

SANREM CRSP Technical Committee Teleconference Minutes

11:00 am - 1:00 pm EDT, Friday, April 6, 2007

Call in number: 804-497-3932; Passcode: 1230

Participants:

Jeff Alwang, Virginia Tech
Jacqui Bauer, Indiana University
Mike Bertelsen, Virginia Tech
Theo Dillaha, Virginia Tech
Maria Elisa Christie, Virginia Tech
S.K. De Datta, Virginia Tech
Deanne Estrada, Virginia Tech
Conrad Heatwole, Virginia Tech
Chris Kosnik, USAID
Keith Moore, Virginia Tech

Saied Mostaghimi, Virginia Tech
Paul Mueller, North Carolina State
Elinor Ostrom, Indiana University
Chris Pannkuk, Washington State
Manuel Reyes, North Carolina A&T
Gerald Shively, Purdue
Alex Travis, Cornell
Corinne Valdivia, University of Missouri
Peter Wyeth, Washington State

Agenda:

The meeting was called to order by Jerry Shively, TC Chair.

1. Election of new TC Chairperson

After a brief discussion on the pros and cons of a long-term researcher or a TC member with no major project serving as the TC Chair, the consensus was that there was an advantage in having an “outsider” serve as the TC Chair and, Jerry Shively was reelected unanimously.

2. System Coordinator Technical Committee (SC/TC) representation at annual meeting

Selection of two Systems Coordinator Technical Committee (SC/TC) representatives to attend the SANREM CRSP Annual Meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia, June 23-27. SC/TC members that indicated they could attend included: Saied Mostaghimi, Paul Mueller, and Jerry Shively. Paul Mueller withdrew his nomination and Jerry Shively and Saied Mostaghimi were appointed as the TC/SC representatives by the TC/SC members.

3. Selection of TC Host Country Representative

Nominated individuals included:

Elizabeth Jiménez, Zamora, Bolivia, Valdivia Project
Toni Gandarillas, Bolivia, Alwang Project
William Gombya Ssembajjwe, Uganda, Ostrom Project
Anas Susila, Indonesia, Reyes Project

Each person nominating a candidate spoke briefly about his or her qualifications and a brief discussion followed. The group elected Elizabeth Jiménez Zamora unanimously.

4. FY2008 Budget Discussion and Planning: Theo Dillaha, Program Director SANREM CRSP gave an overview of the SANREM budget situation for next year. Key points included:

- USAID is tentatively cutting our budget 21.4% from that in our original cooperative agreement next fiscal year (2008). Projected funding is \$1,830,000 versus the \$2,347,830 in our Cooperative Agreement.
- This 21.4% budget reduction would result in approximately a 16% average budget reduction for the long-term research activities (due to lower spending by LTR activities in year 3 compared to the original SANREM projections).
- If you have pipeline (10% maximum), this means next year's cuts would be on the order of 6%.
- The ME is recommending that next year's allocations be based on activity progress and potential at the time of this year's annual meeting. Activity progress and potential will be judged by the SANREM EEP and will involve their review of:
 - Original research proposals,
 - FY 2006 Annual Reports,
 - Trip reports,
 - FY 2007 work plan,
 - FY2007 quarterly reports,
 - The interim FY2007 progress report (Due June 1, 2007), and
 - Activity reports at the annual meeting in Cochabamba
- Assessments of EEP would be shared with the ME and TC for discussion and then ME will make final activity allocations.
- Budget allocation process will be an agenda item for the SANREM Board.
- Chris Kosnik said that in Washington's current economic climate and with the power shift in Congress, nobody has budget numbers yet. The expectation is that USAID funding will be at previous years' level, but discussions are continuing with the State Department and Congress. So far, the target number appears better than thought initially.
- We have to decide collectively how money in pipelines would be redistributed. The SANREM EEP will be involved in discussions on what has been accomplished and will make recommendations in June based on which projects are making the most progress, are meeting goals or have greatest potential to do so. That information will help us decide how to make budget adjustments.
- S.K. said there is not much doubt that the budget will be \$1.83 million. It is a two-pronged issue: managing the actual cut and the natural tendency during budget crunches to hold money for a rainy day. But from USAID's position, large amounts in the pipeline are a target for redeployment elsewhere. Don't spend for spending's sake, but once a program is approved, go ahead and use the money.
- Chris said, because foreign assistance is being directed toward Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sudan, the budget for missions not in "strategic countries" has been cut. He advised using available funds wisely, focusing on research, carry over up to 10% where there are cost savings. Those funds can be redistributed. "Virginia Tech has been doing a good job, but it has been a tough year budget wise for all of us."
- May is usually when the next year's budget is announced; however, Chris Kosnik indicated it probably will be June this year because of the State Department-Congress tug of war.
- Theo said because it will be later this year when we finally get figures, the ME has to act quickly so individual projects can quickly develop their FY2008 budgets so their sub-awards can be in place by October 1, 2007.

- S.K. said the TC's job is to look at technical issues. The EEP can comment on whether we are spending wisely, suggest that an activity is not doing well, but will not say whether a project should continue. That is up to the ME and board.
- Saied said the TC's role is to focus on the technical aspects and the progress that's being made. It is not appropriate for the TC to get involved in what's being cut and by how much.
- Jerry said that the TC can look across the portfolio of activities and long-term research grants, and recommend projects working synergistically, rather than others that may be operating on their own.

5. SANREM External Evaluation

- Theo indicated that USAID has proposed to start the formal EEP evaluation of SANREM in January 2008 (9 months from now) to determine if SANREM will be renewed for another 5 years. Evaluation would be conducted by SPARE, which would report to BIFAD.
- USAID is proposing to evaluate SANREM on the following: "SANREM CRSP to be evaluated on extent to which it addresses soil, water, and eco-system services issues of importance to USAID." This is contrary to our Cooperative Agreement with USAID and it is not clear if changing the program evaluation criteria three years into the project is contractually legal.
- Theo noted that typically a CRSP EEP process begins toward the end of Year 3, leading to renewal for five years. For many reasons, SANREM and IPM are proposed for review in January 2008 by USAID/BIFAD. SANREM had previously planned for a fall 2008 review.
- Chris explained that after the latest SANREM and IPM awards were made, USAID started looking at the broader research portfolio and how to work better with the university community. Because of the unique position of SANREM and IMP, the agency is taking a special look in Year 4 at how SANREM might take control of the proposed soil, water and ecosystem CRSP. Rather than a typical technical or administrative management review, the two CRSPs would have a programmatic evaluation. However, at the latest SPARE meeting, not all committee members appeared to be on the same page regarding what was to be done. It is not clear now exactly what the review will be. A separate programmatic evaluation might consider incorporating SANREM into the soil, water and ecosystem CRSP. SANREM already has various projects looking at soil, watershed management and ecosystem issues. He expects more details after the SPARE meeting on May 14.
- S.K. asked whether SPARE will decide at that meeting what reviews will be conducted, and when.
- Chris said there are many options, with SPARE members clarifying, specifically regarding timelines, and deciding how to proceed. USAID and BIFAD would want a six-month overlap with any competitive process for a new award. If there is a technical review of SANREM in February 2008, he asked, what considerations should evaluators take into account, knowing that the research is just getting started? He asked for suggestions. They would review research proposals and search for evidence that the process was moving forward. Identifying progress even without clear concrete results

may be difficult, but SANREM has TOP Framework designed to show progress in a cycle. Are we on target?

- Theo said we must assume that evaluations will occur in nine months, focus on progress and prepare to show our projects in the best possible light. We must show that our projects have potential to achieve the best outcomes while showing relevance to a soil, water and ecosystem CRSP.

6. Cross-Cutting Water Quality Modeling Proposal

A proposal for a watershed modeling and assessment cross-cutting activity was presented. Conrad Heatwole has done a pilot study on the approach for Alex Travis's project in Zambia, which was distributed with the meeting agenda prior to the meeting.

- Theo indicated that the SANREM ME strongly recommends approval of this proposal because it would beef up our "water" activities in case we are evaluated on how well we "... address soil, water, and eco-system services issues of importance to USAID."
- Jerry asked if funding this activity would jeopardize any other project and what scientific output it would generate.
- Conrad said the proposal grew out of talks at the first annual meeting in Blacksburg and was developed in the following months. The goal is to build on and work with each of the existing projects by incorporating satellite imagery and watershed modeling. Some already have the elements and framework in place. There are common threads that can strengthen research objectives, even in projects with different focus.
- Alex spoke in support of the proposal based on his work in Zambia, where massive deforestation and change of land use have resulted in serious flooding, affecting livelihoods. Conrad's analysis would help to tie things together different landscape at ecosystem level, economically and scientifically.
- Manny and Jeff also endorsed the proposal, which Theo said would use FY2007 funds not yet allocated. Elinor and Corinne suggested other projects where the technology would be beneficial.
- Funding for the project was approved unanimously.

7. Associate Award and Technical Assistance Updates:

- Payments for Environmental Services (PES) Associate Award
Theo said we are developing training materials on how to manage PES programs for USAID. At a one-day policy seminar July 12 in Washington, D.C., in cooperation with the BASIS CRSP, we will discuss logistics and present the materials to people invited by USAID to participate.
- Potential Soil Management Associate Award
USAID is tentatively planning an associate award to carry on some of most promising research of the Soil Management CRSP, \$400,000 next year, possibly renewable the following year. Chris said the proposal may have to go through SPARE but would be expected to come through SANREM, which would decide how it would be implemented.
- Madagascar Forest Restoration Plan Technical Assistance
Theo said we have \$50,000 in the annual budget for USAID missions that request technical assistance. The first award will go to Madagascar, where an international logging company illegally cut trees in a national forest. The money will be used to help

develop a forest restoration plan, with a team traveling to the site for two weeks in May to complete up the project.

We are looking for other places where SANREM can provide short-term technical assistance, matched by mission funding, possibly leading to associate awards down the road.

- Annual Meeting Reminders: Theo reminded everyone to make plans for the annual meeting. Details are on the SANREM CRSP website, <http://www.oired.vt.edu/sanremcrsp/>. Reserve your hotel room now, even if you don't have flight information yet.
- And while you're in the neighborhood: Corinne asked people to consider taking part in an international symposium being planned for La Paz on June 29. The topic is climate change, a huge issue in Bolivia now.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 pm.