

Management Response to the 2016 Evaluation of the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF)

Background

IDRC commissioned the Universalia Management Group (Universalia) to undertake an independent summative evaluation of CIFSRF Phase 1 (2009-2015) and a formative evaluation of the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF) Phase 2 (2013-2018). The work commenced in March 2016 and concluded in October 2016 with the approval of the Final Report by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Global Affairs Canada.

The evaluation found that CIFSRF Phase 1 was effective in meeting 12 of the 13 expected outcomes (falling short in mobilizing complementary funding for the testing and validation of innovations), including:

- strengthening of Canadian-developing country partnerships
- harnessing Canadian expertise to develop solutions with and for developing countries
- generating new knowledge, as reflected in the 144 innovations developed and over 167 articles in peer-reviewed articles published
- contributing to individuals' ability to transfer technologies to intended end-users
- creating awareness around gender equality and increasing access to resources and nutritional benefits for women and their families.

It found that, while program management and the governance structure of CIFSRF were efficient and suitable, the project was under-resourced both at Global Affairs and at IDRC, and that greater diversity of participants and expertise might be represented at both the technical advisory and strategic orientation committee levels.

Phase 2 projects involving 16 Canadian and 26 developing country organizations are being implemented in 17 developing countries. Over 40 innovations were developed during Phase 2 that have the potential to address the food security needs of the poor. These illustrated a diversity of food security themes (availability, accessibility, and use) as well as scaling up approaches. It noted that Phase 2 is on track in informing public policies and programming related to food security and nutrition in developing countries; CIFSRF has been less effective in informing Canada's international assistance food security policies and programming. The report made 11 recommendations for improved program results and 5 recommendations for future programming.

While the evaluation informs CIFSRF decision-making for the remainder of the duration of CIFSRF Phase 2 and any future joint innovative evidence-based programming in the sector, the final users of this evaluation are intended to be developing country stakeholders (including government ministries and agencies, civil society partners and the national private sector as well as the targeted clients of this research-for-development).

IDRC and Global Affairs Canada have consistent responses to the evaluation, noting that IDRC is expanding on how CIFSRF is already addressing many of the recommendation areas identified by the Evaluation. While there may be opportunities for uptake of CIFSRF innovations at Global Affairs, up-take by other potential international development agencies, national governments and the private sector needs still to be pursued.

The finding and results have been reviewed by IDRC, and relevant geographic programs, thematic and impact analysis specialists in Global Affairs Canada. IDRC and Global Affairs Canada are in general agreement with the findings and recommendations.

IDRC and Global Affairs Canada's Management Response to the Phase 2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: *CIFSRF should advise and support project teams to strategically and effectively build relationships or partnerships with appropriate Canadian and developing country actors, intent on a more effective scale up of innovations. Priority Level: 1*

Response: Fully agree with this recommendation.

Both IDRC and Global Affairs have generated greater awareness of CIFSRF innovations and have been encouraging CIFSRF project teams to build strategic and effective relationships or partnerships with appropriate Canadian and developing country stakeholders to scale up innovations. Illustrative examples include:

- Global Affairs Canada has facilitated strategic relationships between the University of Saskatchewan and several of Global Affairs' partner organizations who program in the area of agro-ecological and conservation agriculture in Ethiopia, including Canadian Feed the Children, USC Canada, Canadian Foodgrains Bank and CPAR.
- Global Affairs Canada consulted with the Inter-american Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) with the aim to explore the scope for addressing the regulatory issues associated with hexanal use for soft fruit preservation in the Americas. The University of Guelph has had on-going discussions with IICA to explore how best to proceed with the registration of hexanal in Latin America and the Caribbean and hosted a webinar conference with IICA members.
- IDRC and Global Affairs Canada are organizing an event with the University of Guelph on "Agrifood Trade Between Canada and Nepal: Gateway to South Asia", held at the University of Toronto. The event is open to business, academic, trade and government officials with the purpose of informing participants of the opportunities that exist for both Canadian and Nepalese companies and to catalyze increased bilateral trade in the agrifood sector. The event is building on momentum from the Nepal Sustainable Agricultural Kits project with the University of Guelph.
- IDRC, working closely with funding recipients, is pursuing development innovation scale up opportunities in Colombia based on the establishment of strategic partnerships with Global Affairs' bilateral partners in the context of achieving peace and security in war-torn regions of that country.
- Funding recipients are identifying such opportunities, recognizing that scale up and mainstreaming is likely to depend on developing innovative partnerships and securing resources available outside the public sector.

Recommendation 2: *CIFSRF should bolster its efforts and methodologies of 'researching scaling up'. Priority Level: 2*

Response: Agree to the importance of this research.

It was agreed by the Governance Committee early in Phase 2 that some funds should be used to research scale up. While majority of CIFSRF Phase 2 funds were already committed at the time of the evaluation, research questions on scaling up were included in Call 6 projects and projects from phase 1, who received a second phase of funding from CIFSRF in 2014. There is also opportunity to learn from the broader scaling up experiences of

Phase 2. The program is focusing its learning on scaling-up processes, and specific research questions on scaling-up at a programmatic level are being finalized to link specific project learnings to broader research agenda.

Resources permitting, consideration might be given in the remaining year of CIFSRR Phase 2 to use unspent funds to bring together CIFSRR teams and other experts in this area to discuss experiences and opportunities.

Recommendation 3: *CIFSRR should strategically address the possible integration of CIFSRR results into GAC programming. Priority Level:2*

Response: Agree to some extent, subject to the availability of resources.

Global Affairs Canada and IDRC have identified some promising innovations that are application-ready for development programming. Some of these could be considered in the Global Affairs programming pipeline, subject to the availability of resources, inasmuch as they fall into one or more of the Government of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy action areas. Partnerships for Development Innovation (KFM) in Global Affairs Canada has undertaken significant communication and dissemination of CIFSRR results across Global Affairs including those bi-lateral programs where CIFSRR has active projects.

However, GAC alone will not have sufficient resources to scale-up all of the application-ready innovations emerging from CIFSRR. Greater effort needs to be made to inform both civil society organizations and the private sector (in Canada and abroad) of the potential of these results and innovations to positively impact on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable populations through improved nutrition and livelihoods, increased climate resilience, better access to the market-economy and higher value-chain benefits, etc. An effective engagement strategy targeting the identification of alternate sources of funding needs to be developed and implemented by IDRC and Global Affairs Canada that results in greater uptake and mainstreaming of CIFSRR innovations. Funding recipients are also working on strategies for uptake as part of their exit strategies.

Recommendation 4: *CIFSRR should clarify its strategy, priorities and approaches with respect to each of the three categories of private sector actors: small-scale actors in developing countries (DCs); national level in DCs; and multinationals. Priority Level: 2*

Response: Agree, but this is best addressed at the design stage of the initiative.

CIFSRR Phase 2 was not intended to target multinational private sector actors. Calls for proposals invited participation from private sector and/or business-oriented not-for-profit organizations as important partners in developing and bringing to scale practical solutions to pressing day-to-day problems faced by farmers, food processors, wholesalers and other actors along the food chain. Research teams were required to have an initial scaling up strategy to pursue initial innovations that showed promise, whether this was by the public or private sector, or civil society partners. Potential scale up partners from the private sector should be involved early in the process.

Insofar as the type of private sector involvement or partnership is concerned, this will depend on the nature of the project and the type of opportunities innovations present for commercial application.

Recommendation 5: *CIFSRR should provide support and spaces for cross-project collaboration in documenting and sharing experiences. Priority Level: 1*

Response: Fully agree.

IDRC and Global Affairs not only encourage this but see cross-project learning and the contribution to building innovation knowledge as important elements of the CIFSRR experience (benefiting not only funding recipients,

IDRC, Global Affairs but the much broader development community). Some cross-project learning happened throughout the life of the Fund, enabling project partners to make timely adjustments to projects. With assistance of IDRC, some partners (eg. University of Saskatchewan), did implement workshops inviting other projects to participate in scaling up for impact learning. Almost all projects also benefited from IDRC-organized cross-project learning workshops on the topics of scaling-up strategies, gender capacity building, and communications training.

Future initiatives should ensure that adequate resources are available to provide support and spaces for cross-project collaboration in documenting and sharing experiences throughout the life of the initiative. Consideration should also be given to bringing in other international stakeholders working on similar issues.

IDRC and Global Affairs Canada support the undertaking of an end of project event inviting key informants as well as IDRC and Global Affairs and selected international stakeholders to discuss, share and document experiences gained under CIFSFR Phase 2.

Recommendation 6: *CIFSFR should implement its communication strategy with a particular focus on target groups that have been reached the least effectively thus far. Priority Level: 2*

Response: Fully agree.

Annex XXXIX recommends “creating awareness with Canadian Universities of CIFSFR experiences, and engaging in high-level policy debates and meetings on agricultural innovations”. Program communication is under the responsibility of IDRC. Together with CIFSFR grantees, IDRC has participated to several high level conferences over the life of the program, organized several learning workshops for CIFSFR grantees and produced several new communication products to increase visibility of the program. IDRC and Global Affairs are committed to continue increasing communication efforts to raise CIFSFR visibility within multiple audiences in Canada (research and academic, general public, civil society, Global Affairs and Government of Canada).

This strategy should also target women and the poorest and most vulnerable populations in both rural and urban settings who could benefit from innovations that contribute to increased agricultural productivity, improved nutrition and enhanced knowledge. To achieve this, information must be presented through diverse means, in formats that are easily available and accessible, and that can be readily assimilated by targeted end-users. Funding recipients are best placed to reach these target groups.

All project have developed communication strategies and have made in-roads to communicating innovations with target groups. For example, research teams are working with ICT’s (particularly with community radio broadcasting in indigenous languages), community theatre, through schools and health centres, and developing pamphlets, manuals and resources for communities in local languages and picture lessons and best practices for illiterate farmers. All knowledge translation products and events are also pre-tested with communities prior to dissemination.

IDRC and Global Affairs Canada can facilitate this by sharing information also with relevant networks in developing countries (particularly those that target women, the poorest and most vulnerable).

Recommendation 7: *CIFSFR should ensure that project benefits accrue primarily to key program beneficiaries, namely the poor, small-scale farmers, and especially women. Priority Level: 1*

Response: Fully agree.

The portfolio approach to funding implemented by CIFSFR has targeted smallholder farmers and women in particular. Efforts have been made to make innovations available, accessible, and affordable to smallholder

farmers and women. Funding recipients are working closely with other stakeholders (outside the research-for-development realm) to make these innovations more accessible to smallholder farmers and women, eg. working through community savings and credit organizations, technology transfer providers, financial and marketing organizations, etc. The extent to which CIFSRF has effectively benefited the poorest and most vulnerable will only be evident when the evidence-base for change from the baseline level are submitted with the final project reports.

The inference in the report seems to be that perhaps some of the biotechnology projects funded (eg. nanotechnology) may not equally benefit the poorest and most vulnerable. To the extent that these groups are organized (or can be organized) in farmers' or womens' organizations, cooperatives or associations, biotechnology projects can benefit the poorest and most vulnerable by improving reach. In the case of the two livestock vaccine projects, researchers are addressing the issue of affordability and reach by producing these vaccines in Africa using vaccine manufacturers based in Africa, consultation with industry groups, and engaging the farmers directly, including by undertaking end-user research.

Recommendation 8: *CIFSRF should ensure that project results are environmentally sustainable, as per all criteria defined in the SEA 2010. Priority Level: 2*

Response: Fully agree.

The Evaluation draws attention to two issues: i) weaknesses in the proposal assessment instrument vis a vis addressing environmental sustainability and ii) the need for more rigorous assessment of sustainable livelihoods in the scale up of initiatives.

There was no intent to reduce the importance of any of the cross-cutting themes in Phase 2 and both the funding recipients and IDRC/Global Affairs have sought to ensure that any apparent negative environmental impacts are mitigated (as was the case with the construction of aquaculture ponds in Cambodia). It would be useful to revise the proposal assessment tool before it is applied in any future initiative to ensure that adequate weight is given to environmental sustainability.

In the future IDRC and Global Affairs could organize workshops early in the implementation of projects (much the same way IDRC organized for gender equality) to ensure greater integration of environmental sustainability in projects. IDRC could also include more focus on environmental sustainability in its project monitoring and grantee reporting. Subject to the availability of funds, Global Affairs Canada's or IDRC's specialists in these areas could carry out more frequent field monitoring missions or hire regional monitors to track progress in this regard.

Adequate and appropriate resources need to be assigned by the implementing agencies in the future to ensure the integration of the three cross-cutting issues in projects and to assess sustainable livelihoods considerations (biosafety, health, etc) in the context of scaling up. In the case of the nanotechnology hexanal project the implementing partner carried out related trials on biosafety and before hexanal is registered for commercial use, rigorous health and biosafety trials will be carried out under national government supervision.

Recommendation 9: *CIFSRF should ensure that greater understanding is acquired across projects on matters of good governance. Priority Level: 2*

Response: Fully agree.

Good governance was a criteria in proposal review before projects received funding. Cross-cutting specialists from Global Affairs in gender, governance and environmental sustainability were involved in proposal review. Fund recipients are required to regularly report on how their projects are providing opportunities to promote

principles of good governance, such as participation and inclusion, transparency and accountability, equity and non-discrimination for the needs and priorities of project beneficiaries.

Despite earlier efforts to integrate governance considerations in CIFS RF, more effort is clearly needed to raise the awareness of funding recipients (Canadian and developing country partners) on how to better integrate governance considerations in these projects.

Although CIFS RF Phase 2 field activities are expected to end in March 2018, it would still be useful to share with all funding recipients tip sheets, specifically adapted for research projects, prepared by Global Affairs for integrating governance considerations in projects, understanding that these will be superseded with new human rights-based approach (HRBA) guidelines.

The undertaking of a cross-project learning workshop(s), inviting Global Affairs and IDRC cross-cutting specialists (gender, governance and environmental sustainability), could be useful. This would allow those projects more advanced in these areas to share with others their lessons learned and best practices in integrating these concepts into their programming.

Recommendation 10: *CIFS RF should ensure that M&E requirements and processes are equally clear and feasible for all project teams. Priority Level: 1*

Response: Fully agree.

Reference is made in Annex XXXVII of the Evaluation to the feedback received from surveyed stakeholders regarding the M&E system developed by IDRC, with 11 of 39 survey respondents indicating that their M&E system was weak. These comments referred primarily to onerous reporting requirements. The report states that lack of resources in both IDRC and GAC, and the frequency and detail of reporting requirements was considered significant burden by some implementing partners, particularly academics. IDRC is working with CIFS RF project funding recipients to reduce the reporting burden.

Reference is also made in Annex XXXVII that results-based management is less aligned with the reality of research-for-development programs to foster innovation and may not fully capture the impact of the program, which is likely to be generated on a longer term. In future initiatives IDRC will consider alternatives or adaptations to the RBM approach to ensure that its M&E system is appropriate to R4D.

Global Affairs and IDRC expect that project and program level M&E systems will provide the results and evidence-base to inform future policy and programming.

Recommendation 11: *CIFS RF should undertake a summative evaluation of Phase 2, including a meta-analysis of projects that have received both Phase 1 and Phase 2 funding, with a particular emphasis on program and project outcomes. Priority Level: 2*

Response: Fully Agree.

IDRC is currently undertaking a contribution analysis to assess the program's early impacts. It will assess CIFS RF's contribution to changes in productivity, incomes, nutrition for the small-scale farmers involved in CIFS RF projects, with a particular focus on gender equity within those results, and if the program also had outcomes and impacts for business and other actors. It will complement program activities to systematize lessons of the program regarding its strategy to scale-up of agriculture and nutrition innovations and to support gender-transformative research.

Global Affairs Canada, working in partnership with IDRC, will commission and manage the undertaking of a Summative Evaluation of CIFSRF Phase 2 in fiscal year 2018-2019.

3.0 Management Response to the Consultant's Strategic Recommendations for Future Programming.

IDRC and Global Affairs Canada thank the Consultant for their insights into the design and implementation of potential future phases of CIFSRF and will take their recommendations under advisement.

Recommendation 12: There is a clear continued need for CIFSRF. Closing the Fund at the end of Phase 2 could harm the reputation of IDRC, Global Affairs Canada, and Canada overall, as a partner in development.

Recommendation 13: Maintain the focus on: i) Overall food security of the poor; ii) Emphasis on minor or traditional crops; iii) Supporting uptake of promising CIFSRF innovations while funding new innovations; iv) funding large projects that foster interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships to address complex problems; v) competitive grants schemes with open calls and two level governance structure; vi) financing diverse Canadian and developing country partnerships; vii) publish results; viii) strategies for developing country policy-makers; ix) focus on small-scale and national private sector in developing countries; and x) maintain IDRC as the implementing agency.

Recommendation 14: Build in: i) longer term funding to the Fund; ii) Expand opportunities for learning, knowledge sharing and networking across projects; iii) Simplify the Fund's administrative procedures and the PMF; iv) strengthen the governance and management structures with representatives of key beneficiaries (in needs assessment, criteria and processes); v) expand Global Affairs strategic engagement in scaling up processes, facilitated by increased human resources and budgetary allocations; vi) increase flexibility of partnership modalities; and vii) support resilience building agro-ecological approaches in the context of climate change.

Recommendation 15: Seek to ensure: i) capacity-building strategies are developed and implemented; ii) partners seek additional human, organizational and financial resources for their work; iii) Global Affairs considers contributing to the further scaling up of CIFSRF results.

Recommendation 16: Seek to ensure: i) support for resilience-building agro-ecological projects and innovations in the context of climate change more intentionally; ii) representatives of key CIFSRF beneficiaries, namely the poor, especially small-scale farmers and women are on the SAC; and iii) a clear framework for technology assessment in project selection, as part of its commitment to the cross-cutting theme of environmental sustainability

Response: Agree in principle subject to alignment with the Feminist International Assistance Policy and availability of resources.

With the launch of the Feminist International Assistance Policy in June 2017, food security is no longer a thematic priority *per se* but is an integral element of a number of the targeted Action Areas: Empowerment of women and girls; Human Dignity (through nutrition), Inclusive growth (through sustainable agriculture and value-chain development); and Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action. Innovative programming continues to be a priority in the Feminist International Assistance Policy as is reflected in *'Global Affairs Canada will build innovation into its assistance programs by adopting new business models, policy practices, technologies and ways of delivering products and services. Canada will build innovation into its international assistance, encouraging greater experimentation and scaling-up of new solutions to development challenges.'* Future funding for the uptake and mainstreaming of these innovations or for the development of an innovative evidence-based program in the agriculture sector, will give priority to FIAP action areas.