

IPM CRSP
Technical Committee Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2007

Conference Call 11:00 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Present: Jeff Alwang, Maria Elisa Christie, SK De Datta, Mark Erbaugh, Debbie Francis, Mike Hammig, Bob Hedlund, Sam Kyamaniwa, Karim Maredia, Wondi Mersie, Don Mullins, Muni Muniappan, Doug Pfeiffer, Sally Miller, Sue Tolin, George Norton, Ed Rajotte, Naidu Rayapati, Miriam Rich, Larry Vaughan, Yulu Xia.

Meeting chaired by George Norton.

1. Welcome Remarks/Overview of IPM Situation

De Datta thanks everyone for coming. He reports that he is pleased that the Interim EEP report came out positive. He notes that the panel made some suggestions that the ME is taking action on, and that the final report is due December 7. He encourages program leaders that “for any input that is sought from you—please cooperate,” and continues by noting that this is the only report that will be meaningful to the review team to go one way or the other [to continue with the IPM CRSP or not]. “We want to show that we have carried out our duties with utmost distinction. I can assure you that administrative process is very important.”

De Datta reports that he still has concern regarding USAID’s intention—“IPM CRSP is still very much challenged. In order for us to be renewed, we need to do everything possible.” He reminds everyone that “everything you say and how you conduct yourselves is very important.” A possible scenario is that the Horticulture CRSP is back on the table. He urges Program Leaders to do everything they can to cooperate as best they can with the ME, and that from its end, the ME will do its best so that the USAID decision-makers won’t find any holes.

He gives an overview of the pipeline situation, reminding PLs that their funds will not be replenished and that there will not be any carryover. “Your burn rate should be commensurate with your workplan. Make sure that your invoices come in on a timely manner.”

Finally, he addresses the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), noting that, “It is not something anyone wants to do, but Bob [Hedlund] has made it abundantly clear that this is very important. If the word pesticide appears in your workplan, you need to do an IEE. If not, we will be in a very vulnerable position. I’ve designated Larry [Vaughan] to get the job done. He’ll be responsible and accountable. We are putting external resources in to get the job done. It’s the law.” Vaughan adds that all reports will be done by December 15th.

De Datta reminds people that on the positive side, if IPM PLs do it right, Hedlund can say this is one thing that the IPM CRSP is well-positioned to do for the USAID's entire IPM portfolio. He thanks the group for their participation on this matter.

2. Approval of the Minutes of May 7 and 8, 2007

Sue Tolin motions to approve the minutes of May 7 and 8, 2007. Don Mullins seconds this. The minutes are approved.

3. Budget Scenario

Hedlund comments about the budget scenario, explaining that because USAID had some extra money, this year's funding is for \$3,102,000. This is a difference from \$1.96M. Then they added another \$1.1M. This brought it up to the original amount, including \$150k for some biotech work. The entire CRSPs budget for next year is expected to be \$13M, which is a \$10M drop. Because of this, he says, you can expect an equivalent drop. Both the House and Senate put in funding for \$29 M. But it hasn't yet passed, so officially we're still saying \$13M. Next year's allocation is the last one programmed. It will be for activities in 09. He notes, "You shouldn't expect more. You've got to spend the money you have."

APARIQ (Consulting Firm) to Conduct IPM Review

Hedlund also remarked that regarding the administrative review of the IPM and SANREM CRSPs, they [USAID] just issued a contract to APARIQ, a consulting firm, to handle them. This organization will conduct the review of both programs. They will begin their activities on October 1st. This will involve document solicitation and review. Visits will take place in January and February. Hedlund has been given CTO authority over this review. He can send the PLs a Scope of Work. APARIQ expects to gather all necessary documents in the fall. They will not be able to visit outside the United States. Hedlund noted they will visit Virginia Tech first, then they may contact the PLs.

Erbaugh noted that it would be very useful to have their Scope of Work because the PLs could then set up a calendar of when they're visiting other universities, and that would be useful.

New Program Reporting Requirements

Hedlund said that regarding program reporting requirements—there are some that are new. "They are extremely complicated. We're doing it in two phases. We have to report on the Initiative to End Hunger in Africa sooner than we expected. We're looking at a list of the countries where we have activities, and looking for government partners. Regional organizations, private sector partners, any other donors, how much of the money can be categorized as enabling the environment, etc. This is the first year for this. I will then send this on to Muni for further work. This will be different from what we've been asking from you in the past. E.g.: We want the number of trainees in long and short-term training and broken down by gender. Also: how many hectares, how many tomatoes, how many households were affected by CRSP activities. It will also be broken down by crops. All of this info will be provided to the Secretary of State."

4. Initial Environmental Evaluations (IEEs)

Vaughan begins by stating that the IEEs need to be completed in a timely manner. “The risk of us getting caught and severely reprimanded is possible because this is federal law.” He notes that we need to set up some measures that show that we are getting what we need. “If we don’t have an IEE submitted, we can’t release the programs. We are obligated to work with you, but you need to come half-way as well.” Vaughan noted that De Datta has authorized the ME to hire someone to help dig into these. Robert Kenny is being put on the payroll 25% time to help with this. It is the PLs, though, who have the expertise. The ME will try to fill in the other gaps that the PLs can’t do. The real criterion is something—a draft submitted to the ME. “We have to give this to USAID, they have to approve it. Their turn-around time has been pretty good. Our intention is to get all of these in by December.”

There was a question to clarify: PLs don’t get any funds unless they have submitted an IEE? Vaughan responded that that was correct.

There was some discussion about the IEE as being another burden being imposed on the PLs, but Vaughan reiterated the necessity of doing these, of involving the site coordinators, and of keeping the program leaders involved.

IEEs a USAID (Federal Law) Requirement

De Datta further noted that this is not an ME requirement, but a USAID requirement. Although PLs may view this as another burdensome requirement, De Datta notes that he doesn’t know of another federal grant that doesn’t require some reporting of project related mandates. He cites the example of the Nepal proposal that Virginia Tech just won that requires several reports; this is just a part of getting a grant from the federal government. “This is not something we’re imposing from the ME—this is the federal government requirement.”

Rajotte suggested that the form sent out to the PLs by the ME needs to be simplified down to the essential questions that need to be filled in by the PLs so that compliance is simplified. Others agreed. Vaughan suggested that the current form provides such a list, but perhaps there are some questions that could be answered by the ME to help reduce the burden, for example the risks associated with specific chemicals that are common across locations.

Vaughan noted that, “We have a template; we see some weaknesses with it, we’ll fix it. I’ll stay in touch with every program leader. I’ll be in contact with everyone every week—briefly, I hope.”

Norton added that any time a PL has a question, they should make sure that they’re asking only what they need to ask. “Make sure you only ask the right, targeted questions.”

Key Info on IEEs

Hedlund said that the information he needs from the field, and he hopes that we are only talking about pesticides that are *proposed*, is the **brand name, the active ingredient,**

and the environmental conditions in which it's being applied. "Those are things you can't do from back here. We have to know **the concentration and the formulation being used.**"

There was some discussion about actually being able to comply with the spirit of the law, and the difficulty of obtaining all this information. "You also need info on the trade people and the supervision, etc. It's almost impossible to say who is supervising it." The concern was expressed that this is going to take a long time and that it will be almost like re-writing the annual report. Furthermore, some of the PLs are not chemists, and they don't know all this stuff.

Vaughan responded that this simply indicates the necessity of working together [with the ME] to work on the IEEs. And, he noted, **reports should be sent to the ME.** Hedlund will see them first before they go to the environmental officer. Vaughan further noted again that he will be sending out a template. De Datta urged PLs to cooperate with Vaughan.

5. Budget for Year 3 (Fiscal Year 2008)

Muniappan reviewed the budget situation, and began by saying that the core budget for this year is \$3,103,200; the ME will take out 20%, or \$620,640, and that will leave \$2,482,560 available for distribution. Out of that, the ME has to separate out the biotech funds. That is mandated. It's \$150k. Hedlund noted that this is \$150k in addition to what the ME said it was doing.

Review of Budget Allocation

Muni continued by noting that the total funds available amount to about \$2.63 M. "We haven't received this yet. So now, the surplus is about \$480k. Out of this, we are trying to restore the cuts we implemented. This is equal to \$216k." He outlined the proposed budget allocations as follows:

\$264,229	cross-cutting initiatives
\$115,000	workshop to be held in India, the Philippines or Ecuador [may also be Ethiopia, which was not discussed at the meeting]
\$40,000	EEP, to complete site visits
\$49,229	IEE
\$15,000	two workshops coming up, for pesticide and food safety
\$5,000	crop protection
\$5,000	IPM Symposium held in 2009
\$35,000	gender issues

Gender Funds

At this point, Christie explained what the gender funds would be going for: how gender affects tech transfer. There would be enough money for all of the projects that have gender work. Regarding whether or not this would include global themes, Christie said this was a good question, but she encouraged everyone who has ideas to propose them.

De Datta noted that PM has done a good job with gender issues; it just needs to document that.

Norton summed up by saying that “what Muni has tried to do is go through and say how we can get the best bang for the buck. He’ll be contacting you as to what that means for each site. The other thing is: there are still some other funds that he will decide how to allocate. They may help us next year with the annual meeting. Additionally, there is the problem of the visa issue—trying to bring everyone to the United States.”

Christie asked if anyone wanted to take a look at the gender questionnaire; Alwang and Pfeiffer responded yes.

To Hold, or Not to Hold, an Annual Workshop?

There was some discussion about being careful about doing extra things. “A lot of sites are making do with less. It’s important to make sure that our collaborators in these countries are well-funded before we think about doing workshops and taking on extra tasks. I think we need to pay attention to people who are doing a lot of work and not getting remuneration for it.” Several PLs concurred, commenting on the embarrassingly low rates at which some local collaborators are being paid. Furthermore, a PL noted that it would be preferable to spend money on other things than on an annual meeting.

De Datta noted that “in fact, everyone’s problem is going to be to spend the money, and to invoice it.” Hedlund added that the workshop is not an extra one; it’s one that has already been planned. De Datta also noted that this is a *global* project. “We learn from each other; it [the annual meeting] has been a cornerstone of our program. In this phase, we haven’t even done one yet. It would be a huge loss. If we haven’t met face to face, we can’t call this a global project.”

De Datta noted that there were two key points to take note of here: 1) the budget is fully reinstated; 2) we have a pipeline amount that has not been invoiced.

Discussion of Pipeline

There was some discussion of the pipeline, and it was noted that although some PLs pipeline flows might look bad, the money was in the process of being invoiced. Many PLs concurred.

Issue of Difficulties with Sponsored Programs

There was some discussion of the efficiency and timeliness issues of various sponsored programs. This is apparently an issue everywhere. At Virginia Tech, it is not different.

De Datta noted that the ME is not going to take away money, but he did urge the PLs to spend the money they have.

There was some discussion of the burn rate. Norton confirmed that if people don’t get Year 1 and Year 2 resolved, money gets cut.

De Datta summed up again: “The real issue is you need the money as soon as possible and we will get it to you as soon as possible. If you have an issue, get in touch with Debbie and Muni, or with me. The idea is: spend more to get more. Spend more to replenish the funds.”

There was some more discussion of the necessity of an annual meeting, and it was decided that there would be conference call at a later date to discuss the issue separately.

Tolin asked about a Food Safety event in Jordan. Muni explained that USAID was conducting an event on Food Safety in Jordan in October. Three people are going.

There was more discussion of the IEEs—whether there was enough money to do them, who would do them, and how they would be done, and the desirability of getting host country input.

Budget Approved Except for Workshop

Norton asked for confirmation on the budget. Hammig made a motion to approve the budget allocation. Norton seconded it. Before a general vote was taken, Alwang questioned why this had to be voted on now. Norton explained that the ME has to approve the budget or it can't move any money. He asked if the controversial part of the budget could be identified and held aside, and the rest voted on. Hammig modified the motion to approve everything but the workshop. Then a roll call was taken and votes were as follows:

Norton: yes
Alwang: yes
Mullins: yes
Erbaugh: yes
Mersie: yes
Rajotte: yes
Xia: yes
Miller: yes
Tolin: yes
Maredia: yes
Rayapati: yes
Kyamaniwa: not present*
Hammig: yes
Pfeiffer: yes

* (his phone line had cut off by then)

De Datta noted that the budget had been approved except for the workshop. For that, there will be a follow-up conference call.

Issue of Biotechnology Money

Norton brought up the issue of biotechnology money. De Datta recounted the recent sequence of events: “the ME got a phone call at 4:30 pm on a Thursday. I thank Larry for

speaking with you and putting together a document. Muni reviewed the proposal for the spending of biotechnology funds. Nine projects were submitted; based on suggestions from USAID, we selected two—one for West Africa (\$90,160) and a survey of tospoviruses (30,000).” (See handout.) Vaughan explained in more detail the Africa program. Although intentions of the programs have been there [to document biotechnology-related money that was spent?], funds were restricted in prior budgets. The ME gave USAID a large number, but was only approved for a small percentage.

Mullins noted that in justification of this, in the West Africa project they are certainly trying to build capability for labs to process samples, etc. This can be a useful tool.

De Datta designates a group composed of Miller, Tolin, Mullins, Erbaugh, and Rayapati to discuss biotech project assignments and the distribution of funds. A PL expresses concern that this biotech project is only in Africa—there are projects elsewhere, too.

Rayapati notes that he has been to Central Asia this year, and that he has had some ideas that he discussed with Mark Erbaugh. “So we already have two proposals that are being linked regionally.”

Tolin motions to approve biotech funds to these two projects with details to be worked out. Don seconds the motion.

6. Review of Fiscal Year 2008 Workplan

Norton says that rather than having everyone say a few words, in interest of time, he will go down the list and see if there are any issues.

De Datta says that he has a clarification for the group to think about. “Now you’re going to get more money than you thought you were going to get. If there’s anything you want to change, that has to happen within the next week. Your workplan and budget have to match. I suggest that you understand what the charges are. You have one week to modify your budget and workplan. Muni and Larry need to get the workplan back within a week.” By the end of next Friday (10/5), the ME needs a revised workplan. This does not have to go through Sponsored Programs.

Francis adds that what she needs as far as budgetary info is the green sheets, or an Excel spreadsheet.

Norton told PLs to assume they’ll get the carryover; to budget for Year 3. He suggested that the group vote on the workplan electronically later.

Tolin suggested that people send their individual comments to the relevant individual and copy the ME (Muni).

EEP Report

Norton reminded people that the EEP report came out and it was positive, and we’d like to keep it that way.

Annual Report FY 2007

Muni mentioned that the ME needs to have annual reports by October 15th; and that “we need to keep this deadline.” It should be fixed so that one can put pictures in it. Travel reports need to be sent to the ME at least 30 days before so we can contact Bob, and tell him why we’re traveling.

Travel Matrix

Hedlund noted that as regards travel, he needs a reference to a workplan.

Vaughan said that with the added money, they may indeed revise the Travel Matrix. PLs need to send in their changed plans. “The fact that we have more money is a valid reason to go back and have it [the Travel Matrix] be re-approved.”

Muni added that regarding trip reports: please prepare and submit them to the ME.

7. Closing Remarks – Hedlund, De Datta

In Hedlund’s closing remarks, he noted that as regards the workplan, he has noticed there are some plans to start Ph.D. students yet to be selected. He reminded people that as the AID policy is no longer to see a student through to the end of his or her studies, one needs to make sure that one has a Plan B. [Don’t assume you can have a student finish out a degree if the program ends mid-way through his or her studies.]

Vaughan noted that this doesn’t forbid us from starting a new student. But it is important to get a document from the student indicating that they understand this. No money can be given beyond the project cycle.

Hedlund closed by asking the PLs to show him the vouchers.

De Datta closed by expressing his wish that everyone be on board about renewing the IPM CRSP. “We are proud to be part of the IPM CRSP. That’s why we need your help on it.” Secondly, he said, with funding transmittals, make sure that those come to the ME, not to Sponsored Programs. With that, he thanked everyone for actively participating with the Technical Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.

8. Review of Actionable Items

1. Vaughan will fix the weaknesses in the IEE template. He will contact everyone regarding the IEE.
2. PLs will do their utmost to complete the IEEs; in turn, the ME will do its utmost to help them. PLs will send their IEE reports to the ME.
3. PLs will contact Christie with ideas on projects for the gender funds.
4. Alwang and Pfeiffer will take a look at the gender questionnaire. (p. 4)
5. The ME will hold a conference call at a later date to discuss the issue of whether or not to have an annual meeting.
6. A group composed of Miller, Tolin, Mullins, Erbaugh and Rayapati will discuss biotech project assignments and the distribution of funds (p. 7)

7. Biotech funds will be allocated in the amounts of \$30,000 to Rayapati's project and \$90,160 to the Africa project involving Erbaugh, Mullins, Tolin, Miller and Rayapati; details will be worked out. (p. 7)
8. PLs will send a revised workplan to the ME by Friday, October 5.
9. PLs will send their individual comments on the workplan to the relevant individual and copy the ME (Muni). (p. 7)
10. PLs will submit their annual reports to the ME by October 15th.

Meeting minutes recorded by Miriam Rich.