

SANREM CRSP Technical Committee Teleconference Minutes 1 to 3 p.m. EDT Wednesday, Aug. 15, 2007

Participants:

Gerald Shively, Purdue, TC chair
Alex Travis, Cornell
Jacqui Bauer, Indiana
Manuel Reyes, North Carolina A&T
Corinne Valdivia, Missouri
Elizabeth Jiménez, University de la
Cordillera
Devona Bell, Winrock International
Chris Kosnik (ex officio), USAID
Michael Bertelsen (ex officio), Virginia
Tech

S.K. De Datta (ex officio), Virginia Tech
Theo Dillaha (ex officio), Virginia Tech
Keith Moore (ex officio), Virginia Tech
Deanne Estrada, Virginia Tech
Jere Gilles, Missouri
Conrad Heatwole, Virginia Tech

Exiting Members

Andrew Manu, Iowa State
Saied Mostaghimi, Virginia Tech
Oumarou Badini, Washington State
Peter Wyeth, Washington State

Minutes:

The meeting was called to order by TC Chair Jerry Shively at 1:10pm.

TC Membership:

Peter Wyeth noted that Washington State's activities with SANREM have ended and questioned Washington States continuing participation on the TC. Theo Dillaha indicated that according to the POP Manual (page 27), "In the event that a U.S. or host country institution have their activities closed out, the PIs and board members from that institution will lose their seat and voting privileges on those advisory bodies." Oumarou Badini asked to move the membership issue, Agenda Item 7, to the top so that the committee can excuse those affected from the teleconference. Theo Dillaha asked for an update first on the status of the systems book. Jacqui Bauer, S.K. De Datta, and others concurred. Committee Chair Jerry Shively recommended dealing with the membership issue immediately but taking up the book issue in a different conference call to reduce the number of participants. Keith Moore proposed a teleconference about the book in early September. The group agreed and proceeded with discussion of the membership rules.

Shively recommended reducing the committee's membership to be consistent with the POP Manual. Moore said there are benefits to having guidance from members not directly involved with the program. Wyeth agreed but said he is not up-to-date enough to contribute. Shively said the SANREM CRSP Technical Committee (TC) was established before the Long-Term Research Activities were approved, and its original composition reflected that. The intent, he said, was to rotate onto the TC those associated with the projects and to rotate off those no longer actively involved. There would still be external members, such as International Agricultural Research Centers (IARC) representatives and host country delegates such as Elizabeth Jiménez. He moved to allow those no longer part of a funded project to rotate off the TC. De Datta asked how to ensure that chapters for the book be delivered if those involved are

no longer on the committee. Shively said that they would honor their commitment, whether they are still committee members or not. He called for a vote. The TC unanimously voted to rotate the ex-system coordinators from Washington State University (Oumarou Badini, Peter Wyeth, and Chris Pannkuk), Iowa State University (Andrew Manu), Virginia Tech (Saied Mostaghimi), and North Carolina State University (Paul Mueller) off the committee. De Datta expressed gratitude to all for their service.

Approval of June 26, 2007 TC Minutes:

The minutes were approved unanimously.

SANREM Budget Update:

Dillaha reported he had just spoken by phone with John Thomas, head of the agriculture program for the Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade (EGAT) of USAID. John Thomas reported that the minimum allocation to the CRSPs for Fiscal Year 2008 would be what is budgeted. In the case of SANREM, that would be \$2.328 million. Dillaha indicated that John Thomas said that USAID also intends to catch up on arrears, which for SANREM is about \$400,000. That would put the total allocation at \$2.3 million to \$2.7 million. If SANREM is fully funded at \$2.382 million, each project would receive its requested budget, with \$110,000 remaining in the competitive grants account for new cross-cutting initiatives. That pool could increase to \$500,000 if the amount in arrears is received.

De Datta asked Chris Kosnik for clarification on the minimum likely to be funded. Kosnik said his estimate would be \$2.4 million with additional funds available for a stronger focus on cross-cutting initiatives, as the SANREM Management Entity (ME) has proposed. The budget looks much stronger than six months ago, Kosnik said, and even stronger for the next fiscal year, though it is important to look at cost management and deal with pipeline issues. Dillaha said the TC established at its June 26 meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia, that any pipeline funds in excess of 10% would go into the competitive grants pool for redistribution. Shively said if projects have scaled back in anticipation of a smaller budget, they might restore activities now that funding is likely to be available. Devona Bell raised the issue of timing – whether pipeline surpluses might be kept if they are spent within a month or two. Dillaha said he has reviewed the projects' budgets, and everybody is doing well on pipeline. Moore recommended keeping the 10% rule but allowing the ME to consider special requests, with priority given to cross-cutting initiatives. De Datta agreed but said the TC should weigh in on those decisions. Kosnik recommended using the SANREM External Evaluation Panel (EEP) review, now in progress, to decide how to spend surplus funds. Dillaha said all projects can plan their budgets with full funding for FY 2008, work plans can be developed, and extra money can be designated for cross-cutting activities. If other opportunities for host country capacity building arise, surplus funds might also be used to support for additional host country graduate students.

After further discussion, the committee concurred. Shively emphasized developing work plans based on the budget amount that is assured, with an appendix stating how additional funding would be used if available. Kosnik said USAID expects to announce funding by Aug. 17. Shively noted that Aug. 15 is the deadline for work plans. Dillaha said he has heard by e-mail that there will be delays, so Aug. 24 is the extended deadline, which will give the project leaders time to respond. Corinne Valdivia said the EEP interim report noted that student support is critical for her project and that she has four candidates to work on landscape issues but no

funding. Dillaha advised her to include the students in her budget proposal and, if resources are available, the ME will work with her later to make modifications.

EEP Site Visits:

De Datta said the EEP's concerns about the research projects were diminished after hearing presentations and meeting with researchers at the SANREM annual meeting. He recommended that EEP members visit major research sites before the panel issues its final report at year's end to speak with stakeholders and see the actual design of the projects. Shively said that idea has merit, but the EEP report is generally favorable, with remaining issues not necessarily resolvable by site visits. More critical recommendations are about scientific reporting of research results, cross-cutting issues, and articulating plans for scaling-up and outreach, he said, with no red flags raised regarding what is happening on the ground. Kosnik said timing may determine whether EEP visits are appropriate. Panel members have indicated that they have limited availability and the new EEP chair will not be familiar with the research projects. He advised leaving the matter to the ME, the Principal Investigators (PIs) for the research projects, and the EEP. Dillaha said the EEP is already considering schedules that would allow them to piggyback SANREM site visits with their other travel, and the ME is compiling PIs' travel plans. Kosnik said the bigger issues for the SANREM EEP are eventual publication of research findings and evidence that any project weaknesses are being addressed and improvements made.

FY 2008 Work Plans:

Discussed during budget update. Dillaha added that PIs should note in their work plans how the EEP's concerns are being addressed and should include appendices to document experimental procedures.

FY 2008 Annual Reports:

Dillaha said special emphasis should be given to responding to the EEP's interim report. Form 19 citing additional impact should be submitted by Oct. 15 with each annual report. Valdivia said in some cases her project is working to build coalitions that will improve marketing, and that also strengthens capacity to negotiate. How should that be reported? Dillaha said an activity can be counted twice and can be reported in more than one category. Kosnik said USAID defines technology broadly, and practices to build coalitions would fit there. De Datta said his impression is that the EEP wants more scientific reporting. He asked if there is a template for that and, if not, whether one can be created. Shively indicated that he had previously offered to make a template, though it may not be appropriate for all procedures. The key, he said, is to communicate to the EEP that research is hypothesis driven and data well documented. Moore said the issue can be addressed in part through the scientific appendices of the work plan describing methods and procedures for each type of research. The annual reports should be more scientific in describing the work, with a major emphasis on materials and methods. Reports should not be heavy, he said, but should flow smoothly with results that demonstrate science-based impacts. Kosnik asked whether materials and methods should be included as an appendix to reach the scientific research community, USAID and the development practitioner community. Moore said appendices to work plans and annual reports should be modified as the research evolves. Dillaha said flexibility is essential because some activities are just starting, so the focus should be on the science, giving the reader an understanding of expected impacts down the road and reflecting activities in the best possible light. Shively said the most important point

is that each project keeps its eye on scientific publication of research results as the eventual output. Articulation of scientific hypotheses, materials, and methods must be a clear focus. Dillaha said an action item out of the previous TC meeting was to revise the reporting format, including templates and guidelines, which the ME will do by Aug. 23. If activities do not fit a standardized form, researchers and the ME can work on that together. He also reminded researchers to keep up with SANREM Knowledge Base entries, with the goal of being up to date by Oct. 15.

FY 2007 Invoices:

Dillaha indicated that all FY 2007 expenses must be submitted by Nov. 15 to determine what pipeline exists. Kosnik said there is some debate within USAID management whether no-cost extensions will be granted in the future. Kosnik said that PIs should not spend funds if doing so is not productive, he said, but keep a handle on pipeline. Discussion followed about how funds are classified and whether money can be carried over to future grants. Kosnik said his understanding is that funds would remain for following years.

TC IARC Representative:

Candidates to succeed Barry Shapiro are:

- Carol Colfer, ICRAF, nominated by Moore;
- And Doris Capistrano, CIFOR; Susan Kaaria, CIAT; Regina Birner, IFPRI; Patti Kristjanson, ILRI; Robin Reid, ILRI; Pascal Sanginga, CIAT; Bekele Shiferaw, ICRISAT; Stan Wood, IFPRI; John Pender, IFPRI. All were nominated by Esther Mwangi through Jacqui Bauer.

Speaking in support of Colfer, Moore said he has read her book and finds that she is doing valuable work similar to the interdisciplinary, multiple-institutional adaptive management in SANREM projects. She could contribute to this work in SANREM. Bauer said she does not know all of Mwangi's nominees personally but has worked with Capistrano and thinks highly of her. Shively noted that departing representative Shapiro is an agricultural economist and asked whether another member with economics expertise should be considered. Dillaha said economics is well represented already and recommended choosing from another field. Michael Bertelsen agreed, saying he would prefer a biophysical background. That would rule out Pender, Wood, and Kristjanson. Valdivia said an independent voice is preferable, though someone collaborating on research could be an asset and a person receiving SANREM funds should not be ruled out automatically. De Datta spoke highly of Wood, saying he has name recognition and an excellent professional reputation. Kosnik said Wood is well connected to other sustainable agriculture networks could be an asset in making new contacts. Bauer noted that Capistrano and Colfer have written books together, so their expertise might overlap; and that Capistrano's focus is on forest governance and policy, which is social rather than biophysical science. Shively proposed approaching Capistrano, Colfer, and Wood to see who would be willing to serve. There was discussion of Systems Ecologist Robin Reid as a candidate. Dillaha suggested Meine van Noordwijk of ICRAF, but Shively noted he is ineligible because he is a co-PI on Manuel Reyes' project. He said he will send an electronic ballot to TC members asking them to rank Capistrano, Colfer, Reid, and Wood, and he will approach them in order of preference. Dillaha asked that links to their web pages be provided if possible.

Responses to EEP LTRA Reviews:

Shively said he found the EEP interim report positive overall but that there seemed to be a lack of balance in its structure, presumably due to differences in the approaches of the different lead reviewers. Alex Travis said several of the panel's recommendations for his project would require more funding. He will build on those ideas if money is available, tying in the prospect of host country graduate students. Reyes said he did not realize that his project lacked clarity regarding methodologies and hypotheses, so that is where he is concentrating his response. Shively said, regarding the Reyes project, two questions seem to be whether there is mission drift regarding Payments for Environmental Services (PES), and whether the overall role of Vietnam site needs reevaluation. Dillaha said the EEP also expressed a need for better, more regular communication among the three research groups, with interchange of ideas. Reyes said he will address all those concerns and, to improve communication, researchers will begin reporting to Dr. Miriam Nguyen as well as to their country coordinators. Also, Reyes is initiating quarterly teleconferences for his research team. De Datta said the project needs to articulate that it is a single unit with different facets, rather than disparate activities.

Bauer said a major criticism of her team is that it has not sufficiently reached the analysis phase. She said the project is refocusing on research outcomes, scheduling meetings with PIs on data analyses and hypotheses, and has several papers in the works. Shively said the EEP found that many hypotheses were cast at a general level and requested more refined hypotheses on a smaller scale. Bauer said the project is incorporating that concern into discussions of data analyses, more specific hypotheses, perhaps in each country or across countries.

Dillaha gave an update on Jeff Alwang's project, which drew substantive comments from the EEP. Alwang is working on a response, making major adjustments, and documenting how those will improve the project. Bauer said that, in response to the EEP report and the opportunity for cross-cutting initiatives, she has or intends to speak with Alwang about working together in Bolivia on governance and policy issues, and looking for a joint research site. De Datta noted that the EEP report released in July is interim and that, by the time the final report is released in December, he would hope that all issues will be addressed to the panel's full satisfaction in advance of the administrative management review set for early 2008.

Shively emphasized correcting any erroneous EEP perceptions. That might be done with site visits, he said. Valdivia said the EEP made good comments on her conceptual framework and research design across countries, but there were factual errors, and corrections she made apparently did not get through, a situation that site visits would not remedy. Her project's annual report will restate corrections that did not appear in the revised EEP draft. De Datta said it is appropriate to point out errors so that the EEP can incorporate those responses in its final review. Dillaha said that, where there were misinterpretations, communicate those to the SANREM Management Entity (ME), which will work with the EEP to clear them up. Kosnik advised using written and spoken communications to correct errors and said teleconference between a PI and a key EEP member might facilitate solutions. Bauer said one EEP criticism of her project was that an original research question was not being answered adequately: What motivates decentralization policies? In formulating its original proposal, though, the team was asked to deemphasize that issue, she said.

Kosnik said everybody seems attentive to EEP recommendations about specific projects, but how about comments on the overall program? Some are broad and difficult to answer and will require coordination between PIs and the ME. Dillaha said the ME is addressing those, will

share the results with everybody and develop a draft that the TC will review before signing off. Shively said the TC as a group will respond to broader recommendations but will not micromanage individual projects. There was discussion about the interim status of the EEP report released in July. Dillaha said the ME will demonstrate in the pending administrative management review that the program is responsive to its governing bodies. Shively said part of the researchers' response will be in the projects' annual work plans, but the EEP deserves a response to its executive summary reflecting the TC's involvement. Dillaha said the ME will draft a response to circulate among the TC before it goes to the EEP.

Moving to the next agenda item, Dillaha said he will deal with **Item 10, EEP Fall Visits to LTRA Sites**, and coordinate those. Shively suggested skipping **Item 9, Cross-Cutting Initiatives**, because it is open-ended and already partially addressed already.

SANREM EEP Member Nomination:

Ron Cantrell's name was proposed. De Datta endorsed his nomination, saying he has the leadership qualities, stature, and experience for the job, having led success programs on two continents, having land-grant and USAID contractual field experience, and having been head of the agronomy department at Iowa State University. Dillaha noted that Cantrell is returning from medical leave, that he has time and enthusiasm for the position, and can provide leadership. Dillaha also noted that Cantrell does not know SANREM's history but has time to review it. Dillaha has been soliciting comments about Cantrell, and all have been enthusiastic. Departing EEP Chair Richard Harwood has agreed to work with Cantrell and to participate with him in the next EEP teleconference, set for Sept. 4. The TC voted unanimously to support Dr. Cantrell's nomination.

Cross-Cutting Initiatives:

Dillaha said he is communicating with all the projects and knows that some people are developing cross-cutting proposals, including one in the area of soil quality, which he will distribute. Volunteers are needed to provide leadership for cross-cutting activities. Shively asked what outcomes SANREM is hoping to achieve and noted that Maria Elisa Christie is working on a journal issue on gender. Dillaha said he has asked her to develop a proposal for cross-cutting gender activities that would involve all projects. Bauer and Alwang are already talking about governance and policy cross-cutting activities. Dillaha indicated the ME is seeking proposals to complement existing activities that can use additional funds if they become available in areas such as soil quality, biodiversity, climate change, gender, and watershed management. Shively offered to lead a cross-cutting activity in climate change for sustainable agriculture in marginal areas. Dillaha indicated that Valdivia has SANREM's strongest program in this area. Moore said the projects need to refocus on research already being done and build on that. He cited action research proposed by Esther Mwangi at the SANREM annual meeting. Bauer said Mwangi's topic is Knowledge to Action, evaluating the different models people are using to move from research to impact.

De Datta said gender is a USAID priority, as is climate change, and soil management is an increasing concern since the Soil Management CRSP is being eliminated. He said some proposals can be combined. Conrad Heatwole said his focus is to link existing watershed management projects and to expand and facilitate imagery analysis and watershed modeling. His

approach varies for different projects, he said, with the eventual goal of refereed publications looking across projects at common issues such as how high-resolution imagery can be used in sustainable agriculture and natural resource management. Dillaha said watershed management may have tie-ins with soil management and with climate change. Once models are set up, he said, different data sets can be applied to evaluate long-term effects of climate change on watersheds. Travis said the EEP recommended that his project add an erosion component tying together watershed issues, deforestation, and soil quality. He said he hopes to assign that to Zambian students and already has people interested in cross-cutting soil issues. If that could tie in with existing projects, he said, he would be interested in developing it. He said he would also welcome feedback to see if people are interested in biodiversity. Valdivia said she is not sure how to build a proposal for tying watershed management to glacier-melt research. Heatwole said he can work with individual projects but needs guidelines.

Shively asked for more direction from the ME, which will have a better sense of the possibilities after it gets budget numbers. He recommended postponing further discussion until the budget is known, which the TC approved unanimously. Kosnik said the projects must prioritize human and financial resources, for there will not be funding to do everything. The TC can give guidance, he said. Dillaha said regarding cross-cutting that decisions do not have to be made immediately but soon enough that the EEP can consider them -- within eight to 10 weeks.

Shively adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.