

Membership of CGIAR's Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)

Purpose

This document presents the background, rationale and proposals related to membership of SPIA as outlined in two sections following this cover note:

- Section I: Proposed candidates by SPIA Chair for SPIA Standing Member to fill the arising vacancy from the term-end reached by a current member, plus a proposed candidate as an additional Special Initiative Member- both aimed at strengthening the diversity of SPIA's composition and methodological approach. These proposals have been consulted with and supported by the System Council's Standing Committee on Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation (SIMEC).
- Section II: Proposed continuation of the current SPIA Chair for the remaining two years of the allowable six year total term to steward the ongoing workplan of SPIA and exploration of its optimal service to One CGIAR as sponsored by SIMEC.

Action Requested

The System Council is requested to consider, and if thought appropriate to approve the:

- Appointment of **Dr. Sujata Visaria as SPIA Standing Panel Member** for a three-year term with effect 1 July 2021 unless otherwise decided by the System Council;
- Appointment of **Dr. Monica Biradavolu as an additional Special Initiative Member** for a three-year term with effect 1 July 2021 unless otherwise decided by the System Council; and
- Extension of **Dr. Karen Macours as current SPIA Chair** for the remaining two years of the allowable six years until 30 September 2023.

Special notice on 'Consent Agenda' status of this document

This item is presented to the System Council according to Article 7.1(a) of the System Council's Rules of Procedure, permitting a 'consent agenda' consisting of items that require formal System Council decision but are submitted as a group for adoption by the System Council without discussion.

Further to the rules of procedure, **should a System Council member or Active Observer wish to remove an individual item from the Consent Agenda, that request should be communicated to the Secretary of the System Council by close of business Paris time on Wednesday 2 June 2021.**

Document category: Working document of the System Council

There is no restriction on the circulation of this document

Prepared by: System Council Secretariat based on inputs from CGIAR Advisory Services and SIMEC.

Background

1. The SPIA Terms of Reference (ToR)¹ describe the process and consultations required for SPIA membership.
2. Pursuant to those ToR, Article 4.1 sets out that *'SPIA will consist of a core of three (3) standing members, one of whom serves as SPIA Chair. SPIA membership may be grown to a maximum of 3 additional special initiative members to provide strategic guidance in the delivery of the SPIA workplan as necessary'*.
3. Article 4.3 of the ToR states that *'SPIA standing members, including the Chair, will serve an initial three years, with the possibility of renewal up to three additional years without further extension'*.
4. Article 4.7 of the ToR states that *'The additional standing and special initiative members of SPIA will be identified by the SPIA Chair based on role specification, criteria and key competencies desired for SPIA members, as approved by the System Council, with those persons identified by the SPIA Chair, in consultation with SIMEC, being confirmed by the System Council'*.
5. SPIA is in the midst of implementing a six-year workplan, reaching mid-point in December 2021. According to its workplan, SPIA has identified and committed a pipeline of \$5 million in accountability and learning studies being implemented until 2023. Following the launch of the Ethiopia synthesis report, SPIA plans on documenting the reach of CGIAR in 3 other countries by 2024.
6. The process to develop the 2022-24 Investment Plan and CGIAR Initiatives ([SC11-04a](#)) outlines the central role of CGIAR Initiatives to deliver the strategy.
7. The approved [Performance Results and Management Framework](#) (PRMF) (Decision Reference: SC/M11/DP2) states that ***CGIAR Initiatives will implement/commission evaluations and impact assessment studies, designed from the start as integral part of the research process to causally test the assumptions underlying the Theory of Change in order to contribute to their improvement and increased impact.*** SPIA has received requests from Initiative Design Teams for advice on methods and metrics to consider for the impact assessment plans.
8. After consultation with Executive Management Team ('EMT') (on SIMEC's recommendation) SPIA, in coordination with the System Organization, has offered the Initiative Design Teams advice on methods and metrics for their impact assessment plans during the research initiatives proposal development.
9. Of the three-person SPIA Panel, Dr. J.V. Meenakshi completed services as at 1 May 2021. SPIA Chair, [Dr. Karen Macours](#), was appointed on 1 October 2017 as part of a publicly advertised call for applications in May 2017. She was appointed for a term of three years with possibility of renewal for one additional term under the previous ISPC. Her appointment was extended for one year on 1 October 2020.

¹ The approved SPIA ToR with effect from 4 October 2018 are available at:
<https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2018/10/TOR-SPIA-Approved-4Oct2018.pdf>

Section 1: Appointments to Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) proposed by SPIA Chair

Purpose:

The document presents the rationale and proposal for appointments of a SPIA Member and a Special Initiative Member.

Rationale:

1. The proposal seeks to assure the continuity of thought leadership and good stewardship of the committed SPIA pipeline under the current workplan with utmost accountability to System funders on the commitments already made to 20 learning and accountability studies and to the various partners for the country work in 3 countries, while also increasing the ability to respond to the new asks resulting from the One CGIAR reform. The proposal presents the optimal arrangement to assure adequate capacity and interdisciplinarity to support the One CGIAR impact areas and new Initiatives, whilst responsibly implementing the ongoing program.
2. The proposal entails the appointment of a new Panel Member, to fill a Member vacancy (since 1 May 2021) during a time of extreme demand on SPIA, and abbreviate to the extent possible the gap that places additional burden on the Chair and one Panel Member.
3. The proposal entails the three-year appointment of surge capacity through a Special Initiative Member. This surge capacity will expand the disciplinary expertise of SPIA. The proposal has no material budgetary implications.

Proposals:

The appointment of Dr. Sujata Visaria as Standing Panel Member for a full three-year term, and the appointment of Dr. Monica Biradavolu as Special Initiative Member for the duration of three years.

Sujata Visaria

Sujata Visaria is Professor and the Associate Director of the Institute for Emerging Markets Studies at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). Dr. Visaria will contribute across 3 SPIA objectives and help steward the continuation of the multi-year workplan activities, assuring optimal returns to investment made. Her base and deep experience in Asia and emerging markets, and her strong theoretically grounded and empirically rigorous research on value chains, financial access and marketing arrangements, will help guide the orientation of the SPIA country work as it expands to Asia. In this region, SPIA expects to document the reach of CGIAR-related innovations and policy influences in countries further along structural transformation and where CGIAR research is focused on new challenges around resilient agrifood systems & food system transformation. Dr. Visaria's skills and expertise are further important to assure continuity of the SPIA activities that were under the primary responsibility of Dr. J V Meenakshi (including steering the portfolio of ongoing long-term large-scale studies, providing

technical feedback to study teams and capacity strengthening activities, such as the monthly webinar and mentoring for early career researchers and the broader Impact Assessment CoP). Dr. Visaria has a strong publication record (including multi-disciplinary journals) and brings insights regarding incentives by different actors in value chains, credit markets, marketing arrangements, and policymaking. She combines these insights with rigorous empirical methods to test optimal designs for contracting arrangements and market structure. Her research spans work in (her native) India and various emerging markets in South East Asia. Before moving to HKUST, Dr. Visaria was an Assistant Professor of Economics at Boston University and a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Ford School of Public Policy and Ross School of Business, University of Michigan. She is a Research affiliate at the Bureau of Research and Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD) and at the Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA) in the small and medium enterprises initiative. Dr. Visaria received her MA from the Delhi School of Economics and completed her PhD in Economics at Columbia University.

Proposal: a 3-year Panel Member appointment from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024.

Monica Biradavolu

Monica Biradavolu is a Scholar-in-Residence at American University, CEO of Qualanalytics and a well-recognized mixed-methods impact assessment expert. Dr. Biradavolu will expand SPIA's capacity to respond to new asks resulting from the One CGIAR reform, and in line with the overall SPIA mandate. Dr. Biradavolu's qualitative methods skills, training in sociology and connections to experts in qualitative-quantitative methods will help expand SPIA's capacity to provide guidance to Initiative Design Teams. Accounting for the broad range of research areas and topics covered by the research initiatives will necessarily imply using a variety of methods to provide rigorous evidence of impacts for testing key assumptions underlying theories-of-change, stage-gating, learning and accountability purposes. Dr. Biradavolu brings a particular expertise on gender, and social inclusion more broadly. As part of a pluri-disciplinary team, she has done pathbreaking work on measurement innovations around women's agency, combining qualitative methods with machine learning approaches to design new rigorous and scalable measures. Dr. Biradavolu's competencies complement the contributions and expertise of the other 3 Special Initiative Members. Dr. Biradavolu has published widely in top health, nutrition, sociology and multidisciplinary journals, plus a book with a sociological study of entrepreneurs and innovators. She has done impact assessment research using both qualitative and mixed-methods approaches in Asia, the Middle East and Sub Saharan Africa. She is also well recognized for her qualitative methods trainings. Prior to her current position, she was an Assistant Research Professor in the Department of Sociology and Assistant Director of the Center on Health, Risk & Society at the American University. She was also a Research Scholar at the Global Health Institute at Duke University and a postdoctoral associate at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS at Yale University. Dr. Biradavolu completed her BA in Sociology at the University of Delhi, India and received her MA and PhD in Sociology from Duke University, US.

Proposal: a 3-year Special Initiative Member *One CGIAR Surge Capacity* appointment from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024.



Section 2: Extension of Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) Chair

Purpose:

The document presents the rationale and proposal for appointment of the SPIA Chair, sponsored by SIMEC. As a reference to the decision, the document includes a table with current members and proposals presented to System Council in its 13th meeting.

Rationale:

1. The proposal seeks to assure the continuity of thought leadership and good stewardship of the committed SPIA pipeline under the current workplan with utmost accountability to System funders on the commitments already made to 20 learning and accountability studies and to the various partners for the country work in 3 countries, while also increasing the ability to respond to the new asks resulting from the transition to One CGIAR.
2. The proposal entails an extension of the Chair to the full limit of the term, i.e. a further two years, to assure continuity and good stewardship of the financial commitments already made, and continued leadership to crowd-in new methods and support the CGIAR initiatives.

Proposal:

A 2-year extension of Dr. Karen Macours as SPIA Chair with effect from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2023.

Karen Macours

Dr. Karen Macours is a chaired professor at the Paris School of Economics and research director at the French National Research Institute for Agricultural, Food and Environment (INRAE). Dr. Macours provided leadership to the development and launch of the SPIA current multi-year workplan, which is mid-way through its implementation. She maintains an active research portfolio focused on the micro-economic constraints to agricultural productivity and rural poverty reduction in developing countries. Much of her current research involves impact assessment related to agricultural research, the evaluation of programs addressing rural households' productive and human capital investments (early childhood development, nutrition, health, education), and related measurement and methodological questions. She has led field projects in Sub Sahara Africa, Latin America and Asia, and has worked with a variety of stakeholders (national and regional governments, NGOs, bilateral and multilaterals agencies).

Dr. Macours is a board member and co-lead of the health sector for JPAL (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab), member of the board of directors of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Market Risk and Resilience, co-editor of the Journal of Development Economics, associate editor of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics, lead of the development research group at Paris School of Economics, member of the board of

directors of BREAD (Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development) and an affiliate of CEPR (Center for Economic Policy Research) and EUDN (European Universities Development Network). She previously was Associate Professor of international economics at SAIS- Johns Hopkins University.

Reference Annex:

SPIA Membership table

Member	Role	Gender	Active Research Areas / Professional Affiliation	Term
Karen Macours	SPIA Chair	F	Agricultural productivity, social protection & inclusion, human capital (ECD, nutrition, health), measurement Chaired Professor at the Paris School of Economics and researcher at the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (INRAE)	First three-year term from 1 October 2017, plus one-year renewal
Kyle Emerick	SPIA Standing Member	M	Resilience, migration, seed systems, water markets, property rights & labor Associate Professor in Economics, Tufts University, USA	Three-year term from 1 January 2020
Vacant <i>Proposal: Sujata Visaria</i>	SPIA Standing Member	F	Value chains, financial access and marketing arrangements Professor and the Associate Director of the Institute for Emerging Markets Studies at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	
Kelsey Jack	SPIA Special Initiative Member	F	Environment, eco-system services, natural resources management, Climate Change, Remote Sensing Director of the Poverty Alleviation group at the Environmental Markets Lab (emLab) and Associate Professor of Environmental and Development Economics, University of California Santa Barbara, USA	Three-year term from 1 July 2019
Rachid Laajaj	SPIA Special Initiative Member	M	Technology adoption in agriculture and NRM, corruption, human capital & measurement Associate Professor in Economics, University of Los Andes, Bogota, Colombia	Three-year term from 1 January 2020
Travis Lybbert	SPIA Special Initiative Member	M	Risk & Uncertainty, Technology Transfer & Adoption, Intellectual Property & Innovation Policy Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California Davis, US	Three-year term from 1 July 2019
Surge capacity <i>Proposal: Monica Biradavolu</i>	SPIA Special Initiative Member	F	Sociologist, qualitative methods, gender, and social inclusion Scholar-in-Residence at American University, CEO of Qualanalytics	