

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



Executive Summary

The ICT-KM Program promotes and supports the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and knowledge management (KM) to improve the effectiveness of the CGIAR's work on behalf of the poor in developing countries.

The future success of the ICT-KM Program depends on, among other factors, the continuing use of an effective system for capturing the achievements and learning from the Program's various activities. By constantly striving to improve through regular review and analysis of activities and results, the Program hopes to stay relevant and serve the expectations of its partners, stakeholders and investors.

With the completion of the Program's second year on 31 March 2006, it was decided to examine the Program in detail. This report covers the highlights of the Programmatic, Management and Financial analyses commissioned by the Program and carried out by experts external to the Program, along with a summary of the Program's achievements in the past year. In keeping with our commitment to improve, we have also included our Charter of Commitment, which will guide our work over the next year.

Overall Program Performance

An online survey was administered by an evaluation specialist to a large group of people with knowledge of the Program and followed up with interviews with a small subset of the respondents.

The Programmatic reviewer found that:

- The results of the online survey indicate that the Program has made significant contributions to the creation of useful tools and systems, made cost savings through economies of scale and the standardization of systems, built awareness about new ways of accessing and using information, and created for itself a high, positive and influential profile both internally and externally.
- 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.

- 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.
- Along with expressing satisfaction with both the management and the achievements of the Program, respondents thought the Program could further improve its effectiveness by:
 - Working even more diligently to promote cross-Center and cross-project collaboration in those areas where the returns will be the greatest
 - Trying to address the tension felt by project personnel who have to juggle the responsibilities of both System work and Center work (see recommendation by Management Audit about providing dedicated time in projects for project leaders and creating high-level steering committees for fewer, large projects, as is being planned in the 2006 Investment Plan)
 - Trying harder to get senior leadership to influence organizational culture
 - Rethinking and reconstituting the Advisory Group
 - Promoting transparency in decision-making by keeping people informed about who makes what decisions, when, and based on what criteria, and also by letting people know when the door is open for inputs
- The survey findings suggest that it is time to align Program priorities so that they are 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 realize these through planning and consultation.
- Unsolicited comments on the CIO's management style are complimentary, mentioning her effectiveness in generating awareness and motivating Center audiences. It is felt that the CIO and her team have been largely successful in striking a balance between being supportive and directive.

In the words of the evaluator: "The Program is tenacious, increasingly knowledgeable and conscientious in its commitment to and use of M&E [monitoring and evaluation] as one of its management tools. M&E capacity in the Program and its constituent projects has been strengthened. 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. And finally, the strongest aspect of performance: findings are taken seriously in the planning and reporting of the Program."

Management Analysis Highlights:

The analysis carried out by the CGIAR Internal Audit Office concluded that:

- Program objectives and outputs are clearly defined in the Program's Business Plan and seem to be well understood
- Processes put in place by Program management have enabled the Program to progress towards its desired objectives but at great cost to the current staff involved

The Management analysis recommended that Program management should:

- Review the CIO's tasks to ensure they are realistic and consider the need for additional staff
- Review the Advisory Group governance model
- Ensure dedicated time in projects for Project Leaders
- Implement high-level steering committees for large projects
- Create an explicit communication strategy including a clear definition of stakeholders and plans on how best to communicate with them.

Financial Analysis Highlights

Carried out by the Finance staff of the CGIAR Secretariat, this analysis concluded: "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 Investment Plan expected to commence soon."

ICT-KM Program Outputs

To help achieve a CGIAR without Boundaries, the ICT-KM Program is implementing a portfolio of projects that address **Connectivity, Content for Development and Work Culture** issues.

From giving CGIAR staff access to System-wide resources and a unique set of collaboration tools, to enhancing the communication capabilities of scientists through advanced research networks, to providing remote offices with the basic Internet connections that many of us take for granted – the projects of the Program are on track to achieving their objectives.

Connectivity Thrust Highlights

- High-speed advanced network connectivity established for four Centers

- Geo-spatial portal and tools created, partnerships developed, usage of online products heavy and growing

Content for Development Thrust Highlights

- CGIAR's first intranet/extranet (CGXchange) created, providing access to information resources and collaboration tools
- Portal platform behind CGXchange available for all Centers to adopt for own use
- One-stop access through the CGVLibrary to more than 110 information resources and the library collections of 11 Centers
- Delivery of information services to farmers demonstrated
- CGIAR Training Community of Practice emerging and uploading training resources onto CGXchange for all to access

Work Culture Thrust Highlights

- Knowledge Sharing (KS) techniques integrated into some Center events
- 60 people trained in facilitation techniques
- KS toolbox available through CGXchange

Other Program Activities Highlights

- Considerably strengthened Communities of Practice: IT Managers, Information Managers, and Consortium for Spatial Information
- Strong, working partnership focusing on information and knowledge management developed with FAO
- US\$300,000 saved through joint purchases
- Active Directory and Exchange 2003 implemented for seamless internal networks

The Commitment to Learning and Improving Continues

To best serve our clients in 2006/07, the Program has made a commitment to:

- 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.
- 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 act as additional eyes and ears for the Program.
- Investigate the expansion of the CIO Office team.

- 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.
- Increase interactions and discussions with Directors General in order to increase their commitment, ownership and actions towards the mission of the Program.
- Discuss with the Secretariat ways to improve compliance with administrative and financial reporting procedures.
- Make the communications strategy explicit and increase efforts for strategic, targeted communications.
- Communicate decisions and decision-making processes to appropriate parties as early as possible.
- Ensure that the trend being established regarding external partnerships and support for CGIAR research and science continues and strengthens.

Conclusion

We are very pleased with the progress that the Program has made to date. Many people have worked tirelessly, often sacrificing their own free time, to make sure the Program's various projects and initiatives are kept on track. We extend our deepest appreciation to these champions, without whom the Program would surely flounder. The many voices that run through this report reflect our desire to listen and learn. We have incorporated all relevant feedback into the plans for the year 2006/07, and it is with great excitement that we begin the next phase of the ICT-KM Program.