



**Independent CRP-Commissioned External
Evaluation of the CGIAR Research Program on
Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH)
Background papers**

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**RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Agriculture for
Nutrition
and Health**

Led by IFPRI

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The background papers were prepared for the External Evaluation of the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) and were authored by the evaluation team members incorporating inputs and comments from A4NH staff. More specifically ‘Governance and management’ was prepared by Julia Compton; ‘Capacity building and human resources management’ mainly by Ben Emmens with inputs from Julia Compton and Mysbah Balagamwala; ‘Gender and equity’ by Julia Compton with inputs from a self-evaluation by Hazel Malapit and the A4NH gender team; ‘Research management and quality of science’ mainly by Diana McLean with some inputs from Julia Compton and Mysbah Balagamwala, and ‘Lessons from the seed grants process’ mainly by Mysbah Balagamwala with inputs from Julia Compton.

Background paper 1 - Governance and management¹

Basic information

1. A4NH is led by IFPRI, and includes 11 other CGIAR Centers and numerous other research and development partners (IFPRI, 2011). CRPs are not legal entities and therefore legal and financial responsibility for A4NH ultimately rests with the lead CGIAR Center and its Board of Trustees (IFPRI-BOT).
2. IFPRI is legally accountable to the Consortium Board for the use by A4NH of W1/W2 funds, through a Program Implementation Agreement (PIA). The PIA sets out roles and responsibilities for the submission, approval, funding and reporting of the CRP. In its turn, IFPRI has contractual Program Participant Agreements (PPAs) with each collaborating A4NH Center. The PPAs describe the workplan, budget and expected deliverables to be supported from the CGIAR Fund. These are planned with and monitored by A4NH, but any action to enforce the contract (if required) is the responsibility of IFPRI.
3. Other funders support research activities that are mapped to A4NH via direct contracts either with IFPRI or with one of the other 11 collaborating Centers. The A4NH Director does not have any authority over these contracts or the use of the funds, and depends on Center management to report against them as part of the monitoring system.
4. A4NH has the following management and governance structures, with responsibilities as detailed in Table 1:

Management

- A [Program Management Unit \(PMU\)](#) located in IFPRI that undertakes the day to day management and administration of A4NH.
- A [Planning and Management Committee \(PMC\)](#) with seven CGIAR members and two external members with the responsibility to “oversee the planning, management, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of A4NH”. Major decisions on the program are often taken in joint PMC-Center Focal Point meetings.
- Nine [Center Focal Points, \(CFPs\)](#) “selected by their respective Center management and accountable to both the CGIAR Center management and the CGIAR Research Program Director on activities related to this CGIAR Research Program”².

Governance and advisory

- The [IFPRI Board of Trustees \(IFPRI BOT\)](#) has ultimate legal and fiduciary responsibility for A4NH along with other IFPRI-led programs
- An [Independent Advisory Committee \(IAC\)](#) that “provides advice to the IFPRI Board of Trustees and to the A4NH Planning and Management Committee on research program performance, research priorities, and management and partnership issues”.

¹ This background paper was prepared by Julia Compton

² One of the focal points (for ILRI) is also a Flagship leader.

Table 1: A4NH management and governance structures – composition and main responsibilities

Composition	Meetings	Main responsibilities (shortened from ToR)
Planning and Management Committee (management)		
A4NH Director, Four Flagship leaders, two other Center Focal Points and two members external to the CGIAR	Face to face twice a year, and additional virtual meetings every 6-8 weeks. The Director of A4NH is responsible for convening meetings. Minutes are not public, but are available to all A4NH –related staff via the internal website.	Coordinating strategic foresight and planning of the program Managing evaluation activities Providing leadership on planning and implementation of the program gender, partnerships, capacity strengthening, communications strategies, and impact pathways Facilitating collaboration and partnerships across A4NH partners Providing insight into new funding initiatives
Program Management Unit PMU (management and administration)		
A4NH Director, Program Manager, Senior Research Fellow (M&E), Research Analyst, Communications Specialist, Contact and Grants Administrator, Gender Research Coordinator, and Program Assistant	Work together daily, supplemented by a weekly team meeting and annual retreat.	“Support the implementation of the Program”
A4NH Flagship leaders		
Four leaders: Program Director of HarvestPlus, two from IFPRI, one from ILRI (see text)	On PMC, and as needed	Leadership: foresight, set priorities across Flagship and develop Flagship impact pathway Coordination: work with Centers to develop Flagship workplan Evaluation and assessment: timely reporting on Flagship, participate in evaluation and impact assessment activities. Partnerships: including supporting CFPs to develop the Flagship Communication: engage with Centers and CFPs, communicate strategic direction Fundraising: Help leveraging resources for the Flagship and for A4NH Meetings: active member of the PMC, and others, helping determine the allocation of resources to Flagships and activities Accountability: Accountable to the A4NH Director on contracted work
A4NH Center Focal Points CFPs (management)		
Nine Center representatives, selected by their center DG. Most are ‘full-time’ researchers with an interest in ANH. AVRDC (an important partner not in the CGIAR) also sends a Focal Point to most CFP meetings. IFPRI does not have a CFP.	Face-to-face twice a year, once in Washington DC, once in a CGIAR host country. Minutes as for PMC above	Coordinate the Center’s work plan and budgets for A4NH, engaging appropriate Center staff Facilitate Center contracts with IFPRI/A4NH Coordinate and prepare technical and financial reports from the Center to A4NH Responsible for communication both within the Center and to/from A4NH for information relevant to the management of the CRP and “information relevant to the agriculture, nutrition, and health agenda”

Composition	Meetings	Main responsibilities (shortened from ToR)
Independent Advisory Committee (IAC)		
8 recognized experts, plus DG IFPRI and DG IITA (ex-officio members). Areas of expertise represented include: Understanding key clients/partners of the program (donors, governments, implementers and the private sector) ; A4NH key research areas; Representation from targeted geographical regions – (2 current members are from sub-Saharan Africa and 2 from South Asia); plus representation from the HarvestPlus PAC (currently 3 overlaps)	Face to face once a year (in Washington DC) for 1-1.5 days Minutes are public (on A4NH website). Also meets virtually as needed.	Review and provide advice on the plan of work and budget and on the overall Program portfolio and resource allocation. Review program impact pathways, milestones, outputs and outcomes Review planning and implementation for gender, partnerships, capacity development and communications. Provide advice on program management. Review research priorities and quality of science. Advise on needs for external review or support Help promote the program to partners and donors. Provide a concise annual report to the A4NH Program Director and IFPRI Director General. The PMC, through IFPRI and the Program Director, will be required to formally respond to the Independent Advisory Committee recommendations.

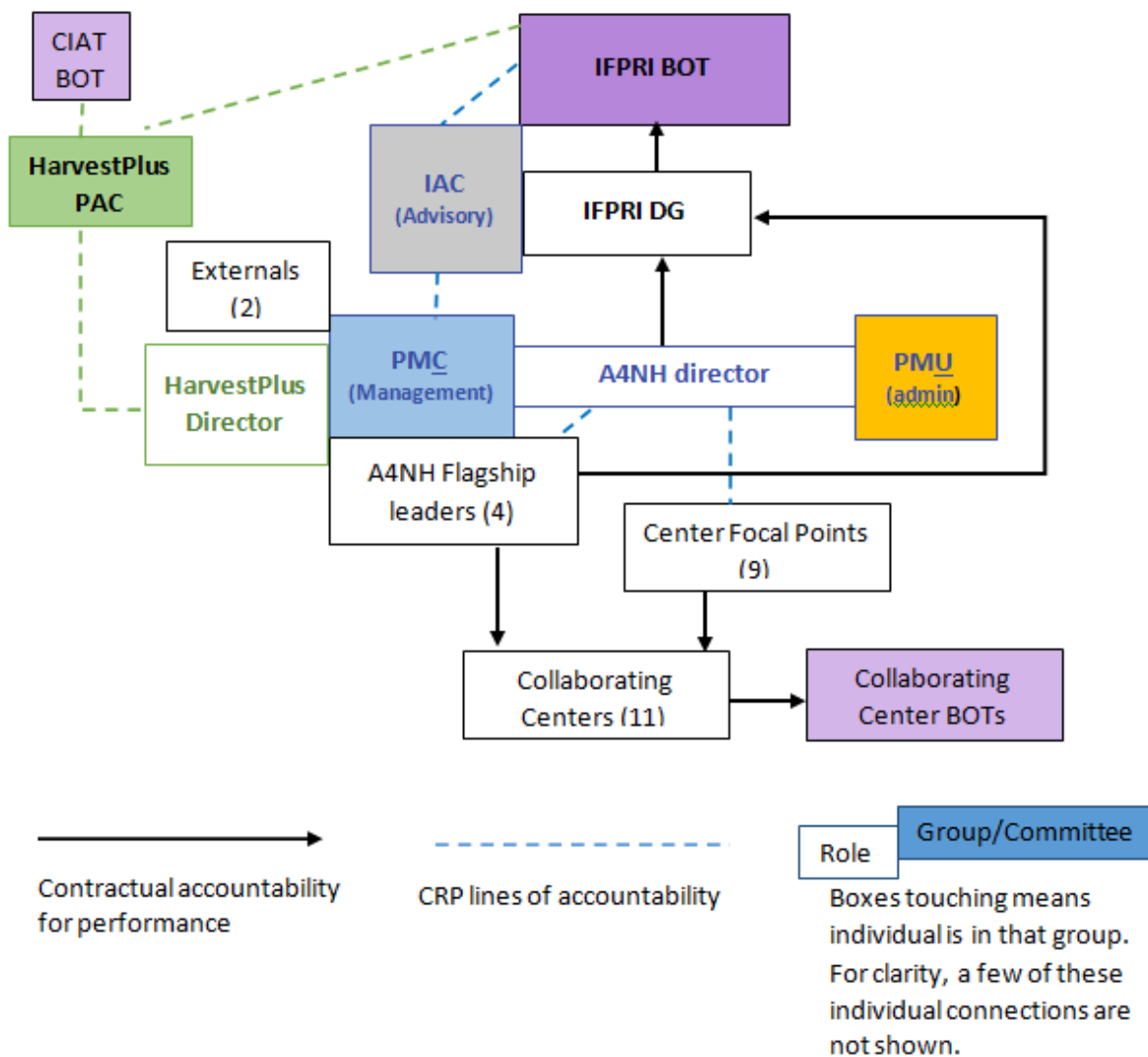
Sources: A4NH webpages ([Who We Are](#)) accessed 1 July 2015 and unpublished A4NH Terms of Reference, some of which were provided to us still in draft form from 2012, updated to incorporate corrections by PMU on first draft

Management structures, systems and challenges

Structures

- The structures set up for management and advisory input on A4NH are shown in Figure 1, linked by the **blue** dotted lines. (If this looks complicated, it is.)
- The A4NH Director is at the center of the diagram, and leads both the Planning and Management Committee (PMC) and the PMU. The four flagship directors and 9 Center focal points report to him as regards the CRP.

Figure 1: Responsibility without power: current management and governance structures of A4NH



Source: Evaluation team

7. However, the **black** 'contractual accountability' arrows on the diagram tell a different story. Flagship leaders' primary accountability is to their Centers, not to A4NH³. Center Focal Points also report to their own Centers. At the moment, the A4NH Director has no formal input into the performance management of any of these individuals, although he has been asked informally by the IFPRI DG for views on performance of IFPRI staff working with the CRP⁴.
8. The incentives to prioritize Center/HarvestPlus interests over those of the CRP are strong, and for most leaders in A4NH their role in their Centers long predates the invention of the CRPs. It is therefore a

³ One Flagship leader is a Divisional Director in IFPRI, reporting to the IFPRI DG and sitting on the IFPRI Management Group, and her Flagship co-leader is a senior researcher in her division, reporting to her. (It is instructive to note that in IFPRI's organogram, the A4NH and PIM programs are shown alongside and at the same level as the 6 IFPRI Divisions and two Regional Offices.) A second Flagship leader is a 'middle manager' (IFPRI terminology) in another IFPRI Division, most of which is mapped to another CRP (PIM), and reports to that Divisional Director. The third Flagship leader is one of the 10 Research Program Directors in ILRI and reports to the ILRI DG. The final Flagship leader is the Director of a large and well-established program (HarvestPlus) which has its own management and governance structures, and reports jointly to the IFPRI and CIAT DGs.

⁴ PMU staff also work for IFPRI, although they do directly report to the A4NH director as regards performance assessment.

tribute to the vision and dedication of the A4NH leader, Flagship leaders and CFPs that they have invested so much in supporting the A4NH CRP.

9. Despite individual efforts, there are some major management challenges inherent in the current matrix structure. These include:

Challenges for Flagship management:

- Flagship leaders have no responsibility or power, and little incentive, to manage, monitor or mobilize resources for research activities which are mapped to their Flagship but carried out in other Centers. This is not just a theoretical problem: leaving aside HarvestPlus, the other three Flagship leaders were unable to describe to the evaluation team the activities being undertaken in “their” Flagships outside their own Centers⁵. If unresolved, this setup poses an existential threat to the entire Flagship concept. The problem exists to some extent for all CRPs, but it is probably worse in A4NH due to the large number of Centers involved and the lack of substantial W1/W2 funding that could pose an incentive for Centers to work together.
- Principal Investigators (PIs) for research projects mapped to A4NH report to their own Centers, through the Center management system. The Flagship leaders have no formal role in setting objectives or monitoring performance of PIs outside their own Center. A4NH Center Focal Points have (in their CFP role, that is) no management responsibility for other PIs in their Centers.
- There are also potential conflicts of interest embedded in the structure, in that most Flagship leaders are leading research groups in their own Center that are potentially competing with other Centers working on topics in the same Flagship for a limited pool of funding from the CGIAR fund. This means that Flagship leaders are unable to take on the key management function of review and arbiter of priorities within their Flagship (outside their own Center).
- Finally, the time needed for Flagship (particularly cross-Center) management is a significant disincentive for flagship leaders, given that the individuals are also world-class researchers who need time to provide intellectual leadership for their own research groups and write up research. A4NH has already taken some steps to remedy this with the appointment (or planned appointment) of Research Coordinators⁶ to work with Flagship leaders.

Challenges for Center Focal Points:

- Most Center Focal Points are ‘full-time’ researchers with an interest in ANH. The CFP ToR (Table 1) describes their key roles as being planning, monitoring and reporting A4NH-related activities in their Center, as well as maintaining communications about ANH work. Most have carried out a conscientious job, with timely and high-quality submission of Center workplans, budgets and reports to A4NH⁷.
- In the judgment of the evaluation team, there is a mismatch between the current responsibilities of CFPs and their roles, interests and level of administrative support in their Centers. With one exception, CFPs are not in top management positions, and cannot fully speak for their Center in A4NH decision-making meetings. (Some of them have found ‘workarounds’ for this, for example by working in close association with a senior Center manager.) Several CFPs expressed frustration to the evaluation team at their role being less technically-focused and more administrative than they had originally expected – especially since many CFPs do not have any administrative support to help shoulder the considerable administrative burden of the role.

⁵ The exception was for aflatoxin research, where Flagship 3 has funds for an ‘aflatoxin coordination project’”. The challenges of cross-Center coordination in aflatoxin work are discussed in the A4NH evaluation report

⁶ Research Coordinators are less senior researchers who also have strong management skills and can support Flagship leaders.

⁷ Source of information: individual A4NH Phase 1 Center Performance Summaries 2015 for collaborating Centers

Furthermore, the huge burden of communications being generated by A4NH (and the CGIAR) – both technical and managerial – cannot be left to CFPs, who have many other tasks. There is evidence both from our minisurvey and from interviews with staff in collaborating Centers that poor internal communication (e.g. on how decisions have been taken by A4NH management) is weak, and can sometimes generate tension and distrust.

Program Management Unit (PMU)

10. The **PMU** is the day-to-day management and administrative body of A4NH. It is a small, efficient⁸ and (based on observation by the evaluators) very overstretched unit, with unpaid overtime being routine for all staff members. The average cost of the PMU in 2014 was 1.7% of total A4NH expenditure⁹, slightly less than the relative cost of PIM's PMU (2.1%).
11. The PMU is currently financing and providing staff time for some core technical activities which in the judgment of the evaluation team should not be considered 'administrative overheads', for example mainstreaming gender into A4NH research (Background paper 3 – Gender and equity), and working with researchers to develop detailed technical theories of change.
12. The Evaluation specialist in the PMU is currently responsible for managing CRP-Commissioned External Evaluations¹⁰, the importance of which is discussed in the main report. To ensure evaluation independence, she needs to be backed up by an independent governance body which commissions and oversees the evaluations. The IAC (see below) has made comments on evaluations, but currently has no formal oversight role or any designated individuals for this.
13. Resource mobilization functions are mainly with Centers and also with individual researchers (with an opportunity cost in lost research time). The A4NH Director has been personally active in resource mobilization (RM) for research connected to A4NH, but this needs to be supplemented with more day-to-day RM support (e.g. spotting calls, writing applications). There is a strong argument for strengthening A4NH RM, as this is a cross-sectoral area. We suggest that the PMU take on additional capacity for resource mobilization – to support both the core research areas and also the wider program of 'value added' ANH work across the CGIAR (see main report). It would be important to employ a highly experienced person/people who understands the market in which A4NH / the CGIAR is operating (it could be a virtual position). Any RM in A4NH however needs to work closely with wider efforts on [resource mobilization in the CGIAR](#)
14. Internal communications have been highlighted as a weak point in the program by many A4NH-related staff. Branding and recognition of A4NH is also weak, with many partners and researchers not even aware they are involved in an A4NH program. Good progress has been made, for example with an A4NH website and regular reports, as well as a blog on gender and nutrition research. However this is severely constrained by resources: A4NH PMU currently has only one person working half time in communications, insufficient for a large and complex program which needs to communicate both across the CGIAR and externally.

⁸ The PMU got very positive feedback from a variety of staff in our minisurvey and interviews, for being both efficient and helpful.

⁹ Note that most of the day-to-day administration of the research is carried out in the participating Centers and HarvestPlus, so the PMU costs form an additional overhead.

¹⁰ Including this evaluation: please see Section XXX of the main report which describes the measures taken to ensure independence.

Planning and Management Committee (PMC)

15. The PMC is the main management decision-making body of A4NH. It consists of the A4NH Director, the four Flagship leaders, two Center Focal Points and two externals.
16. The two external members of the PMC are both distinguished leaders in the fields of ANH who can make a significant input into planning and technical discussions. The inputs of the LIDC Director in particular have been very valuable, based on our observations of meetings. Nevertheless, the role of the 'externals' is ambiguous. They both come from institutions that receive small amounts of A4NH funding, but neither institution has an official role in A4NH management (e.g. as Flagship leader or official partner at the level of a Flagship), so institutionally (as opposed to personally) their role on the PMC is not clear¹¹. This is likely to become an issue in Phase 2, if A4NH takes on external partners to co-manage Flagships.
17. Collaborating Centers have a direct interest in the program, but are currently not represented on the PMC. In the judgment of the evaluation team, DGs/DDGs would be a valuable addition to the A4NH broader management committee (there would need to be some representation/rotation, due to the large number of Centers with an interest in A4NH). The Consortium agreements put DGs on the Independent Steering Committee rather than on the PMC, and we are not sure if there is scope to revisit this decision. Some internal CGIAR discussion papers on the 'Level Playing Field' (unpublished 2015) have also raised the possibility of DDGs being part of CRP management committees. We would suggest that A4NH explore this possibility.
18. The PMC meets on a regular basis, either virtually or in person. Strategic decisions on the direction of the program are submitted to a larger group involving the Center Focal Points. However, there are many decisions that need to be taken on a more regular basis. Rather than the current practice of ad hoc, informal communications across the whole group, we suggest that A4NH could adopt a standard management practice: that is to nominate a Program Executive Committee drawn from 3-5 of its members (some rotating) that could be responsible for day to day decisions and for giving more formal regular feedback to a wider group.
19. The PMC normally takes decisions by consensus, although there is provision for voting. In practice, the evaluation team has noted (from both interviews and observation) a lack of challenge about key issues, such as whether and to what extent to support certain areas of research and the (perceived) quality of the research being undertaken in some parts of the program. Individuals express doubts about particular issues in personal conversations or evaluation interviews, but then fail to raise/push these questions in the PMC. The lack of challenge has a number of possible roots:
 - A very fast moving program and context together with high workloads and consequent lack of time for scrutiny and challenge (it is hard for everyone to keep up with developments and read all the documentation thoroughly).
 - The broad nature of the A4NH program: PMC members are skilled in very different areas (ranging from economic analysis to livestock disease epidemiology), and may lack confidence to challenge each other on technical points
 - A "culture of politeness": good personal relationships are highly valued, partly because the world of ANH research (and the CGIAR) is small; and the wish not to upset enthusiastic colleagues can override personal doubts about the value or quality of their research
 - A lack of positive incentives to overcome the above disincentives.

¹¹ In fact the home institutions of some IAC members have at times received more A4NH funding than those of the 'externals' on the PMC

20. For these reasons, the lack of robust challenge in the PMC will be difficult to change, and means that the ‘challenge function’ for A4NH prioritization must be located elsewhere. Normally this is one of the functions of governance and oversight structures¹².

Governance and advisory structures, systems and challenges

IFPRI Board of Trustees (IFPRI-BOT)

21. Legal responsibility for oversight rests with the IFPRI-BOT (see Figure 1). Like other CGIAR Boards of Trustees, the IFPRI-BOT members receive some compensation and also receive training in board functions through the CGIAR Board Induction Program. The IFPRI-BOT is conscious of its legal and financial responsibilities towards A4NH. It is concerned for example with issues of managing legal risks for the program (e.g. Intellectual Property and the possible risk of being sued for health outcomes). However, the BOT does not currently see its role as detailed technical oversight of A4NH – it sees that as the responsibility of the IAC. Until now, discussion of A4NH in IFPRI-BOT meetings has been limited to very brief presentations and discussions¹³ which make it impossible for BOT members to give effective oversight of the CRP. The minutes of the IFPRI-BOT are not made public.

A4NH Independent Advisory Committee (IAC)

22. The IAC is a committee of distinguished professionals who have been selected in their individual capacities¹⁴. It also has the DG (IFPRI and DG (IITA) as ex-officio members. The IAC is positioned somewhat awkwardly. It does not have a formal governance function, and some of its members see it purely as a helpful and somewhat-informal advisory group to “support” A4NH management and “act as a sounding board” for the A4NH Director to take tricky management decisions. However, the current IAC Terms of Reference (see Table 1) extends beyond this, to functions such as ‘reviewing’ the A4NH program of work and budget, progress and quality of science. A4NH is also required to make a formal response to IAC recommendations, and has consistently done so, even when the ‘recommendations’ are more of the nature of general suggestions (Table 2). Notes from the IAC meetings are publicly available on the [A4NH IAC webpage](#).
23. The current processes of the IAC at the moment make it difficult for it to fulfill its ToR effectively, in our judgment. First, IAC members are only paid expenses, which reduces the incentive to spend a lot of time on complex analyses, especially given that most of them have demanding fulltime jobs. Second, there is only a single annual face-to-face one day meeting¹⁵, the agenda of which is set by the A4NH Director and the PMU, although it is informally agreed with the IAC Chair. Most of it is taken up with presentations from A4NH, at the end of which IAC members meet for about an hour alone to prepare their recommendations (before flying back across the world). IAC members told us variously that this process was tiring and confusing, and did not allow them to get to grips with the complex material presented (including the “sea of acronyms”) or to have sufficient debate among themselves. More frequent meetings (which could be virtual) have been suggested, although remuneration would also need to be considered. Third, there is no clear provision for decision-making or reconciling opposing opinions in case of need, although the IAC are supposed to put forward a unified view.

¹² The ISPC also provides an important technical challenge function for CRPs, but only at a high level (of the overall A4NH proposal), and at long intervals. Another suggestion we have made in the main evaluation report is that A4NH could contract some independent external reviewers to review research proposals.

¹³ For example, about half an hour in the most recent two-day IFPRI-BOT meeting was devoted to an update by the A4NH Director and questions

¹⁴ The ToR state that “The Independent Advisory Committee and its Chair will be appointed by the Director General of IFPRI (the Lead Center) taking into account advice from Centers and partners.” The IAC members interviewed were not aware of any formal process of selection and approval.

¹⁵ The meeting was extended to 1.5 days in 2014 on request from members

Table 2: IAC recommendations and suggestions, with A4NH response

IAC recommendation or suggestion, with year of IAC meeting	A4NH response (usually in following IAC meeting)
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear plan to strengthen connection to health, 2012; need for more projects with distinct health outcomes, 2013; add research on urbanization, NCDs and links between irrigation and health, 2014 • Development of strategic partnerships in the public health sector, 2012; 2014 • Build internal research capacity on health, 2012; consider recruiting a medical doctor to the research team, 2013 	<p>Document on progress of health research drafted for IAC and discussed; Public health consultations conducted; Brief on research options on NCDs to be prepared; Collaboration with IWMI to be explored Phase-2 proposal in 2016</p>
<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender strategy should be limited to precise priority questions, 2012, 2013 • More emphasis on gender-health relationship, 2012 • Gender strategy should include the role of men 2012, 2013, 2014 • Development of a Women’s Empowerment in ANH index, 2012 • Mainstream gender rather than present as a separate theme, 2014 • Gender team should address operational issues by working with centers, 2014 	<p>Gender strategy updated and approved; 2015 IAC meeting’s gender presentation to take into account how gender is mainstreamed and the relationship between men and women;</p>
<p>Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving partnership strategy: inter-center and CRP partnerships, 2012, 2014; management of partner list, 2012; across portfolio, 2013 • More thinking on how to incentivize private sector to build partnerships 2012 • Development of a shorter strategic innovational partner strategy document in addition to the more detailed version, 2012 • Clarify on focus areas, 2014 • More collaborations with INGOs and strengthen relationship with WFP, 2014 	<p>Partner-oriented annual report prepared; Shorter partnership strategy document prepared in addition to the longer one; Focus areas, partnerships with centers and CRPs and with INGOs to be included in Phase 2 pre-proposal</p>
<p>Communications (internal and external)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication of research portfolio of each flagship to outsiders 2012; development of an effective external communications, 2013 • Simple summaries of research projects to be regularly provided to IAC, 2013 • Development of a pro-active response to Zambia Vitamin A finding by HarvestPlus, 2013 • Involvement of A4NH in developing strategic communication on the issue of disease epidemics, 2014 • Clarify how the A4NH evaluation will be used and by whom, 2014 • Tailoring of strategic communication to different donors, 2014 • More articulation of capacity building in communication strategy 	<p>Draft communication strategy presented in 2014 meeting; Capacity building to be articulated in the communication strategy in the Phase 2 proposal; Tailoring of strategic communication for different donors is in progress and will be presented in 2015 IAC meeting;</p>
<p>Research program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of new research ideas and building synergies between legacy newer flagships, 2012; provide stronger sense of priorities and explanation of new initiatives, 2013 • Developing cohesive narrative on integrating different programs in Flagship 4, 2013; refinement of Value Chain flagship, 2014 • Consideration of implications of research results on food safety in supermarkets versus informal markets, 2014 • Provide evidence to development of 2015 SDGs, 2014 	<p>Food safety in formal vs informal market to be included in Phase 2 pre-proposal; Value chains work to be refined in Phase 2 pre-proposal;</p>
<p>Theory of change and impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining target audience for theory of change and impact pathways work and communicate in language accessible to non-specialists, 2013 • Measurement of impact in ways others than peer-reviewed publications, 2014 	<p>ToC work measures impact in additional ways than peer-reviewed publications</p>
<p>General management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full time, senior leader should be appointed as Value Chains flagship leader, 2013 • Assess and document the implications of W1/W2 budget cuts, 2014 	<p>New leader appointed for Flagship 1 in 2014; Budget cuts reflected in 2015 POWB</p>

Source: Extracted and summarized by evaluation team from IAC meeting records

24. In contrast to the IAC (and somewhat confusing, from the point of view of A4NH governance), the HarvestPlus Program - now A4NH Flagship 2 - has for over ten years had its own, strong **Program Advisory Committee (PAC)** – see Figure 1. The PAC has delegated authority from the BOT¹⁶, and in practice is run like a Board, with an Executive Committee, Nominating Committee, Science Committee and Audit Committee. It meets face to face once a year and also has three quarterly virtual meetings. The processes established for the IAC, including voting rules and conflict of interest rules, are set out in the HarvestPlus Management and Governance Handbook (HarvestPlus, 2012). Inter alia the PAC approves the work program and budget for HarvestPlus, checks financial probity and risk management, and discusses policy on things like intellectual property and whether genetic modification (GM) should be allowed in the breeding program¹⁷. Minutes of the meetings are not publicly available, as far as we are aware. Independent members for the PAC are formally selected with the help of the Nominations Committee. Both the IFPRI DG and the A4NH Director also sit on the PAC.
25. Linkages between the IFPRI-BOT, IAC and HarvestPlus PAC are aided informally by overlap of individuals belonging to two or more of them¹⁸. However, according to our interviews there does not seem to have been any regular report-back from one committee/Board to another.

Addressing Potential/Perceived Conflict of Interest (COI)

26. While the evaluation team has not come across any evidence of actual instances of conflict of interest in the A4NH management and governance structures, some potential (*or potentially-perceived*) conflicts of interest do exist. For example:
- a. IFPRI is the highest management and governance authority for the CRP, as well as being a significant user of CRP (W1/W2) funds.
 - b. The independent experts on the PMC and many on the IAC come from institutions that are on the current list of contract partners for A4NH. Some of them potentially have access to sensitive commercial information (such as cost structures) and technical information.
 - c. Our interviews and surveys revealed some dissatisfaction and suspicions of possible COI in A4NH governance and management, from both internal and external stakeholders. Some people posed questions about how PMC and IAC members were chosen, while others raised direct suspicions of COI – mainly involving the role of IFPRI in deciding on the use of funds, but also raising questions about whether particular partner organizations were favored for A4NH contracts.
27. The issue of COI has been addressed at length in the PIM evaluation (CGIAR-IEA, 2015). While HarvestPlus has a clear COI policy, neither A4NH nor IFPRI have an appropriate policy in place (the IFPRI policy relates to individual rather than institutional interests). This is important not only to avoid actual COI but also to protect individuals and institutions against the possible perception of COI.

¹⁶ “Both the CIAT and IFPRI Board of Directors [HarvestPlus is a joint program] have delegated their authority and related responsibilities to the Program Advisory Committee (PAC) to undertake their mandate as an independent expert body. The Directors-General of CIAT and IFPRI and one Board member from CIAT and from IFPRI comprise four of the seventeen members of PAC. They are responsible for reporting to their respective Boards on progress made under HarvestPlus”. (HarvestPlus, 2012) p.1

¹⁷ So far, the decision has been no GM.

¹⁸ Three external individuals are on both the IAC and the PAC, and one is also on the IFPRI-BOT.

Discussion

Based on the above evidence:

28. **We recommend** that A4NH should adopt a clear policy on managing (institutional) Conflict of Interest, and operationalize this in its management and governance structures. The policy could be written by IFPRI-BOT as lead Center (as recommended by the PIM evaluation) or by the Consortium.
29. In our view, the two key issues for **management** that need to be addressed before Phase II are:
- a. The lack of power and incentives for Flagship leaders to lead and coordinate the Flagship work across all Centers. This issue is not unique to A4NH. We suggest that A4NH tackle this in the Phase II planning discussions with the Consortium and collaborating Centers. Resources for direct payment of Flagship leaders by A4NH would be useful, but large amounts of unrestricted research resources would also help to overcome the incentives of Centers and individuals to attract their own bilateral research funding and ignore the CRP¹⁹.
 - b. The lack of power and resources for CFPs to fully/easily carry out the administrative functions envisaged in their ToR, together with the opportunity cost in time of using their technical skills more fully in A4NH. We suggest that the CRP-Center management liaison functions should be transferred to Center management structures (for example the DDG-R), who have the authority and resources to handle the decision making and communications, while the current group of CFPs be kept on instead in a technical capacity, becoming *technical* focal points for a new CGIAR ANH Community of Practice (see Section IV and recommendations of main evaluation report).
30. As regards **governance**: given the absence of any other detailed oversight body for A4NH, there needs to be a decision as to whether the IAC will be strengthened to take on this role, or continue in its current relatively-informal mode of operation. This decision will be affected by decisions about governance structures for CRPs taken at the Consortium level, following lessons from an IEA-commissioned review of CRP governance and management (Robinson et al., 2014) as well as several IEA CRP evaluations. The current plan²⁰ is for an Independent Steering Group for each CRP, broadly similar to the IAC in composition (including participation from DGs of collaborating Centers as ex-officio members) but which has stronger reporting lines and internal processes, and delegated responsibility from Center Boards for some tasks such as approving the Plan of Work and Budget. Given this context, we do not feel we should make detailed recommendations on governance for A4NH in this evaluation. Our two suggestions are:
- a. It would be valuable, if feasible, to include institutional representatives of UN agencies and key regional bodies on any governance committee, as well as one or two key donors.
 - b. The governance body should take on a clear responsibility for commissioning and managing CRP-Commissioned External Evaluations, and allocate this responsibility to specific individuals.

Recommendations and suggestions

Recommendation: Strengthen A4NH governance and management to support the Phase 2 agenda

- i) A4NH/CGIAR Conflict of Interest policies should be operationalized in management and governance structures.

¹⁹ Mobilization of significant resources to support a few large cross-center programs – as discussed elsewhere in this report – would also change incentives

²⁰ Source, with further details: CGIAR Consortium Office (May 2015): CRP Second Call Guidance for Pre-Proposals: Section & Background paper on Governance and Management prepared for the A4NH evaluation

ii) [We assume that governance structures for Phase 2 will follow Consortium/Fund Council agreements]. The CRP governance structure should be adequately resourced to carry out its agreed functions. Inter alia it should take on the oversight of A4NH M&E, with this responsibility allocated to nominated individuals.

(S) If feasible, include key donors to A4NH and institutional representatives of UN agencies and key regional bodies on the governance body

iii) Strengthen the A4NH management structures, in alignment with central CRP agreements.

(S) Wherever feasible, fund the positions of Flagship leaders and other key A4NH staff through A4NH W1/W2 funding. Where not feasible, negotiate with the relevant Centers for the A4NH Director to have a formal role in recruiting and performance management for key positions for A4NH.

(S) Create a Program Executive Committee that deals with day to day decisions and reports to a wider Program Management Committee that takes strategic decisions.

(S) Move the Center Focal Point (CFP) planning, reporting and budgeting function to Center management, eg. the DDG-R. Existing CFPs could then become focal points for the ANH Community of Practice.

(S) Consider including DGs/DDG representatives in the wider Program Management Committee, instead of in the Governance structure

iii) Strengthen the Program Management Unit to support the A4NH agenda, in particular resource mobilization and communication

(S) Revisit which functions need to be included in the PMU. Technical work on 'value added' work by A4NH (see main report) should be managed separately and not counted as an administrative overhead,

(S) Take on additional capacity for resource mobilization – to support the core research areas. This needs to work closely with wider efforts on [resource mobilization in the CGIAR](#).

(S) Conduct a review of A4NH communications and branding, both internal and external, with a view to strengthening this area

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Robinson M, Zimm S, King A, et al. (2014) *Final Report: CRP Governance and Management Review*.

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Background paper 2 – Partnerships, capacity building and human resources management²¹

Partners and partnerships

Key findings

A4NH has a wide variety of partnerships and the PMU is active in forging globally-strategic partnerships that are consistent with the principles set out in the partnership strategy itself (A4NH 2013). However, the A4NH partnership strategy is not yet operationalized: there is no A4NH specific policy for engagement with the private sector; the choice of partners in research projects is not controlled by A4NH; partnering sometimes lacks transparency or appears un-strategic, and partnership brokering competencies are unevenly distributed among senior managers. Some partnerships are akin to sub-contracts in which partners may not have an equal voice in the partnership and may feel unable to challenge.

Key findings and supporting evidence

Number and types of A4NH partners

In a similar way to other CGIAR Research Programs at the time, the 2013 A4NH partnership strategy summary (A4NH, 2013) proposed that partners be classified according to four broad categories: Enablers (policy and decision makers), Development Implementers (e.g. government ministries, NGOs), Value Chain Actors and Representatives (e.g. private companies, farmers' organizations) and Research Partners (e.g. NAROs) Some partners play different roles and feature in more than one category. The last list using these categories was prepared in 2012, and indicated that A4NH had approximately 150 external partners at that time: 23 enablers, 52 development implementers, 15 value chain actors and 62 research institutes.

11 Centers collaborate in A4NH (see main report). Based on interviews undertaken with key CG Center stakeholders and the review of documentation, the way in which partners are categorized differs by Center with no consistent use of a classification system. The Consortium Office was not able to provide any comparable data for partnerships across CRPs²².

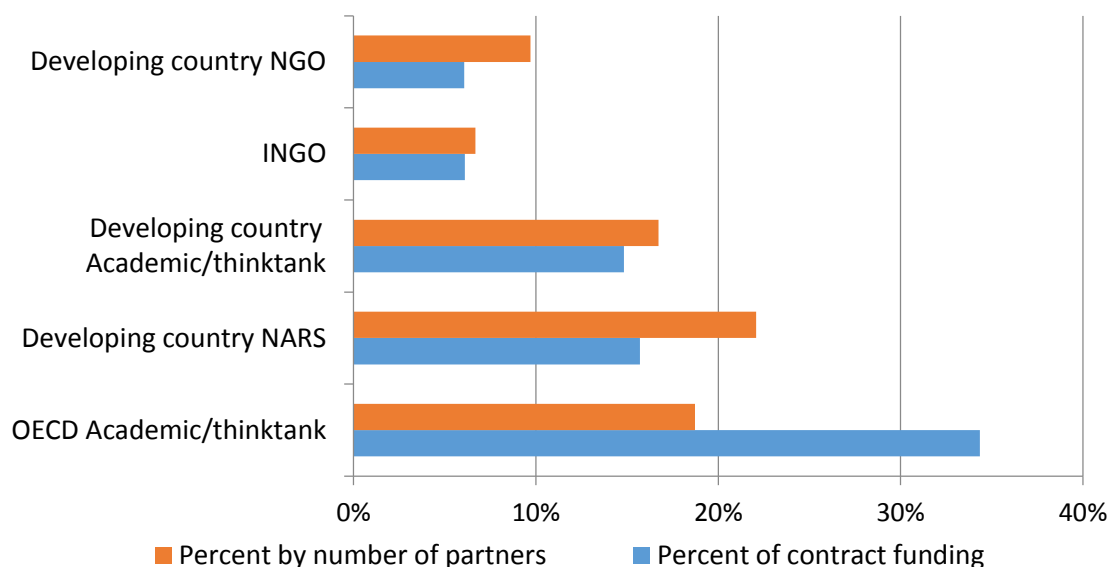
Getting data on current A4NH partnerships was challenging for the evaluation team. Some information is held on partners in the A4NH project database, but software difficulties meant that lengthy manual extraction of this data would be required, not possible in our timeframe, and in any case there are reasons to think that this is not complete and correct (see below). Instead we analyzed the information on A4NH contracts provided to A4NH Program Management Unit by Centers, categorizing them by type of country (OECD/developing). We were not sure how representative this list of partners, was so we cross-checked this information for a small sample (project partner information provided by two Centers: ICRISAT and Bioversity).

²¹ This background paper was prepared by Ben Emmens with additional inputs from Julia Compton

²² The Consortium Office hopes that the inconsistent approach to classifying partnerships will be addressed in the second round of CRPs – as part of the second round call for pre-proposals, and at the point where full proposals are submitted, CRPs will be expected to give details of their partnership strategy and plan for implementation, along with a list of partners classified according to 3 types i.e. partnerships at the discovery, proof of concept, and pilot level (if relevant) and partnerships at the scaling-up phase
<https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/3915/Guidance%20Note%20for%20CRP%20Pre-proposals.pdf?sequence=4> pp 22-23)

The analysis of A4NH contracts is shown in Figure 1. It shows a good spread of partnerships both national and international, although academics / think-tanks from OECD countries are dominant in funding terms (over % of total contract funding). It is important to note however that this data excludes small contracts (below \$0.5 million) which are very important in some Centers but for which no information is available. The sample cross-check showed inconsistencies in the reporting of key partners to A4NH in the work plan for research projects: for example, in the case of ICRISAT, less than a third of partners were common between their work plans and financial reports. Similarly, for Bioversity, about 45 per cent of the partner names were found in both work plans as well as financial reports. About three-fifths of ICRISATs partners were found in their financial reports only. For Bioversity, this was true for only about a quarter of all partners.

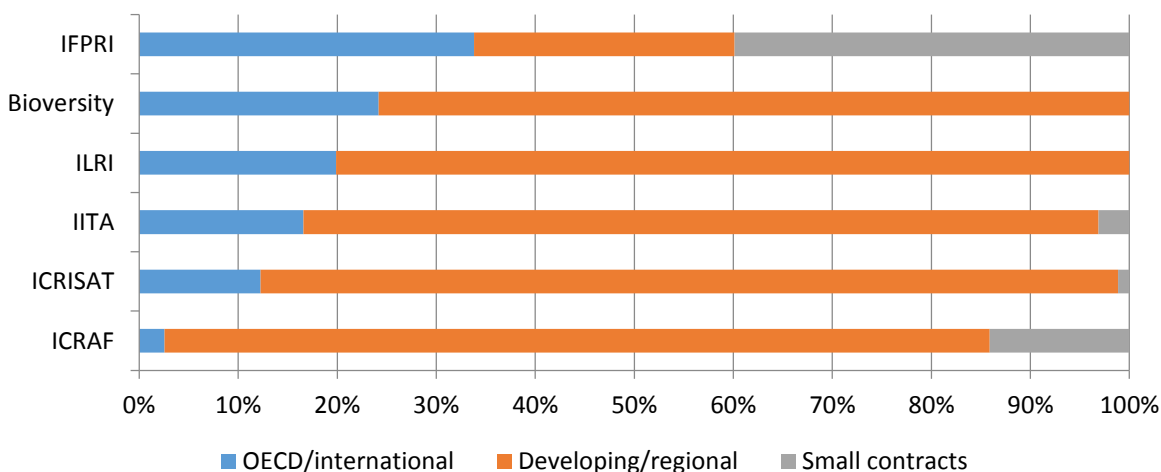
Figure 1: Types of A4NH contractual partners by number and amount of funding



Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of A4NH Annual Financial Reports 2012, 2013 and 2014

Figure 2 shows the distribution of A4NH contract funds by the Centers with most partners: it can be seen that there is no very clear pattern across Centers, although IFPRI spends most on OECD partners and also has the largest spend on small contracts.

Figure 2: Distribution of contract funding by Center and broad partner type



Source: Evaluation team’s analysis of A4NH Annual Financial Reports 2012, 2013 and 2014

Operationalization of the partnership strategy

The draft A4NH partnership strategy (A4NH, Sept 2012) and the A4NH partnership strategy summary (A4NH, 2013) both reference the important elements of a partnership strategy as set out by respected experts in this field such as the Partnering Initiative and the Partnership Brokers Association and reference these and other useful resources. The draft A4NH partnership strategy sets out the principles for partnership and a framework for smart partnership identification (A4NH, 2012: 13, 15) but it lacks the practical guidelines for operationalization which are typically found in a partnership strategy and guidelines document, such as procedures for the selection of partners, capacity assessment of partners and the elements of a partnership agreement (Table 1).

Table 1: Analysis of the A4NH partner strategy in relation to best practice

Best practice strategy should contain:	How the A4NH draft strategy fares:
Principles, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Values • Expectations • Respect • Strategy • Responsibilities • Accountability • Flexibility • Communication 	The draft strategy contains a section on principles
Selection of partners	The framework for Smart Partner Identification addresses this point but stops short of offering guidance on partner selection.
Set up & partnership agreement, including details on how disputes will be addressed, and how risks will be managed	There is reference to partnership agreement but no guidance on establishing an agreement or what an agreement should contain
Management / Operational issues / Review	There is reference to working with the Coordinator of Partnerships in IFPRI but this is not elaborated.
Evaluation of partnership	There is reference to a regular (external) review of partnerships (A4NH, 2012:21) but we could not find evidence of this having taken place in the first part of 2015.

Sources: Best practice references: civicus.org, thepartneringinitiative.org, and partnershipbrokers.org

However, the evaluators were not able to find a finalized version of the strategy, nor evidence of an implementation plan/s, or generic partnership tools such as templates for partner assessment and development, and partnership agreements. Thus, with little evidence of its operationalization since 2013, the draft partnership strategy is more a statement of intent than an operational reality, and there was little evidence that the draft was informing day to day practice with regard to identifying, developing, managing and evaluating partnerships. In stakeholder interviews, familiarity with the A4NH partnership strategy was lacking in most cases, except where the interviewee had some responsibility for partnerships, and it was only referenced by 5% of the documents reviewed as part of this evaluation (see Annex I)

At the time of the evaluation, a newly appointed and dedicated partnerships role in Harvest Plus was concentrating on developing consistent tools, frameworks and processes to guide the identification,

assessment, development and management of partnerships, initially for HarvestPlus, but ultimately it is hoped that such resources will benefit A4NH as a whole. This work is still at an early stage although the evaluators saw a 'Structure and protocols for successful partnering' document which had been developed by Harvest Plus and World Vision²³ (December 2014) and through interviews and reference to partner capacity assessment tools under development it was evident that guidance had been sought from recognized partnership experts such as the Partnering Initiative and the Partnership Brokers Association and resources were being adapted by both Harvest Plus and World Vision. A4NH stakeholders interviewed as part of this evaluation made reference to a clear commitment to partnerships by the CRP Director and those associated with Harvest Plus were clear that in order to achieve 'scale' and deliver the objectives of the CRP, partnerships in all categories would be essential.

Selection of partners

It was claimed that the strategy of A4NH is to choose partners that align with the theory of change, however, we were unable to verify this through our interviews with A4NH staff, and interviewees in the lead and contributing Centers, or through our document review. The Consortium office and the CRP Second Call Guidance for Pre-Proposals (CGIAR Consortium Office, 2014) make it clear that this is a desired state, and the intent is reflected in the A4NH draft partnership strategy (A4NH 2012). However, in this evaluation, a small number of interviewees in both scientific and operational roles suggested that A4NH partners tended to be organizations that are well known to researchers or Principal Investigators, or the contributing Centers. We were unable to verify this.

Equity in partnerships

With few exceptions, the general approach to A4NH partnerships described by interviewees is characterized by time-constraints on the part of A4NH and a need to get things done quickly, meaning that selecting partners is often hasty and not always transparent. In some cases partnerships are actually contracts or sub-contracts, and while this can be an entirely acceptable arrangement, it has the potential to limit partnership potential and mitigate against being able to build trust and develop a partnership of equals. When work is contracted by A4NH to individuals within 'partner' organizations in the form of consultancies, and contracted hastily due to the short time-frames for delivery, then due diligence processes were described by interviewees as being limited to financial vetting, and ensuring a partner is not on the UNSC sanction list²⁴. No examples of due diligence templates or processes were shared with the evaluators and interviewees described sub-grants and financial agreement as being typically handled by lawyers or the center's legal counsel and legally privileged, with the aim of ensuring the partner (or sub-contractor) could fulfil its contractual obligations. Such approaches imply an imbalance of power and a one-sided relationship - i.e. not a partnership of equals - in which those being 'contracted' reported feeling unable to challenge A4NH or CGIAR on practices. For example, in several of our group interviews, researchers from partner organizations made criticisms relating to CGIAR Center research quality or management²⁵, but when asked why they had not challenged this, explained that they felt uncomfortable

²³ The Harvest Plus global partnership with the INGO World Vision was mentioned a number of times in stakeholder interviews and is also highlighted in the 2014 A4NH Annual Report <A4NH, 2014: 10>. This partnership is still in its infancy – the Harvest Plus Director and WorldVision CEO signed an MoU at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2014 – (<http://www.harvestplus.org/content/new-partnership-launched-davos-improve-nutrition-millions>) although a degree of equity in the partnership is demonstrated by the joint-funding of a key post at the outset (Partnership Coordinator) and the fact that WorldVision has set up a biofortification working group, to actively stimulate the exchange of biofortification knowledge to the whole organisation.

²⁴ http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/aq_sanctions_list.shtml

²⁵ Examples of specific criticisms included: poor training of enumerators leading to ethical as well as research quality problems; a decision to work with farmers for only one season, so that it could not be checked whether adoption was

about doing so given that they were subcontractors. However there were also some positive examples – for example the [Mama Sasha](#) partners interviewed all (separately) praised the annual partnership review processes undertaken in that project, which were initiated and managed by CIP (with A4NH funding).

Responsibility for partnerships

A major challenge for A4NH is that the responsibility for managing CRP-related contracts typically resides with the collaborating CG center, i.e. where the legal, financial and contractual responsibilities lie. Although several CG centers (for example ILRI, ICRAF, IITA) have a relatively well-developed approach to partnerships that references good practice partnership principles, and have partnership strategies that have been effectively operationalized to varying degrees by suitably qualified and competent staff with resources at their disposal, approaches to partnership and partnership brokering skills vary substantially across most of the other Centers involved with A4NH, and there is plenty of scope for improvement and alignment.

Competencies for brokering partnerships

Based on the interviews undertaken with partnership specialists as part of this evaluation, and the lack of practical implementation guidelines for the partnership strategy covering the selection, brokering and developing of partnerships, the competencies required to successfully broker and manage the kind of partnerships A4NH requires in order to deliver on its objectives and achieve scale are not widely distributed or incentivized. In other words only a handful of staff in senior partnership-related roles have had professional development with regard to partnership brokering, and performance incentives within CG centers tend to be aligned to producing tangible output in the form of publications, new varieties or strains and not partnerships. Competencies relating to partnership brokering are elaborated above (Box 1).

Box 1: What is a partnership broker?

Key skills of a partnership broker cover the following areas:

- Negotiation
- Mediation
- Facilitation
- Synthesizing information
- Coaching / capacity-building
- Institutional engagement
- Institution-strengthening
- Evaluating / reviewing

Sources: <http://partnershipbrokers.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/brokersleaffinal.pdf>
<http://thepartneringinitiative.org/publications/toolbook-series/the-partnering-toolbook/>

The centers mentioned above (ICRAF, IITA and ILRI) and interviewed as part of this evaluation, together with Harvest Plus, have taken steps to strengthen internal capacity with regard to partnerships, but other than this, there was no evidence of partnership brokering skills or competencies being developed by other A4NH-collaborating Centers. The consortium office is seeking to meet with the Partnering Initiative in the months ahead (July – December 2015) with a view to developing a closer working relationship and developing tools and guidance to support CG Centers and CRPs that depend on partnerships in order to achieve their objectives. The process of updating and operationalizing the A4NH partnership strategy could be one way of clarifying responsibility for partnerships and identifying capacity gaps.

Diversity in partnerships

One consequence attributed in part to the challenging funding environment, interrupted funding flows, and delayed decision making / project approvals is the adoption of a ‘risk averse’ approach when choosing partners which can typically result in fewer, larger partnerships and/or a large number of small low risk partnerships. In our analysis of A4NH contracts (above) we calculated that 41% of funding went to very

sustained; and annual delays in arrival of funds for transport to the field, meaning that the only farmers available to work with were the last ones to sow (which informants felt was often synonymous with poor farm management).

small partners, with the remainder being allocated to fewer larger partnerships. When we investigated further, researchers and other interviewees in non-research roles (finance, partnerships, capacity development) involved with A4NH described how there appears to be a tendency to choose long standing and/or well-known partners, as there is often insufficient time to identify and onboard a new partner, or to choose bigger or long established partners with strong cash flow who are able to work for several months without receiving any funds). There is also often a rush to find partners for grant applications in response to donor calls. While focusing on existing partnerships, personal networks and established organizations that have a good track record is understandable given these pressures, on occasions this approach could be criticized for not being sufficiently transparent, and could leave the CRP open to accusations of nepotism or unfair discrimination. Additionally, and over time, favoring the safe, convenient and quick option may result in new, potentially innovative or high value partnerships being overlooked and may make it harder for A4NH to achieve the scale and impact it (and its donors) desire.

Private sector partnerships

Although engaging with the private sector was recognized by those interviewed and in various documents (draft A4NH partnership strategy, 2014 Annual Report) as being of fundamental strategic importance, we were unable to find evidence of an A4NH specific private sector engagement strategy or policy, and this was verified through interviews with senior stakeholders. Harvest Plus has informal guidelines that frame its engagement with the private sector, and these could provide a useful starting point for A4NH to develop guidelines that are relevant to the whole CRP. In the absence of a consortium wide CGIAR policy or position statement, policies for private sector engagement and partnerships are developed at by CG centers, and in the case of A4NH it is IFPRI's position and policy (IFPRI's 2006 Guiding Principles for Policy Research and Policy Advice²⁶) that guides A4NH. As A4NH moves into work with food systems where private sector organizations are important partners but may also have significant differences of interest as well as specific conflicts of interest, it will be important for A4NH to review existing policies and their application to its work.

Realizing the potential of partnerships

Successful collaboration through partnerships invariably requires a certain amount of funding to enable and facilitate the face to face and ongoing virtual interaction which is vital for building trust, and maintaining a high performing partnership. The evaluators heard through focus groups and individual interviews how relatively small amounts of money were needed to cover transport and per diem costs for face to face meetings, in-country and how such measures had been instrumental in enabling partnerships such as [DDDAC](#) to thrive, and how CG centers such as Bioversity had hosted learning events and/or meetings over several days which enabled rich opportunities for networking and sharing of experience, insights and ideas. At a time when unrestricted funding is under pressure and susceptible to being cut further, creative ways of facilitating (and sharing the cost of) interaction between partners will enable partnerships to survive and be strengthened for the future and these could include strengthening online communities of practice, and simultaneous events in one location to achieve economies of scale in terms of hospitality and enable more people to be in one place at one time, thus increasing the opportunities for networking. This should be encouraged to ensure partners with fewer means at their disposal (particularly financial), are still able to participate in discussion and debate, attend networking events and play an active role in any partnership.

²⁶ <https://www.ifpri.org/private-sector-guidelines>

Suggestions

1. Detailed management guidelines to support the implementation of an updated partnership strategy would help frame various important activities such as identifying appropriate partners, assessing partner capacity, and adjusting due diligence processes so they are in proportion to the risks (opportunities), value (\$), and duration of the partnership. Both ILRI and ICRAF have useful examples^{27 28} that can be of assistance in terms of guidelines, and consultation with key staff in terms of what constitutes reasonable due diligence processes should be undertaken as part of the development of implementation guidelines.
2. Partnership brokering skills are an important competency for senior staff, especially for those working in the CRP, and these skills could be substantially strengthened either by the CRP or by centers themselves. Again, ILRI's partnership management guide (ILRI, 2008) provides a useful and accessible guide in this regard and other useful guidance can be found at partnershipbrokers.org for example.
3. In view of the increasing importance of private sector partnerships for the CGIAR and specifically for A4NH, there would be value in reviewing the A4NH Partnership Strategy to ensure it is up to date and adequately covers private sector partnerships, including risks such as intellectual property. In the absence of Consortium Office private sector engagement strategy guidelines, A4NH may need to look for examples more widely in which case the FAO's 'Strategy for partnerships with the private sector'²⁹ is a useful starting point together with the UN Standing Committee for Nutrition policy³⁰ and discussions with other CRP Directors would be useful to ensure a degree of coherence among CG centers.

²⁷ Partner Strategy and Management System <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/566>

²⁸ <http://worldagroforestry.org/downloads/Publications/PDFS/MN15943.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3444e/i3444e.pdf>

³⁰ http://www.unscn.org/en/mandate/private_sector

Capacity Development

Key findings

A4NH has no capacity development strategy or strategic framework for capacity development of external partners; capacity development tends to be at project level and the focus tends to be on developing individuals rather than strengthening institutions. Monitoring and evaluation of capacity development is ad hoc, and in the time available the evaluators were not able to review the impact or effectiveness of capacity development activities as part of this evaluation.

Key findings and supporting evidence

1. *Capacity development strategy and leadership*

- Among those interviewed as part of this evaluation there was wide recognition of the importance of capacity development to A4NH. However the CRP has no capacity development strategy or strategic framework for capacity development. Responsibility for capacity development is identified as a responsibility of the A4NH PMC in their ToR, but otherwise not specifically assigned to an individual. Unlike in other CRPs for example L&F and PIM, the Head of Capacity Strengthening of the Lead Center (IFPRI) has had minimal involvement in A4NH-related capacity development to date. Flagship leads and senior scientists described capacity development as being largely dealt with at a project level. Often, capacity development relies on individual leadership or interest in order to materialize and be prioritized; at best this could be described as ad hoc.
- Some Centers such as IITA and ICRAF have notably recently restructured internally to give higher profile to Capacity Development (inter alia), and interviewees from these centers described a slow but positive transition towards more consistent planning, implementation and evaluation of capacity development activities. Some other CRPs also have useful strategies that A4NH could learn from, such as CCAFS Capacity Enhancement Strategy.³¹
- At Consortium level, a CGIAR Capacity Development Community of Practice is active and has pushed for stronger commitment to capacity development in the second round of CRPs, in the form of a strategy and designated budget for capacity development. They have developed a CGIAR Capacity Development Framework (CGIAR, 2014:4) with nine elements (Figure 3) which would provide a useful basis for A4NH to frame and develop its capacity development strategy. Some of the capacity development specialists from centers that support A4NH (for example ILRI and ICRAF) are working to elevate the status of capacity development and uptake in line with the Strategic Results Framework and the CRPs they are involved in through the CGIAR Capacity Development Community of Practice.

³¹ <https://ccafs.cgiar.org/publications/capacity-enhancement-strategy#.VZIVCmBclsw>

Figure 3: The nine key elements of the CGIAR capacity building framework



Source: CGIAR CapDev Community of Practice (CGIAR, 2014)

2. A4NH capacity development activities

- Many A4NH research projects undertake capacity development activities. These include training for project staff and partners, in research methods and techniques (ranging from laboratory analyses to running focus groups).
- The projects interviewed also included a surprising amount of “development” style training eg training of farmers and community workers in topics such as how to grow particular crops or how to teach mothers to prepare certain complementary foods.
- The evaluation team was unable to undertake an inventory of capacity development activities in A4NH as the information is not readily available. However in the sample of A4NH projects reviewed by the evaluation team (see Annex I of the evaluation report) 47% mentioned undertaking capacity development in research methods, 58% mentioned capacity development activities related to the use of the products/technologies developed in the project and 37% mentioned capacity development activities related to policy.

3. Capacity development budget for partners?

- As with other CRPs, expenditure for operational costs such as travel and staff tends to be grouped and reported in aggregate and not on a project by project or activity by activity basis, so it is difficult to estimate the amount allocated to capacity building in A4NH. In an interview with the Heads of Capacity Development from ILRI and ICRAF it was suggested that Capacity Development related activities typically account for at 5-12% of a CRP’s budget.
- The CGIAR Capacity Development Community of Practice suggested a reasonable budget figure to guide the development of second round CRP proposals was approximately 10% although this was not verifiable and no figure is mentioned in the Guidance for pre-proposals, simply that the amount should be “credible” (CGIAR 2015: 50).

4. Monitoring and evaluation of capacity development

- In A4NH, we found that capacity development activities were not consistently recorded or evaluated. Interviewees from CG centers described this as being the case across CRPs.
- Generally, some monitoring takes place of individual capacity development activities at project level: for example surveys of people who have taken part in training activities (these are generally developed by individual projects and do not benefit from common formats). However, as far as we

could ascertain, there is no attempt to collect and analyze this information either at Center or A4NH level.

- There is potential for the CGIAR Capacity Development Framework (CGIAR, 2014) to form the basis for monitoring, although the framework itself does not yet contain indicators.

5. Staff development

- Staff training and development is managed by individual centers, usually as part of an HR / People strategy, though some centers such as have assigned staff development to Capacity Development specialists or a capacity development unit such as IITA, rather than to Training / Learning specialists within HR or support services (such as ICRAF).
- Budgets for technical training are typically held by technical units or within project teams and it was not possible to quantify these. However, budgets for general staff development (usually held by HR or Training & Development) vary but are typically 0.5-2% of staff cost as evidenced by the figures provided by the lead center and 3 participating centers as part of this evaluation (Table 2).

Table 2: Examples of staff development budgets in A4NH collaborating Centers

	IFPRI	CIAT	Bioversity	ICRAF
Percentage of staff cost allocated to general staff development	0.5%	1.5% (down from 2% in 2012/13)	Approx. 1%	2% (up from 1% in 2012)

Source: Interviews with HR Directors in (April & May 2015) as part of this evaluation. Note these percentages do not include technical training as these budgets are not held centrally / by HR.

- A small number of interviewees suggested that training / staff development in A4NH supporting centers is typically aimed at junior to middle scientists – this was not possible to verify. There were very few examples of learning and development or training opportunities for senior scientists given to the evaluators ; two which were highlighted and praised by interviewees were the Leadership Award for African Women (ICRAF) and the Leadership Matters program at WorldFish).

6. Institutional versus individual capacity development

- Capacity development specialists within participating centers felt that capacity development continued to be interpreted in a fairly narrow or traditional way by CGIAR centers, with interviewees describing it as often being focused on end of project workshops or training of partners, or providing individual opportunities such as post doc / PhD placements and internships³². While the outcome of a continued reliance on providing opportunities for individuals to develop can be very positive i.e. individuals go back to their institutions and play an important role, it is neither easy nor financially viable to scale this approach in order to achieve the objectives of the CRP which include strengthening the capacity of partners (institutions). Moreover, plenty of research over the last ten years from reputed entities (such as the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Institute of Development Studies, the Overseas Development Institute, SNV, the FAO, the United Nations³³) shows that individual capacity building that ignores institutional realities and public service reform is practically useless.

³² In the case of the latter, interviewees reported that funding for internships and post doc / PhD placements was decreasing despite them continuing to be seen as important, though it was not possible to obtain figures to support this in the time available for the evaluation.

³³ http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/systematicreviews/Capacity_strengthening_2013Posthumus.pdf, the Institute of Development Studies

Suggestions

1. A capacity development strategy or strategic framework for the CRP itself, together with an operational plan and indicative budget to support implementation, would go a long way towards ensuring capacity development was coherent, aligned to the CRP objectives, able to be evaluated and likely to deliver the results anticipated and given the importance of capacity development in the second round of CRPs there is no reason to delay beginning work on the development of a strategic framework for capacity development.
2. The strategy or strategic framework would contain principles, target, methods and approaches and resource allocation. There are useful resources the A4NH leadership team could draw on as it develops its strategy, notably the CGIAR Capacity Development Community of Practice 'Capacity Development Framework' (CGIAR, 2014) and strategies from other CRPs and Centers (see above).

Human Resources Management

Key findings

At the time of the evaluation, an estimated 380 CGIAR staff worked fulltime or part-time with A4NH. With few exceptions, all staff are employed by Centers. Performance management is the responsibility of each participating Center; there is no centralized performance management system and no common HR database/information system. Participating CG centers are adopting the One Common System (OCS) at various speeds, which may provide some help towards harmonizing wider systems.

Key findings and supporting evidence

1. Staffing profile for A4NH

- Based on data provided by the A4NH PMU, an estimated 380 CGIAR staff work fulltime or part-time with A4NH in 2015. With few exceptions (for example people jointly employed with external institutions), all staff are employed by the 11 collaboration CGIAR Centers, as A4NH is not a legal entity.
- The breakdown by staffing type and Center is shown in Table 3 and Table 4). It is important to note that this data does not reflect how much time individuals work on A4NH (many split their time between different CRPs and other Center work) so comparisons between Centers and ratios of staff types would not be reliable.
- Staff members normally report to the CGIAR Center in which they are physically located, but anomalies abound, because not every Center has a MoU with every country in which CGIAR researchers work. For example, many A4NH staff in Zambia report to WorldFish, which has a MoU with the Government of Zambia, even if their work has nothing to do with fish. Matrix reporting lines are further complicated in HarvestPlus, where Country Directors normally report to CIAT while their direct staff report to another Center (in Zambia, WorldFish).

Table 3: Staffing profile of A4NH by staff role, June 2015

Role	Female	Male	Total	F/M
Director/Team Leader	8	19	27	0.42
Principal Investigator/Senior Scientist	12	37	49	0.32
Scientist	14	45	59	0.31
Post-doc/Research Fellows	31	26	57	1.19
Other Research and Admin Support staff	100	68	168	1.47
Total	165	195	360	0.85

Source: Evaluation team calculations on staff list provided by A4NH PMU. This table excludes 20 staff who work with A4NH but where information was not available for categorization.

Table 4: Staffing profile of A4NH by staff role, June 2015

Center	Female	Male	Unknown sex	Total	F/M (of known)
Harvest Plus *	53	67	6	126	0.79
IFPRI	44	29		73	1.52
ILRI	22	27	1	50	0.81
IITA	8	24	6	38	0.33
ICRISAT	5	24		29	0.21
Bioversity	15	8		23	1.88
CIP	7	10		17	0.70
ICRAF	7	9	1	17	0.78
World Fish	2			2	all F
Total Centers	163	198	14	375	0.82
A4NH-PMU	4	1		5	4.00

Notes: The figure for HarvestPlus is the sum of staff marked as HarvestPlus (54 staff) CIAT-HarvestPlus (40) , CIAT (17) and CIMMYT (15).

Source: Evaluation team calculations on staff list provided by A4NH PMU.

2. Performance management

- A4NH like other CRPs, manages very few staff directly. Staff members report to their employing Centers, and staff incentives are very much set by the Center. For example, judgement of performance of researchers in IFPRI is strongly based on their ISI publications (with a minimum target of 2 per year) while other Centers set annual performance objectives which reflect the current research portfolio. The challenge of managing performance in a matrix and the additional challenge of managing contractors/consultants in research positions who are not bound by the same employment policies and procedures is significant for A4NH, as for other CRPs. A4NH generally has little say over individual researcher performance and its only (weak) point of leverage is through its Center performance agreements. So for example, Flagship and cluster leaders currently have no official input into planning and review of PIs working on the Flagship in other Centers. In their turn, Flagship leaders report to their Centers, not to the A4NH Director (although he reportedly makes informal inputs into their workplans and reports).
- There is no common performance management system across CG centers despite the proposal being mooted by a number of HR Directors in their community of practice. Unfortunately we were unable to obtain any comparative data on Center performance management systems and processes. Based on our interviews, some participating centers have 360 performance management processes whereby staff including senior managers receive feedback from peers and supervisors (for example CIP, IFPRI) and others centers are moving in this direction (for example ILRI, ICRAF, IFPRI).

3. Competency frameworks

“Competencies are a signal from the organisation to the individual of the expected areas and levels of performance. They provide the individual with a map or indication of the behaviours that will be valued, recognised and in some organisations rewarded. Competencies can be understood to represent the language of performance in an organisation, articulating both the expected outcomes of an individual’s efforts and the manner in which these activities are carried out.”³⁴

Some CG centers (for example IWMI) have used competency frameworks for many years and in addition

Box 2: Why use a competency framework?

Competency frameworks are frequently used by the public sector¹, research institutes and development agencies, and the benefits include:

- Assisting the organisation to take stock of staff capability and the organisation’s ability to deliver against its goals
- Helping to describe what attributes staff need to develop to meet present and future organisational challenges
- Clarifying expectations in a consistent and objective way
- Creating a shared language about what is expected from staff Supporting a feedback and development culture using measurable evidence

to generic competencies (such as creativity and innovation, leadership, inter-personal skills), technical competencies have been elaborated. For example, technical competencies relating to scientific knowledge include relevant scientific research and implementation practices spanning a number of countries and continents; relevant scientific research spanning a number of disciplines; and scientific information spanning a number of countries of specific interest to IWMI³⁵.

There is renewed interest in some parts of the CGIAR in using such frameworks, for example the evaluators understand CIMMYT has recently commissioned work on a gender competency framework for WHEAT³⁶.

- There is no consistent approach to the use of competency frameworks whether for recruitment, talent management, performance management, or staff development. One participating center (WorldFish) gave an example of using psychometric tests during recruitment to ensure good alignment with CRP and Center strategic objectives but no other examples of this were given to the evaluators. The HR and People & Organization Development Directors interviewed as part of this evaluation, as well as A4NH’s Director, expressed interest in developing 3 or 4 core technical / R4D competencies that could be used either for A4NH itself, or more broadly by CG centers. Successful implementation would depend on A4NH being able to insist that the evaluation of research staff working on A4NH projects must include reference to these competencies, and that relevant A4NH staff were able to provide performance feedback to staff employed by participating centers. These competencies would ideally be more technically focused than those behaviors considered essential in order to be an effective leader and CG scientist in the twenty-

³⁴ www.cipd.co.uk The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

³⁵ <https://library.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10947/2714/Accommodating%20spouses%20partners.pdf?sequence=1>

³⁶ <http://wheat.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/05/Call-for-EoI-and-Proposal-GenderCompetencyFramework-Comms.pdf>

first century. The latter are important, and could be consolidated across participating centers; the competency domains typically include developing and maintaining collaborative relationships (listening and creating dialogue, working with others), achieving results (ensuring research quality and impact, working accountably, making decisions) and demonstrating leadership (self-awareness, motivating and influencing others, critical judgement).

- Technical competency domains would require more detailed research to scope and elaborate but might include collaborative research for development, gender and women's and girls' empowerment³⁷, evaluation and results as well as specific areas of ANH. This work could be initiated by the HR Directors Community of Practice with input from senior scientists across the CG. Ultimately, and when implemented effectively, a clear and simple competency framework with behavioral indicators and contra indicators could underpin recruitment and performance management in CRPs.

4. *Workload*

- In terms of workload, there is evidence from our mini-survey and from interviews of a substantially increased planning and reporting burden for those working on CRP funded research. This is not a new problem, and has been reported by other CRP evaluations. When combined with other responsibilities such as resource mobilization (fundraising / proposal development) the result is that workloads become unmanageable / unsustainable – concerns that were raised by interviewees at all levels during this evaluation. In our document review and interviews with we found that centers were aware of workload concerns through regular staff surveys and staff forums, and had taken some steps to address issues through the introduction of flexible working arrangements, employee assistance programs (ILRI, ICRAF, CIAT), although interviewees still maintained the issue of job size, excessive working hours and unmanageable workload remains and in the evaluators judgement this assertion is accurate, and presents a risk to the organization in terms of sustainability and staff health.

5. *Alignment of HR systems and incentives*

- The question of whether HR systems effectively support staff and align incentives with the objectives of CRP is an important one and while there are various initiatives underway to make this the case, the current situation, based on the evidence from this evaluation, is that they generally do not. In general the incentives reflect the approach of each center and are aligned to center strategies – thus for A4NH researchers in IFPRI published output is still very important (reflecting IFPRI's approach) and the highest annual merit-related pay increases can only be achieved by those who have exceeded expectations with regard to published output. Looking across the CG consortium, and based on the interviews with HR Directors and senior researchers, the prevailing approach is to reward publishing, although in the last two or three years some centers (notably IITA, ICRAF, Bioversity, WorldFish, CIAT and CIP) have taken steps

³⁷ Useful references that A4NH could consult include DFID's Social Development Technical Competencies (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214123/technical-competencies-social-development.pdf)

towards a more holistic performance management approach which takes into consideration personal effectiveness, alignment to organizational values, and other contributions such as fundraising and capacity development when evaluating performance.

- Some interviewees stated that HR Systems in general did not tend to be enabling or adaptive in other words the focus of HR systems was more on compliance and control rather than supporting researchers and projects, and the flexibility required to support a CRP in terms of resourcing and HR processes was lacking. In our interviews we found limited evidence of this but a number of centers have had new HR Directors in the last few years (IFPRI, ICRAF, CIP, WorldFish) and others are in a state of transition (ILRI) in terms of HR leadership. The HR Directors interviewed recognized that new HR competencies are required in order to bring about the internal organizational transformation required to deliver the outcomes in the Strategic Results Framework and in several centers HR transformation is underway, with ICRAF, CIAT and WorldFish being notable examples. The challenge relates to mindset as well as technical skills and HR systems, for example managing joint appointments requires a 'what's best for the CRP?' mindset, as well as simple systems to cost share, contract and manage performance in complex collaborations.

6. HR support to the CRP

- In the course of interviews with HR Directors during this evaluation, it was clear that their direct involvement with CRPs varied widely, and with regard to A4NH, there was little involvement from HR Directors at CIAT, ILRI and IITA, and IFPRI's own HR Director described her input to the CRP as minimal. The only HR Director that described a more substantial involvement in a CRP project country was WorldFish where as well as recruitment support, involvement had included supporting strategy development and implementation and change management processes. Given the complexity and importance of people management related issues that arise in CRPs (including recruitment strategies where skills are scarce, performance management in a matrix management structure and managing change such as closure and handover of project sites and staff), and the fact some senior scientists may lack the HR management knowledge and/or skills required, there is plenty of scope for center HR Directors to become more closely involved in CRPs and to provide strategic and operational support.

Suggestions

1. A4NH senior staff should negotiate – for example through the Center Performance agreements – to participate in the performance planning and evaluations of key staff working on A4NH programs, in particular: PMU, Flagship and cluster leaders, and CFPs (or their successors). Flagship and cluster leaders also need an input into planning and review of PIs working on the Flagship in other Centers, especially where the PIs time involvement with A4NH is more than 20%.
2. IFPRI / or A4NH itself could pilot a simple online 360 performance management process for key A4NH staff, as a way of initiating a more robust approach to performance management.
3. The A4NH PMU, working with IFPRI's HR Director, HR Directors in participating centers and senior scientist representatives, could identify and elaborate 3 or 4 core (technical)

- competencies for R4D for A4NH itself. If successfully adopted, these competencies could be applied across the CG system and be adopted by other CRPs and centers. These competencies would be useful for recruitment, staff development and could underpin performance management within the CRP.
4. Harmonization of key HR systems (including performance management, incentives and rewards) is fundamentally important and the HR Directors Community of Practice should maintain their focus on this and work to achieve breakthroughs for the CG consortium and at center level. A technical focus on its own is insufficient - harmonization should be accompanied by a change management program that supports a shift in behaviors, practice and mindset.

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Background paper 3 – Gender and equity³⁸

1. Introduction

Gender and equity issues are important cross-cutting issues for agriculture, nutrition and health. Gender issues (Section 2) have been a major focus of both A4NH and the Consortium, with significant levels of investment and management attention, so gender is given special emphasis in this evaluation. In contrast, wider issues of equity have been given relatively little attention to date, and Section 3 explains why we think they should get more attention.

The following analysis draws principally on evidence from:

- A self-evaluation of progress carried out by the A4NH gender team, in response to a request by the A4NH evaluation team
- Interviews, including of researchers, partners, the gender specialists and others in the A4NH Project Management Team
- Analysis of project documentation, publications and data held in the A4NH database (see the evaluation report's annexes for methods and further data)
- Observation by one of the evaluation team (JC) of the Second Gender-Nutrition Methods workshop held in December 2014

2. Gender

Background

Gender is recognized as a key area for A4NH, because the relationships between women and men, boys and girls, and the practical roles that they undertake inside and outside the household (for example as farmers and traders, cooks and caregivers) strongly affect nutritional and health outcomes. Apart from this, 'Gender equality and women's empowerment' is one of the Millennium Development Goals, and the CGIAR is committed to promoting this. The concept of 'gender' is therefore complex, and encompasses two different paradigms/approaches: **gender differences** (sometimes called 'practical gender needs') which addresses current differences in male and female roles and relationships, and '**transformational**' **aspirations** to promote changes in gender equity (sometimes called 'strategic gender needs').

IFPRI – the lead Center for A4NH - is an acknowledged world leader in gender and agriculture research (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011), and inter alia has been instrumental in developing the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index WEAI (Alkire et al., 2013; IFPRI, 2012). The CGIAR more widely, however, has had a patchy track record on gender, with gender reportedly being "de-emphasized in CG research since mid-2000s" (Ashby, 2012). The reformed CGIAR has a strong focus on gender, supported

³⁸ This note has been prepared by Julia Compton with inputs from a self-evaluation by Hazel Malapit and the A4NH gender team

by a senior gender specialist based in the Consortium Office and a [gender and agricultural research network](#) which started in 2012.

Two gender strategies: Consortium and A4NH

Consortium Gender Strategy

The Consortium Gender Strategy (CGIAR Consortium Board, 2011) has two components, with targets shown in :

- Mainstreaming gender research in the CRPs
- Diversity and Gender in the workplace

Box 1 Targets for the Consortium gender strategy

1. *All CRPs have an explicit gender strategy that is implemented within 6 months of their inception. This should include inter alia, clear impact pathways, an explanation of how gender will be considered in all aspects of the research cycle (targeting, priority setting, and design of the research, implementation and impact assessment); a monitoring and evaluation plan with clear targets; budgeted activities; clear management accountabilities; and an assessment of CRP capacity. (However, gender strategies were not required to be specifically linked to/nested under the Consortium strategy.)*
2. *Research outputs in all CRPs bring demonstrable and measurable benefits to women farmers in target areas within 4 years following inception of the CRP.*
3. *By 2014 Staff training and strategic partnerships ensure all CRPs have sufficient gender expertise.*

There was also a Human Resource target on gender (not detailed in strategy).

Key activities under the Consortium strategy are shown in the timeline in Figure 3.

A4NH Gender Strategy

The A4NH Gender Strategy was approved in the first year of the CRP (A4NH, 2012). Its stated goal (p.7) is “to facilitate the achievement of our nutrition and health objectives through greater attention to gender issues along the impact pathways [for A4NH research].

The strategy takes a broad view of gender issues, including both women and men. For example: *“Men face their own unique set of social and biological risks to attaining good health and nutrition. Gender roles in agriculture influence the difference occupational hazards men and women face.....It is not enough to focus on women as key to food and nutrition security; they must also be viewed in the context of their relationships with men, being influenced by, and also influencing, men.” (p. 4)*

The strategy generally supports a ‘transformational’ view of gender roles. An example paragraph (from the policy section) states:

“...Our goal will be to provide evidence to advocate for investments in order to increase women’s empowerment in these five domains, as well as close the empowerment gap between men and women within the same households. This does not mean that we advocate policies to disempower men; rather, we want to close the empowerment gap, particularly in regions where

gender disparities are marked and where they clearly contribute to poor health and nutrition. In addition, we will examine how different policy instruments can be used to shift power relations so as to increase the women's rights and decision making power so that they may be able to mobilize resources in support of their own and their families' health and nutrition" (p.4)

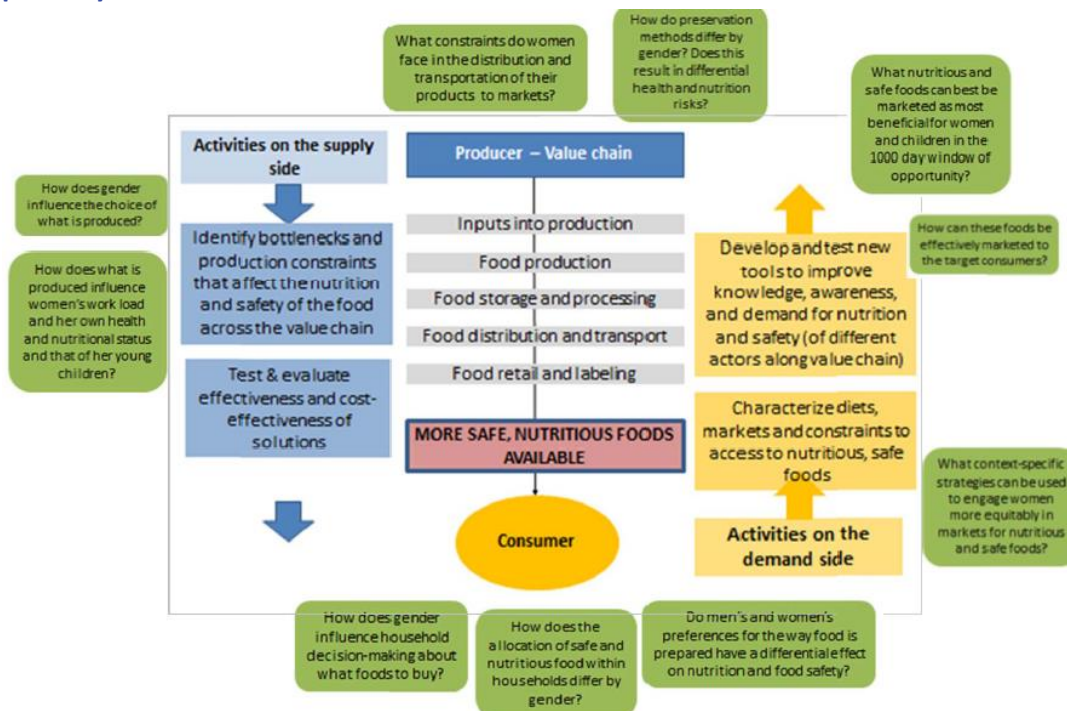
The strategy identifies three main impact pathways through which gender research can be operationalized: through value chains for nutritious and safe foods, through integrated development and nutrition programs, and through a supportive policy environment. It sets out ambitious gender-related objectives and outcomes for each of the four A4NH Flagships, related to these three impact pathways. An example of an outcome from the value chain flagship is "Women have increased capacity for decision-making in the production, marketing, and consumption of nutrient-rich and safe foods". (p. 15)

The strategy then identifies seven main areas of initial focus for gender analysis and research:

- a. conducting gender analysis to understand the roles of men and women in a particular context;
- b. assessing gender-specific risks that men and women face through their participation in agricultural value chains;
- c. fostering women's participation in and benefits from agriculture, nutrition, and health programs;
- d. empowering women and increasing their access to and control of assets, so as to reduce the gender asset gap;
- e. promoting equitable intrahousehold food allocation and consumption for all members;
- f. ensuring gender-sensitive technology and delivery systems; and
- g. building capacity at the local and national levels, among implementation partners, researchers, and policymakers to be better able to address gender issues in the design and implementation of multisectoral ANH programs.

The strategy sets out how each of these areas of research potentially fits into the three impact pathways identified. An example is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Extract from A4NH gender strategy: Gender questions (in green) in value chain impact pathway



Source: A4NH gender strategy (A4NH, 2012) Fig 2 p. 12

The strategy envisages three main areas of activity on gender:

- a. **Support to CGIAR research programs to better integrate gender issues into A4NH-related research**, particularly for CGIAR Centers that do not already have a strong capacity in this area: *“Our strategy in 2013 and 2014 will be to use additional funding to help these Centers make concerted efforts in research that increases their understanding of gender at the household level and to identify areas of need along value chains for developing women’s capacity. Funds will likely be used to hire gender experts, add gendered research components to existing studies, and establish strategic partnerships to complement our efforts.”* (p.22)
- b. **Identification of capacity needs in gender research, and support for capacity development:** *“The ability of the teams to undertake the gender-related research in each activity will be assessed by the respective members of the A4NH management team, building on the initial consultation, and additional training or collaborators with expertise will be sought, as needed. ...Capacity strengthening will need to build on efforts of the nutrition community to build a common set of tools and methods for nutritional assessment..[and make use of other resources such as] online training courses...”* (p. 24)
- c. **Monitoring and evaluating progress toward achieving gender-responsive objectives in the research programs:** *“We will use participatory methods, such as outcome mapping and net mapping, tailored to each of the impact pathways and their associated theory of change. We will follow ex ante assessments and baseline surveys will be followed by an evaluation. In the value chains pathway, we will conduct some initial baseline surveys both at the household level and of*

actors along the value chains, in collaboration with value chain partners like other CRPs or Centers. For the integrated ANH programs pathway, we plan to do a baseline study at the start of any intervention to be evaluated, and for the integrated ANH policies pathway, we will supplement standard surveys, such as DHS, with more targeted baseline studies, as needed.”

The strategy does not envisage gender research being conducted by the A4NH gender ‘project’ itself:

“The AN4H does not conduct strategic gender research (it is not a separate component of the CRP’s agenda) but rather ... gender analysis is integrated throughout the research to inform and deepen the relevance of other research themes.” (p.7)

The theory of change for the gender activities to be undertaken is not well articulated in the strategy. There is a section on theory of change for each of the three impact pathways, but it is not linked to how the gender activities will actually be prioritized to strengthen these.

Moreover, the text contains numerous optimistic statements such as:

- *“...evidence generated by A4NH will demonstrate to donors and development agencies...” (p. 11)*
- *“...the new research evidence we provide to development agencies will help identify context-specific leverage points to ensure [equitable outcomes for men and women]...” (p. 14)*
- *“...Disseminating research evidence from improved sex-disaggregated databases on gender, health and nutrition will increase the attention of policy-makers...” (p. 15)*

The underlying assumptions in the theories of change presented seem to be, first, that CGIAR researchers and partners in each of the targeted areas (value chains, integrated programs and policy) will mainstream gender issues appropriately throughout their research and second, that researchers in each of these areas will take on the job and be successful in influencing their target audiences re gender issues (inter alia). Both of these assumptions require closer examination. (See Discussion section for more).

A4NH gender-related resources, activities and results

Resources

Finance: The A4NH proposal described aims related to gender research and capacity building, but it was not linked to budget. In 2013, a budget of \$250,000 was allocated from W1/2 funds to support the implementation of the A4NH Gender Strategy. This budget was increased to a planned \$300,000 per year in 2014 and 2015, and then (as a result of general W1/W2 funds described elsewhere) cuts were made at the end of 2014 and again in early 2015, meaning that some planned activities (such as technical assistance to flagships) were cut back or have been postponed to 2016. As in many other areas of A4NH/the CGIAR, the time of the researchers working on gender is financed from a number of sources, including relevant bilateral projects with relevant overlapping objectives³⁹.

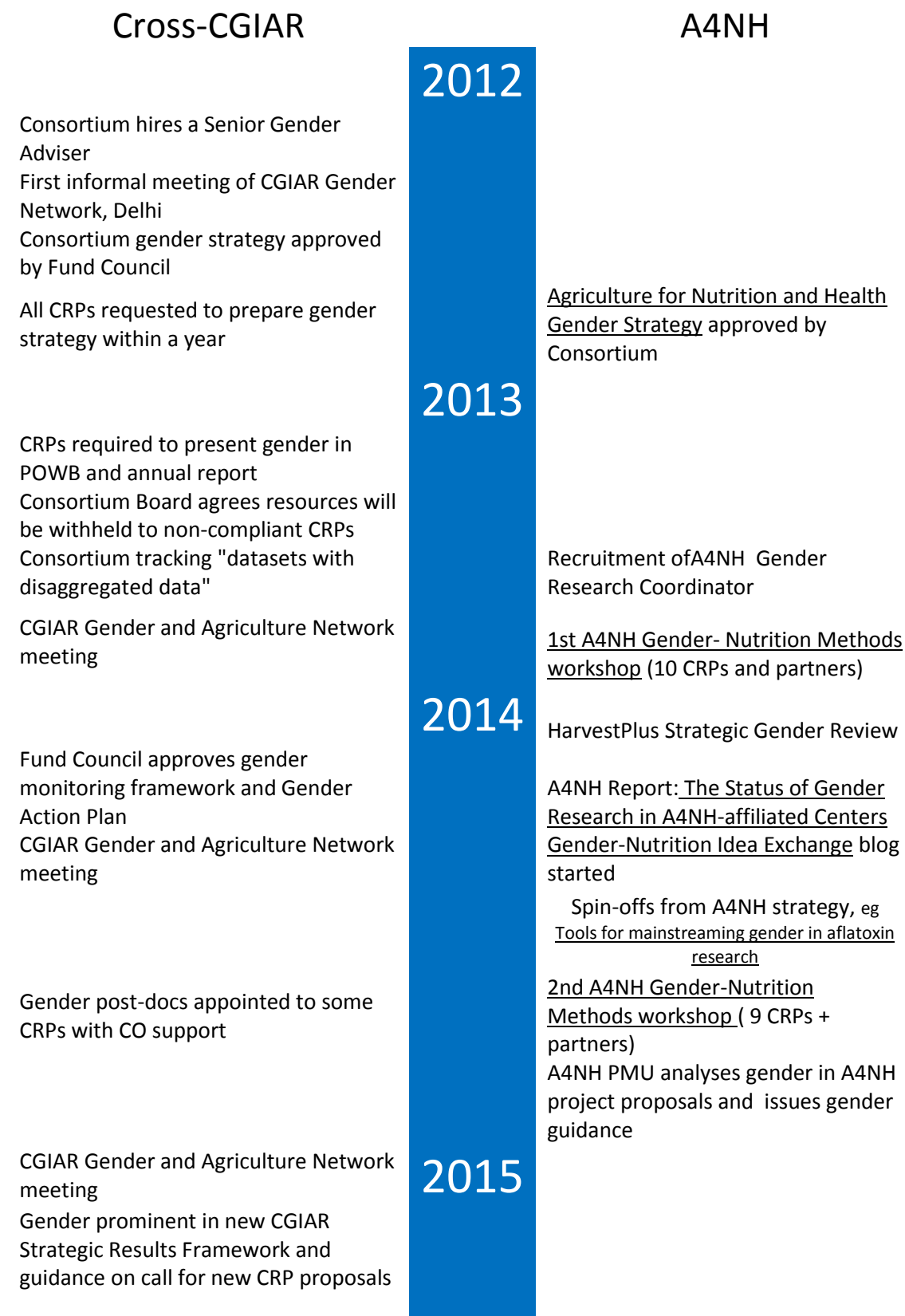
³⁹ For example the Gender, Agriculture and Assets Project, [GAAP](#)

Human resources: Initially, responsibility for implementing the strategy rested with the PMU and Flagship leaders (p. 23). An A4NH gender research coordinator was recruited in October 2013, working 50% of her time for A4NH⁴⁰. A research analyst was recruited to support her in 2014, working 75% of her time for A4NH while the remaining 25% of her time is spent coordinating the IFPRI ‘gender taskforce’. The other members of the informally-constituted ‘A4NH gender team’ all spend less than 20% FTE. These are a senior IFPRI gender researcher and two members of the PMU: the Program Manager and the M&E leader. All are female. All work for IFPRI, where there are strong incentives for staff to maintain a good research publication record. As a result, the gender research coordinator and research analyst said that they spend “10 months on research, 2 months on capacity building” (mainly organizing the annual workshop, see below).

IFPRI has a ‘gender task force’ with two researchers in each division (one of whom is a senior researcher) devoted to integrating gender issues into its work. Other Centers have gender focal points in the Consortium gender network. There is no formal linkage between these and the A4NH gender team, although some informal liaison exists and both A4NH and PIM are represented on the gender taskforce.

⁴⁰ Confusingly, for the other half of her time the gender research coordinator works for the Poverty Health and Nutrition Division of IFPRI, the director of which is also a Flagship leader for A4NH, but also has research programs outside A4NH. The incomplete CGIAR reform has led to many such mixed lines of accountability.

Figure 3: Timeline of key gender-related actions in CGIAR and in A4NH, 2011-15



Activities

Figure 3 shows a timeline of key gender-related activities at the level of the CGIAR and in A4NH, which have developed roughly at the same time.

In practice, activities have fallen under three main workstreams:

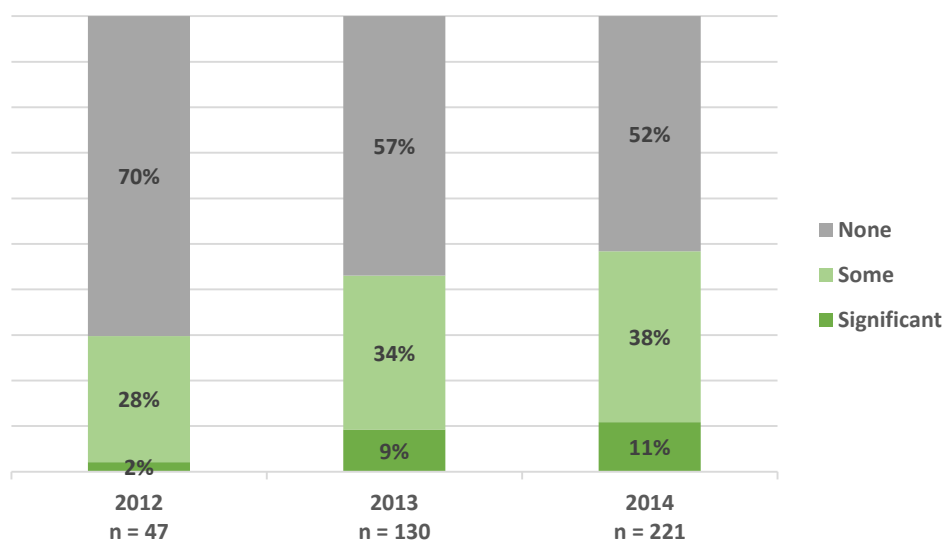
- a) Mainstreaming gender into A4NH research
- b) Capacity building on gender and nutrition issues across the CGIAR and partners
- c) Research on key gender and ANH issues undertaken by the A4NH gender team

The activities, and evidence on progress for each, are described in turn.

Mainstreaming gender into A4NH research

Leadership and messaging has been consistently strong from A4NH about the importance of integrating gender issues into the research. The A4NH PMU and gender team have been active in monitoring the research portfolio – commissioning a gender inventory in 2014 (Figure 3) and including specific questions on gender in the A4NH project planning forms. Combined with pressure from the Consortium and Fund Council (Figure 3), this likely to have contributed to a 35% increase in the reported gender focus of projects in A4NH since the beginning of Phase 1 (Figure 4). About half (49%) of project deliverables were reported as having ‘some’ or ‘significant’ gender focus in 2014. We do not have exactly comparable benchmarks from other CRPs, but for example the evaluation of Policies Institutions and Markets, the other CRP led by IFPRI, estimated that “about 30% of the PIM portfolio is addressing gender issues” (CGIAR-IEA, 2015) p. xiii)

**Figure 4: “Gender focus” reported to A4NH has increased:
Percentage of A4NH research deliverables with ‘some’ or ‘significant’ gender focus, 2012-14**



Source: Evaluation team analysis of A4NH deliverables database

Self-reported “focus” may not be a very reliable indicator, however. Since the call for the 2015 work plans, A4NH has been collecting additional information on the standard A4NH project sheet⁴¹ about the gender research dimension of projects - including the gender research questions being addressed and the type of gender-disaggregated data being collected. From this, the PMU identified 49 projects with significant gender questions in 2015 (about half of total projects⁴²). The distribution by flagship is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender integration into project plans, by flagship, 2015

Flagship (n=number of projects)	Collection of sex-disaggregated data % of projects	Gender-related research questions % of projects
F1 - Value Chains for Enhanced Nutrition (n=23)	82%	55%
F3 - Agriculture-Associated Diseases (n=33)	48%	33%
F4 - Integrated Programs and Policies (n=20)	35%	40%

Source: Analysis carried out by A4NH Gender team. The Biofortification flagship (F2) could not be meaningfully analysed, as in this database, the entire \$100M HarvestPlus program is recorded as a single project. The analysis does not distinguish ‘relevant’ research projects and it is possible that some are highly technical / lab-based projects which would not be expected to have a gender dimension.

The analysis by the gender team of the 2014 round of workplans also highlighted inconsistencies and misunderstandings in the wider research group, for example about what constitutes a ‘gender research question’. In response, the PMU working with the gender team has recently produced guidance to integrating gender into research plans (an extract is shown in Box 2) and has also given individual feedback to a number of Principal Investigators. This seems likely to have positive results, but it is too early to judge.

⁴¹ See the monitoring and evaluation section of the report for more details on this sheet.

⁴² Harvest Plus is counted as a single project and only covered by a few lines

Box 2: Extract from ‘A4NH Guidelines for Reporting on Gender Research in the 2015 A4NH Centers’ Work Plans

Is this a gender research question?	
YES	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any question that seeks to identify and understand gender-based differences, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ access to information ○ decision-making power ○ control over income ○ access to assets ○ preferences ○ perception of risk ○ time use ○ barriers to entry in value chains ○ labor in and out of the household ○ food preparation ○ food consumption ○ relative health impacts ○ access to technology, etc. • Relationship between women’s health, nutrition, empowerment indicators (e.g. control over income, decision-making power, etc), and woman/child/household nutrition indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of women involved in the project implementation or in project leadership • What is the sex of the household head? • Everyone is encouraged to participate in the intervention/use the technology

Source: (A4NH PMU, 2015) p. 2

The gender team has also recently carried out an examination of integration of the seven focal research areas identified in the gender strategy in the research projects in the four flagship areas, based on 2015 workplans. The main focal area identified was ‘Gender analysis to understand roles of men and women’, included in 44% of all projects and 70% of projects in the IPP Flagship. ‘Promoting equitable intrahousehold food consumption’ was identified in 19% of all projects and 43% of projects in the Value Chain Flagship. The other five focal areas were only identified in a small number of projects.

Table 2: Integration of specific types of gender analysis in current research workplans

Focal area	Value chains N=23	AAD N=33	IPP N=20	Average N=76
Gender analysis to understand roles of men and women	57%	24%	70%	44%
Promoting equitable intrahousehold food consumption	43%	3%	20%	19%
Empowering women and strengthening women’s control of assets	17%	12%	5%	11%
Assessing gender specific risks in agricultural value chains	9%	0%	25%	9%
Ensuring gender-sensitive technology and delivery systems	0%	12%	10%	8%
Fostering women’s participation in A4NH programs	9%	6%	5%	6%
Building capacity to address gender issues	0%	6%	0%	3%

Source: Unpublished self-evaluation by gender team. The denominator is the total number of projects mapped to the Flagship. The analysis does not distinguish ‘relevant’ research projects and it is possible that some are highly technical /lab-based projects which would not be expected to have a gender dimension. The biofortification flagship was excluded from the analysis (HarvestPlus is recorded as a single giant ‘project’)

A financial analysis in the same report (not shown here) indicates that A4NH W1/2 funding accounted for a high proportion of expenditure of the projects with a gender research focus.

Integrating gender at the planning stage is not enough, however, as there is ample evidence of “evaporation” (Longwe, 1997) of gender in the course of implementation. For example, gender issues can be lost in the process of data collection (e.g. because interviews are scheduled at an inconvenient time of day for women, and returning for further interviews is not practical) or in the process of analysis (rushed researchers may not get round to disaggregated analysis) (Laurila and Young, 2001). For this reason it is important to monitor the whole process of research, and the ultimate research products, through a gender lens.

Publications are one of the ultimate research products, and thus provide some indication of potential “evaporation”. The evaluation team⁴³ has carried out a short gender analysis of A4NH ISI publications published in 2014. Most of these are reporting work that started before or at the beginning of the CRP, so it would be useful to treat this exercise as a baseline. The results (Table 2) present a picture of relatively low integration of gender research questions and even sex-disaggregated data. Integration of gender seems to vary by Flagship, although sample numbers are too low to draw firm conclusions at the Flagship level. One factor in the low numbers might be lack of space and ‘publication bias’ in ISI journals – i.e. it is possible that gender differences were explored in a particular piece of research, but if no statistically-significant results were found in the analysis, then the result might not be reported in the journal⁴⁴.

⁴³ The evaluation team is very grateful to the gender team – particularly Sophie Theis – for providing an independent (from us) check on the classification of individual publications.

⁴⁴ For example, in several publications, some sex-disaggregated data is presented in summary tables but then not analyzed.

Table 3: Gender in a clustered randomized sample of A4NH ISI publications published in 2014

Flagship	Total no sampled	Number of relevant publications [#]	Number (percentage of relevant publications) with ^{##} :		
			Women as target group	Sex-disagg data	Gender research questions
F1 Value chains	9	5	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)
F2 Biofortification	9	3	0%	0%	0%
F3 Agric Assoc-Diseases	9	7	0%	1 (14%)	0%
F4 Integrated PP	9	9	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)
Total	36	24	5 (21%)	5 (21%)	2 (8%)

This analysis formed part of a wider publications analysis, based on a randomized cluster sample see A4NH evaluation report, Annex J). Some of the publications were highly technical (e.g. laboratory analyses) and therefore judged not 'relevant' for the gender analysis. ## See footnote for definitions⁴⁵

Finally, it is instructive to consider the **underlying paradigm** (practical or transformational) that underpins research approach to gender issues. The limited evidence we have from documents and our interviews indicates that many researchers and partners appear to take a 'practical' view of gender roles. In the project document review carried out by the evaluation, 58% of those projects which had any mention of gender took a 'practical' approach. Of the seven focus questions in the gender strategy, by far the most frequently addressed is the neutral question of gender differences (Table 2). Failure to address gender research questions can reflect an underlying view of gender roles as immutable, focusing the research on the practical needs of current roles (e.g. on women primarily as caregivers and food preparers). This is something that could be considered more carefully in the gender strategy (see discussion section).

Capacity building on gender and nutrition issues across the CGIAR and partners

The gender specialists in A4NH have carried out three main activities in trying to build capacity across the CGIAR and partners: methods workshops, a blog and providing expert advice.

- a. **Annual Gender-Nutrition Methods Workshops** (two held to date). Each has involved about 40 people including A4NH researchers, researchers from 8-9 other CRPs with nutrition IDOs and 7-8 partner organizations. The first workshop concentrated on establishing common frameworks (eg for theory of change around gender and nutrition) and training in particular quantitative and qualitative data collection tools (such as asset/income survey modules and focus group discussions). The second workshop had a particular focus on women's empowerment and decision-making, and included (inter alia) interactive group work on case studies as well as 'Research Clinics': individual consultations with senior gender researchers on methodological

⁴⁵ Women as target group – the study is focused on women, or women are the target group of the program being evaluated; Sex-disagg data – the student collects data that is disaggregated by sex; Gender research questions – at least one of the research questions of the study is about gender or the study utilises sex-disaggregated data or includes gender in the analysis

questions. The second workshop also had the specific objective: ‘To build a community of practice on gender and nutrition across CGIAR Research Programs and partners’.

Questionnaires were administered at the end of both workshops. Overall reactions were very positive, e.g. 94% of respondents in the first workshop rated the workshop “excellent” or “very good” from a five-point scale (albeit from only 16 questionnaires). Participants raised a number of issues for future work, both in the workshops and in the evaluation forms. These included for example: interest in broadening out the group to agricultural scientists and creating more space for exchange of ideas; the need to consider further the role of men in nutrition; and a continued focus on practical methods and tools for application in research projects.

A member of the evaluation team (JC) observed the second workshop and held informal conversations with participants. Impressions included:

- The group was dominated by female social scientists and nutritionists.
 - Most of the group appeared to really appreciate the chance to talk with like-minded researchers and share practical challenges, and were motivated to apply the results of what they learnt in their own research
 - Many of the younger researchers gave the impression of being rather un-supported in their Centers, not only in this specific topic but also in access to support on things like questionnaire design and ethics training.
 - The workshop organizers had made an effort to reflect feedback from the first workshop and give a chance for researchers to share experiences
 - The workshop provided some useful support to many participants, however time limitations made it difficult for everyone’s practical questions to be fully answered
 - It was challenging to address the varying levels of expertise and experience in the workshop given the relatively small group.
 - Face to face workshops are very useful for building and supporting a community of practice; however they are probably not the most cost-effective way of capacity building at scale in the CGIAR or providing a help function for individual researchers.
- b. **A monthly blog** hosted by the A4NH website: ([Gender Nutrition Idea Exchange - GNIE](#)). This is principally a technical and methods blog, aimed at researchers. So far, posts have been made by CGIAR researchers and close partners. A few comments have been made on the site by external researchers as well. However, there has been no systematic response to comments, with some questions going unanswered.

In its first 13 months the blogs has accumulated over 11,000 unique page views⁴⁶. This is difficult to benchmark, especially since the target audience is quite specialised, but one academic blogger has suggested that 1,000-10,000 views per year is in the “just getting started” range⁴⁷. Nearly 40% of page views were for two specific blogs: “[Three things you need to know about sex-disaggregated data](#)” and “[Dietary diversity 101](#)”. These were among the first posts

⁴⁶ Google analytics: May 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015: 11,094 unique page views. Data courtesy of Kimberly Keeton.

⁴⁷ <http://academia.stackexchange.com/questions/7809/statistics-on-readership-and-posting-habits-for-academic-blogs> accessed 29 June 2015.

on the blog, which may have generated initial interest, but it is likely they are also popular because they address key practical methods issues of interest to researchers.

c. Individual in-depth technical advice on gender for programmes and projects

The gender team has made some strategic technical inputs at the level of A4NH Flagships including:

- Technical support to a HarvestPlus Strategic Gender Assessment (HarvestPlus, 2014) which has been influential in getting HarvestPlus to seriously invest in mainstreaming gender
- Comments on gender in the Theory of Change for Value Chains and Nutrition
- Suggestions on incorporating gender into Flagship 3 (AAD) ⁴⁸

Project level gender advice, on the other hand has been (according to interviews) sporadic and ad hoc. There has not been any systematic attempt to advertise or provide this service on a regular basis due to lack of resources in the gender team.

Research on key gender issues

As mentioned above, the 2012 A4NH Gender strategy did not envisage that A4NH would conduct its own strategic gender research. However, PMU views on this changed after the first Gender-Nutrition methods workshop (Dec 2013), when it *“became apparent that there was interest among the CRPs working on nutrition for more knowledge on gender-nutrition topics, such as time use and household decision making, but not all CRPs had the capacity or methodological expertise to undertake research on gender and nutrition. Thus, A4NH invested resources in conducting gender research on key cross-cutting topics relevant to all of the flagships ...”*⁴⁹.

So far, research has been undertaken on:

- Cross-country comparisons of women’s time use in agricultural work, and its effect on food consumption and nutrition in developing countries.
- Measuring women's decision making: Indicator choice and survey design.
- The use of the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (Alkire et al., 2013) and its sub-indicators in understanding nutrition outcomes in different settings.

All these research topics appear to be relevant in terms of filling in evidence gaps regarding the postulated impact pathways between agriculture, gender and nutritional outcomes (Harris and Kennedy, 2013). They also respond to practical needs expressed by the research programs (e.g. for empowerment and decision-making indicators to measure the IDOs) and by participants in the Methods Workshops. On the other hand, the specific research projects undertaken also reflect opportunities that have arisen for partnerships and funding, and the specific backgrounds and interests of the researchers involved. The topics have not been subjected to any formal prioritization exercise or wider consultation.

⁴⁸ All available as unpublished documents

⁴⁹ Source: gender team self-assessment 2015. Specific gender-nutrition topics of interest to participants are mentioned in the [workshop summary report](#) and post-workshop assessment report.

Expenditure from A4NH gender project

Table 4 shows the main lines of expenditure from the gender project in 2013-14. This underestimates the total investment in gender activities because there are a number of other funding sources. For example most of the staff time on monitoring gender and integrating gender into impact pathways was financed by the PMU, as was the staff time to organize the 2013 Workshop.

Table 4 Main lines of expenditure from A4NH gender project

Expenditure	2012	2013	2014
Total expenditure (\$000)	-	26.5	245.1
Gender research	-	0	48%
Capacity development & coordination	-	100%	52%
Methods Workshop as percent of Capacity Development and Coordination	-	86%	40%

Source: Gender team self-assessment, June 2015

Discussion

This section brings together the evidence above with our evaluative judgments to suggest answers to the evaluation sub-questions and specific queries set out in our inception report.

Is the A4NH work on gender relevant? Is the balance right between the main areas of work in gender?

The evaluation team judges that the various strands of work done by the gender group have all been relevant to the objectives.

Given that work only started two years ago, very good progress has been made on all three areas:

- **Strengthening research across A4NH**, by monitoring what is being planned and providing guidance and individual feedback to researchers, and helping integrate gender into theories of change. The focus on gender in research plans has now significantly increased across A4NH, although it is too early to judge results.
- **Capacity building across the CGIAR**: bringing together researchers across CGIAR interested in gender and nutrition and setting up an incipient Community of Practice. CGIAR research on agriculture, nutrition and health issues is not confined to A4NH (see Annex L of evaluation report) and leveraging the wider research capacity of the CGIAR has a huge potential multiplier effect.
- **Identifying and making progress on some key cross-cutting research questions**. Although it was not originally envisaged in the gender strategy that A4NH would support research at central level, we agree that conducting / supporting some strategic research is important, particularly on key conceptual and methodological questions and to develop indicators and tools.

However, setting up a clear theory of change for the A4NH gender work (see next question) would help to prioritize more clearly between the different strands and sub-strands of work, including agreeing on priority research topics and specific research questions, and also serve as a basis for mobilization of the human and financial resources needed to implement the strategy.

Is the scope and focus of the A4NH gender strategy appropriate?

The A4NH gender strategy was drafted at the start of the CRP. It contains a strong analysis of the issues around integrating gender into ANH research, as well as useful proposals for action. However, it is very ambitious in scope, given the resources available, and does not set out clear processes for prioritization or a clear theory of change to underpin the specific activities undertaken. It has also to some extent been overtaken by events, with new activities being developed by the gender team (in particular a central research program) that were not originally envisaged in the strategy. Furthermore, some of the activities which were planned in the strategy - large-scale capacity building in gender and nutrition, and investing widely in adding gender components into research projects - have not taken place due to lack of resources. Moreover, A4NH is also planning to move into new areas in Phase 2, particularly in health and food systems that will require the gender work to move beyond the 'gender-nutrition' nexus.

For the above reasons, in our view the gender strategy should be revisited for Phase 2. Suggested areas for consideration include:

- a. Constructing a theory of change for the A4NH gender work *itself*, in consultation with Flagship leaders and other key stakeholders. This should help think through more clearly how specific gender activities supported by A4NH centrally are expected to make changes that lead to desired outcomes, and assumptions and risks, and how this can be done most cost-effectively. Development of the Theory of Change also needs to consider how to include broader gender, agriculture and health issues without losing focus
- b. Setting out clear criteria and evidence for prioritizing the gender research done at A4NH level (ie by the gender team) and other research financed by A4NH W1/W2 funding. This should include identification of major evidence gaps in the ANH-gender pathways (in more detail), as well as work on indicators, tools and metrics, and show where these are not being covered by others.
- c. One issue that could be addressed more strongly in a future strategy is the relationship between different approaches to gender issues: i.e. 'practical differences' - often assuming current gender roles are immutable - vs 'transformational' - aimed at changing gender power relations. Most people working as gender specialists (in the CGIAR or outside) are already convinced of the need for gender equity and women's empowerment, irrespective of their 'instrumental value' for nutrition and economic growth - and may see little need to revisit old arguments. However – UN resolutions and Millennium Development Goals to the contrary- there is some evidence from this evaluation that many researchers and project partners see things differently, and are focused on 'practical gender differences'. Deciding how to deal with this requires further analysis. One possibility – which would broaden the audience for the Gender-Nutrition Network beyond those already convinced that gender is important – would be to integrate the Gender Community of Practice in some way into the wider NH Community of Practice suggested in this evaluation (Section XX).
- d. To what extent/how should other equity issues (see next section) be integrated into the gender strategy

Does the A4NH Gender strategy work effectively with the Consortium gender strategy?

While there is no direct link (and no obligation for such a link) between the two strategies, there has been some mutual reinforcement between them. For example, the move to increased gender focus in A4NH projects probably resulted from both from the demand-side pull of Consortium and A4NH requirements⁵⁰ to include gender issues in project proposals, as well as the supply of expert advice and guidance from the A4NH gender team.

While the A4NH gender team is in good contact with the Consortium gender specialist and A4NH is represented on the Consortium gender network, there are still areas where work could possibly be strengthened. One of these is monitoring indicators. The Consortium has established some monitoring indicators which are quite challenging to measure (in particular: “percent of datasets disaggregated by gender”, and A4NH together with other CRPs could help these to be revisited). Another important area is the establishment of competencies for work in gender and ANH (see page 11 for more background on competency frameworks and their use). The Consortium has already proposed some competencies for work in gender and agriculture (unpublished), and CIMMYT has also recently commissioned some work on this for the WHEAT CRP⁵¹. A4NH could usefully liaise on this to ensure that key ANH competencies were included as appropriate, and perhaps also share in the development of appropriate training programs, which could include e-training programs.

Does the way in which gender is being mainstreamed represent high-quality research?

Ashby (2012) identified the “risk of mainstreaming a quick, low-cost ‘gender fix’ versus an evidence-based research process that uses quality social science”, which may be accentuated by a pressure to report rapid progress on mainstreaming.

The evaluation has found that A4NH gender work is consistently promoting high quality research, both in its own strategic research program and throughout its mainstreaming work. The Gender-Nutrition Methods workshops and GINIE blog have concentrated on capacity development in research frameworks and methods, and detailed investigation of how particular methods and indicators are applied. The PMU exercises in monitoring A4NH workplans have gone well beyond a gender ‘tick-box’ to investigate the quality of research questions being asked and to provide general guidance and also individualized feedback to PIs. Integration of gender into theories of change has been heavily based on research evidence (resulting in peer-reviewed papers). The gender program can draw on part of the time of a renowned IFPRI gender researcher, and is backstopped by other renowned researchers. The gender specialists who are carrying out gender capacity development and mainstreaming activities are involved in gender research themselves and understand not only the conceptual issues but the field-level practicalities.

⁵⁰ Bilateral donors are also a very important source of ‘demand for gender’

⁵¹ Call for expression of interest for the development of a gender competency framework and modular capacity building program for the WHEAT CRP, Dec 2014: <http://wheat.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/05/Call-for-EoI-and-Proposal-GenderCompetencyFramework-Comms.pdf>

Is A4NH appropriately resourced and structured for work in gender?

The quality of human resources available for the work is high (see previous paragraph). However, there is a mismatch between the scale of ambition and external expectations of the gender effort and the level of human resources allocated to the work – under 3 FTE for both mainstreaming and central research activities for a very large and complex program (A4NH) as well as for support to gender mainstreaming and capacity building across the wider CGIAR.

Part of the problem is that gender mainstreaming activities may be wrongly seen as an ‘administrative overhead’ rather than as an integral part of the research work. In A4NH, a significant portion of the gender work has fallen to the Program Management Unit, and the gender research coordinator is counted as part of the PMU. This has a very positive effect in ensuring for example that gender is fully integrated into PMU planning and monitoring, but in terms of budget, the PMU is counted as an overhead.

There is also a potential tension for individuals between conducting their own research (which is what mainly gets rewarded in IFPRI) and mainstreaming activities. While it is clearly important to have gender mainstreaming done by people who are conducting research themselves (see above), this severely reduces the time available for mainstreaming work. There are different ways to handle this, including outsourcing some activities (e.g. a helpdesk or training).

Scaling up nutrition and health issues across the CGIAR requires a serious effort of mainstreaming and capacity building. In the view of the evaluation team this should be properly resourced as a major workstream for A4NH in Phase 2, as argued elsewhere in this evaluation report. Ideally the gender mainstreaming work would form one of the components of this workstream.

The development of a revised gender strategy and theory of change would provide an opportunity to revisit the human and financial resources required, including through links with other A4NH and CGIAR workstreams.

How are other equity issues handled in gender work?

A focus on gender does not automatically mean that other equity issues are adequately considered. Based on our interviews, many A4NH projects appear to have addressed gender issues in a rather mechanistic way - e.g. disaggregation of data by sex, or separating village focus groups by sex - while ignoring other social differences.

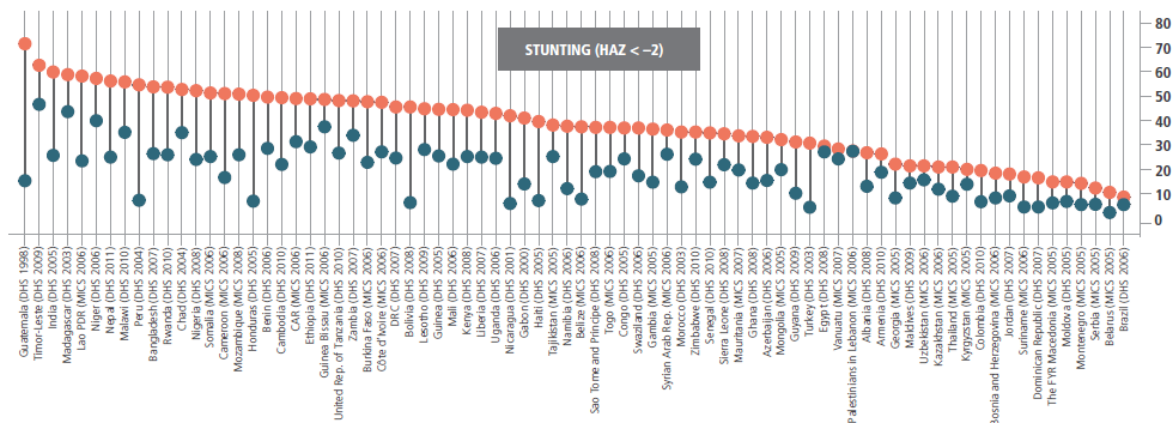
While all the gender researchers interviewed for this evaluation are social scientists who are well aware of other social issues, they currently have no responsibility for ‘mainstreaming equity’ into other researchers’ projects. Equity issues are further discussed in the next section.

3. Equity (beyond gender)

Equity and discrimination are important issues for A4NH outcomes (Black et al 2013; GNR, 2014; Haddad, 2015). Nutritional levels differ starkly by wealth (Figure 5), location, and by ethnic and other social groupings.

As pointed out by Haddad (2015, p. 8), “given equal costs of action, the marginal returns to development tend to be greatest when investments are made in those with the least [power, wealth and nutrition]. The question is whether these greater impacts can be realized in practice and whether they outweigh the additional cost of working in the areas that are hardest to reach. The answer seems to be positive...” - but this is an important empirical question for different contexts.

Figure 5: Prevalence in stunting in highest and lowest wealth quintiles for 79 countries



Source: Figure 5 in (Black et al., 2013) redrawn for the Global Nutrition Report (GNR, 2014), Fig 4.1. The longest vertical lines indicate the largest gaps between rich (blue) and poor (red). (Black et al., 2013) note that stunting (height for age <-2 Z-scores below median) was on average 2.5 (range 1-7.6) times higher in the poorest wealth quintile than the richest. They also note (p. 436) that “in 81 countries with data, stunting was 1.45 times higher (range 0.94 to 2.94) in rural than in urban areas.”

Equity issues are explicitly addressed in some areas of A4NH research, and are implicit in others, for example in the concept of “access” of poor people to value chains. However:

- There is no specific CGIAR or A4NH strategy or framework for addressing equity issues other than those related to gender. The new CGIAR Strategic Results Framework adds ‘youth’ to ‘gender’, but young age is only one of many equity issues.
- Despite frequent mentions of “the poor”, equity issues are given little or no explicit attention in A4NH proposal and extension documents (A4NH, 2014; IFPRI, 2011). The major exception is the Agriculture-Associated Diseases Flagship, which specifies “gender equity and social and economic fairness” as one of its three principles (IFPRI, 2011)p.72), and embeds equity into many of its research questions.
- A clustered randomized sample of A4NH research project documents examined by the evaluation team (see Annex I of evaluation report) found that 45% (nearly half) mentioned key

monitoring indicators being disaggregated by sex, but only 13% (just over 1 in 8) by ‘other social groupings’.

- A clustered randomized review of A4NH research publications from 2014 (see Annex J of evaluation report) found that of 24 publications which could have been expected to consider equity issues, only about a quarter presented data that is disaggregated by some measure of equity, and some of these did not refer to it in the analysis. Equity issues mentioned included ethnicity, income /consumption, and location (urban/rural). It would be useful to analyze a slightly bigger sample as a baseline for future comparisons.
- Many A4NH research projects target “the poor”; however this does not automatically mean that they disaggregate data by equity or investigate issues of equity. Our impression from document reviews and interview evidence is that a number of technology development projects in A4NH focus on “the small farmer” - or in some projects, “the community” - with (as yet) very little social analysis – e.g. who is producing, who is consuming, where consumers get their food over the year and how they pay for/access it, and within-household distribution and consumption⁵². Such an analysis might lead the research and development in different directions – for example, in biofortification, in some areas, it could mean more focus on larger farmers who supply the markets from which the poorest people are getting their staples, while in aflatoxin research, it might mean an increased focus on the informal sector.

In our judgment, the institutional lack of attention to equity (other than gender) issues is a major gap in A4NH that should be addressed. This holds for the CGIAR generally: the latest Strategic Results Framework only mentions equity in relation to gender and ‘youth’ (CGIAR Consortium Office, 2015).

One of the reasons may be the continuing lack of a ‘critical mass’ of social science expertise in the CGIAR, identified in the 2009 ‘Stripe’ review (Barrett et al., 2009). A4NH does not hold data on the disciplinary background of researchers at present, but a rough estimate⁵³ is that only 2 or 3 out of 48 senior researchers (<7%) have a social science background. (This figure excludes economists, some but not all of whom are knowledgeable and skilled in addressing equity issues.) In mid-2008, social scientists represented just over a quarter of all CGIAR internationally recruited staff in mid-2008, of whom 60% were economists.

4. Potential recommendations and suggestions

Gender issues

Potential recommendation: A4NH should redraft its gender strategy for Phase 2, strengthening the theory of change for gender work and proactively searching for the resources needed.

Who is responsible: A4NH Director and A4NH Gender research coordinator

Timing: In time to inform Phase II resourcing plans

⁵² In fact, only 42% of the sample research projects examined in the project document review mentioned previously specified a clear target group for their work.

⁵³ Made by senior social scientists examining names in the A4NH staff list.

Suggestions:

- See specific suggestions on the A4NH Gender Strategy in Section 2
- Work with the Consortium gender specialist(s) to integrate competencies around ANH-gender into the gender competencies that are being developed

Equity issues

Recommendation: Make a commitment to systematically address social equity issues, including attention to disaggregated data and social analysis.

(S) Commission a study on systems and resources needed to integrate equity more fully into the program.

i) Include ‘attention to social equity’ as a basic quality requirement for A4NH research, wherever relevant.

ii) Build researcher capacity on social equity issues in ANH.

(S) The existing gender and nutrition network could broaden out to cover wider equity issues – or these could be covered by another subgroup in a wider ANH Community of Practice.

(S) Definition of basic researcher competencies in ANH (see recommendations in main report) could include understanding of basic social equity issues and their implications for ANH research and development work.

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Background paper 4 – Research management and quality of science⁵⁴

Approach

This note examines the science quality of research supported by A4NH in its first three years (2012-14). The quality of science has been assessed by looking at (1) research management processes, (2) research inputs and (3) research outputs at both program and project levels, including strategic and operational functions.

The quality of strategic research management is the driver to achieving program results along the impact pathway. It includes applying state-of-the-art thinking to problem identification, prioritization, and research design, and ensures that institutional resources and support services are adequate to implement the research program. It also reinforces information sharing and knowledge management and coordination/collaboration among research teams and partners. The principal focus for strategic management in this evaluation will be on CRP program and Flagship management, with consideration given to project management within each Flagship for chosen research lines.

At an operational level, the quality of science is reflected in the qualifications and composition of research teams, team leadership, coordination, facilities and support services, resources, and staff conditions which motivate performance. For high performing science organization, evaluations seek to identify innovative and novel approaches and the generation and dissemination of research results.

A combination of primary data collection⁵⁵ and available secondary sources, including recent evaluations, provides the information for science quality findings. These are complemented by analyses conducted by members of the evaluation team on outputs and publications, seed grants and gender.

Research management processes

Science quality is included as part of the systems analysis of research management undertaken in this evaluation. It is informed by research evaluation approaches being used in various international settings (Guthrie, *et al* 2013, REF 2011) and emphasizes the essential elements of research planning, implementation and results generation and use as noted below:

1. **Research planning**, including:
 - **Impact orientation of research:** Is research aligned with higher level objectives and likely to contribute to impacts at scale? Is there a focus on gender and equity issues?

⁵⁴ This note has been prepared by Diana McLean with inputs from Julia Compton

⁵⁵ (3) mini-surveys: all A4NH staff, seed grant researchers and external stakeholders; (38) projects document review; self-evaluation: CFP/PMC; focus group discussions with researchers and Center leaders; semi-structured interviews: PMC, IAC, CFPs, researchers, partners, donors, stakeholders; country visits of 18 projects: Bangladesh, India and Kenya; CGIAR Center visits: IFPRI, ILRI, ICRISAT, ICRAF, Bioversity and in-country leaders of IRRI and CIP; observation of IAC and technical meetings.

- **Research priority setting:** Is there a clear and credible priority-setting process?
 - **Research design and approval:** Is there a clear proposal or conceptualization process which includes well-articulated research issues, questions, hypotheses, methods, work plans and budgets, informed by high quality scientific input and reviewed through an internal or external peer or expert review process? Have all important clearances (e.g. ethics, environmental) been obtained?
 - **Research innovation:** Is A4NH research innovative in terms of methods, partnerships and/or expectations of uptake?
2. **Research implementation**, including:
- **Institutional support:** To what extent do A4NH, IFPRI and participating Centers create the conditions and incentives to ensure high quality scientific output?
 - **Scientific expertise and leadership:** Does A4NH have the number, quality and level of researchers and research leaders to deliver relevant high quality scientific output?
 - **Coordination:** Is there effective and efficient coordination among CG Centers, CRPs and other partners? Are there reasonable administrative overheads and transaction costs?
 - **Research inputs:** Does A4NH have access to the facilities, resources and other inputs to conduct quality research? Are financial resources adequate, stable and timely?
 - **Performance management:** Are there effective and efficient performance-based management systems, including clearly defined results, work planning and budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge sharing/learning?
3. **Research results**, including:
- **Research outputs:** Are research outputs of high quality and do they address A4NH objectives? Have they been delivered in an efficient manner? Have there been positive or negative unplanned effects?
 - **Gender/equity sensitivity:** Do research outputs consider gender and other equity issues?
 - **Information management, communications and dissemination:** How effectively are research results stored, communicated and disseminated and are there feedback loops for institutional learning?

Research Planning: impact orientation, research prioritization, design and approval and innovation

Impact orientation

The Phase 1 A4NH proposal (Oct 2011) outlined an impact pathway that addressed the strategic goal to “work to accelerate progress in improving the nutrition and health of poor people” through four components: value chains, biofortification, control of agriculture-associated diseases, and integrated agriculture, nutrition and health development programs and policies. These four components were reportedly selected “based on discussions and brainstorming with representatives from 12 CGIAR centers and a wide range of partners.” From this, A4NH proposed three impact pathways: (1) value chains that provide more nutritious and safer foods; (2) development programs that successfully

integrate agriculture, nutrition, and health; and (3) policy that promotes a supportive and enabling cross-sectoral policymaking process and investment environment. The original proposal also detailed a gender research strategy.

Additional work was done in 2013 to further refine the results framework.⁵⁶ It identified four Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs): better quality diet, reduced exposure to agriculture-associated diseases, empowerment of women and poor communities, and better cross-sector policies, programs and investments. This resulted in seven research areas organized within the four Flagships, with some overlap:

1. Breeding crops with enhanced levels of micronutrients (biofortification)
2. Improving maternal and child nutrition through integrated agriculture-nutrition-health programs (integrated programs)
3. Managing key food safety risks facing poor consumers (food safety)
4. Enabling nutrition and health-sensitive agricultural policy (cross-sectoral processes)
5. Supporting value chains to deliver healthier dietary transitions (value chains and healthy diets)
6. Managing infectious disease risks associated with agriculture (agriculture disease risks)
7. Supporting nutrition and health-sensitive landscapes (nutrition-sensitive landscapes)

While A4NH has made progress to develop and improve upon its results framework in Phase 1, using this information to guide and inform research requires strong staff sensitization and good performance management systems. Acknowledging this, more emphasis has been placed since the Phase 1 extension (2015-16) to develop the theories of change (2014) needed to clearly situate research on an impact pathway. Some progress has been made since 2012 to develop better project reporting methods though this does not yet address results monitoring and reporting in a comprehensive way.

The Phase 2 planning process aims to be more strategic in delineating A4NH Flagships and Clusters. Consultation is underway to identify areas of comparative advantage and to set priorities. A Flagship planning tool for Phase 2 was introduced in March 2015 to present thoughts on strategic relevance; the scale, extent of problem and targets; theories of change; partnerships and capacity development; expertise, capability and track record; and budget. Strong leadership and a disciplined approach will be needed to use this tool effectively, including coordination mechanisms and clearer communications - both identified as problematic in surveys and interviews with researchers and Center Focal Points.

Research prioritization

A4NH has not instituted a systematic, transparent *ex ante* priority setting process for developing its portfolio. Research priority setting and planning in A4NH has been evolving since 2012 when Phase 1 projects were first approved. A4NH's institutional landscape is complex in that 11 CGIAR Centers

⁵⁶ A4NH (2013) *Results Framework, Future Research Areas and Potential for Impact Discussion Document* (Sept 30, 2013)

participate. For 2012, the inception year of Phase 1, A4NH W1/W2 funding was allocated by the Consortium as a Center “entitlement” with approximately \$13 million for Centers and \$1.5 million for management. A4NH management worked with Centers to understand their restricted and W1/W2 portfolio using a set of project data forms that included key information, including gender. This was not a formal proposal process but rather an information gathering process to understand how they were using their W1/W2 funds. A4NH management was able to suggest some project improvements and what might be appropriate to include in A4NH flagships.

The process changed in 2013 and 2014 to include more discussions on work plans and “deliverables” with semi-annual work plan follow-ups as part of the annual funding contract (PPA). There was also an agreement with Centers that their W1/W2 funding would be maintained in 2013 and 2014 for them to build their capacity to better participate in A4NH and that additional W1/W2 funding would be used in three priority research areas – value chains for enhanced nutrition, aflatoxins and policy – and to develop new partnerships. There was also some additional funding for gender research to implement the 2012 gender strategy.

Resulting from these agreements, A4NH took several initiatives to address these priorities in a more proactive way by funding seed grants for value chains work, aflatoxin coordination efforts and new policy projects to begin in 2014 and 2015. Some targeted funding was also provided to HarvestPlus to establish a Latin American network to concentrate more strategically on a food basket versus a commodity approach. Similarly, A4NH is aiming to improve longer-term nutrition programming through a new partnership with IFAD and through several public-private partnerships. A nutritionist has also been funded to work with the AU in CAADP programming. These forward looking, more strategic decisions address some concerns about A4NH priority setting; they were initiated by the PMU, advised by IAC and agreed with the PMC.

At Flagship level, discussions are held on resource mobilization priorities, financing and research methods, though researchers describe varying degrees of active Flagship and Cluster management. In terms of how decisions are made overall and how resources are allocated, a number of researchers have commented that the processes are not communicated effectively nor done in a transparent manner: 19% of mini-survey respondents noted problems with lack of trust, tensions and competition between Centers and issues of not getting fair shares of funding; 28% noted poor communications between A4NH and the Centers.

At the present time, the A4NH Director describes the project planning approach as a “hybrid” – some with Centers and with Flagship leaders, then trying to connect the two. The Center Performance Summaries have led to one major funding re-allocation associated with poor performance. The aim in the extension and Phase 2 periods is to move to a more coordinated CRP and Flagship planning, monitoring and evaluation approach.

Given this situation which is compounded by the over-riding influence of large bilateral projects and Flagships of variable composition, leadership and momentum, the Flagship portfolios look more like

compilations of individual projects, rather than a “sub-program” which is larger than the sum of its parts. The exception to this is HarvestPlus which was already conceived and managed as a unified program and which was blended into A4NH at its inception as the biofortification flagship.

Research design and approval: proposals and clearances

Proposals To assess the quality of research designs, the evaluation tried to obtain research proposals or concept notes from the A4NH project database or directly from Principal Investigators. The review of project documentation revealed that most project files did not include an identifiable research proposal. Concept notes or proposals were available for some bilateral projects, though these did not necessarily include what would be considered standard in good research proposals: a clear definition of the problem, situated in past or ongoing research and supported by a strong literature review; a detailed methods section; a results chain, identifying assumptions and risks and mitigation measures; a detailed work plan and budget; the performance monitoring and reporting system to be used; and a clear communications/dissemination strategy. Depending on the research itself, this might also include a discussion of gender and other equity considerations, environmental impacts, partnerships and the effects of and on policies. The document review noted some issues in covering these essential elements, for example, only 50% had clear outputs and outcomes, of which 13% related to strategic impact pathways; only 34% mentioned assumptions and risks and the analysis was often weak; and only 7% of projects clearly described monitoring responsibilities, 55% had measurable indicators and 42% reported regularly against an M&E framework.

An exception to the above findings is the awarding in 2013 of seed grants to foster expanded research capacity in Flagship 1 (value chains). While it is positive that A4NH took this initiative to create a grant facility, it could have been improved through a more structured and transparent proposal review process. Expert reviewers were asked to address a set of questions when reviewing proposals, however, the evaluation team was unable to locate detailed scoring guidance which would be typical of a rigorous proposal review mechanism; without this there can be considerable interpretation by reviewers.

Clearances The next stage of a good design and approval process is obtaining sufficient peer or expert reviews of the proposal and obtaining relevant clearances, for example, for ethics and environmental impacts. In addition to weaknesses in the proposals themselves, in Phase 1 proposal review processes have been variable. The host Centers have been principally responsible for ensuring good research designs and the roles of A4NH, Flagship leaders and cluster leaders are less apparent. Researchers interviewed note a variety of guidance and oversight involvement, with few noting actual peer review of proposed research. The project document review explicitly noted peer reviews in only 5% of projects. The PMU has provided comments on individual projects and at the end of 2014 there was a more detailed discussion on Center roles and contributions in A4NH as a program, as reflected in the Center Performance Summaries. It is not clear to what extent A4NH provides guidance or a “challenge function” to ensure high quality research designs.

The need for clearances is a matter of Center, CRP, donor and national policies and procedures derive from these. The document review found that only 24% described an ethical clearances procedure, for example, something critical for many of the research areas of A4NH which often involve human and animal subjects and which aim to ultimately impact on human nutrition and health. Beyond the need for due diligence, there is a reputational risk to both the CGIAR and A4NH if ethical clearances are not done consistently and well.

Due to its importance, the evaluation team looked closely at ethics and ethical clearances. Currently, projects do not have to report on ethical issues/clearances to CRPs, CRPs do not have to report on ethics or clearances in their annual reports to the Consortium Office. A4NH does not apply a consistent standard for ethical clearances across participating Centers for research involving human and animal subjects. According to the 2014 A4NH Annual Reports, some Centers (Bioversity, CIP, ICRAF, ICRISAT, WorldFish) use *only* national ethical clearance processes and these vary a lot in quality by country and institution within the country. Others use a combination of internal ethical clearance processes with national or donor-required processes (IITA since 2014, IFPRI, and ILRI). IFPRI divisions – HarvestPlus, MTID and PHND – follow IFPRI’s internal review process which includes staff training in ethics and project-specific clearance processes.

Good practice goes beyond setting a standard for internal review and ethical clearances and includes staff training appropriate to the country and research topic. Since many ethical issues arise in the field, often with partners or contracted enumerators, research managers need to find ways to improve the skills of these individuals and factor these additional costs into the research budget.

Examples of ethical problems noted in this evaluation were: an enumerator gossiping in a public place about an interviewed farmer, with serious consequences; project partners who exaggerated the health benefits of CGIAR varieties to sell them to farmers; and farmers encouraged to form cooperatives around particular technologies without adequate consideration of longer-term risks or social effects. Other common ethical research issues mentioned included attribution of authorship, the time taken from collaborating farmers and whether and how much to reward them for participating. It is clear that the issues of ethical clearance are important and they could pose significant reputational risks if not addressed.

Innovation.

The original A4NH proposal discussed three types of innovation:

- Fostering new partnerships to ensure that agriculture, nutrition, and health are integrated and delivered—at the community level, in large development programs, and in policymaking.
- Undertaking cutting-edge research to meet emerging challenges—for instance, by working with partners to design mechanisms for enhancing nutrition along the agricultural value chain and applying new molecular biology tools informed by population biology and social research to improve the understanding of how agricultural intensification can be more sustainably managed.

- Investing in designing new tools and approaches to build the evidence base to usefully guide policy and practice across sectors.

Developing cross-sectoral programming in agriculture, nutrition and health is itself an innovation within the CGIAR which, if fully integrated, would result in many new technologies, perspectives and partnerships. There is evidence from project documentation, interviews with researchers and partners and the mini-survey that new types of partnerships and collaborations have been forged in A4NH projects, including technical and social scientists working more closely together, public and private sector partnerships and engagement with informal markets and small producers in value chains of high economic potential.

This evaluation was not intended to do an in-depth assessment of innovation, however, some examples were highlighted in A4NH Annual Reports (2013,14), including innovative pulse research on value chains in India using public-private partnerships; progress on women’s ownership and control over assets in the Gender, Agriculture and Assets Project (GAAP), innovations in communications using video for the Gender-Nutrition Ideas Exchange hosted on the A4NH website; and training and certifying food processors in informal markets. For 2015, they note the use of a strategic innovation fund to make small grant awards in support of adding more gender perspective to existing projects.

CFPs and researchers note that A4NH has enabled new lines of research - often multi-center and multi-disciplinary - which would not have occurred pre-CRP. Many think that there will be new and expanding fields in ANH with potential to innovate.

Research implementation: institutional support, scientific expertise and leadership, coordination, research inputs and performance management

Institutional support

Science quality is dependent on strong institutions to provide access to qualified and motivated researchers and staff; research facilities and funds; scientific support for designing and implementing research, including mentoring younger researchers; and capacity development opportunities for staff and partners. In A4NH this has been largely the responsibility of the 11 CGIAR Centers where researchers are located. While not tasked with institutional assessments of each Center, the evaluation team noted variability in some of these functions among the eleven Centers participating in A4NH, including in the quality assurance of research designs and statistical analyses and in human resource management systems, discussed elsewhere in this report.

IFPRI is the lead center of A4NH and manages three of the four Flagships (one of which is HarvestPlus which has its own research management systems), as well as approximately 60% of the A4NH budget. As such its systems and administrative structures support much of what occurs in A4NH. A 2014 management review of IFPRI determined that it is a “generally well-run place that generates high quality research that is globally recognized. The majority of issues raised in the review fall in the zones of

operating capabilities, leveraging tangible assets and HR management and culture.” It recommended changes in how divisions support CRPs and improvements in coordination at HQ and with country offices.

A4NH management also has an institutional support role, principally by providing scientific support for research design and capacity development opportunities for staff and partners. A4NH has helped to engage research and research assistant staff and has funded some equipment to Centers to improve research, these to be managed by the host Centers. The Planning and Management Committee (PMC) and the Center Focal Points (CFP) meet regularly in face-to-face and virtual meetings to update one another and deal with financial and administrative issues, such as, developing work plans, the extension to Phase 1, reactions to budget cuts and Phase 2 planning. Interviews with CFPs note a frustration that these are principally administrative meetings and not science meetings.

The other structures providing institutional support in A4NH are flagship and cluster research managers. In its 2014 Annual Report to the Consortium Office, A4NH management notes that “progress across the four flagships has been mixed, largely due to differences in resources (critical mass of people and funding) and experience. For the larger and more mature research flagships of Biofortification and Integrated Programs and Policies, there is much more experience and skill in managing all the elements of resource mobilization, and research planning, management, and reporting required to achieve results.” Flagship managers and researchers also note variability in how clusters are managed, noting that they are sometimes just clustered on paper and not led as a research sub-program.

When asked an open question about positive aspects of A4NH in the mini-survey, several aspects of institutional support were noted: 18% cited flexible funding and CRP support, 12% noted opportunities for learning and 11% cited good systems and management. Conversely, 32% of the respondents noted increased administrative and reporting workloads and 16% had issues with funding instability.

Scientific expertise and leadership

In terms of scientist numbers and qualifications, there is no central database in A4NH which describes its collaborating scientists by seniority, sex or disciplines. These records are held at individual Centers and times allocated to A4NH are apportioned based on how researchers are “mapped” to it and other CRPs. A4NH has collected staff numbers by type and gender (Table 5) A4NH has an estimated 380 associated staff of whom nearly half (168) are research and admin support staff⁵⁷; nearly half are associated with HarvestPlus. Women comprise 46% of all staff and 26% of senior scientific staff (directors/team leaders/Pis/senior scientists), including two of the four flagship leaders. The overall proportion of senior staff (as above) to total scientists (excluding research and admin support staff) is 39% which seems high, although it is difficult to benchmark this figure in a meaningful way, as the needs of A4NH research programs vary dramatically, from plant breeding programs to impact evaluations.

⁵⁷ All numbers taken from evaluation team analysis of staff list compiled by A4NH PMU June 2015

Table 5: A4NH staff by category and gender

Role	Female	Male	Total	F/M
Director/Team Leader	8	19	27	0.42
Principal Investigator/Senior Scientist	12	37	49	0.32
Scientist	14	45	59	0.31
Post-doc/Research Fellows	31	26	57	1.19
Other Research and Admin Support staff	100	68	168	1.47
Total	165	195	360	0.85

Source: A4NH CRP-Commissioned External Evaluation Background paper on gender and equity

These statistics on numbers and levels of scientific expertise are not sufficient to come to any conclusions on the adequacy of A4NH staffing. As noted earlier, A4NH management in its Annual Report to the CO (2014) raised some issues with critical mass and funding within Flagships. Observations were mixed on capacity and disciplinary coverage from project and researcher interviews. Most felt their projects were adequately staffed, some appreciated the flexibility A4NH had shown to assist with additional hiring (particularly for affordable research assistants, post-docs, etc.) and some noted that more staff would have extended reach or accelerated scaling up. It was noted in some interviews that people were not hired who were needed to complement A4NH researchers in such fields as business development, social entrepreneurship and food processing. Researchers also noted that budget cuts in 2015 resulted in the delayed hiring and laying-off of some scientific and administrative staff.

Being over-worked is a common complaint among interviewees and 28% of the mini-survey respondents. The IFPRI Management Review (2014) noted that some staff members are working 60-70 hours per week, allocating their time *pro rata* in the time recording system beyond full-time hours. Some researchers have “over-promised” or under-estimated the time and costs of project implementation, perhaps to attract bilateral funding or through an overly optimistic position on what is possible. Some research managers and PIs have noted that they do not record the time spent administering research, nor do they allocate time in work planning for this. For whatever reason, these observations imply that A4NH staff numbers are not adequate for the work being undertaken.

Beyond staff numbers, the evaluation examined available metrics on the quality of A4NH scientists. One approach is to look at ISI publication rates as a proxy for quality and performance. Though ISI publication rates are only one facet of assessing scientific merit, it is illustrative of the standing of A4NH vis-a-vis other CRPs. The 2014 Elsevier study, *Research Performance of CGIAR Research Programs*, concluded that A4NH is one of two CRPs with the most senior researchers and highest H-index for publications, scoring 11.45 within a range of 6.38 and 17.50 for average H-index/researcher. This study however was not comprehensive, referring to only 11 researchers in A4NH.

These rankings do not take into account other essential attributes – such as capacities in leadership, communication and research project management – that are also vital to ensuring science quality, especially in a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral research-for-development program. Some of these

issues of staff recruitment, appraisal and reward systems – and how varying Centers are approaching them - are discussed in the human resources management background paper for this evaluation. It is important to stress here that creating a productive science environment rests on HR policies which recognize and reward researchers for more than their capacity to produce ISI publications.

In addition to the numbers and quality of research staff, the evaluation looked at scientific leadership. As with all CRPs involving numerous participating Centers, it is dispersed in A4NH. The research itself is directly hosted and supported by the scientists' centers to which they are also accountable. The Centers provide the structures, leadership and processes to ensure science quality. In interviews, researchers have reported varying degrees of engagement of A4NH flagship and cluster managers in terms of priority setting, technical leadership, resource mobilization and coordination. Researchers report that the quality of research is more often dependent on the strengths of the individual principal investigators and their teams. In some Centers, including IFPRI, the divisional structures, for example, MTID and PHND, are providing the principal scientific leadership for A4NH and other CRP work, depending on how research projects have been "mapped". This being said, the A4NH Director and Flagship leaders can and do weigh in on technical matters and on how funds are spent. When asked open-ended questions in the mini-survey on positive aspects of A4NH, 28% noted its inspiring mission and leadership. Problems however were also cited, including 28% being concerned by inefficiencies and/or lack of realism in management.

Coordination

Good research coordination goes beyond information sharing and under best practice would result in joint priority setting, planning and implementation. To date, A4NH coordination varies within Flagships and Clusters, across Flagships, and across participating Centers. There is far more evidence to support information sharing than joint research. Information sharing however is a first step and better coordination of work between Centers and disciplines was cited as the most positive aspect of A4NH (47% of open-ended responses) in the mini-survey. A4NH management, Flagship leaders, CFPs and researchers have all noted that much more could be done to prioritize research and develop joint research areas.

One good example of coordination within A4NH is among the mycotoxin researchers of the CGIAR, most who work within the food safety/aflatoxin cluster. Mycotoxin research is done by five CGIAR Centers: CIMMYT, ICRISAT, IITA, ILRI/BecA and IFPRI in three CRPs: A4NH, Maize and Grain Legumes. All but CIMMYT are part of A4NH. In 2012, a formal CGIAR mycotoxin research coordination group was instituted. Up to that time, collaboration or information exchange was sporadic, regionalized or based on individual scientist relationships. While progress has been made in Phase 1, there are more opportunities in Phase 2 for integration and harmonization of research approaches.

This coordination group has constituted three working groups thus far on (i) evidence for risk and risk mitigation, (ii) diagnostic for use and (iii) population biology for control, and has produced a synthesis report, *CGIAR Aflatoxin Research Synthesis* (November 2014). Since 2013, A4NH has provided a full-time international staff position to assist with coordination and communications through its \$ 150,000

Aflatoxin coordination across the CGIAR project, funded entirely through W1/W2. It aims to identify research gaps in aflatoxin research and provide evidence, risk assessments and best-bet interventions for policy makers.

The October 2014 PMC-CPF meeting identified areas for more coordination - policy engagement, effect of biocontrol on public health, economics, and health trials – and the need to identify gaps and clarify areas of coordination. For Phase 2 they expressed the need for a high-level conversation on the role of the CGIAR and A4NH in health research. Further reflection by the coordination group (March 25, 2015) noted an interest in having more regular working level meetings within the CGIAR for science sharing and a more coordinated approach to scaling up and out. The experience of aflatoxin coordination demonstrates A4NH successes as well as challenges. There are transaction costs to coordination and to working jointly on research; meetings alone have not been sufficient to bring about this more coordinated work. Having significant amounts of research funding available through A4NH would provide an important incentive to taking coordination to the next level.

For coordination overall, in its 2014 Annual Report to the Consortium Office, A4NH management noted that budget cuts to W1/W2 funding undermined commitments to partners and interrupted investments in coordination and management improvements that are central to CRP performance.

Research inputs

Research inputs include the facilities, support services and financial resources that enable or constrain quality research. The CGIAR Centers are noted for having good physical infrastructure, laboratory and IT services, transportation and other support services and this was corroborated by interviews with research staff and CFPs. A4NH was credited with providing updated equipment, for instance to analyze aflatoxins, in several Centers and with collaborating partners.

Another essential aspect of support is the communications and knowledge sharing functions – critical to research for development organizations for both internal and external audiences. As with other research supports, the participating Centers provide some of these services to A4NH and their research teams, including events facilitation, producing stories and web content, publications reviews, etc. As the lead Center, IFPRI provides significant support through its Communications and Knowledge Management Division to A4NH. A4NH has also engaged a half-time Communications staff member in the PMU. In recent years, IFPRI has grown considerably - according to the 2014 management review, its annual budget has increased by 170% between 2009 and 2014 while its staff numbers have increased by 53% in the same period. The staff members responsible for information management, communications and knowledge sharing at IFPRI are handling considerably increased workloads without commensurate increases in staff. Without having conducted a workload analysis, it is not possible to know in what ways these staff should be supplemented to take on the increased workloads associated with growing programs. If A4NH attracts even more funding in Phase 2 – with concomitant staff increases and expectations of increased delivery – the need to plan for this expansion in information, communications and knowledge management is clear.

They note that more requests are received for communications assistance – and usually at the end of the research process rather than during the planning stage – and that knowledge management is underserved. They also acknowledge the need to have more common norms for things like branding among the CRPs and for better coordination among center communications and knowledge management specialists. To maximize efficiencies, the A4NH communications specialist has made some inroads with participating Centers' communications groups to share relevant information and to cross-post when possible.

Less favorable in this analysis is the financing situation. While W1/W2 funds were used tactically in many projects to improve research through the provision of equipment or additional staff, the funding shortfalls of 2014 and 2015 created untenable situations for many projects, resulting in the extreme in the laying off of research staff (ILRI) and in reduced activities with partners. In the mini-survey, 16% of respondents cited problems with unstable funding; the document review noted resource problems in 35% of the projects. A lack of transparency around resource allocation and problems associated with budget cuts were corroborated in interviews with researchers, Flagship leaders and CFPs.

Performance management

Results-based approaches in research rely on good quality performance management systems, including clearly defined outputs and outcomes, work planning and budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge sharing. A4NH has been improving its processes since 2012 but there are still issues which need to be addressed. Performance reporting is time-consuming and would benefit from better guidance, streamlining, instituting more of a results focus in reporting (beyond deliverables) and more gender disaggregation. Tracking deliverables is not sufficient to manage for impact and the current reporting requirements were identified by 32% of mini-survey respondents as contributing to a highly burdensome administrative system. As many researchers are engaged in more than one CRP and often a number of projects, their reporting functions are often complex and not clear⁵⁸, requiring in some cases the hiring of additional administrative assistants to comply with the needs of CRPs, Flagships, the CO, the Centers and donors.

As noted earlier, A4NH has been developing theories of change and refining impact pathways for research outputs since 2014. This includes bringing researchers and research managers more on board to ensure that activities, outputs and outcomes address the intermediate and strategic objectives of A4NH. The project document review supports the findings that more work needs to be done to clarify outputs and outcomes, including assumptions and risks and to relate them to impact pathways.⁵⁹

How work plans and budgets were developed and funded was seen as particularly problematic. Done by researchers using procedures required by Centers and donors, 28% of mini-survey respondents found inefficiencies or lack of realism in the time and amount of funds indicated. There have also been a

⁵⁸ Even in a relatively more coordinated program on aflatoxins, some researchers reported directly to the CRP Director and others reported to the Flagship.

⁵⁹ Only 50% of the project documents had clear outputs and outcomes, 34% discussed assumptions and risks and 13% related to strategic impact pathways.

number of unplanned deliverables in A4NH projects, perhaps resulting from inadequate work planning or from circumstances and opportunities that arose after work plans were approved. Beyond the research itself, the time needed to coordinate and manage A4NH was often not explicit in work plans and was “borrowed” from other projects. Once approved, respondents also noted that funding allocations to Centers and to projects was not done in a transparent way. Similarly, how budget cuts were dealt with was not understood.

Performance monitoring also needs improvement in A4NH, based on evidence from the project document review and interviews with research teams, so that managers can clearly see and assess project situations and progress. From the project document review, only 37% had clear monitoring roles and responsibilities, 55% had measurable indicators, 32% of indicators were disaggregated by gender, 8% of indicators were disaggregated by other groups, 45% reported regularly against an M&E framework, and 5% had external reviews. Interviewees noted problems with the multitude of reports, reporting formats and timing and the lack of feedback received on these reports⁶⁰.

While there is evidence to support the use of performance information to improve subsequent project-level activities, there is a lack of cross-fertilization of information and learning across projects, Flagships and CRPs. There is considerable potential for A4NH to improve this situation, particularly as ANH is itself a novel field within the CGIAR.

Research results: research outputs, gender/equity sensitivity and information management, communications and dissemination

Research outputs

To assess research outputs, the evaluation team analyzed the deliverables database, reviewed A4NH Annual Reports, the Center Performance Summaries (2015) and available evaluations⁶¹, and interviewed researchers and research managers. Through this a picture emerges of productive – even inspired - research teams who complete a variety of deliverables with impressive reach in some cases.

When analyzing productivity, it is important to note that there are some problems using the indicators defined for annual reporting in terms of getting a clear and useful picture of what A4NH accomplishes. They (1) do not necessarily relate clearly to the outputs and outcomes of an impact pathway, (2) are

⁶⁰ Cases exist of research managers reporting to several CRPs and multiple donors, sometimes on the same projects depending on how activities are mapped and funded.

⁶¹ Formal, technical program evaluations were available for HarvestPlus Phase II (2012) and Food Safety Research (2015).

open to some interpretation and hard to verify, and (3) are not comparable. Deliverables are not always equivalent as “outputs” – some being more synonymous with “activities” in results chain parlance - and they have not always been clearly linked to higher order outputs and outcomes along an impact pathway. This limits their usefulness in assessing the actual progress A4NH has made to deliver its outputs and ultimately outcomes. So saying, the deliverables indicators can be used to track progress against work plans but do not adequately reflect results performance.

A4NH has recently made some progress in this regard, as discussed earlier, to define what is meant by outputs and outcomes and to situate research more clearly within theories of change. It will be important for A4NH to continue to improve its project and program reporting. The next step will be to create performance monitoring systems – preferably systematized throughout the CGIAR – which change the reporting requirements to more closely reflect results at different levels.

The deliverables analysis (Annex I of the evaluation report) also showed that A4NH is generally making good progress against work although there is some slippage – sometimes up to a year – which is more evident in some parts of the program than others. It is difficult to make comparisons based on deliverables as Flagships report in different ways and produce different types of ‘deliverables’.

Publications hold a special importance in research organizations, representing the culmination of a phase of work, the communication of important “outputs”. To gain a better appreciation for refereed publications, the evaluation drew on the findings of the Annual Reports to the Consortium Office and the Center Performance Summaries, the 2014 Elsevier study, *Research Performance of CGIAR Research Programs*, and a publications analysis by the evaluation team (see Annex J of the evaluation report).

The Elsevier study, *Research Performance of CGIAR Research Programs (2014)*, examined the publications output of all 15 CRPs and the citation impact of CRP-generated publications for the 2012-2013 period. It is not clear why they based their findings on a sub-set of publications reported by A4NH for the same period, nor why they analyzed the output of a sub-set of senior researchers. Based on their analysis, A4NH was on par in terms of productivity with other CRPs, and was the highest performer in terms of citation impact, having a Field Weighted Citation Index (FWCI) of 2.75 within a range of 1.0-2.75. The sampling issues however make deriving conclusions from this study difficult.

The Annual Reports and the Center Performance Summaries give a more interesting view of what A4NH is doing. A4NH is more complex than some CRPs in that it covers a wide spectrum of disciplines, such as plant breeding, natural resource management, economics and social science, policy analysis, nutrition and human and animal health. Assessing science quality for each of these disciplines would require a diverse team of experts and different approaches and methods. Thus far, A4NH has benefited from only one technical program evaluation (biofortification) and one thematic evaluation (food safety). This is not unexpected as A4NH is relatively young and more of these programmatic/thematic evaluations (CCEEs) would be expected in coming years. Thus saying, the evaluation findings have been informed by the “self-assessment” of the Center Performance Summaries and the overall assessment of the PMU

in describing the progress, constraints and ways forward in the various disciplines covered by the 11 Centers.

The two available technical evaluations gave detailed research management and technical recommendations which are not repeated here. It is important to note that the Harvest Plus evaluation was very positive on the program's contribution to nutrition ("a lead institution in the area of micronutrients for human health", contributing to advance knowledge of metabolism, bioavailability, biomarkers, functional indicators, and algorithms to predict biological impact based on diet composition) and was positive about its breeding programs with some qualifiers on whether biofortified cultivars would be sufficiently superior in other desirable traits to be preferred by producers. The overall assessment of A4NH food safety research was also positive, noting its relevance and contribution to a growing evidence base.

Unplanned outputs

The evaluation was asked to look at unplanned effects – both positive and negative – of working with A4NH. Some unplanned deliverables were reported to A4NH, such as unexpected presentations, publications or policy briefings, however these are not systematically recorded. The most noted positive effects have been the opportunities to work with a more diverse group of partners, many of them novel in terms of their traditional partnerships. Some of these partners have enabled research in terms of coverage, access to beneficiary groups and research methods (particularly in nutrition). Individuals have also benefitted from additional funds in some instances which have allowed them to accelerate their research or their reach due to supplemental staff, training opportunities and provision of updated equipment (e.g. aflatoxin analysis). The negative effects have been principally due to reductions in funding – unexpected in that researchers had understood that reforms were supposed to result in more stable and predictable funding. The secondary effect of this is the increased individual efforts of researchers to mobilize resources, much of which is not enabled by A4NH or their Centers.

Gender/equity sensitivity

Gender issues are central to CRPs and are reported in the A4NH Annual Report under a separate section, entitled Gender Research Achievements, including a financial summary of gender by flagship and a designation of some of the indicators in terms of explicit targeting and assessment of effects on women. The latter shows parity and even advantages for women in training programs, though raises some questions about technology programs, their targets and achievements, particularly in NRM research.

Other equity issues (such as those involving ethnicity, disability, social group, age) have not received much attention to date and do not appear to be supported by CGIAR or A4NH policies or processes in terms of providing support to researchers.

Information management, communications and dissemination

Information management, communications and dissemination of research results are critically important for both institutional productivity and learning and for scaling up within a research-for-development paradigm. Information provided by subject matter specialists in A4NH, IFPRI and ILRI and

A4NH Center Performance Summaries were used to gain insights into what is working well and what might need improvements in these areas. We do not itemize here the deliverables associated with information and communications.

Information management is part of performance management, discussed earlier. An aspect of information management which is evolving in the CGIAR is the institution of open data policies supporting an open access mandate. In March 2012, the Consortium approved *CGIAR Principles on the Management of Intellectual Assets*. Each Center is responsible to build a repository of data that meets international standards. The Consortium White Paper (Gassner, et al, 2013) *Shifting the goalposts – from high impact journals to high impact data*, provided an overview of existing infrastructure for research data management and bioinformatics across CGIAR Centers; they are in varying stages of implementing these policies. Reportedly, there are delays with lots of data still “under the iceberg”, undocumented and unanalyzed.

Indicative of the variable stages of Centers in this process is the information in the Center Performance Summaries on open data; though required, many Centers left this section of the report blank (CIP, ICRISAT, IITA, ILRI) and others provided only partial information, such as, “several publications made available for open access” (ICRAF), “the HarvestPlus library aggregates all publications, including open access documents”, “MTID makes an effort to provide open access on all published articles”. Only Bioversity and Transform Nutrition (PHND) provided more details on their efforts to implement this policy, including the payment of fees.

Researchers are also raising questions about open data, such as, who owns the data? What to do with shared data where partner organizations might not want to comply or have barriers to doing so? At what point should data be open (e.g. only after publication or final use)? How can researchers provide the necessary explanations to external users to understand the data? Who pays the fees associated with open access data? Implementing this process is clearly a work in progress and one that may require far more dedicated resources to do thoroughly and in a timely manner.

Information sharing goes far beyond open data. Considerable feedback during this evaluation shows a desire among researchers and partners for more learning opportunities, more scientific exchange and technical networking and coordination. From an institutional point of view, the opportunity to learn from the novel experiences of integrating agriculture, nutrition and health into research organizations should not be missed. For improved project and program designs, how can lessons learned and best practices be captured for the next generation of initiatives? How can all of this be shared with donors, partners and other stakeholders? These are large challenges facing A4NH and critical for science quality and institutional health.

Conclusions and recommendations

A4NH is evolving in its research management processes as experiences with Phase 1 and its extension contribute to Phase 2 planning. Phase 1 is largely appreciated for enabling an integration of agriculture,

nutrition and health in ways that were not prevalent in the CGIAR prior to its reforms. Researchers and managers especially appreciate their access to new partners which has increased mutual learning and increased their expectations for results and scaling up. There have however been challenges in Phase 1 and lost opportunities. Many of the projects in Phase 1 are “legacy” projects, not included based on strong priority setting or an appreciation of the strengths and comparative advantages among Centers and partners, nor designed to create programmatic synergies and accelerated results.

Though efforts are underway to create a greater corporate understanding of the impact pathways which would lead to higher order ANH results, there are indications from the analysis that improvements are needed in research processes priority setting, research design and performance management. Some of these building blocks are really the purview of the CGIAR and should be applied in all Centers, based on best practices and a need for some unity of approach. A4NH management is hampered by the common issue within the CGIAR that research support and science quality are currently the responsibility of Centers. In a large CRP like A4NH with 11 participating Centers, one could expect variability across Centers in terms of how research is planned and implemented, including quality assurance. Becoming overly bureaucratic is also not the answer – a perception widely held that there is already too much redundancy in administration and reporting.

A4NH would benefit from instituting more frequent CCEEs of programs, flagships and themes (see Recommendation A7 ii)A. Though the PMU and Flagship leaders have maintained an overall perspective on their programs, expert reviews or evaluations could increase science quality and institutional learning.

The evaluation found that overall A4NH researchers are highly motivated, productive and encouraged to continue working in an integrated ANH program. Their continued involvement however should be based more on a strong proposal for inclusion, vetted using multi-disciplinary expert or peer reviewers and based on clear standards of what is required, such as, ethical clearances, gender analysis and inclusion, environmental assessment, coordination, partnerships, etc. Reporting also needs to be streamlined and centered more on outputs than simply deliverables.

It should be noted that one of the most prevalent issues raised in this evaluation concerned poor internal communications at all levels - A4NH, flagships, CFPs and Centers. Researchers and their partners are the life blood of the CRP and poor internal communications can undermine motivation and increase stress. Some existing managers may not be suited for these positions or may need some training to bring their skills up to speed.

Recommendations

Recommendation C 1 *We recommend that scientific leadership⁶² in the CGIAR System set standards for science quality and research management, and monitor and support Centers to achieve these.*

Suggestion: Science quality standards expected from Centers could include, inter alia:

- Clear ex-ante review of project proposals against standard criteria, involving specialists where needed (e.g. for environmental impact assessment)
- A process for checking research protocols with appropriately-qualified people (including specialist methods for areas such as nutrition and health)
- Rigorous ethical review
- Appropriate ethical training for both researchers and field staff undertaking work with human or animal subjects, including partners and subcontractors.
- Compliance with A4NH/Consortium policies, as relevant, for example open data

Recommendation A 1 *Adopt CGIAR standards of research quality as soon as these become available. In the meantime, set out clear expectations of the minimum research management processes required for all A4NH-supported research, making reference to these in key contractual agreements (e.g. PPAs), research program strategies, and in the Phase II proposal.*

- i) *A4NH should require Centers to adequately document all research projects supported by A4NH, showing what science quality processes have been followed. This would apply both to core A4NH research and that supported under the A4NH wider 'value added' program.*

Suggestions:

- As a strictly interim measure, A4NH could continue to provide additional information and support to researchers where strong Center systems do not exist, for example publishing links to e-courses on ethics, or links to statistical support
- Definition of basic researcher competencies in A4NH research management could include understanding of the principal ANH frameworks and some key ANH methods, as well as general research management and ethics competencies.

⁶² This recommendation was originally addressed to the ISPC and the Consortium, but we have reworded it in general terms, as there is an ongoing task force - set up following the MidTerm Review of the CGIAR Reform - to consider the ISPC's role and powers (ISPC Secretariat, 2015).

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Background paper 5 – Lessons from the seed grant process⁶³

This note summarizes lessons from the seed grant process conducted by the Value Chains Flagship, which are referred to in the main report. The evaluation team interviewed people involved in the seed grant process and surveyed 12 of the 13 Principle Investigators (PIs) who applied for seed grants, of whom 6 were successful. We found that the concept of seed grants was very useful and could be expanded more in Phase II of A4NH, although some details of the process could be improved.

Background

Thirteen research teams from 6 CGIAR Centers and 1 non-CGIAR research institution applied for the 'Seed grant proposals to foster expanded research capacity in A4NH component 1, Enhancing Nutrition in Value Chains'. The objective of the seed grant was to 'specifically encourage the design of integrated value chain research, through allowing the formation of partnerships (including those outside the CGIAR system), development of larger project proposals, and networking activities'. The value of the total seed grant was \$ 0.5 million to be divided among 5 projects.

The call for proposals (see Sub-Annex 3: Call for proposals) was circulated in January 2013 and the deadline for proposal submission was February 15, 2013. Researchers were asked to provide a brief proposal of 3 to 4 pages which had to include the following:

1. the Center's current research on nutrition sensitive value chains (if relevant);
2. the proposed new research or expansion of existing research;
3. how the proposed new research addresses 4.1 goals [*goals of the Value Chains flagship*] and the criteria for successful proposals outlined above;
4. constraints to developing new research (e.g. expertise, partners) and how those will be addressed with seed grant funds; and
5. budget for one year's activities

They were told that:

"Successful proposals will support development of major research projects that: 1) examine the value chain for at least one nutrient rich food; 2) evaluate diet quality, dietary deficiencies, and dietary outcomes; 3) address key constraints to improvements in dietary diversity; and 4) focus on poor consumers and their constraints to nutritional and dietary improvement, especially women and young children" (Call for seed grants proposals, Sub-Annex 3)

By March 2013 project leaders were informed of the decision taken by the seed grant committee. The committee consisted of six reviewers who were either members of the A4NH Independent Advisory Committee or researchers from IFPRI who were familiar with A4NH (IFPRI researchers were not allowed

⁶³ This background paper was prepared by Mysbah Balagamwala and Julia Compton

to submit proposals for the seed grant). The proposals were scored using the matrix given in Table 1 and each reviewer assigned a rank to each proposal along with additional comments. The committee provided feedback to both successful and unsuccessful proposals.

Table 1: Scoring matrix used by seed grants committee

Criteria for Evaluation	Score (Score 1 to 5, with 1 = little or none and 5 = excellent; N/A if unable to evaluate)
Focused on priorities for 4.1: enhancing nutrition in value chains for vulnerable consumers.	
Potential to develop a successful research project as a result of the proposed activities.	
Potential for the resulting research to be of high quality, including appropriate methods, and original, innovative approaches. Research track record of team.	
Potential for the resulting research to demonstrate or translate impact.	
Budget is adequate and appropriate.	

Source: A4NH PMU

Five successful projects were given seed grants of \$ 100,000. One of these was a combination of two proposals from two different centers (ICRAF and Bioversity), and each center was given half of the seed grant funding (i.e. \$ 50,000 each) for their research activities. One year was given to each successful project to complete their proposed activities. A list of proposals that were awarded the grant can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Successful proposals that were awarded the seed grant

Title of project	Center
Case Study: enhanced nutritional outcomes of populations through nutrition-sensitive agricultural promotion by a vegetable seed company in Bangladesh	AVDRC
Expanding research on dried small fish in Bangladesh to improve nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life and beyond	WorldFish
Investigation of the relationship between livestock value chains and nutritional status of women and children: a pilot study in Kenya	ILRI & partners
Building a Framework for Assessing the Impacts of Efforts to Enhance Access to Nutritious Foods Through In-depth Analysis of the Grameen Danone Case	ILRI & IDS
Leveraging fruit value chains for sustainable and healthier diets in Kenya and Peru	ICRAF/ Bioversity

Source: A4NH PMU

A workshop titled ‘Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) Workshop: Enhancing Nutrition in Value Chains’ was held in Washington, DC in June. The purpose of the workshop was ‘to review research plans for new activities in the A4NH program to enhance nutrition in value chains; to identify synergies and gaps in the research portfolio; and to explore potential partnerships to support and extend these activities’.

Survey of seed grant applicants

Methods

The evaluation team sent out a short survey via email in March 2015 to all 13 project leaders who applied for seed grants (see Box 1 in Sub-Annex 2: Survey questionnaire). The survey is a mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions. All but one responded to the survey (92 per cent response rate). Two responses were joint responses from different individuals working on the same project. This document summarizes the findings from the survey.

Findings

Rationale for applying

One of the main reasons for applying for the grant was the interest held by the applicant (or the center) in the theme of linking or leveraging value chains to improve dietary and nutrition outcomes. Some respondents applied for the grant to add a nutrition component to their existing project or build on their existing work. For many it was a chance to collect initial data or building partnerships for a potential large-scale project. They were three respondents who had an added objective of increasing their presence and/or participation in A4NH.

Application process

Almost all respondents think that the application form was easy to fill (see Table 3 in Sub-Annex 1) and that the decision process was quick (Table 4). There were, however, diverging views regarding the transparency of the decision-making process. Less than a third of the respondent's think that the decision-making was fully transparent, and all of them were successful in receiving the grant. However, even among those who received the grant there were still a few who did not think the seed grant process was completely transparent (Table 5).

As part of the seed grant process, all applicants were given feedback on their proposals and a justification was given if the proposal was not given a grant. There were some who thought that the feedback given was beneficial (including one respondent who was unsuccessful in receiving the grant) while several (including two who did receive the grant) did not think that the feedback given was helpful and/or justified. One respondent, who was happy with the overall justification of why their project was not successful was of the opinion that the review team was not diverse enough as they were only examining proposals through an 'economic lens'. There was a complaints from one respondent of not being informed about the winners of the seed grant.

Resources for the project (budget and time)

Half of the respondents who received the grant think that the funds they received for their project were sufficient (Table 7). One respondent said that the funds available were too little for a project that required original fieldwork. All of the grant recipients feel that the time for the project was not enough

or that it was not clear what the time-scale for the project was. Half of them said the time was not enough as a project of this type requires research publications at the end which can be time-consuming. Others said that a duration of one year is not enough to complete field work as there are always logistical and administrative delays in such activities. One of the respondents said that their project had experienced a delay in starting due to the late arrival of funds. There were suggestions for time-scales to be more flexible in the future according to each project's needs.

Project success

All of the respondents think that their project activities were successful (Table 6). Many find that interest in their research area has increased and that there is potential for receiving additional funding to do in-depth work. The start-up activities allowed some to formulate important partnerships but there was one respondent who felt that their project did not have enough funding to invest in partnerships. However, one respondent who feels that their project resulted in interesting findings and would like to do additional research but has experienced funding issues due to limited funding available for their research topic.

Additional funding

There was a common concern about many about the purpose of the seed grant. Many project leaders had expected A4NH to provide additional funding if the seed-grant activities were successful and felt that the purpose of a 'seed' grant was not fulfilled. Some respondents felt that the seed grant project results were not acted upon as they had not informed future spending priorities of A4NH. Half of the seed grant beneficiaries requested A4NH for additional funding (which they did not receive) and two of them asked for help with fundraising (Table 8). Only one project has so far been successful in raising additional funds (externally); the project leader noted that they 'have been successful – on my own – with much effort, long time needed for application and hard work as this is an area of priority for my present and future research'. Three respondents said that they were working on a proposal or waiting for an appropriate call for proposals that they can apply to.

Other concerns

Communication issues were noted to be an important concern by some respondents. They felt that the objectives of the seed grant program were not communicated properly and they were confused about the funding process.

Additional comments

Some of the issues that A4NH faced with the seed grants process can be explained by the change of leadership in Flagship 1. The first leader of Flagship 1 left IFPRI in 2014 while the current Flagship leader took over after a gap of a few months.

Sub-Annex 1: Summary tables

Table 3: Ease of filling the application form

Filling the application form	
Easy	10
Don't remember	1
Total	11

Table 4: Speed of decision-making process

Speed of decision-making process	Received grant?		
	Yes	No	Total
Quick enough	5	5	10
Too slow for me	1		1
Total	6	5	11

Table 5: Transparency of decision

Was the decision transparent?	Received grant?		
	Yes	No	Total
Transparent	3		3
Not fully transparent ⁶⁴	3	5	8
Total	6	5	11

Table 6: Success of start-up activities

Start-up activities successful?	
Yes	6
No	0
Total	6

Table 7: Sufficiency of funds

Seed grants fund enough?	
Yes	3
Mixed views	1
No	2
Total	6

Table 8: Additional funding and fundraising

	Asked A4NH for additional funding	Asked A4NH for fundraising help	Successful in getting fundraising help	Successful in raising other funds?
Yes	3	2	0	1
No	3	3	2	4
Total	6	5	2	5

⁶⁴ This includes respondents with mixed views or those who said the process was partially transparent (2) and those who said that the process was not transparent to them (6)

Sub-Annex 2: Survey questionnaire

Box 1: Seed grant survey

Dear users of A4NH seed (startup) grants

Greetings from the A4NH evaluation team! We would be very grateful if you could answer a very **short confidential questionnaire on seed grants**, just by answering this email. For the why, how, and when, please see below.

Why this questionnaire? The evaluation team would like to learn some lessons from the positives and negatives of seed grants as they were used in Phase 1 of A4NH, so that we can make recommendations for Phase 2. We have got some indications already (including from our first mini-E survey) that seed grants were appreciated but it was disappointing that there was no follow-up from A4NH. We would like to check how widespread this experience was, and also get additional information on the practical consequences.

How to answer? The easiest and quickest is simply to answer this email (just write a brief answer below each question below). In accordance with all our evaluation information, the emails will be archived in strict confidence and the information you give will be “anonymised” (removing identifiable details) before sharing with anyone. Alternatives: If you prefer to use my email address outside CGIAR, then please respond to XXX. If you prefer to be interviewed by skype, please let me know and we can set up an interview.

MINI-SURVEY ON SEED GRANTS

This is a quick mix of multiple choice and open questions. Please delete/highlight/underline multiple choice answer.

1. Name and Center (this information will be kept in strict confidence)
2. Why did you apply for an A4NH seed grant (what attracted you about this funding mechanism)
3. Application process: what was good and bad?
 - 3a Filling the application form: easy/hard/don't remember
 - 3b Decision process: quick enough for me/too slow for me/don't remember
 - 3c Decision: transparent to me/not transparent to me/don't remember
 - 3d Other comments on the application process (optional):
4. Did you receive a grant yes/no

If no, then you can stop the questionnaire here. Please feel free to add any other comments you like:

If yes, please answer these additional questions:

5. Funding and timing
 - 5a Were the seed grant funds enough for what you wanted to do? yes/no
 - 5b Did you also have to look for additional funding from other sources (that is, for this same set of start-up activities)? Yes/no
- If yes please give details

5c Was the one year time scale enough for what you wanted to do in the start-up phase?
yes/no

5d If you answered no, can you suggest what timescale would be better for future seed grants?

6. At the end of the seed grant, were your start-up activities successful / did you reach your aims? Yes/no

If you answered no, you can stop the questionnaire here – please feel free to add any additional comments below, especially on any next steps for you in this area of work.

If you answered yes, please answer these additional questions

7. Did you ask A4NH for additional funding to continue or expand the work after the seed grant? Yes/no

7a – if yes, were you successful? Yes/no

7b - please comment

8. Did you ask A4NH for help with fundraising from other sources to continue or expand the work after the seed grant?

8a – if yes, were you successful? Yes/no

8b - please comment

9. What have been the next steps for you after the seed grant finished? Did you get funding from other sources, or are you making applications for some?

Source: Seed grant survey carried out by the evaluation team

Sub-Annex 3: Call for proposals

Box 2: Call for seed grants proposals

A4NH Component 1: Enhancing Nutrition in Value Chains

Call for Seed Grant Proposals to Foster Expanded Research Capacity

The objective of this component is to leverage the value chain for select nutrient-rich (high value) foods to increase the demand for, access to, and consumption of affordable nutritious foods among poor rural and peri-urban marginal households, with particular emphasis on women, infants, and young children. Nutrient-rich foods include those that are rich in essential nutrients such as legumes, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, and dairy products. Thus, this component is focused on improving diets through encouraging dietary diversity, either of individual nutrient-rich foods or of groups of foods, such as all animal-source foods or traditional vegetables.

Value chains can be leveraged at different points for improving nutrition. Nutritional and diet quality can be enhanced through improved production practices, expanding seasonal availability, improved processing or storage that preserves nutritional quality or extends availability. Behavior change communication can motivate consumers to either produce more nutrient-rich foods or to purchase them. A multi-disciplinary approach is needed to identify barriers to improved nutrition and to assess the technical, economic, and nutritional implications of value chain interventions. Furthermore, how a single commodity focus may compare with a whole diet approach is not well understood and more research to test hypotheses about the links between value chain development and dietary improvement is needed.

Several promising research projects are already underway in different CGIAR centers that approach nutrition-sensitive value chains in different ways. Current projects may be limited, however, by the expertise currently available and the modest initial levels of funding under 4.1.

A program of seed grants to enable expanded activities is proposed. The purpose of this program is to specifically encourage the design of integrated value chain research, through allowing the formation of partnerships (including those outside the CGIAR system), development of larger project proposals, and networking activities. A CGIAR center (other than IFPRI) must be the lead partner for a proposal. Partnerships with other research organizations with relevant expertise are strongly encouraged. IFPRI researchers other than those currently supported by A4NH 4.1 may be partners in proposed activities. Up to 5 seed grants of \$50,000 to \$100,000 each will be awarded. If project development is successful, then the awardees would be supported through future increases in CRP4 funding and would be “showcased” for enhanced bilateral support.

Successful proposals will support development of major research projects that: 1) examine the value chain for at least one nutrient rich food; 2) evaluate diet quality, dietary deficiencies, and dietary outcomes; 3) address key constraints to improvements in dietary diversity; and 4) focus on poor consumers and their constraints to nutritional and dietary improvement, especially women and young children.

The major research projects that would be the result of seed grants might include some of the following activities. Nutrition-sensitive value chain research may include some or all of these elements:

- dietary and nutritional assessment of target population
- identification of how nutrient-rich food(s) would improve diets and/or address dietary deficiencies
- mapping of the value chain for nutrient-rich food(s)
- identification of constraints to expanded supply and demand of nutrient-rich food(s)
- developing and/or testing value chain interventions in a rigorous manner
- assessment of impact on diets of the target population

Examples of interventions might include one or more of the following:

- improvements in supply for target populations through addressing production constraints such as seasonality or through enhancing nutrient content at the production level;
- improvements in storage, handling, processing, or marketing to reduce loss, especially loss in nutritional quality;
- increased demand or improved nutritional quality through education or improved incentives for different actors in the value chain; or
- food product development to address constraints in availability, marketability, or nutritional quality.

Seed grants can either be for development of new ideas or for expansion of a current activity to more fully address nutrition goals. The time span for activity is one year or less. Brief (3-4 page) proposals should include: 1) the Center's current research on nutrition sensitive value chains (if relevant); 2) the proposed new research or expansion of existing research; 3) how the proposed new research addresses 4.1 goals and the criteria for successful proposals outlined above; 4) constraints to developing new research (eg., expertise, partners) and how those will be addressed with seed grant funds; 5) budget for one year's activities. Reviews of the literature or workshop activities, if proposed, should support the development of major new research projects.

Proposals are due February 15, 2013. Proposals will be reviewed by a committee of John McDermott, Laurian Unnevehr, and two researchers familiar with A4NH. External reviews will be sought from selected members of the A4NH Independent Advisory Committee. Decisions will be made and announced by March 15, prior to the March 21-22 PMC meeting. A follow up workshop with those receiving seed grants will be held after the PMC meeting. Please submit proposals by email to l.unnevehr@cgiar.org.