



Meeting Evaluation Report No. 01

ILAC Learning Laboratory: 2009 Meeting evaluation report

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November 2009

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The ILAC initiative fosters learning from experience and use of the lessons learned to improve the design and implementation of agricultural research and development programs. The mission of the ILAC Initiative is to develop, field test and introduce methods and tools that promote organizational learning and institutional change in CGIAR centres and their partners, to expand the contributions of agricultural research to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

This paper has been reformatted to comply with the style of the ILAC publication series.

Citation: Sette, C. (2009) *ILAC Learning Laboratory: 2009 Meeting evaluation report*. Meeting Evaluation Report No. 01, Rome, Institutional Learning and Change Initiative.

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ILAC Learning Laboratory: 2009 Meeting evaluation report
21-25 September, 2009
Nairobi, Kenya

Introduction

Central to ILAC's strategy is the Learning Laboratory in which professionals from collaborative research programs come together to share knowledge and experiences, experiment with new approaches for facilitating pro-poor innovation and evaluate the results. The first meeting of the Learning lab took place in Colombia in April 2008. This, second meeting builds upon the lessons and insights of the Cali meeting.

The meeting

The meeting was conducted as an interactive workshop and included the following themes:

1. Lesson learning on collaborative programs/partnership (including a field visit to the Smallholder Dairy Project)
2. Self-assessment
3. Planning of future activities

The lesson learning exercise included an analysis of the following aspects of partnership:

- Goals of collaboration / partnership
- Types of partners involved and nature of their involvement
- Partnership structures and processes (including governance, accountability & communication)
- Success factors for (different types of) partnerships
- Value added by working in partnership
- Implications for partnership strategies and policies

The planned fieldtrip to a site of the Small-Holder Dairy Project was an essential part of the larger exercise to draw lessons from the experience of participating programmes.

The self-assessment exercise addressed the following topics:

- *Continuing relevance of ILAC* in the changing context of international agricultural R&D
- *Project activities and outputs to date*, including those associated with small grants to Learning Lab teams
- *Learning and knowledge sharing within the Learning Lab*
- Progress made toward *institutionalizing ILAC* in the CGIAR and partner organizations, and recommendations for the future

The self-assessment session was lead by Victor Kommerell, A consultant hired by ILAC to work on its mid-term review.

The planning exercise took place on the afternoon of the last day of the meeting.

The facilitator

The meeting was facilitated by Dr Jurgen Hagmann, from PICO Team <http://www.picoteam.org/> with the assistance of Rachel Rege and Judith Odhiambo

Meeting objectives

The meeting had three major objectives:

- Draw lessons from participants' experiences with collaborative programs / partnerships to inform the development of partnership strategies and policies in agricultural research-for-development organisations.
- Conduct a participatory review of the ILAC Initiative.
- Plan future activities of the Learning Laboratory and the ILAC project more broadly.

Meeting programme

The five-day meeting was structured by topics and sessions, as illustrated below:

	Monday 21/09	Tuesday 22/09	Wednesday 23/09	Thursday 24/09	Friday 25/09
Session 1	<i>Opening and Setting scene</i>	<i>Pulling together: challenges in partnership mgmt</i>	<i>Reviewing lessons from field visit & Presentation of group results</i>	<i>Institutionalisation of partnership and learning</i>	<i>ILAC in the new CGIAR structure: options</i>
Session 2	<i>Overview of ILAC Analysis of experiences</i>	<i>Strategies to deal with challenges</i>	<i>Towards conceptualisation</i>	<i>Self-assessment: first analysis</i>	<i>Enhancing learning in the group</i>
Session 3	<i>Analysis of experiences cont'd</i>	<i>Field visit</i>	<i>Conceptual. cont'd policy & practice recommendations</i>	<i>Self assessment cont'd</i>	<i>Future initiatives</i>
Session 4	<i>Presentation and discussion of experiences</i>	<i>Field Visit</i>	<i>Policy & Practice recommendations</i>	<i>Panel discussion with CG managers</i>	<i>Next steps Workshop eval. & Closing</i>
Evening Program		<i>Open Space Discussions</i>	<i>Open Space Discussions</i>	<i>Open Space Discussions</i>	

Participants

The meeting was attended by 24 professionals from 7 case studies (Table 1) and ILAC Core Team. The list of participants is included in Annex 1.

Programme	Lead Organization	Countries of Operation
Users' Perspectives With Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD)	International Potato Centre (CIP)	Philippines
Learning in Knowledge Intensive Agricultural Systems in India	Xavier Institute of Management	India
Andean Change Initiative (Cambio Andino)	International Potato Centre (CIP)	Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador
Linking users to researchers for banana and plantain improvement	Bioversity International	Nicaragua, Venezuela, Dominican Republic and Panama
Smallholder Dairy Project	International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)	Kenya
SG2000 Innovations in Africa	Centre for the Improvement of Maize and Wheat (CIMMYT)	Ethiopia and Uganda
African Highlands Initiative	World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)	Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda

A group photo is shown below and additional photos of participants can be found in Annex 2.



Group Photograph

First row (left to right): Waga Mazengia, Wondwossen Tsegaye, Evanson Mwangi, Julius Nyangaga, Jamie Watts, Victor Kommerell, Doug Horton, Vivian Polar and Charles Staver

Second row (left to right): Jurgen Hagmann, David Brown, Dindo Campilan, Emma Rotondo, Cristina Sette, Jephine Mogoi, Matteo Giancristofaro, Zakaria Mkoga, A Ravindra, Lorna Sister, Julieta Roa, and Shambu Prasad

Meeting evaluation

Approximately two months after the meeting ended, participants were asked to rate various aspects of the meeting through an online survey. A web-based service, *Survey Monkey*¹, was used to administer a custom-made survey. Participants were asked to respond to 10 questions, five of which required a rating and five an open ended, essay-type response. Eighteen of the twenty one participants of the survey completed the survey -- a 85% response rate.

General comments from respondents included:

Thank you for the patience of everyone, especially the organizers and facilitators. Despite its flaws, it provided enough inspiration on how to move forward. The interactions were so rich.

It was a great and stimulating opportunity for joint learning about partnerships. We need more of this type of interactions.

Thanks to Chris, Jamie, Jurgen and Doug for all the hard work

A little more detailed and in depth analysis is required to improve understanding and to facilitate learning.

I was a bit surprised by a couple decisions on the learning lab which seemed to be a bit off the mark in terms of partnerships. We were not well prepared with the specifics of the workshop focus on partnership. There was also a change in the focus of the grants for 2010 which was sent to us after the workshop. While the decision may make sense, it was done in an after the matter approach.

General reaction

A summary of the responses is presented here.

1. Overall satisfaction with the meeting:

The overall satisfaction with the meeting was considered excellent and good by 83% of respondents, as illustrated in Figure 1. Respondents' comments to the overall meeting are listed below:

Good organization and achievement of workshop objectives

Good interaction, "no defensiveness", open

Fruitful and excellent energy and creativity among participants

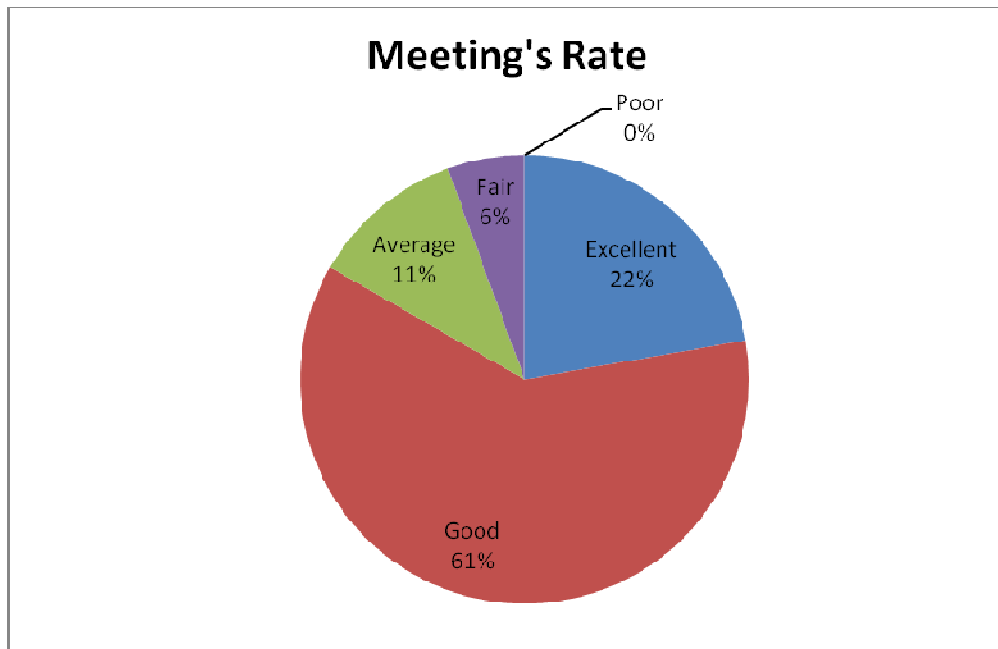
The participation and commitment of the partners was high. Some clarity was needed at the beginning.

Not much exciting discussion took place. Not much intellectual stimulation as consensus is given more weight than discussion.

Well facilitated expertly planned

¹ www.surveymonkey.com

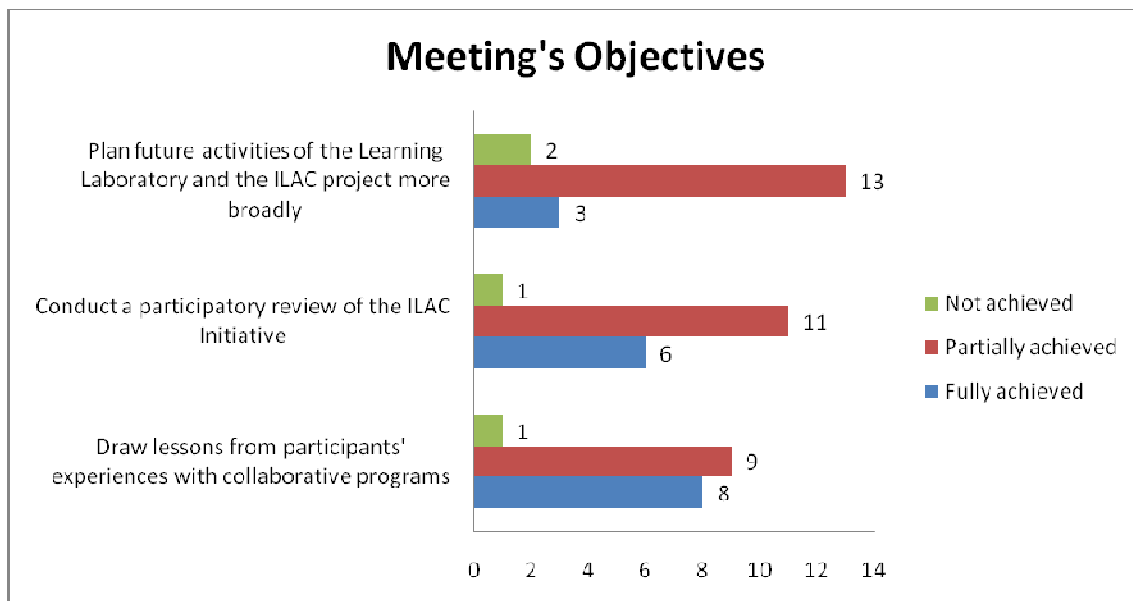
Figure 1. Participants' general assessment of the meeting



2. Meeting objectives:

Respondents indicated that the meeting objectives were, in general, partially achieved, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Meeting's objectives



Respondents' comments included:

Had too many objectives

I think we spent too little time on the future activities of the learning laboratory and perhaps could have factored more time on this and less on partnership

For future meeting I believe it is important to invite at least a person who has participated in the past meeting.

I feel it is good for future meeting that there should be a kind of presentation from each institution to reflect their experience on the topic of discussion selected for the meeting - as was "Partnership" for the recent meeting

Objectives and results of the review were not very clear

1st step in self-assessment of all ILAC initiatives. Need to combine with previous assessments to see recurring patterns, deepen is/to-be/hurdles/solutions analysis; WS generated much learning about 'partnerships'; To Do List & ILAC central-driven future activities would have benefitted from prioritisation

Had we gone a bit in depth with each case or more into the nuances, we might have had deeper insights. Each case studying the other would have been an intensive learning exercise.

The participants were not very involved in setting the objectives for the meeting. although I appreciate very much the learning lab as an opportunity for exchange of ideas and exposure to new ideas, the partnership is a bit one-sided in terms of determining procedures and objectives

3. Comments on the most useful aspects of the meeting

Frequently mentioned useful aspects of the meeting were related to understanding partnership and partnership management and sharing experiences with other members of the Learning Laboratory.

Topic	Frequency mentioned
Understanding partnership	7
Sharing experiences	6
Getting to know each other	2
Learning about the cases	1
Understanding about ILAC	1
Understanding institutionalization	1

Respondents' comments included:

Better understanding of institutionalization and the advantages of institutionalizing ideas

Cross-LL cases learning about partnership

The partnership information sharing; a good spirit of teamwork

To Do List with improvement actions, owned by participants

Planning future work

Meeting the group unknown to me

A better understanding of ILAC initiative.

Facilitation was exemplary. The material developed for the paper on lessons of partnership was very good.

4. Comments on the least useful aspects of the meeting

A few respondents indicated that the meeting agenda was too ambitious, with too many objectives, limiting the time for sharing and learning. They also indicated that the review of ILAC and case studies activities was not clear.

Respondents' comments included:

Learning lab presentations that were not well structured; should have benefitted from pre-workshop preparation to be more useful

Partnership overkill Too much agreement

Action planning

Example of evaluation of an initiative

Spider diagramming of partnerships follow up tasks carried out on last day

The review of past activities and future planning was weaker. There was no framework or exercise for learning from the learning-lab projects per se (i.e., no comparison with the goals set in Cali a year earlier and no reference to PIPA).

5. Meeting logistics and features:

Respondents indicated that, in general, the meeting logistics were very good or good (Figure 3). On the travel reimbursement issue, the evaluation was carried out before the invoices were processed, affecting the responses for this question.

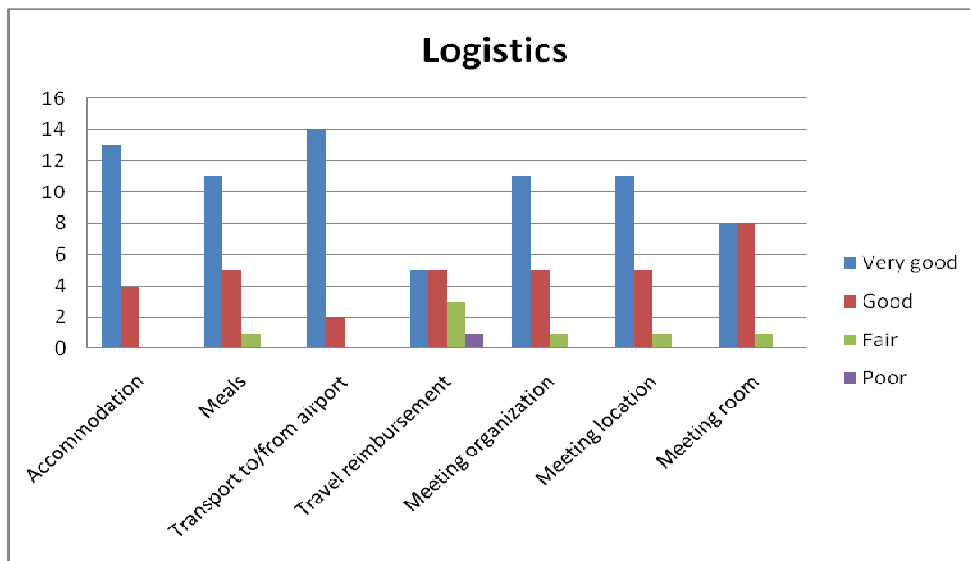
Respondents' comments included:

I had problems accessing and sending emails; erratic internet connection

Room was too small, no break-out spaces, visualisation equipment crappy

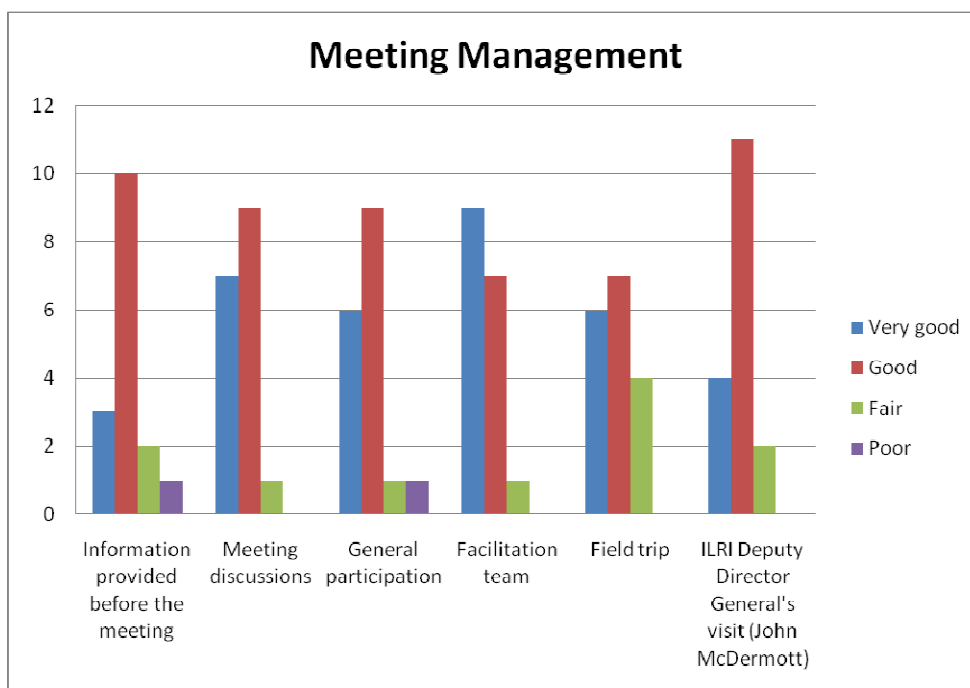
I think \$10/day is very little for participants.

Figure 3. Meeting's Logistics



Regarding the management of the meeting, the overall rate was very good or good (Figure 4). One respondent indicated that “some previous preparation may have been useful to have all partners tuned for the meeting”.

Figure 4. Meeting’s Management



6. Additional topics

Asked what additional topics participants would like to have included in the meeting, participants were eager to hear more about experiences from participants. Some felt that the meeting already covered too many topics to have any additional ones.

Respondents’ comments included:

More information on different types of partnerships and how they can be managed

Learning about stories of similar efforts - for example listening to Dindo on UPWARD and its history and implications for ILAC A presentation by Doug on his recent frustrations on CG change

Some more time for the planning of future activities by partners (small grants)

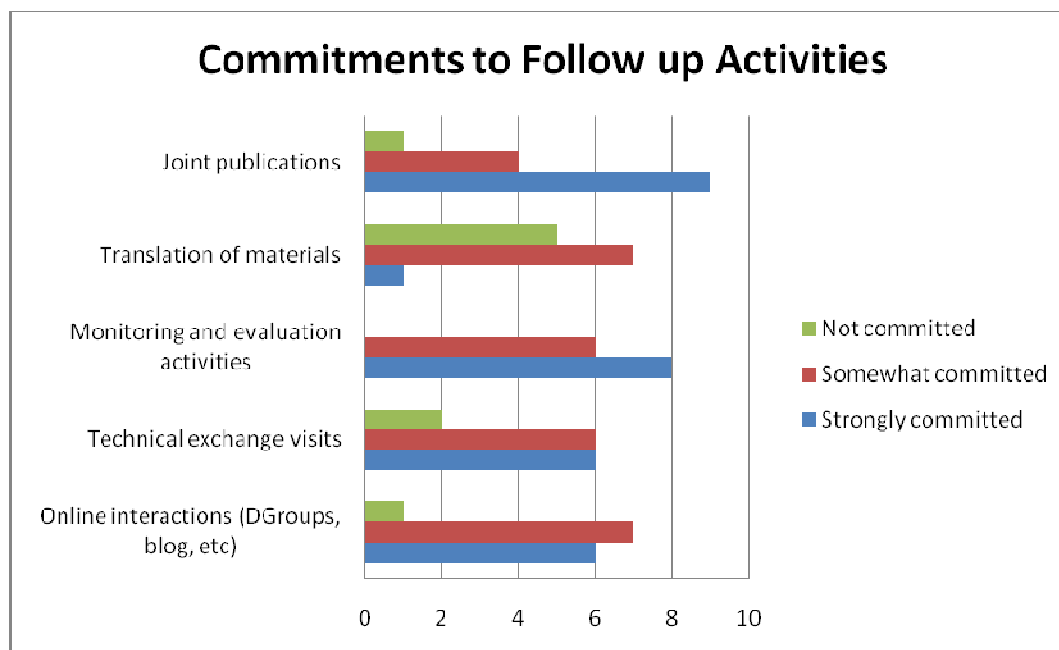
Institutionalization of learning; more work on the conceptual framework of ILAC in the CGIAR

More structured learning from Learning Lab projects. More structured exchange of experience among teams, related to their projects.

7. Follow up activities

Participants felt that the topics presented during the workshop were very useful. Of the various topics covered, group decision making and facilitative listening were considered to be the most useful (Figure 3).

Figure5. Commitment to follow up activities



Respondents' comments included:

I can not lead any of the activities as I have poor access to internet. But I can be committed to forward inputs for all

Small grants in 2010

8. Obstacles for participating

Asked what obstacle could prevent them from participating in the Learning Laboratory virtual discussions/interactions or accessing information posted on the website, respondents indicated that the major constrain is time.

Respondents' comments included:

I do appreciate the virtual discussions, though, since it provides opportunity to pick up the thread of discussions whenever time allows. The downside is that you cannot do that when you are not online.

I see the participation levels still low in D group and not clear how this can increase given the commitments of time all have.

I have poor access to internet but still it is the best way to me to communicate

At the moment time is not allocated specifically to ILAC activities. It needs to be built in the annual work plan.

Due to travel schedule, I cannot also access an easy and fast connection

I use these tools to the extent that they are directly useful to me in my work. Direct emails are often more engaging than widely distributed ones.

Annex 1: Participants of 2009 ILAC Learning Laboratory Meeting

Name	Position, Organization & Address	Email address
Users' Perspectives With Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD) network		
Dindo Campilan	Regional Leader for South, West and Central Asia International Potato Center, New Delhi, India	d.campilan@cgiar.org
Julieta Roa	Director Philippines Root Crop Research and Training Center (PhilRootcrops), Philippines	nello_roa@yahoo.com
Lorna Sister	Research Specialist, Impact Enhancement, UPWARD Partnership Program, International Potato Center, Philippines	l.sister@cgiar.org
Andean Change Program (Cambio Andino)		
Emma Rotondo	Evaluation Coordinator PREVAL, Lima, Peru	emma.rotondo@gmail.com
Vivian Polar	Participatory Methodologies Team Leader, PROINPA Foundation, La Paz, Bolivia	vivian.polar@gmail.com
Network for linking users to researchers for banana and plantain improvement		
Charles Staver	Senior Scientist and Project Coordinator Bioversity International, Montpellier, France	c.staver@cgiar.org
David Brown	IT Specialist Bioversity, San Jose, Costa Rica	d.brown@cgiar.org
The Kenya Smallholder Dairy Project		
Julius N Nyangaga	Research Associate International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi, Kenya	j.nyangaga@cgiar.org
Philip Cheron	Chief Technician Kenya Dairy Board, Nairobi, Kenya	pcherono@kdb.co.ke
Evanson N Mwangi	Chief Dairy Inspector Kenya Dairy Board, Nairobi, Kenya	emwangi@kdb.co.ke
Knowledge and Monitoring System of SG2000 Innovations in Africa		
Roberto La Rovere	Impact Assessment Specialist International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	r.larovere@cgiar.org
Wondwossen Tsegaye	The Sasakawa Global 2000 - CIMMYT, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	wendsentsgay@yahoo.com
Matteo Giancristofaro	Intern The Sasakawa Global 2000 - CIMMYT, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	matteogiancristofaro@hotmail.it
African Highlands Initiative		
Jephine Mogoi	Research Assistant World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Nairobi, Kenya	j.mogoi@cgiar.org
Waga Mazengia	Gununo Watershed - Areka Agricultural Research Centre, Ethiopia	waga966@yahoo.com
Zakaria Juma Mkoga	Principal Agricultural Research Officer,	mkogazj@yahoo.co.uk

	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Cooperatives, Agricultural Research Institute, Uyo, Mbeya, Tanzania	
Knowledge Intensive Agricultural Systems (KIA) in India		
Shambu Prasad	Associate Professor Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar, India	shambu@ximb.ac.in
A Ravindra	Director Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), Secunderabad, India	raviwn@gmail.com
ILAC Initiative Coordinating Team		
Jamie Watts	ILAC Coordinator Bioversity International, Rome, Italy	j.watts@cgiar.org
Doug Horton	ILAC Honorary Fellow Sarasota, USA	d.horton@mac.com
Cristina Sette	ILAC Programme Specialist Bioversity International, Rome, Italy	c.sette@cgiar.org
Victor Kommerell	Consultant	victor@kommerell.com

Annex 2. Meeting Pictures



Credit: C. Sette



Credit: L. Sister



Credit: Shambu Prasad



Credit: D. Horton