

FTA II Collated comments to the IEA evaluation of CGIAR CapDev Activities

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The following constitute the final collated comments (CIFOR and ICRAF) to the findings and recommendations presented in *Evaluation of Capacity Development (hereinafter, CapDev) Activities of CGIAR Volume 1*, and are based on i. continuous engagement by CIFOR/ICRAF dedicated CapDev staff with the evaluation team throughout the period March 2016 – August 2017 and ii. earlier sets of comments to the:

- Draft Inception Report, IEA evaluation of CapDev Activities of CGIAR, 27 April 2016
- CGIAR CapDev indicators for the CRP 2 portfolio developed by the former COP on CapDev, 18 June 2016;
- IEA evaluation webinar, 9-10 February 2017
- Draft IEA evaluation of CapDev Activities of CGIAR, 18 July 2017

A. General comments

1. The evaluation report represents a good and well-balanced synthesis of key CapDev challenges and opportunities that CGIAR centres and Consortium Research Programmes (CRPs) are facing based on an extensive use of earlier evaluation documents, reports and databases, a survey of individual CapDev participants, and more than 100 interviews. The report provides a clear framework and set of recommendations to assist in improving the relevance, comparative advantages, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) II CapDev activities. CIFOR in collaboration with ICRAF has already started this process albeit under severe funding constraints.
2. The report is based on a sound analysis of a very broad and complex portfolio of CGIAR CapDev activities in often dynamic contexts which have targeted individuals, organizations and institutions outside CGIAR. This builds on the conceptual framework developed during the Inception Phase. The report highlights some useful documented CapDev experiences for follow-up although there is a linguistic (anglophone) bias in the analysis of data from the survey of individuals who benefited from academic education support.
3. The evaluation report also recognizes that CapDev remains a broad and elusive umbrella concept, and in the CGIAR context, is distinguished by the absence of a clear typology of CapDev activities. This has already been noted in earlier evaluations (see, for example, OECD-DAC, 2000. *Donor Support for Institutional Capacity Development in Environment: Lessons Learned*. Aid Evaluation Effectiveness # 3, OECD, Paris. 225pp). FTA II concurs with the need for a CapDev typology, and for a more systematic approach to Capacity Needs Assessment particularly to help clarify informal CapDev activities through research collaboration which continue to be under-reported.
4. The earlier decision in 2013 to not support, and build on the initial activities of the CapDev CoP did not augur well (then) for CapDev activities, particularly in a context – as the evaluation report notes - of a distinct lack of strategic direction from the CGIAR system since the closure

of ISNAR in 2004. The funding situation is now even more critical. Additional reflection and ideas on innovative ways to finance CapDev, particularly to fund expert positions and CapDev support units and the CapDev CoP would have improved the relevance and usefulness of the report. Additional thought on possible changes to CGIAR scientist performance metrics to provide incentives to promote greater attention (to detail) on CapDev activities is also needed.

5. The Achilles heel of the report is the lack of analysis of the comparative costs (cost-effectiveness) of different types of CapDev to facilitate future prioritization of CapDev activities. This pattern has been observed with several IEA evaluation reports. The report shifts the responsibility for this to Centres and CRPs as part of Recommendation # 2.
6. Furthermore, the CapDev evaluation does not explicitly address three aspects of long(er)-term CapDev activities, viz.,
 - the actual or potential role of curriculum development/curricula reforms as an integral part of long(er)-term CapDev activities;
 - the actual or potential role of CapDev of media organisations and journalists to enhance the communication of research results; and
 - the role that CGIAR centres play in terms of CapDev of their own staff, although this aspect was formally outside the scope of the CGIAR CapDev evaluation.

B. Specific comments to the recommendations

The CapDev evaluation report recommendations formulated are broad, and will need clear and context-specific follow-up actions (and additional corresponding resources) to be implemented by the Centres/CRPs if these are to be meaningful.

Strategic prioritization of Capacity Development activities (Recommendations # 1, 2 and 3)

FTA II agrees that more strategic leadership and direction is needed and that clear strategic guidance may be helpful to strengthen CGIAR's approach to CapDev as a System. However, there are risks of too much simplification if capacity needs are over generalized at the System level. FTA II concurs with the evaluation report conclusion that Centres are in the best position to manage CapDev activities. CIFOR's new Strategy 2016-2025 – *Stepping up to the new climate and development agenda* - includes CapDev as strategic Pillar # 2 and through FTA II will develop a new CapDev Strategy and a new approach to how CapDev activities are recorded and monitored in 2017-18.¹

Recommendation # 1 to develop a comprehensive CapDev agenda is critically linked to the need to develop modalities for significant dedicated support for CapDev at System and operational levels. FTA II supports this assuming the System Management Board engages and commits additional W1/W2 resources. The report highlights the impacts of inadequate core funding which limits the degree of freedom on how Centre funds can be flexibly used to address CapDev issues.

FTA II understands the need for innovative ways to finance CapDev, and collective work on CapDev but such work has to be financed at the System level without diverting already scarce W1/W2 resources away from research. The never-ending frontier of donor predilections (and fickleness) can have profound effects on the types and duration of support to develop individual, organisational and

¹ CIFOR, 2017. *CIFOR Priorities 2017 Advancing Research for Forests and People*. pp. 41-43.

institutional capacities needed for effective and sustainable research in developing countries. In the short and medium-term, Centre-led initiatives to mobilize additional bilateral resources for CapDev activities will be essential pending tangible follow-up at the System level.

FTA II agrees with Recommendation # 2 and has already started the process of developing a clear CapDev Strategy, conducting Capacity Needs Assessments and to ensure that CapDev activities are more consistently incorporated into the theories of change of each flagship. These efforts will continue in 2018 at a level commensurate with W1/W2 funding including Centre and FTA II-led assessments of the relative cost-effectiveness of CapDev activities.

FTA II also supports Recommendation # 3 where, historically, CIFOR has de-emphasized training of local end-users. The likely focus of FTA II's new CD strategy will remain on individual CapDev to develop capacities for research, developing more formalized approaches to organisational and institutional CapDev through new research partnerships and using multi-stakeholder platforms to promote policy and legal reforms, and CapDev for scaling of results.

FTA II will also explore other modalities to take full advantage of the experience and facilities of CIFOR and ICRAF HQs in Bogor and Nairobi respectively through, for example, potential replication of a short-term 'Landscape Governance' course originally developed in S.E. Asia (in collaboration with Wageningen University/Centre for Development Innovation), to East and Southern African and Latin American contexts.

Approaches to capacity development (Recommendations # 4 and 5)

FTA II agrees with the evaluation report Recommendation # 4 to build on successful partnership approaches. However, this should not be at the expense of forging new partnerships. FTA II flagship programmes increasingly depend on collaborative multi-stakeholder networks (e.g. FP 3) and multi-donor programmes (e.g. FP 5) with long(-er) term perspectives and multiple approaches to CapDev for different groups of actors.

FTA II also recognizes the need for more explicit definitions of the intended purpose(s), type(s) and modality(-ies) of CapDev for specific stakeholder groups to facilitate improved reporting and monitoring of CapDev activities. This includes the need for more careful thought and planning of CapDev exit strategies once key donor funding ends. This theme will be addressed through a case study during the CIFOR Annual Meeting CapDev session on 18 October 2017.

FTA II endorses Recommendation # 5 and agrees that there is stronger documented evidence of the impacts of individual CapDev interventions. FTA II also recognizes that this might be due to either the relative simplicity of capturing the impacts when dealing with individuals, or due to the short-term nature of, often, project-based approaches to CapDev activities.

In contrast, the complex nature of interventions, the need for long-term and systematic engagements, and the increasingly projectized CGIAR have limited CGIAR's meaningful contributions, and assessment of the outcomes/impacts of both organizational and institutional CapDev. For example, both ICRAF's and CIFOR's engagements with multi-stakeholder platforms, such as the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD mechanisms as well as with several national and sub-national innovation platforms (eg Cocoa Board of CDI, Rwanda Agricultural Board, RSPO etc), and developing capacities of private sector partners (eg with Unilever, MARS and APRIL, APP and Bakrie in Indonesia) have all influenced thinking around sustainability but, to date, impacts and outcomes have not been systematically assessed or reported. FTA II is exploring novel ways to improve the reporting of such partnerships including the use of tracer and outcome studies (see below).

Strengthening institutional set-up and support for Capacity Development (Recommendation # 6)

FTA II agrees that the lack of adequate dedicated CapDev staff and a complex matrix structure are challenges to effective CapDev implementation by Centres and CRPs. FTA II also agrees that some form of System-level collaboration amongst CapDev staff would facilitate cross-Centre and cross-CRP collaboration and learning, but this might only be possible by mobilizing additional resources at the system level exclusively for CD without diverting the already scarce W1/W2 funds away from the current ambitious CGIAR research and development agenda.

FTA II acknowledges the useful preparatory work conducted by the CGIAR CoP to develop a first CapDev Framework based on good practices, and recommends additional dedicated support for the CoP to facilitate further refinement of the CapDev Framework, and continued knowledge exchange between Centres and CRPs.

Monitoring and Reporting on Capacity Development (Recommendation # 7)

Although FTA II broadly agrees with Recommendation # 7, the report does not give sufficient recognition of the differences in the degree to which Centres have documented and archived data and information. ICRAF, for example, has devised systems to capture, archive and retrieve such data on key CapDev themes such as ICRAF's Student Management Information System. FTA II acknowledges, however, that there is a need for harmonization of practices, systems and standards across centres to use the data generated by Centres for strategic analysis at the system level. This will benefit from a System level strategic definition of priority CapDev themes.

FTA II strongly agrees with the evaluation that there is little value in the CRP Phase-I CapDev related reporting in CGIAR for any of the purposes associated with results-based management: learning, improved decision-making, and accountability to donors, development partners and beneficiaries. Nevertheless, FTA II is unclear given the dwindling and unsure level of W1/W2 funds, how much data collection on a larger number of indicators might be feasible to collect and report on.

FTA II supports the idea of using longer-term tracer and outcome studies to improve CapDev-related reporting. CIFOR's preliminary ideas for some long-term tracer studies include:

- EC-financed support to training Masters students and PhD candidates and empowering academic staff at the University of Kisangani, 2007-2017, DRC including nation-wide adoption of the 'Science Week' model (introduced by CIFOR in 2014) in all faculties across all universities in DRC;
- CIFOR-ICRAF/Wageningen University/Centre for Development Innovation short-term 'Landscape Governance' course conducted in Indonesia over the past 7 years; and
- CIFOR's catalytic role in organising Forest Days and subsequently Global Landscape Forum events during the UNFCCC COP negotiations, 2007-2016.