

Learning, Adjusting, Moving Forward: ICT-KM Program 2005/06 Annual Report

"The appointment of a CIO and the establishment of the ICT-KM Program have given an impetus to knowledge sharing within the CGIAR System and beyond. This now allows us to move communications into higher and higher levels using new information technology to the fullest extent possible so that our knowledge and the results of our research are widely shared by all." – Ian Johnson, CGIAR Chairman



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Views from Outside: Management, Financial and Programmatic Analyses	3
3. ICT-KM Program Outputs.....	14
4. Views from ICT-KM Program Management	23
5. Conclusion.....	27
6. Annexes	28

1. Introduction

Learning is viewed as a necessary focus for any endeavor aimed at supporting new ways of doing business. With that perspective, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) has been an integral part of the ICT-KM Program from the very beginning. Indeed, the "Consolidated Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation" states:

"As part of its management process, the Program will track progress in implementing its projects and activities and their effects in order to assess and improve its effectiveness and to enable it to report on its contributions to the overall CGIAR change process."

As is evident in their annual progress reports, both the Program and its component projects routinely and systematically generate and use performance information to guide their actions. This year the Program commissioned a three-pronged analysis of the Program. The management review was conducted by the CGIAR Office of Internal Audit, a System Office partner; the financial analysis by the CGIAR Secretariat; and the programmatic review by a consultant, Terry Smutylo, creator of the Outcome Mapping Monitoring and Evaluation approach.

To effectively serve Program learning, the programmatic performance information collected needs to be reliable, so we contracted this evaluation specialist to ensure the thoroughness and relevance of the Program's M&E components. Thus the M&E approach serves the dual management functions of learning and accountability, and has definitely contributed to the Program's success to date and to the creation of progress reports that are both thorough and realistic.

The three-pronged analysis covered the period from 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006, the results of which are aimed principally at Program management, the Alliance Executive, investors in the Program, and those staff responsible for implementing project and Program activities.

2. Views from Outside: Management, Financial and Programmatic Analyses

The next three sub-sections present the highlights of the Management, Financial and Programmatic analyses commissioned by the Program and carried out by experts external to the Program.

2.1 Management Audit

An audit was carried out in March 2006 by the CGIAR Office of Internal Audit, with the purpose to review the adequacy of the Program's internal control systems which operate to ensure:

- Project implementation activities are effective and efficient;
- Reliable financial reports are submitted to donors;
- Compliance with applicable donor requirements; and
- Compliance with applicable Program policies.

The review concluded that Program objectives and outputs are clearly defined in the Program's Business Plan and seem to be well understood by ICT-KM staff and consultants.

The "Guidelines for Preparing Project Documentation for the ICT-KM Program" provides a template for the preparation of documentation for projects to be considered for funding. The template guidelines ensure that uniform proposals are developed and submitted for evaluation, thereby facilitating the assessment process and the subsequent awarding of funds. The review indicated that the guidelines were both clear and useful in ensuring detailed proposals were submitted for consideration.

The "Criteria and Terms of Reference for Project Selection and Identification of Lead Administrative Centers" provides the key principles that guide the Program and hence the type of projects it would like to fund. The criteria include: integration, innovation, linkages, learning, appropriateness, sustainability, scalability, technical, accountability, alignment with ICT-KM strategy, expected impact on the CGIAR System, strategic nature of the project, balance across Centers, fundability and do-ability. The guidelines also outline the Program's expectations regarding the Lead Administrative Centers.

The documented procedures reviewed related mainly to the Program's goal of ensuring transparency and quality control in both project selection and the subsequent execution of projects in the Centers. The review concluded that this goal, which has been effectively met, minimizes the risk of any Center feeling there has been bias in awarding projects and ensures appropriate projects are selected in keeping with the Program's vision. The guidelines also inform host Centers of their roles and responsibilities for implementing projects.

The review of the Program's management and governance processes indicated that the Program faces certain risks that could hamper its effectiveness if not addressed. It concluded that these processes have enabled the Program to progress towards its desired objectives but at great cost to the current staff involved. Consequently, it is unlikely that the present progress can be sustained to ensure the Program achieves all its desired outcomes. The following recommendations were made:

- *"Review the CIO's tasks with a view to ensuring they are realistic and consider the need for additional staff."*
- *"Ensure the AG's effectiveness is addressed through an in-depth evaluation of its desired role, past practice compared to this role and desired modus operandi in light of the results of the in-depth evaluation. The initially envisaged individual and joint roles and responsibilities (CIO and Advisory Group) should be reviewed in the evaluation with a view to rationalizing them for greater practical*

application within the desired objectives. The Program should develop its own recommendations for a Governance structure that will better contribute to its Program objectives in order to influence any ongoing initiative."

- *"The Program should fund dedicated time in projects for Project leaders."*
- *"The Program should include the use of project steering committees to enhance project management on large risky project."*
- *"The Program should sign an official hosting agreement with IPGRI [for the CIO]."*
- *"A formal communication strategy should be developed with a clear definition of stakeholders and plans on how best to communicate to them."*
- *"The CIO and Program staff and consultants should review the draft risk analysis and use it in the future implementation of the program."*

2.2 Financial Analysis

A financial analysis was carried out on the Program and its projects in March 2006 and concluded the following:

*"No significant financial issues were identified and we noted that all the **14 projects under the CGIAR ICT-KM 2004 IP were implemented successfully across the CGIAR Centers.** Still, we believe that the findings identified and recommendations made by this review will be beneficial for the continuation phase of the program and to the proposed 2006 ICT-KM IP expected to commence soon."*

It made a series of recommendations that follow below:

"All completed projects are encouraged to be signed off by project coordinators with the submission of final reports to the Program Manager to ensure proper completion.

Any change or revision of budget is encouraged to be updated directly into the project records to ensure better monitoring of funds of a specific project.

A standard format/ template will facilitate effective financial reporting.

Signed financial reports with proper time frame is encouraged to ensure reliability, accountability and clarity of financial reporting from each project/ Center.

Submission of financial reports with clear justification on differences of approved budgeted amount for the project is encouraged to ensure better control of expenditures on the project and to avoid any unidentified overspending.

A complete set of cumulative expenditures report is encouraged to ensure accurate liquidation against funds disbursed. For projects which are shared across Centers, dual-Center reports are necessary to ensure complete liquidation.

A detailed submission of financial report, which incorporates any revision of approved budget, is encouraged to ensure clean liquidation against funds disbursed/receipt for each project.

Requests for no-cost-extensions are encouraged to be supported with proper justification with proper time frame (at least 2 months before expiration) as this is necessary to ensure that there is no interruption of actual deliverables to the Program."

2.3 Programmatic Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Analysis

The Program has used a modified version of the 'Center Commissioned External Review', which involved the evaluation consultant who (a) worked with Program participants to build capacity, (b) generated feedback independently through surveys and interviews, and then (c) reported to the management team. This year's programmatic report is based on information from several sources: an internet-based survey involving people suggested by Program management (Project Coordinators; Directors General; Human Resource Managers; and Other Stakeholders); telephone interviews with a subset of those surveyed; the Program's draft 2006 Annual Report; and the annual reports of Program projects. The view of the Program's efforts with M&E by the programmatic reviewer and highlights from his analysis are presented below.

2.3.1 View of ICT-KM Program M&E Efforts by Programmatic Reviewer

"The ICT-KM Program has established, as part of its management processes, a system whereby both the Office of the CIO and the component projects plan, conduct and utilize monitoring and evaluation to improve and report on their performance. I have been the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) advisor to the program for over two years, at first as Director of IDRC's Evaluation Unit and more recently as an independent consultant.

Each year, in addition to the advisory function, I collected and analyzed information to assess program management's performance and its achievements as perceived by its various stakeholders. My findings have been used by the CIO, along with other reports and the annual project reports, to formulate the Program's Annual Report.

My 2006 report found the Program to be tenacious, increasingly knowledgeable and conscientious in its commitment to and use of M&E as one of its management tools. The Program has held to its original M&E plans of ongoing monitoring, annual assessments and assisting projects to clarify, plan, implement and revise M&E activities according to their own needs. Flexibility and persistence in making M&E an integral part of operations is highly commendable and a sign, from an evaluator's point of view, of sound program management.

Having both an internal and an external perspective on the Program has both advantages and disadvantages when attempting to assess the quality of its use of M&E. Involvement with the program gives detailed knowledge of its context, challenges,

changes and achievements; and an independent outsider can maintain a degree of disinterested observation and interpretation. On the other hand, involvement as an advisor means that, to some extent, one is assessing the outcomes of one's own work. Faced with a similar tradeoff, some organizations base assessments of evaluation quality on a set of internationally recognized and utilized program evaluation standards developed by Western Michigan University's Evaluation Center. These standards are used to enhance the quality of evaluations by assessing against four dimensions: utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy. Applying these criteria to monitoring and evaluation by the ICT-KM Program, gives the following results.

Utility

M&E findings are utilized to alter Program activities, to modify management practices, and to create baselines for tracking future performance. In 2005 & 2006 Program management specified the issues on which it needed feedback from program stakeholders and contracted a credible, senior evaluator from an organization with a reputation for excellence in evaluation to collect and analyze the data. Each year, the key findings are presented in the main body of the annual reports along with the changes that will be made in response. The methodology and complete findings are presented as annexes. The Program ensures that monitoring and evaluation findings are timely and coordinated with its annual planning and reporting cycle. The performance issues raised last year are reflected in this year's report. There is clear congruency between the monitoring, evaluation and review findings and the key issues addressed in the 2006/07 report's 'charter of commitment'. These include: Senior Level Leadership; Risk Analysis; Project Design and Selection; Advisory Group; Communications; Cross-Center and Project Linkages; Transparency; CIO Office Human Resources; Work Culture; and Working with Research and External Partners

At the project level, reporting on the use of monitoring and evaluation information varies greatly among the projects. However, this year, there is more reporting on things that did not go well, or as planned and on the changes made, or to be made, in response. Several of the March 2006 reports, chart progress against planned objectives, identify areas of learning and reflection and a few include the evidence on which some of their learning is based.

Feasibility

The Program attempts to keep its M&E activities realistic, prudent, diplomatic and frugal. It uses short, inexpensive web-based surveys, and telephone interviews with the smallest feasible numbers of respondents, focusing only on the needed information. The intent is to obtain only the needed information, imposing the lightest possible time burden on respondents and interviewees. Informants are consulted, informed and treated with respect to obtain their cooperation and prevent resistance or misinterpretation of intent.

Propriety

The propriety standards are applied to make evaluation procedures legal, ethical and regardful of the welfare of those participating. Participants in surveys and interviews

were informed of the use and users of the findings; and no quotes are directly attributed to individuals identifiable by name or affiliation. All findings along with their pertinent limitations are fully disclosed as part of the Program's reporting. As can be seen in the external management review and the financial analysis, evaluation expenditures are planned, adequate and accounted for.

Accuracy

For its learning and reporting, the Program draws on and triangulates information from a range of sources: internal and external to the Program, its projects and the CGIAR; and at different levels of management and in different functions. Data from year to year, from the surveys and interviews and from the other external reviews are compared and reported on. The annual project reports address monitoring and evaluation and they increasingly identify data sources and the evidentiary basis for their findings. In 2006 there is greater accuracy in applying M&E concepts, for example in differentiating between outputs and outcomes, and in reporting changes in partner behaviour as outcomes. At the Program level, findings and corrective actions from 2005 are reassessed with data from this year's M&E. And the 2006/07 'charter of commitment' is based on the findings of the 2006 survey and interviews, plus the results from the external Management Audit and the external financial analysis.

In summary, there is very good performance in the application of monitoring and evaluation for learning and accountability. Use and users are identified and participate. Appropriate tools and methods are used; and evidence is presented that substantiates the conclusions and responses. Monitoring and evaluation is planned, timely and relatively light in the level of effort required. Project and program participants are provided the opportunity to enhance their evaluation capacities. All participants are respected and the procedures and reporting screened for ethical concerns. And finally, perhaps the strongest aspect of performance, findings are taken seriously in the planning and reporting of the Program."

Terry Smutylo: "ICT-KM Program M&E efforts", 2006

2.3.2 Highlights of Programmatic Analysis

2.3.2.1 Overall Program Performance

The results of the on-line survey administered by the evaluator to a large group of people with knowledge of the Program indicate that the Program has made significant contributions in:

- *"the creation of useful tools and systems"*
- *"making cost savings through economies of scale and the standardization of systems"*
- *"building awareness and new ways of thinking about accessing and using information"*
- *"creating for itself a high, positive and influential profile both inside and outside the CGIAR"*

Respondents are largely knowledgeable about the Program and its initiatives and are conversant with its knowledge sharing language and concepts.

All categories of respondents perceive significant positive changes in knowledge management and knowledge sharing in the CGIAR. They are able to cite many improvements, particularly in knowledge sharing and collaboration among Centers, and the emergence of knowledge-related communities of practice. As was the case last year, over two thirds of “Other Stakeholders” reported that the Program had contributed to these improvements to either a limited or significant extent. “Other Stakeholders” comprise CGIAR staff and external partners who are involved with Program activities but who are not directly engaged in the governance of the Program or its projects – excluding Directors General and HR Managers. Compared with last year, now some of the Human Resources Managers give the Program credit for influencing their policies and practices.

Similarly, the Directors General singled out the following ways in which the Program has contributed to the changes:

- *“Elevated the agenda on the issue”*
- *“Started to provide the tools and advice needed”*
- *“Raising awareness in the centers”*
- *“Piloting ‘technology choices”*
- *“Vibrant communities of practice have emerged among IT managers, librarians, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) experts”*

The survey and interview findings show progress in communicating the Program’s activities and achievements. All groups of respondents found the Program’s communication instruments to be useful, with greatly increased exposure this year among Human Resources Managers and Directors General. Respondents suggested some improvements, including updating content in the newsletter and website more frequently, making the website more interactive, packaging information on achievements succinctly for both informed and uniformed audiences, and seeking to reach those audiences more widely.

The Directors General report being supportive of knowledge-sharing policies and initiatives and, compared with last year and unlike the Human Resources Managers this year, cite less Program influence on their own behavior and policies. In the opinion of the programmatic reviewer, this may imply widening ownership of these values by the Directors General.

Like last year, around two thirds of “Other Stakeholders” ¹were satisfied with overall Program management, Program reporting and the Program’s fostering of cooperation among CGIAR Centers. However, with regard to “opportunities to influence overall

¹ CGIAR staff and external partners who are involved with Program activities but not directly involved with Program activities

Program goals and direction," a much higher proportion of responses expressed dissatisfaction this year. This may reflect a rise in stakeholders' expectations with regard to their involvement in the Program, especially after a year of increasing familiarity with, or interest in, the Program.

In response to last year's survey, the Program's 2005 Annual Report included a commitment to strike the appropriate balance between "directive" and "supportive" approaches in managing the Program. According to the reviewer, *"This year, unsolicited comments on the CIO's management style are universally complementary, mentioning her visionary, articulate and persuasive presentations and her effectiveness in generating awareness and motivating Center audiences. Along with the participatory nature of the Program's workshops, capacity-building in the weaker projects and the sense of increased ownership and responsibility on the part of project teams, this suggests that the CIO and her office have been largely successful in becoming supportive as well as directive."*

M&E capacity in the Program and its constituent projects has been strengthened. As the reviewer said: *"I would assess this level of progress in M&E as very good. The quality of reporting on results this year is much higher than last year."*

2.3.2.2 Improving Program Management

Along with expressing satisfaction with both the management and the achievements of the Program, respondents also gave positive feedback on how to further improve the effectiveness of the Program. Some of the suggestions are presented below.

- **Cross-Center and Cross-Project Collaboration**

On the whole, Project Coordinators continue to be satisfied with the ways in which the Program is managed. Indeed, they reported being poorly supported by management in only two areas: 'linking with other projects' and 'cooperation within and among CGIAR Centers'. Although the survey findings point to some perceived progress in these two areas compared to last year, Project Coordinators still think more collaboration is desirable. As one interviewee said, *"My project works on common ground with others but I have not contacted them. It's too time-intensive to do this ... to complicate our already busy lives."* A few respondents suggested that the Program could try to determine where inter-project collaboration would be most cost-effective and then create the conditions for this to develop.

- **Tension: System Work vs. Center Work**

At least four of the projects' 2006 annual reports mention the difficulty of meeting the demands of System-wide initiatives while holding down a fulltime job at a CGIAR Center. Although eight of the ten telephone interviewees also saw this as an almost inevitable problem, they still felt it could be managed. How this might be achieved depends, they say, on the situation and the work culture

of each Center. Based on experience, interviewees gave the following suggestions:

"This problem comes from the under-funding and under-staffing of projects; therefore, sufficient staff time needs to be allocated and adequate provisions for backfilling need to be made."

"Senior management at lead Centers should be involved in the allocation of resources and the project design phase, because increased Center responsibility will aid progress."

"The reward systems need to be changed. For example, annual staff performance reviews should include sharing and collaboration."

- **Senior Leadership to Influence Organizational Culture**

Proactive, high-level leadership is important to bring about the shifts in organizational culture as advocated by the Program's overall mandate and goals. Concerted, rather than individual, efforts by Directors General are key in bringing about what is widely held to be a profound change in the extent and nature of inter-Center sharing and collaboration. With the active engagement and sustained support of the Directors General, the Program could more effectively and efficiently investigate how to create the appropriate synergies among the activities of its various projects and enhance the sharing of resources and competencies across Centers. According to some of the interviewees:

- *"The CIO needs to put more pressure on the Directors General and the Science Council. They can legitimize and build support for Cross-System efforts to build System resources and to firmly establish the principle of exploiting strengths in the CGIAR to create shared resources for all."*
- *"The Directors General could help bring out into open discourse some of the main contradictions between the Program's vision of a one System CGIAR and the ongoing reality of a significant number of "fiercely" independent Centers."*
- *"A senior-level champion acting alone may not be enough; there is a need for multiple champions at different levels in the organization."*
- *"The Executive Alliance should share responsibility for Program performance."*

- **Transparency in Decision-Making**

Transparency in making and communicating Program decisions is *"easy to criticize and hard to refute,"* according to one Director General. Transparency in decision-making may mean different things to different respondents.

The external evaluator offered a definition that would be useful for the Program to adopt:

“Transparency is keeping people informed about who makes what decisions, when, and based on what criteria. It also means letting people know when the door is open for inputs to those decisions, and what kinds of inputs will be accepted. Transparency is consistent with a decisive, consultative and participatory management style.”

Some interviewees saw some of the transparency issues as part of the Program's “growing pains”. They also felt these issues might be related to the Program's use of a quasi-competitive process for funding proposals. Whatever the basis for the concern though, the Program could re-examine, clarify and communicate its decision-making criteria and processes and outcomes more widely. From the interviews, came the following suggestions:

“Make communications about activities brief and simple, communicate decisions more clearly, and let people know who is doing what and why.” and

“Put out a piece on options for the future and solicit feedback now regarding the formation of next phase priorities.”

- **Rethink and Reconstitute the Advisory Body**

The functions and composition of the Advisory Group have been widely questioned. Its role and composition needs to be reassessed and brought into line based on lessons learned over the past year. Its membership needs to be appropriate to that role (without conflicts of interest) and able to provide strategic advice and support as needed.

2.3.2.3 Suggestions for Future Directions

The Program's focus in the first phase, which is largely on infrastructure and knowledge sharing within the CGIAR, is perceived as relevant and effective. So far, the Program has achieved economies of scale and value for money with a number of deliverables. The survey findings suggest that it is now time to align Program priorities in keeping with the Centers' programs, the CGIAR research priorities and partners' needs. Both the survey and the interviews provided suggestions on programming directions and how to determine these through planning and consultation.

Programming

There is strong support for the Program to foster direct relationships with the main science, research and outreach players in the CGIAR. The programmatic reviewer synthesized the following suggestions from his findings:

- *The Program needs to work more with national systems, not just internally [within the CGIAR institutions] but externally, too. Involvement that is more externally oriented would be a natural evolution in the Program.*
- *In the next phase the Program could move closer to the research; be more scientist-oriented by raising the awareness of scientists, getting their buy-in and addressing their needs.*
- *The Program needs to screen boldly innovative technologies for future application.*
- *There is a need to align and participate with some System-wide initiatives like the Challenge Programs.*
- *Some activities should focus on the needs of farming communities. Learning systems can be established, with different Centers collaborating to create synthesized content for delivery to farmers.*
- *Links with national, regional and international external partners should be established and used to serve the needs of user communities.*

Planning and Consultation

The programmatic reviewer synthesized the following suggestions from his findings:

- *The Program needs a wider user-support base to maintain its influence. It needs to get away from exclusively IT-intensive approaches by using some off-the-shelf solutions which are cheap, instantly useful, more appropriate for developing countries, and which build familiarity (e.g. Skype, MSN Messenger, etc.).*
- *The Program also needs to get in touch with the Centers' research communities to ascertain the demand for knowledge-sharing among scientific staff. The Program should work within the CGIAR thematic priorities.*
- *The supply-driven process was good for the infrastructure phase, now the Program needs to move to a process of exploration and consultation on the demand side. In other words, move from "intelligent supply" to demand-driven responsiveness.*
- *Systems developed with internal CGIAR needs in mind may not be appropriate for use by CGIAR national partners. The Program needs to build internal and external systems concurrently to ensure they work for everyone.*
- *There are some areas particularly amenable to partnership, shared knowledge networks and collaboration. Now is the time to explore stronger integration with other international initiatives and systems.*
- *Sharing plans and projects when they are being formulated makes it easier to build partnerships.*
- *We could move from informal, interpersonal or project-oriented sharing to higher profile, formalized institutional visits and exchanges.*

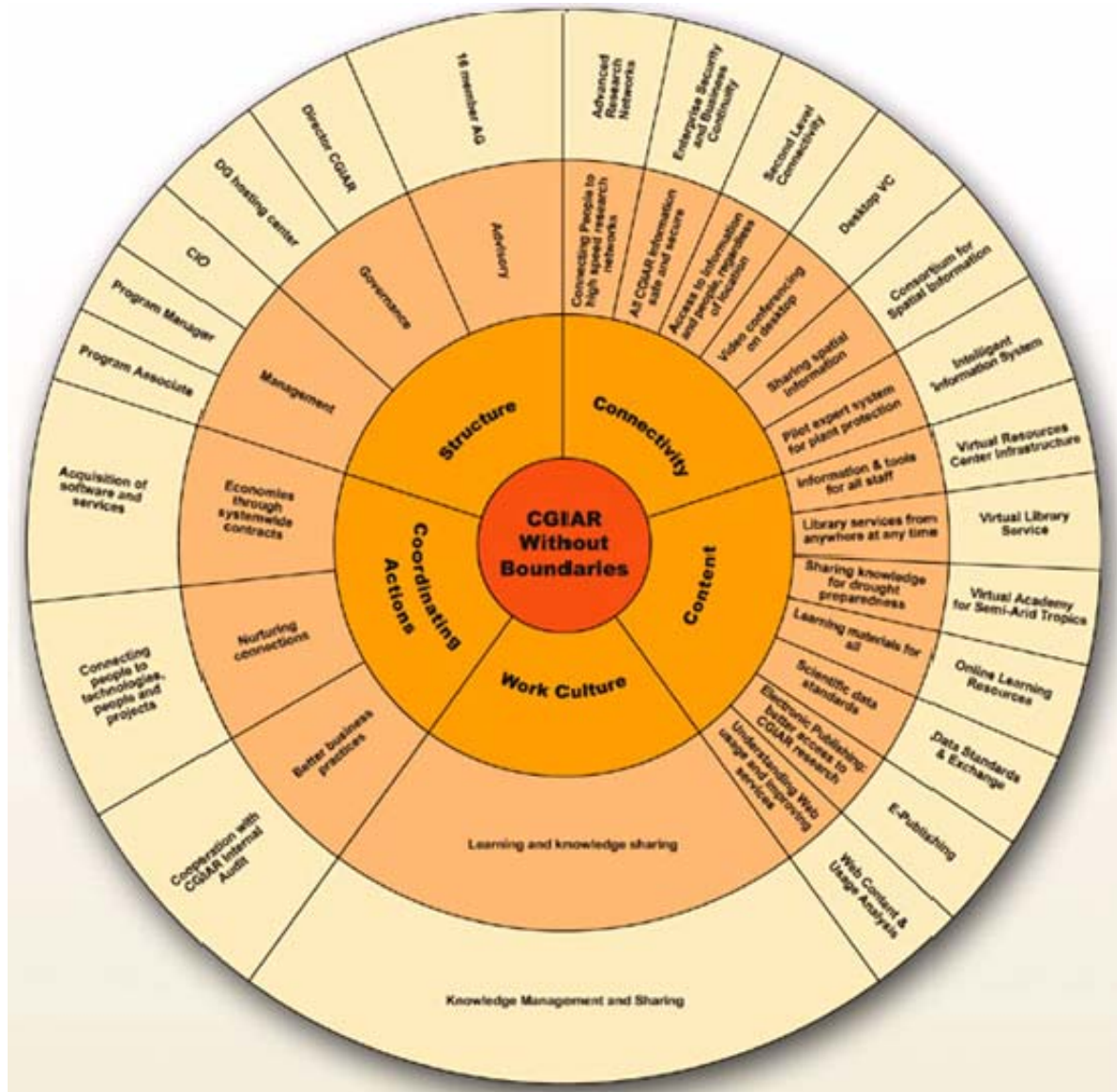
3. ICT-KM Program Outputs

The sections above presented the results of the analyses carried out by experts external to the Program. This section will present some of the main achievements of the Program and its projects this year

3.1 ICT-KM Program Structure and Delivery

The ICT-KM Program strategy will improve access to data and information and make it easy for CGIAR staff and partners to work together collaboratively – from the generation of an idea to implementation. It will contribute to a ***CGIAR without Boundaries*** (an internationally distributed, unified and open knowledge organization), increase the effectiveness of CGIAR staff, contribute to positive work environments and give rise to direct and indirect economic efficiencies.

The Program can be illustrated through the following diagram:



To help achieve a **CGIAR without Boundaries**, the ICT-KM Program requires a **Structure** (or Management Framework) for two principal types of activities: the implementation of a **portfolio of projects** addressing **Connectivity**, **Content for Development** and **Work Culture** issues, managed by individual Centers; and the implementation of a set of **coordinating actions** managed by the CIO Office itself.

3.2 Connectivity Thrust Highlights

Six projects address connectivity-related issues. One of these, the Enterprise Security and Business Continuity (ESBC) project, was developed to replace the Disaster Resilience and Data Preservation project, which had struggled in its initial implementation steps. The newly designed project is being perceived as essential to the System and the Centers and is making excellent progress.

The Consortium for Spatial Information is making significant headway, especially with the strengthening of its community, and is surpassing expectations.

All 15 CGIAR Centers have successfully migrated to Microsoft Active Directory and upgraded to Exchange 2003. This marks the successful end of the upgrade project. The deployment of Active Directory creates a solid technical foundation for seamless communication and collaboration within the CGIAR. The new Exchange server includes many new features that promise to make the life of the 'mail addicted' CGIAR staff easier, especially the frequent travelers, but the benefits are not limited to e-mail.

Significantly more work is required to strengthen the connectivity of remote sites. Good progress is being made with connectivity tools and media for supporting intensive collaboration, both within the CGIAR and beyond.

Project	Outputs
Second Level Connectivity – improving connectivity at remote sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two sites completed • Ten sites underway • More challenging than originally conceived
Advanced Research Network (ARN) – demonstrating possibilities of high speed connectivity for data intensive exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIP, CIMMYT and IRRI established ARN connections • CIAT and ICARDA in process of establishing connections • Grid computing cluster for bio-informatics established (contribution by Project) • Access grid workstation established and first video-conferencing linkage (IRRI-CIP) held
Enterprise Security and Business Continuity (ESBC) – ensuring data and information is secure and ongoing corporate continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops held in Asia and EMEA regions • Rollout in Centers in these regions underway • Latin American process about to begin

Consortium for Spatial Information (CSI) – improving access and use of spatial information and strengthening CSI community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSI Community of Practice strengthening and now vibrant • Strong usage of CSI Geo Portal • International partnerships built
Desktop Video Conferencing (DVC) – demonstrating opportunities for desktop video conferencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical options and utility demonstrated • Also useful for collaboration with national-level partners
Intelligent System for Plant Protection – piloting expert systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core knowledge bases and acquisition tools created • Beta expert system developed • Expert review about to take place

3.3 Content for Development Thrust Highlights

Seven projects are included in the Content for Development thrust. The most significant output of this thrust over the past year was the development and launch of the CGIAR's first intranet/extranet site: CGXchange. Aspects related to the successful launch of this visible System-wide initiative include: improved coordination of the projects involved with CGXchange; the almost unanimous selection of a best-of-breed platform (Plumtree); the option for individual Centers to gain significant benefits by using this platform for their own specific purposes (at a recent workshop, 12 Centers were strongly leaning towards adoption); the provision of tools to support collaborative work; and the strengthening of partnerships with international organizations (FAO, for example) for mutual benefit.

Ex Libris, the Virtual Library Service software vendor, recently asked permission to write up the CGVLibrary as a case study, to show others this exciting and innovative application of their software. The CGVLibrary will gain valuable additional exposure via this case study, and also benefit from some additional training offered by the company. The Project is progressing well.

Female volunteers in Addakal, who are working on a VASAT project, have been honored with the Fellowship of the National Virtual Academy by the President of India. This innovative project is demonstrating the relevance of ICTs for connecting with rural people.

Project	Outputs
Virtual Resources Center Infrastructure (VRCI) – developing infrastructure and initial content for CGIAR's first intranet/extranet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unanimous selection of best-of-breed platform • Platform freely available for use by all Centers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CGXchange (CGIAR's intranet/extranet) created and launched • Joined Dgroups consortium
Virtual Library Service (VLS) – providing access to Centers' library and external resources through a single access point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 110 electronic resources accessible through CGVlibrary • 11 Centers' catalogues accessible through CGVlibrary • Strong community and team enabling excellent progress
E-Publishing – developing media-neutral, electronic publishing workflows and tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software selected and prototype system developed • System currently being field tested • Significant delays and challenges mainly due to personnel changes
Data Standards: Capacity Development – training IT staff and scientists in technologies for accessing distributed databases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 staff trained in latest technological approaches (web services) • 14 Centers developed implementation strategies
Virtual Academy for Semi-Arid Tropics (VASAT) – developing and demonstrating information services for rural farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of information services to local level demonstrated • Service delivery capacity developed • Sustainable delivery of services encouraging
Online Learning Resources – developing a CGIAR community of trainers to provide unified access to training resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OLR site set up on CGXchange • CGIAR Training Community of Practice emerging • 560 training resources from 11 CGIAR Centers uploaded onto the site
Web Content and Usage Analysis (WC&UA) – developing strategies and tools for marketing web content and evaluating usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial CGXchange content identified and services developed • Initial CGXchange marketing plan and materials developed • Work on evaluation tools and strategies commencing

3.4 Work Culture Thrust Highlights

The Knowledge Management/Sharing (KM/S) Project was the only project with an exclusive focus on the Work Culture thrust. The principal outputs of this Project were:

- Four pilots integrating multiple KS approaches into important Center events as models for replication
- Over 60 people trained in facilitation – in partnership with ILAC
- Small community of KS champions emerging within the CGIAR
- Active linkages between the CGIAR and the international KM/S experts community of practice
- A “Toolbox” for KS practitioners available through the CGXchange

As stated in their report, the KS Project has essentially “put KS on the map” in the CGIAR by introducing hundreds of people to KS approaches that directly improve interpersonal communication, relationships, collaboration and participatory decision-making. Strong progress in the first phase points to the need for consolidation in a subsequent phase – consolidation by scaling up within the CGIAR, strengthening the community of CGIAR KS champions and scaling out to partners around KS in research.

3.5 Highlights of Other Program Activities

Coordinating Action	Results
Nurturing Communities	The Program has worked hard to nurture two very important Communities of Practice (CoPs) essential for the Program’s success: the IT Managers CoP and the Information Managers CoP. This nurturing has contributed to the successful implementation of System-wide initiatives (CGXchange, Project Manager, CGVlibrary, Active Directory and Exchange 2003). Attempts to nurture a Webmasters CoP have met with little success to date. Nurturing the CSI CoP is paying significant dividends.
System Office Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two sets of Good Practice Notes developed on Security and Systems Development • Center Financial and Administration IT Systems Survey with the Internal Audit Unit
Active Directory and Exchange 2003	Completion of implementation means a seamless platform is now in place

Project Manager (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine Centers have now implemented PM, with three committed to doing so • Time to explore fuller development and adoption across CGIAR System
Information Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIO presentations at 16 major events • Published "The Way Ahead for Agriculture", IAALD Quarterly Bulletin, May 05, 2005
Financial Savings	US\$300,000 saved through joint purchasing approaches
Exploring New Models	A shared library services pilot project, started with IWMI, WorldFish and CIFOR in collaboration with FAO, will explore areas for cooperation and identify and test new types of information services aimed at improving the effectiveness of research.
Extending Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO: Working together in knowledge management and piloting new information services delivery • IAALD: corporate membership for CGIAR • CTA, DFID, GFAR, FAO: jointly spearheading the development of coherent information standards for agriculture information systems.

3.6 Follow up on 2005 Charter of Commitment

In last year's report, a Charter of Commitment was made regarding changes the Program was making or planning to make as a result of ongoing learning. Some things were done, some are in the process of being done and others are yet to be done. Pertinent actions taken over the last year are summarized below.

Commitment	Actions
Balancing Management Style	As confirmed in the programmatic M&E analysis, Program management has

	continued to balance being supportive versus directive, with emphasis on the former.
Providing technical support to Project Coordinators	A full-time Program Manager, who was based in Penang, supported the implementation and coordination of the projects over the past year.
Improving Advisory Group functioning	The Advisory Group (AG) was strengthened by adding new members from several communities (System-wide Program on Collective Action and Property Rights (CAPRI) and the Marketing Group).
Simplifying and clarifying Project reporting requirements	Project reporting has been simplified with one annual report (which is then fed into this annual Program report) due 15 March. Regular Program monitoring of project outputs are synthesized mid-year by Program management for the AGM Program report.
Improving effectiveness through more optimum location of the CIO	The Chief Information Officer (CIO) moved to Rome and is now based at IPGRI reporting to the Center's DG and the CGIAR Director. This improves global coverage from a time zone perspective and reduces travel costs while increasing the potential for interactions with peers.
Improving communication instruments and delivery	All communication media have been re-designed in light of the learning gained through last year's M&E efforts.
Strengthening the use of learning-focused M&E techniques	The Program has seen concrete growth in the use of learning-focused M&E techniques by the Project Coordinators as evidenced by their reports, documenting results, performance, and more especially by their learning. This has been strongly confirmed by the programmatic evaluator.
Applying lessons learned regarding the project selection process	Lessons learned concerning project portfolio development and project selection

	have been taken onboard in the upcoming Investment Plan, which emphasizes a few, larger projects with adequate human resources assigned to each project to ensure success – e.g. dedicated Project Coordinator time and appropriately designed project steering committees.
Re-engineering the Disaster Resilience and Data Preservation Project	The Enterprise Security and Business Continuity (ESBC) Project was developed
Coupling the KM/S Project and approaches with sensitization of the Directors General and the HR Managers to ensure the success of the Program, and to advance the move towards a “one-System” CGIAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project results were disseminated and the CIO made regular visits and presentations • Directors General and HR Manager surveys administered on an annual basis to track changes in perceptions, actions and the influence of the Program • The CIO communicated the concerns stakeholders raised that are relevant to senior management, including the issue related to the time conflicts that PCs face when trying to juggle project/Center responsibilities.
Exploring new models for service delivery	Implemented Shared Library Services pilot project (eNRIC)

3.7 The View from a Project Coordinator

“The overall participatory approach should be recognized, commended and continued.” – Joanna Kane-Potaka

“I strongly agree with the approach the CGIAR CIO has pursued in undertaking this project [CGXchange project]. It parallels the approach our scientists use when carrying out their research projects: working directly with the people who will implement and use the final product. This approach does take more time, is more complex and is more difficult in terms of getting agreement and getting work done, and much more difficult with regard to quality control, etc. But at the end, you are more likely to get uptake and understanding about the product. It also becomes easier to market the product, find ambassadors, etc. Ultimately, it significantly increases the chances of success.

I have never seen this approach being undertaken to this degree within the CGIAR in any of our own initiatives. I believe this is a 'first'. It has taken a lot of commitment from the CIO and the teams of Center staff who put in the effort to make this work. It was also a painful process as it took more effort, involved bringing together people who have different ways of thinking from different disciplines, and meant trying to come to a common understanding to be able to move ahead and create something that really would mean thinking outside the box and doing business differently. This was by no means a smooth process, nor could it ever be if done as a genuine participatory approach.

Other than the success of a new product, there are many other advantages to this approach that I felt were achieved:

- We built professional relationships across Centers, disciplines and communities;
- The multidisciplinary teams made for a more enriched end product; and
- Internal capacity was built in skills and knowledge

These advantages are long lasting and form the building blocks of further development and change in the CGIAR."

4. Views from ICT-KM Program Management

The management, financial and programmatic analyses identified areas for improvement. In some cases, more than one review identified similar issues. The most important issues relate to the need for senior-level leadership and support; tension between Center and System work; project design and selection, Advisory Group governance issues; and cross-Center and cross-project collaboration. These issues are not new and Program management has already been trying to address them.

- Managing a System-wide project while holding down a fulltime job in the CGIAR usually causes delays in the implementation of projects (often resulting in the need for no-cost extensions) and puts significant strain on an individual's work/home balance. Carrying out dual roles, however, also has its benefits. Some project personnel have developed new skills that are not only useful for their current jobs but also for their career, and some staff have had an opportunity to meet personal growth aspirations without the need to change jobs. The next Investment Plan, which will have a small number of large projects with integrated sub-activities, dedicated time for Project Coordinators and high-level steering committees, should substantially address this time conflict. It will also facilitate cross-Center/project collaboration, and senior level leadership buy-in.
- There has been confusion regarding roles and it is felt that the Advisory Group has not been as active as it could have been (in some cases the representation

- may not have been optimum, and in others the Program may not have utilized the AG optimally). Alternate models for carrying out the role of the AG are currently being considered. The Management Audit and Programmatic review confirmed this failing and also made several good recommendations.
- Communication between projects can be and in some cases has been challenging. Better links between project teams, while very time consuming, are necessary. A better alternative perhaps would have been to have, where appropriate, fewer large projects with integrated sub components – as proposed in the next Investment Plan.

Two issues raised in the reviews require clarification. These related to transparency and influence over programming decisions, and are addressed below.

- The programmatic analysis reported the concerns that some people have about having less influence over the programming decisions of the Program. These concerns may have arisen because the development of the 2004 Investment Plan was highly participative and many had an influence (both direct and indirect) on programming decisions. In March 2005, a broad online forum elicited views about programming directions from both internal and external sources. However, more recently, based on formal learning from M&E exercises and informal learning through day-to-day management practices, a decision was taken to develop the 2006 Investment Plan as an instrument to consolidate gains to date. This was a reflection of both delivery and absorption capacities. As a result, programming decisions were few and obvious. The highly consultative nature of the Program, which gives many the opportunity to influence directions, returns in the planning process for the next out-reaching phase, which will follow the consolidation phase.
- The Programmatic review reported some concerns about insufficient transparency. However, the management audit concluded the opposite. The opinion of a Project Coordinator in section 3.7 above similarly states that the Program is highly participative. This points to the possibility that this contradiction is an issue of perception – that some feel there is a lack of transparency due to their individual context and knowledge of the Program. It could also relate to perceptions concerning the original selection of the 14 projects in the 2004 Investment Plan (as suggested by at least one DG). The decision to propose a transition phase of consolidation was made by the CIO based on careful assessment of needs, and learning to date; this may also have been perceived by some as lacking in transparency.

The results of the programmatic review indicate good progress is being made with the changes to the communications strategy. Program management will act on the management audit's recommendation to make the strategy explicit.

The programmatic analysis pointed out the need to continue maintaining clarity with regard to reporting requirements and to continue strengthening the project coordinators' capacity in M&E. These processes are underway and will be maintained.

The Program recognizes the gap between the job to be done and the human resources available to do it, as identified in the Management Audit. Corrective actions will be discussed with the Program’s oversight body.

The IPGRI hosting agreement for the CIO Office is currently being addressed.

Almost all projects have either achieved their objectives or are on track to achieving them.

We agree with practically all of the recommendations made in the financial analysis. The recommendations are eminently sound and sensible. Indeed, we have been promoting most of them since the start of the 2004 Investment Plan. In some cases perhaps we need to be more diligent; but in others we run into the challenge of trying to determine how a system-wide initiative obtains compliance with some financial and administrative requirements. We are looking into ways to make us more effective.

The savings this year from joint purchasing (US\$300K) almost covers the CIO Office’s yearly budget.

Several observations can be drawn from the experiences of implementing the projects:

- A focus on learning leads to appropriate revisions during the execution of the projects (and the Program), thereby addressing both problems and opportunities.
- Getting consensus and commitment in the CGIAR is a difficult and time-consuming process.
- Broad virtual teams can be very successful.

4.1 Charter of Commitment for 06/07

Based on the accomplishments of the past year, and taking into consideration on-going learning, learning gained through the three-pronged Program analysis and the lessons learned from the projects, the Program intends to take the following actions as part of its 2006/07 Charter of Commitment:

Area	Commitment
Senior Level Leadership	Increase interactions and discussion with Directors General in order to increase their commitment, ownership and actions towards the mission of the Program.
Risk Analysis	Carry out the risk analysis recommended by the Management Audit.

Project Design and Selection	Design and implement the 2006 Investment Plan projects based on the learning to date: dedicated time for project coordinators, high-level steering committees for projects, fewer, large projects, CIO closely involved in large projects.
Advisory Group	Review the tasks of the CIO and the Advisory Group, evaluate the effectiveness of the current advisory model and make recommendations regarding the governance of the Program to feed into other processes underway in the Systems Office. The creation of a "Friends of the Program" team involving associates and champions will be explored. Such a solution could spread and nurture the Program's goals in all Centers and programs and to act as additional eyes and ears for the Program.
Communications	Document the communications strategy and implement specific evaluation metrics. Investigate how the Annual Report can best meet the needs of the key target audiences (CIO, AE, Secretariat).
Cross-Center and project linkages	Continue to analyze where cross-project, cross-Center and cross-community collaboration is most critical, and invest energy and resources to support that collaboration.
Transparency	Communicate decisions and decision-making processes to appropriate parties as early as possible.
CIO Office Human resources	Investigate the expansion of the CIO Office team
Financial Analysis Recommendations	We are looking into ways to make us more effective and are discussing ways to improve compliance with administrative and financial reporting procedures

<p>Work Culture</p>	<p>Support a second phase of the KM/S Project, consolidating the gains of the first phase by scaling up within the CGIAR, strengthening the community of CGIAR KS champions and scaling out to partners around the role of KS in research. Work strategically with HR Managers to further common goals.</p>
<p>Working with research and external partners</p>	<p>Ensure that the trend being established concerning external partnerships and support for CGIAR research and science continues and strengthens, while continuing to plan with national level partners for the post-consolidation phase. This started with the online consultation in March 2005 and continues with upcoming face-to-face workshops and with some of the KS in Research pilots in the KM/S Phase 2 project.</p>

5. Conclusion

Our commitment to learning and improving is paying off. We have been committed to making learning (along with the willingness to admit problems and remain open to changes as needed) an important focus for the Program. The intensive Program-commissioned analyses carried out this year and our Charter of Commitment for 2006/07 both demonstrate this.

The results of our work this year show clear progress. We believe that the commitment to learning and adapting is the underlying winning factor. The upcoming 2006 Investment Plan, which focuses on Consolidating Gains to date, has been developed directly from the learning over the last two years.

We are very pleased with the results over the past year, many of which are becoming visible within the CGIAR and are starting to make a difference. This would not have been possible without the Project Coordinators and their respective teams who have worked hard to deliver the results to date. We would also like to thank all of you who provided support and constructive feedback over the past year; you are helping the Program improve.

We continue to be committed to listening to our audiences, taking learning seriously, making course corrections as needed and moving forward expeditiously to further the mission of the CGIAR.

6. Annexes

Please view the following documents at <http://ictkm.cgiar.org/html/Document>:

- 6.1 M&E Report on the ICT-KM Program – Full programmatic report
- 6.2 Report on the Audit of the Management and Governance of the ICT-KM Program
- 6.3 Financial Review
- 6.4 Summaries of Projects' Annual Reports for 2006.
- 6.5 Projects Finances Table
- 6.6 Human Resources involved with the ICT-KM Program
- 6.7 Presentations, Conference Participation and Articles produced
- 6.8 Acronyms List