

**SANREM CRSP Technical Committee (TC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**4:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 26, 2007**  
**Casa Campestre, Cochabamba, Bolivia**

**Participants**

Jeff Alwang, Virginia Tech<sup>1</sup>  
Jacqui Bauer, Indiana University<sup>3</sup>  
Mike Bertelsen, Virginia Tech<sup>2</sup>  
Maria Elisa Christie, Virginia Tech<sup>1</sup>  
Theo Dillaha, Virginia Tech<sup>2</sup>  
Deanne Estrada, Virginia Tech<sup>2</sup>  
Elizabeth Jiménez, Universidad de La Cordillera<sup>1</sup>  
Chris Kosnik, USAID<sup>1</sup>  
Keith Moore, Virginia Tech<sup>2</sup>  
Saied Mostaghimi, Virginia Tech<sup>1</sup>  
Peter Motavalli, University of Missouri<sup>3</sup>  
Manuel Reyes, North Carolina A&T<sup>1</sup>  
Jerry Shivley, Purdue University<sup>1</sup>  
Alex Travis, Cornell University<sup>1</sup>  
Corinne Valdivia, University of Missouri<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> TC member; <sup>2</sup> ex officio; <sup>3</sup> representing Elinor Ostrom<sup>1</sup>

**Agenda**

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

**1. Format for future SANREM quarterly, annual, and trip reports.**

*Issue: The SANREM CRSP External Evaluation Panel (EEP) expressed concern that current progress reports are too focused on outcomes and do not adequately describe the science involved. That has made it difficult for the EEP to evaluate the quality of the scientific research and for others to understand the research. The EEP has recommended that reports be expanded to describe the science being conducted. The EEP also is concerned that trip reports are too brief and recommends that they be expanded with details of trip activities and project observations.*

Discussion: The current reporting format suits the requirements of USAID and Congress. The EEP wants more scientific reporting quarterly and annually to judge whether the work being done is valid. Theo Dillaha suggested that this would involve documenting of experimental designs, methods, and hypotheses in reporting documents. Jeff Alwang suggested that this information be included in project's annual work plans. Corinne Valdivia asked whether science could also be reported in the project's annual report and if the EEP could re-review the LTRAs based on the additional information. Dillaha said the EEP had indicated that it would not review the projects again; rather it will look at how the Management Entity (ME) responded to the EEP's recommendations. Alwang and Alex Travis asked whether annual reports should be a short summary based on the project's initial/evolving objectives.

Chair Gerald Shively said that, one year into research on a project, its annual meeting should be about the science: the hypotheses, data, methods, results. Meetings and annual reports should be more research oriented, giving details of scientific findings. For annual meeting reports, Jerry suggested that results be condensed to one page that would facilitate communication with each other and the world. Valdivia asked what the format would be. Dillaha said the summary could be amplified with appendices. He offered to draw up a prototype and send it to the TC. Shively said he is less concerned with the need to communicate externally, and more interested in getting friendly critiques of projects from other project participants. He asked that the prototype be included in the next work plan.

Alwang asked what USAID wants to see in quarterly reports. Dillaha said the ME and EEP want the emphasis to be on what is being accomplished with respect to work plan objectives.

Dillaha also said that the EEP wants to clearly define benchmarks (as in the work plan), certain tasks to be accomplished by specific dates, and reporting on those benchmarks in progress reports. The EEP will put that in writing when it presents its report, he said. Valdivia said Principal Investigators (PIs) already do that. She noted that USAID focuses on the number of people trained. Shively said the process should not burden PIs with paperwork. Chris Kosnik said USAID in October will prepare its 2008 Operating Plan. To do so, the agency needs 2007 summaries, as well as 2008 and 2009 projections. He advised that PIs choose what to report on. Training is important, he said, but is time being wasted writing reports? A complication within SANREM is that reports have to be broken down regarding an agriculture-enabling environment and policy. He asked whether the format that he and Mike Bertelsen drew up in January still works. Dillaha said a table needs to be incorporate additional USAID reporting needs described by Chris Kosnik during his presentation. Bertelsen said the cooperative agreement requires quarterly reporting.

Keith Moore suggested that, to condense quarterly reports, the PIs state what was done, with bullets. What the EEP wants is not the same as the ME's obligation, he said. Kosnik suggested that reporting be done twice a year, rather than quarterly. After much discussion, Shively summarized the consensus:

- Progress reports will be done twice a year rather than quarterly.
- Each will state benchmarks and accomplishments in meeting work plan goals. Address each work plan milestone. Identify milestones met and not met and if not met, why and how responding.
- Each will include impact pathways.
- The semi-annual report needs to be a simple communication to the ME about what is happening with the project, *not* a mini-annual report. It should document changes in experimental design, methods, and hypotheses; current findings; and progress towards meeting objectives and benchmarks.

Valdivia asked what should be included to show impact. Shively, Bertelsen, Kosnik and Moore offered suggestions: peer-reviewed articles and research briefs should be mentioned, along with anecdotes, success stories, and two-page reports with photos. Regarding the EEP's request for more detailed trip reports, Moore recommended beginning each with a two- to three-sentence summary of

highlights, followed by details. The ME and TC Chair will develop a new outline for progress and trip reports and share with PIs.

**2. FY2008 budget discussion and planning.** *The budget will be \$1.96 million, an average 10% to 11% reduction for Long-Term Research Award (LTRA) activities. The ME's intention is to inform LTRA universities of proposed FY2008 allocations by late July so they can develop their internal budgets and in turn notify their sub-awardees.*

- *LTRA allocations are to be based on activities' progress and the EEP review.*
- *FY2008 allocations are to be made in two stages to allow the ME to consider pipeline at the end of FY2007.*
- *The first FY2008 allocation is to be made in August or as soon as FY2008 funds are received from USAID. It is to be 75% of the proposed FY2008 total.*
- *The second FY2008 allocation is to be made in early December, as soon as final invoices for FY2007 are received. Those invoices are due to the ME by Nov. 15.*

Dillaha said he had previously spoken with the lead PIs regarding an initial 75% allocation of FY2008 funding with the remainder distributed taking project pipeline into account and that there were no objections to this. The ME will develop proposed FY2008 budgets for projects as soon as possible and notify PIs so that they can begin their internal budget planning. However, the ME will not be able to make official budget allocations until we receive official funding from USAID. Chris Kosnik indicated that official notification might take awhile but that he thought the \$1.96 million funding figure was good. Dillaha indicated that the ME will develop FY2008 budgets after considering the EEPs LTRA reviews and may recommend shifting funds from one project to another. Changes in funding should be reflected in the FY2008 work plans. Alwang and Valdivia asked for clarification on pipeline funds. The group voted to consider the pipeline to be the amount left on Dec. 15 and that a maximum of 10% pipeline carryover be allowed.

**3. The EEP program review.** *Is there a need for the EEP to visit all LTRA sites during its program review? And how are the EEP and TC to communicate during the review?*

Dillaha asked whether site visits now would be necessary or wise. Kosnik said EEPs have done so in some cases but advised waiting for the SANREM EEP report to see if visits are appropriate. Dillaha said field trips might make more sense after SANREM learns in April the status of future funding. The TC consensus was to leave the decision to the EEP members, with the understanding that site visits are welcome.

Regarding communication, Dillaha said the EEP will report to the ME, which will share the LTRA review with the TC members. The EEP will present an informal draft review by July 10, with a final, formal review of the entire SANREM CRSP program to follow in December. The 2008 Work Plan should respond to the EEP questions and suggestions, Dillaha and Shively said, and can include a defense of a project's strategy. The FY2008 budget will reflect the EEP's recommendations, Shively said. Kosnik said the reporting change from quarterly to semiannually will require an amendment to the SANREM CRSP Cooperative Agreement which he will take care of.

If the EEP has questions for the TC, how should they be handled? EEP questions concerning the TC will be directed to the TC chair.

**4. Response to soil, water, and ecosystem services CRSP proposal:** *SANREM will be evaluated on the extent to which it addresses those issues as they are emphasized by USAID, so SANREM needs to document how it does so. The ME recommends that PIs report related activities so they can be included in a description of SANREM's current and potential activities in those areas. The ME then would compile by October the best available description of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Services activities currently conducted by SANREM.*

Dillaha said the ME will send a questionnaire to PIs and include the results in the annual report. Kosnik said the biggest issue is a lack of common understanding of the term “ecosystem services.” Also need to review the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (<http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx>) for a better understanding of what USAID may be proposing. Mike Bertelsen asked whether there is pressure for change from universities in the West regarding watershed issues. Various group members responded that SANREM has a number of water projects already. Kosnik asked how best to communicate that and suggested taking a broad view. Shively said work already being done may simply need a different label. Dillaha said the questionnaire could address several areas: soil and water, biodiversity, gender. Kosnik said the ME must respond to the BIFAD request and, down the road, issues of the knowledge base and cross-cutting. Moore asked what the response should look like. Kosnik said it should be organized around each of the issues. He emphasized the need for a common vocabulary with an understanding of where the science stands. The group agreed that the ME will send each of the PIs a one-page description of the document plus the questionnaire.

Items we need to address include:

- Soils
- Water resources (includes climate change but may deserve a separate climate change section)
- Ecosystems (includes biodiversity but may deserve a separate biodiversity section)

**5. TC membership:** *IARC representative.*

Barry Shapiro is leaving the IARC. Kosnik recommended that his successor be somebody not involved with a project. The group agreed to consider candidates, and make nominations and speak in support of them at the next meeting. Jerry Shively will solicit nominations.

**6. & 7. Organization, format, and location of the next annual meeting.**

Shively recommended a more scientifically oriented program with short presentations to describe research findings, more poster sessions, all overviews given in one morning, with specific projects allotted time that afternoon and the following day. Dillaha said he would like to hear short progress reports plus overviews. Moore suggested that all the overviews together not take more than 90 minutes and that sessions *not* run concurrently. Marie Elisa Christie proposed a session devoted entirely to gender issues. Regarding location, Shively said the site should be near an international airport and in a country that has a SANREM project. Need to avoid US if possible because of J-1 visa issues but must also consider host country visa requirements. Much discussion followed. Suggestions: Mexico, Uganda, Philippines (IRRI). The group agreed that the ME will accept all suggestions and research a location for next year.

## **8. Landscape Systems book update.**

At Shively's request, this item was tabled.

## **9. Other business.**

- Peter Motavalli proposed looking at different indicators to examine soil quality across agro-ecosystems and comparing local results. He said a test kit developed by Midwestern universities could be used, with results communicated among projects, as the gender program does, to come up with a plan. Initial discussion would focus on what methods are already used, and what samples are available. Dillaha said it is doubtful that SANREM would get money now allocated to the soils CRSP, which most likely would be used to continue current high value Soil Management CRSP research. Kosnik said there would be value in getting soil scientists together soon. Kosnik said more information will be available soon about a soils associate award and how SANREM might synthesize the soils program. Motavalli asked whether the program would combine aspects of all current projects or would be separate program like gender. Shively said the ME must get more information before it can respond to TC questions. Theo suggested that Peter Motavalli develop a cross-cutting soil quality proposal for the TC to consider.
- Regarding Knowledge-to-Action Cross-Cutting, Jacqui Bauer said Esther Mwangi of IFPRI has proposed that all projects use a single model, which would be of value in evaluating the effectiveness of each. Shively said it is always good to cluster researchers who have a common interest, but there is no funding for a specific model to do so. He said research results can be funneled to the TC, which then will disseminate the information.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.

### **Action Items:**

1. Revised format and guidance for annual and semi-annual reports. (ME and TC Chair)
2. Revised format and guidance for trip reports. (ME and TC Chair)
3. Suggested format for project summaries to be distributed at future annual meetings. (Jerry Shively and ME)
4. Proposed FY2008 budget allocations for LTRA by Aug. 1. (ME and TC)
5. Prepare USAID Common Indicators reporting table
6. Revise SANREM CRSP Cooperative Agreement to require only semi-annual reporting. (Chris Kosnik)
7. Distribute draft LTRA reviews to TC. Follow-up TC meeting to discuss reviews, implications, response, LTRA funding. (ME and Jerry Shively)
8. Send TC members USAID's description of the proposed Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Services CRSP. (ME)
9. Develop questionnaire to identify SANREM contributions in the areas of the proposed Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Services CRSP. (ME) and distribute to PIs. Responses will be summarized and included in SANREM's annual report (ME and PIs)
10. Solicit nominations for new IARC TC representative. (Jerry Shively)
11. Identify location for 2008 annual meeting. (ME and TC)
12. Cross-cutting soil quality proposal (Peter Motavalli)