

**ISPC commentary on the proposal CRP 1.3: “Harnessing the development potential of aquatic agricultural systems for the poor and vulnerable”** (*Proposal of March 2011*)

**Summary**

The CRP 1.3 proposal presents a “research in development” program to address the issues of poverty and vulnerability in selected countries of the world where aquatic agricultural systems are of major importance. As such, the proposal responds directly to the vision of the CGIAR in transition to have more direct impacts on the poor. The strengths of the current proposal are its problem-orientation, the clarity of the strategy, and novel and appropriate partnerships that have been formed for the initial target countries. International linkages to resilience science are complemented by national and NGO partnerships. It proposes to tackle the general issues of AAS (encompassing for this purpose Asian mega-deltas, Asia-Pacific islands and African inland waters), a potentially huge agenda, by focussing on 5 representative countries initially and potentially expanding the range to 10 countries. The ISPC welcomes this attempt to focus research on systems approaches to specific countries and hubs. However, the ISPC believes that all parties should be aware of the inherent difficulties (i.e. in achieving outcomes in realistic time scales) for a program conducted entirely in such difficult environments.

The CGIAR wrestles with the need to produce international public goods from international research investments and, as for CRP 1.1 (Drylands), the challenge of producing IPGs while having a direct impact on the poor is recognised. The CRP 1.3 proposal correctly notes that the reduction of poverty in particular countries is place-based and context-specific. The primary *raison d’être* for research in development studies at the sub-national level is local development (and this argument may be true for all Theme 1 CRPs). How will we draw upon work with sub-national groups to achieve results and impacts that can be generalised to broader sets of beneficiaries? For CRP 1.3 there are likely to be lessons of general relevance across AAS countries and the program as it develops should continue to work out where true IPGs will be developed and how they can be scaled out and broadcast through scientific publications and the knowledge sharing and learning objective.

The ISPC notes that initial country choices are based on the lead Center’s comparative advantage and are well documented. However, it is not clear how WorldFish’s (and other partner’s) prior results and experience truly contribute to this new way of working. Indeed, although research questions are posed, the current proposal does not elaborate on any new productivity enhancing research activities to be undertaken and how they will be summed for expected poverty impacts. The approach to resilience is to be commended and the approach proposed is novel so that the time course for achieving successful (more resilient system) outcomes is not known. The extent of buy-in from other CGIAR partners is sketched rather than being evident. Thus, the ISPC cannot at this stage determine whether the proponents can deliver the well argued strategic intent, or in what time frame. There is a need therefore to treat the framework presented as a hypothesis for testing rather than the final formulation of this CRP. The burden of the implementation risk rests with the proponents, who will need to be alert to the risks of non-delivery in a program structure which poses leadership and management challenges in keeping the several broad partner coalitions working and productive. We believe that a further critical step for this proposal will be to translate the intent into a more concrete research approach including many of the assessments and the development of impact indicators promised generically so far.

**Recommendation:** The ISPC recommends that the CRP 1.3 approach be approved to allow the program’s proponents to engage with partners so as to develop a revised proposal and work plan with greater specificity. The revision of the proposal should take into account the advice contained in this commentary, and should identify the research activities with research milestones and partner roles (which, for instance, will lead to a revision of Chapter 6 of the current proposal). The proposal should identify the meaningful involvement of other CGIAR Centers and programs in AAS approaches (beyond WorldFish and IWMI); describe and quantify where possible the outcomes and impacts for beneficiaries (in terms of livelihoods, human welfare, institutional change or resource or system resilience) expected from the hub and country-level approaches. On the basis of more concrete outputs the proposal should provide a strategy for how these will be utilised to maximise the IPG benefits across AAS countries and regions subsequently. The ISPC encourages a strategic approach to program evolution and would prefer to see the initial program implemented coherently in the first five target countries and starting to show evidence of added value of the integrated approach before the paced addition of further countries (and then only with adequate budget). The ISPC would be happy to provide further feedback on the initial operational plan for the first three years of the program.

## **1. Strategic coherence and clarity of Program objectives**

The proposal’s strategy is coherent, logical, problem-led, and harnesses the comparative advantages of CGIAR and of the partner organisations. The problem identification is sound and there is an explicit link to the SRF’s system-level outcomes related to poverty and food security. The philosophy underlying the program marks this CRP out as innovative territory for the CGIAR. The program takes as its starting point the people living in poverty, particularly women, in specific geographic areas defined as being dependent on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (AAS). Thus, the production systems themselves are not the unit of focus, and in fact there is rather little discussion of the production systems in the whole document. AAS are defined as “agricultural systems in which the annual production dynamics of freshwater and/or saline or brackish coastal systems contribute significantly to total household income”. This covers aquaculture, cereals, fruit trees, livestock-keeping and capture fisheries. These systems do not need to be physically integrated (in terms of their resource flows) – a focus of the integrated aquaculture-agriculture research agenda of ICLARM/WorldFish in the past. Rather, the CRP is concerned primarily with *livelihood* systems, where there may be diverse strategies employed across the membership of a household. In this regard, it is first and foremost a social science-led proposal - although it is very good to see the integration of the social and environmental sciences being explored in the context of resilience. A revised proposal should, however, provide more details of specific (rather than generic) natural science research questions which might be addressed.

The choice of six research themes is sensible and appropriate to a fully-integrated problem-oriented research for development program for the livelihood systems in these geographic locations. Of the six themes, Theme 1 (Sustainable increases in system productivity) focuses as much on understanding low productivity households’ constraints and implementing strategies for promoting adoption of existing technologies, as on the generation of new technologies. Theme 2 (Equitable access to markets) is focused around participatory market chain analysis (PMCA), although it is somewhat unclear how far the CRP intends to support the implementation of activities that would strengthen the position of women in these market chains, rather than merely diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses. Theme 3 (Social-ecological resilience and adaptive capacity) has similarities with the Alternatives to Slash and Burn (ASB) partnership’s interest in trade-offs among productivity, ecological and social goals. In stating that the program will combine “environmental and social systems research with action for social change” the CRP makes its overt development commitments to the communities quite clear.

The program is focused geographically, with Zambia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Philippines and the Solomon Islands as the initial countries included. Within each country, there are a varying number of research “hubs”. These sites are reasonably homogeneous within countries but very diverse across countries, so the partners and approaches will have to be adjusted to each country. The rationale for

the choice of these countries and the specific sites within them is well justified in the proposal, although there appears to be a much more extensively developed hub-system for Bangladesh than other countries and enjoying significantly the largest proportion of the funds in 2011-13. However, the notion of basing all the research in vulnerable hub sites is possibly excessively risky. An alternative would have been to identify the "hubs" along a continuum of conditions, and so sampling a range of typologies. Instead the proponents have chosen hubs in places exclusively of high vulnerability which may reflect the priorities of the NGO partners or of donors, which in turn reflects an ethical commitment to supporting the poorest people. While this strategy is admirable from a humanitarian perspective, it makes program implementation more challenging and potentially puts the generation of IPGs at risk. Conditions may suddenly worsen and the NGO partners may need to move from a focus on long-term research and development to a short-term humanitarian response.

This proposal is firmly focussed on development. The proponents coin the term "research in development" which combines the acquisition of knowledge as being a necessarily socially-embedded process, with an action research agenda which demands an ethical commitment to improving the lives of the people who are participating in the research. In other words, knowledge is generated *by* people living in poverty AAS-dependent areas *for their own use* in improving *their* lives. The role of the researcher (and the associated partner NGO agencies) is to facilitate this process.

The proposal consistently points to the need for component research to be demand-driven and argues that the 'integrated livelihoods [of the women and men who live in AAS systems] have been marginalized by our agricultural research investments, and the opportunities they offer for reducing poverty have been missed'. It concludes: 'we will pursue integrated research that recognizes the full complexity of these systems and so harness their multiple contributions to reducing poverty'. Nonetheless, it was a surprise to not see any reference to system-specific research on aquatic resources and aquaculture in agricultural systems, for example. Much research has been conducted in this area, and the proposal is silent about why this is not being built on. This omission suggests that this research has had limited adoption or impact – an impression reinforced by the statement that "previous efforts have not been successful to deliver full benefits of AAS". It is critical to understand why, where and how these have failed. It would also be useful for the proposal to include, for example, an overview of the current state of knowledge regarding the adoption of World Fish Center's main technologies in the three focus regions.

A low emphasis on strategic or more fundamental research in particular is noticeable. Few other organizations match the CGIAR's capacity to carry out substantial, strategic research. It is in this area that the CGIAR has a competitive advantage over the more nimble players usually involved in action research. There is no doubt that the WorldFish Center and its CGIAR partners conduct significant strategic research towards the proposal's objectives and will continue to do so, but the proposal itself does not emphasize this, rather the convening power of the Lead Center.

The ISPC / Science Council has consistently advocated that the CGIAR should focus on its core niche of generating international public goods (IPGs). However, the ISPC also recognizes that such a mode of operation may lead to the problem of being too supply-led, where the interests of the scientists take precedence over the needs and interests of the intended beneficiaries of the research. Some expected IPGs are detailed in the program (i.e. knowledge, insight on process) but it would be useful to have more details (including some examples) and a clear strategy for ensuring generalizable insights emerge from the program. Indeed by focussing on key countries, and in some cases on smaller populations at hubs within them, it will be important for the proponents to show how the place-based research will ultimately benefit the greater number of AAS-dependent poor people identified in the proposal.

Based on existing knowledge and scoping studies, key target problems and opportunities to address these problems are indicated for the different countries / hubs. Throughout the proposal it is made clear that the specific research to be undertaken will only be finalized during the participatory inception and priority-setting process that the program will pursue. This process is described in detail

as national inception workshops, participatory diagnoses and ex-ante impact assessments, and program design. This process is appropriate, given the heterogeneity across sites.

## **2. Delivery focus and plausibility of impact**

The proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of the links between problems, outputs and outcomes and the necessity of using an adaptive research approach if SLO goals and objectives are to be met. The impact pathway is based on up-to date research understandings plus pre-proposal participatory scoping in-country and hub research on the multiple dimensions of poverty, the structural underpinnings of poverty (i.e. beyond incomes), and gender inequity. The impression is that a lot of preparation has gone into this proposal.

The proposal does not assume a single pathway from research to impact and that the needs for future ex-post impact assessment in the course of the research will likely be quite diverse. What is common across the program is a desire to understand the “pathways out of poverty and formal and informal institutional structures and processes ... [that] support pro-poor, gender-equitable and sustainable development.” A key determinant of the International Public Good (IPG) nature of this action research will be the extent to which data collected on these diverse pathways can be analysed across contexts to learn more generalizable lessons about what is necessary and sufficient to help people move out of poverty. In general, more serious thinking is needed on what the IPGs from this kind of program might be – currently the discussion on this issue is only on a conceptual level.

The theories of change that shape expectations regarding impacts from the program could be contested but at least are made fully explicit. In terms of achieving ‘sustainable’ and ‘transformative change’ (terms that are integral to gender analysis but also used in the analysis of poverty and social protection), the real challenge will be to provide the financial and other resources (especially time) to ‘moving socio-cultural norms, beliefs and attitudes’ as a necessary condition for impact. The proposal is very clear that it fits into a chain of research and development partners whose participation is essential for meeting the SLO outcomes. Although not directly mentioned in this proposal, all partners involved in this CRP are being asked to change their operational modes. This is acknowledged in the proposal where it is stated that “organisational behaviour changes will be monitored”. Institutional inertia is a potential risk to the program.

Limited attempts have been made in the proposal to specify, let alone quantify the benefits that might result from the program. Even the country-specific sections only identify the target populations but are vague about the nature or magnitude of benefits that may materialize as a result of the program. It is appreciated that specific activities and interventions resulting from participatory action research cannot be fully specified at this stage. However, WorldFish and its partners have been active in most hub regions for a long time and should be able to identify some promising interventions and likely benefits. There is limited consideration of possible negative impacts and of tradeoffs that may constrain options. This area should be given greater emphasis, particularly in the highly managed and integrated systems of the Asian mega-deltas where strong interactions exist between fisheries and agricultural activities, for example, and the tradeoffs are quite well known.

General sections 4 (Approach) and 5 (Impact pathways) are strong, and a focus on learning and adaptive management in the program is appropriate. These require that program management take the steps necessary to prepare for future impact assessment. This will require financial and human resources, as well as a good deal of imagination, as the work will be methodologically challenging, given the heterogeneity in interventions across sites. An adequate set of impact indicators for this project will require a blend of scientific, institutional and end-user developed measures which are not yet satisfactorily described in what tends to be weighted to social science descriptions.

### **3. Quality of science**

It is difficult for the ISPC to make judgments about scientific quality at this stage. The proposal has not elaborated on what gaps it intends to fill in the current state of global knowledge in this area, and hence could not propose specific methods and approaches. Because there are no boundaries to the work, the scope of the research questions and suggested outputs and outcomes for Theme 1 [P28] remain generic and unrealistic for a USD 4-6.5million budget and without embedding the entire CGIAR portfolio in this quest. However, country level research questions focus much more specifically on aquatic system issues but, implicit in the proposal, there appears to be a high reliance on scientific capacities and expertise of other CRPs and partners in many components of thematic research plans. The framework of the proposal itself represents perhaps the main overarching, ‘big’ idea but neither the framework nor its operationalization are treated as hypotheses and subjected explicitly to research. The ISPC believes that more could be learned by taking an explicit research approach to both aspects than from participatory evaluations alone. Section 6 on the research framework and themes is not very detailed with few references to academic literature – something that would have helped the reader get more a flavour of the kind of academic “schools” the research will be grounded in. Better specificity of comparative advantage and what is new is needed.

A very serious critique of resilience assessments to date is that they require an almost impossible amount of research, are very difficult to do at large spatial scales, and are not by nature, participatory. It remains a relevant scientific approach but has provided few notable impacts to-date. Thus, application of novel participatory resilience research on this large scale has a real potential to inform the way that resilience research is both conducted and applied in this type of social-ecological context. The proposal is attempting exactly the sort of innovative research that CRPs are supposed to address. Certainly what is proposed is something that no one apart from the CGIAR is likely to take on.

Attempts have been made to develop research questions of high relevance to the identified constraints and key development challenges under each theme for specific regions (Annex 4). However, the proposal stops short of going the extra step of formulating specific research activities for producing the expected outputs. The next step will be to design specific research activity plans, based on comprehensive consultation and participatory diagnoses of priorities with partners and stakeholders in the different regions during the inception phase. Nonetheless, it should still be possible to identify strategic research priorities at the level of focal systems (e.g. the rice-based farming/fishing/aquaculture systems of the Asian mega-deltas) that could be addressed by a program of this magnitude and lead to significant advances in system understanding and developmental impact. Whether this will be true also for some of the very challenging questions in the policy arena remains to be answered. For example, “What macro-level policies constrain national and local-level efforts to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods?” How the changes in a specific policy factor can be isolated from all the other factors may be beyond the scope of the project.

Because of the lack of research detail (and description of likely benefits) the proposal is really inviting support for a process, and as such it is difficult to assess whether the three year and six year budgets are a legitimate or adequate request. However, the Worldfish Center has demonstrated effective leadership in having already co-ordinated a complex research proposal that is multidisciplinary; involves a range of partners; has a well developed social agenda; a strategy and approach for supporting ongoing change; and meeting the expressed needs and interests of local populations, while also envisioning the contributions it can make to wider and global knowledge. A natural resource program that can contribute to the understanding of what ‘gender-equitable options to improve the lives of smallholder households’ might look like, would be invaluable.

#### **4. Quality of research and development partners and partnership management**

This program has a clear and well developed partnership development strategy. The disaggregation of different types of partners and the specification of criteria for identifying the key implementing partners gives confidence that there is sufficient experience of managing partnerships for true collaborations to be achieved. Due recognition is also given to the skills which the different partners bring, which is evidence of a good understanding of the CGIAR's niche.

The claim that it “will bring together the combined knowledge of AAS users, governments and civil society organizations, integrating it with the capacities of the CGIAR and its partners” is matched by the claim that it will build “partnerships among fishers, farmers, traders, women's groups, private firms, local governments and other agents of change”. The success, suitability and ultimate utility for meeting development and research goals of these downstream partnerships, will depend on the quality of the core relationships between CGIAR Centers and NGOs.

Core partners are to be chosen based on their research and development skills, as well as their knowledge of the locations within which the research will be carried out. The choice of global partners (e.g. on the research side: Stockholm Resilience Centre, UEA, JCU; on the development side: CRS, CARE) is welcomed. There is already significant evidence of partner engagement in planning. This extends from the identification of hubs and 'local' partners to the carrying out of the initial scoping exercises. The synergy between the core partners provides a good balance for this particular program. A number of partners have a long history of engagement in these locations and have demonstrated excellent social development skills. The partnerships are formal and built on a clear understanding of benefits and gains for all those involved. A significant part of the budget (21%) will be expended through partners. As a result, the proposal is clear about the minimum requirements for effective partnership, whether they involve financial obligations or other forms of engagement, with an emphasis on transparency, continuous learning and accountability for results.

The ISPC welcomes the frankness of the descriptions that detail how the CRP will interact with CGIAR Centers and programs (tables 7 and 8). The alignments and potential alignments are succinctly presented along with a straightforward assessment of a Center or other CRP's likely participation. At this stage, the CRP proponents seem to have little buy-in from other CGIAR Centers. Depending on the site they will need much more – for example, from IRRI in Bangladesh; from IFPRI across the board on empowerment, collective action, market chains, and on policy and institutions. CRPs such as this one could involve most of the CGIAR as providers of technologies and expertise to help the partner organisations. At the moment, this CRP appears to be largely about WorldFish and IWMI, given the relatively minor role to be played by Bioversity and CIAT. The CRP expects to be able to draw on emerging lessons from CRPs covering other agricultural systems that can be adapted for AAS. Cross CRP learning on macro-level policy reforms, innovations in institutions and governance for agricultural development is mentioned. Theme 2 (Equitable access to markets) is focused around participatory market chain analysis. There is a considerable body of work proposed under a similar research theme in CRP 2 that is not mentioned in the proposal.

In the section of the CRP that addresses risk management (Section 16, pg. 79), five of the first six risks concern collaboration and partnership of various kinds—new levels and types of collaboration that will be required of CGIAR Centers and projects, the culture of collaboration that will be required within the CRP itself, the challenge of building effective coalitions, the role of partners in scaling out the program's results. Partners are not a *pro forma* part of the CRP, but integral to its conception and its potential success. As a result, CRP1.3 has a nuanced and carefully considered strategy with respect to partnership as well as a number of management mechanisms that are intended to assure that partnerships are not just “good” but are also productive. This provides a sense that the management implications have been thought through, as have the issues associated with scaling up. The management structure includes formal mechanisms for partner engagement. Although the CRP characterizes some partners on the basis of the level of resources they can bring to the project or formal performance agreements, this is not the overriding factor that determines engagement in the

program's management, evaluation or priority setting. The role and value of NGOs, like CARE and Catholic Relief Services, as partners are described in specific rather than generic terms. This reinforces the CRP's underlying commitment both to an integrated approach to the research and to using that approach to push well beyond the usual CGIAR partners to acknowledge complementary and, in some cases, superior capacity to realize results. Based on this, a reference to the ability to leverage \$300 million in additional investments by building effective partnerships does not appear exaggerated.

## **5. Appropriateness and efficiency of Program management**

The proposal has a number of implementation risks. Most of the research sites are likely to be difficult for carrying out research (e.g. working in extremely remote areas of Zambia; working with minority indigenous groups in Bangladesh). While it is laudable that these sites were developed explicitly as a response to priorities set by regional bodies, this is a risky strategy.

The timescale for implementation, especially given these risks, is too ambitious. Attempting to scale up the program to ten countries within three years of operation, with several hubs in each country, represents a significant portfolio to be managed and quality-controlled. Given the complexity of the research that will likely take place, with many different types of interventions, and the difficulty of working in most of the selected sites, it would be better to use the first three years for establishing "proof of concept" in the three different types of systems identified (Mega deltas; Coral triangle; African inland).

CRP 1.3 includes a highly detailed, multi-level structure for program management. These include mechanisms for program administration, independent program review, ongoing learning, and periodic participation by partners and others in evaluation and priority setting. The WorldFish Center serves as the lead Center for CRP 1.3 and the legally accountable entity for overall management and performance. There are also CRP-level oversight and management structures as well as a management and advisory structure that operates at the focal country level. Thus the proposal reflects a thorough effort to arrive at a structure that has integrity and coherence for the CRP, and that provides it with both optimal independence and functionality. It incorporates good checks and balances, the structure (and the tone) balances the relative roles of the Lead Center and the other participating Centers and partners without signalling undue concern about the Lead Center's potential control of the program.

The M&E plan is integrated into an overall monitoring plan that gives priority to constant learning from monitoring being fed back into further research. As noted in the proposal, 'research in development is very much a circular process with many feedback loops'. In terms of monitoring impact, it is the *participating users who will develop and agree on change processes and indicators of change*. This is a sensible approach, relative to the alternative of stating lots of quantitative targets up front, but this should be moderated to include a scientific perspective on assessing sustainability and institutional change.

The formation of country program committees and country program teams also gives confidence that mechanisms for the exchange of knowledge between different parts of the program will happen and thus benefit the likelihood and extent of impact. There is some slight confusion however about whether a Program Management Committee exists or is called a Program Leadership team?

Nevertheless, it appears a complicated structure to put in place, particularly if it is expected to emerge from the intentional realignment and reallocation of existing staff and financial resources within each of the participating Centers. While it is possible to imagine that the Country Program Teams could be identified from existing research staff, the CRP envisions a transformed approach to research and a significant shift in culture, both of which will rely heavily on skilled and committed management at the country level, as well as being open to input from the relationships with development agencies.

The skill set may not already be in place within participating Centers and may require some budgetary leeway to recruit what's needed.

The projected level of CRP program support, which projects 3-5 people plus the Program Leader, does appear realistic, given the program's overall complexity and the kinds of management and coordination it demands. With that said, the CRP does not project a realistic level of funding for salaries and administrative costs – for example, approximately \$360,000 a year for salaries, one of them a senior leadership position, by year 3. The potential under-resourcing of the program's management is further vulnerable in the event of a revenue shortfall. The proposal's contingency planning in the event of a 20% shortfall in projected support includes recruiting existing Center staff to lead and manage the program rather than seeking new leadership and management staff. The proposal makes a strong case for the shift in culture and practice demanded by the CRP and the inherent difficulty the system will face in navigating much more collaborative and integrative approaches to research. This argues for placing a premium on program management that brings new skills and frames of reference to the CRP. It is counterproductive not to budget to achieve that goal and even more self-defeating to see the cost of leadership as a logical place to economize.

The proposed Program Leadership Team serves as a high level and high functioning management committee for the CRP. Where the Program Oversight Panel (POP) embodies expertise and independence, the PLT is designed to bring those with authority for funding and implementing the program together in one place. It is highly representative body comprising a representative of each of the participating Centers and an equal number from partners along with the country program managers. It is designed to work and the only thing likely to make that difficult is if the number of focal countries and the number of key partners grows - this could become a very crowded table and unwieldy for the useful purposes for which it is designed.

CRP1.3 provides for a well balanced executive function for the overall management and administration of the program. The CRP Leader is appointed by the lead Center and reports to the Center's DG. Annual performance evaluation is a shared function that involves both the Center DG and the chair of the Program Oversight Panel (who is neither a staff nor board member of any of the participating Centers. In addition to the expected management and administrative responsibilities, the CRP Leader is also expected to serve as the public representative of the CRP and has responsibility for resource mobilization.

CRP 1.3 proposes that knowledge sharing and learning are core to the program and they are given status as a research theme, rather than a management and coordination function. The budget attached to the theme is also significant. There is merit in considering Knowledge Sharing and Learning to be a function that benefits from a clear location and well defined staff function for its CRP-wide management and monitoring within the Program Support Unit.

## **6. Clear accountability and financial soundness, and efficiency of governance**

CRP 1.3 includes a strong platform for sound governance and oversight in the Program Oversight Panel. While the reporting relationships to the Consortium are clearly reserved to the lead Center, the POP is designed to be a knowledgeable, independent body that can assure the quality and performance of the program as well as maintain the confidence of partners, donors and stakeholders. There is a functional overlap between the lead Center board and the POP that enhances communication and accountability to the lead Center's board, but the POP is given the primary responsibility to undertake formal planning, monitoring and evaluation of the program, including commissioning external reviews.

The balance of budget between the themes looks appropriate. In terms of Center participation there is a very strong element of the budget going to WorldFish with apparently more for the partners than

other CGIAR Centers, but there is evidence in the text to suggest that this is the endpoint of considerable discussion and not that Centers have been excluded.

In the financial presentations, it was not possible to find:

- A consolidated three-year projection of revenue and expenses. Program costs for 2014-16 were presented in this fashion (Table 15, p.86), but no similar table was provided for 2011-2013.
- A financial presentation that consolidates project revenue with expenses. The revenue side is alluded to in the proposal's narrative but does not appear as part of the budget information.
- A clearer presentation of the extent to which each of the participating Centers participates financially in the CRP. There is a pie chart that gives percentages of expenditures by Centers, partners, etc. (Figure 13, p.86). This appears to be a "flow to" presentation. It does not capture the extent to which funds in the initial years of the program will "flow from" restricted and other funds currently allocated to the participating Centers.

The last of these omissions reflects a persistent challenge to viewing this and other CRP budgets clearly. While the presentation itemizes the costs of country and hub coordination as well as program governance and management as direct costs of the CRP, it implies an absolute and onerous increase in these costs as a result of the proposal and places the burden of paying these costs wholly on the new funding mechanism.

Finally, a comment that is important to all CRPs and the efficiency of the CGIAR's programmatic approach: while CRPs are intended to grow the resource "pie" for research agendas, initially current resources from each of the Centers and various projects will be directed through to the CRP. As participation in various CRPs unfolds, it is clear that while more and more of the research side of a Center, including money, staff and partnerships, will flow into CRPs, none of the core costs of management and administration will. Perhaps at each Center these costs begin to contract and vanish as a Center places more and more of its portfolio within CRPs, but this is outside the view of the individual proposals themselves. At the proposal level, all that is evident is that transaction costs increase, and that while Center research funds flow into a CRP (and flow back out), management costs must be recovered elsewhere. There is no indication that the participating Centers, by moving funding and staff into the new program, are achieving any economies and efficiencies in the management area that would result in those gains flowing to the CRP, even initially.