

Learning and Optimization Report

CGIAR Technical Reporting 2023

Assisted Natural Renegeration demonstration plot. Photo by Gabriel Mulenga/CIFOR

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the Learning and Optimization (L&O) process conducted during April-June 2024 on CGIAR's 2023 Technical Reporting. The objective was to identify lessons learned from the second year of Initiative, Impact Platform, and for the first time Science Group Project (SGP), reporting against the <u>CGIAR Technical Reporting Arrangement</u> and set out an Action Plan for improvements in future reporting cycles. The report is structured as follows:

- The introduction provides an overview of 2023 Technical Reporting, the L&O process, and the study's approach and limitations.
- The results section presents an overview of what worked well and what didn't work well and suggestions for improvement (organized according to the five pillars used in the study: conceptual underpinnings, processes, systems/platforms, capacity, and products/outputs) distinguishing between those "quick wins" which could be incorporated in the 2024 Reporting and longer-term items which should be taken on board for the CGIAR 2025-2030 Portfolio.
- The 2024 Action Plan is presented in Annex 1, details on the survey are provided in Annex 2, and a brief comparison of 2022 and 2023 L&O findings are presented in Annex 3.

The 2023 L&O process drew on a similar process conducted for 2022 Technical Reporting, and the <u>2022 L&O Report and Action Plan</u>, and involved a participatory approach, engaging different stakeholder groups, and focused on five key Technical Reporting pillars. The following stakeholder groups contributed to the L&O process:

- Initiative/Impact Platform/SGP teams, including PRMS users.
- Science Group representatives (Managing Directors, Senior Program Managers, MELIA Focal Points).
- Global Group Directors (Regions and Partnership, Partnerships and Advocacy, Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization, Communications and Outreach (C&O)/Knowledge Management).
- Independent Advisory and Evaluation Services (IAES).
- Digital and Data (D&D), Project Coordination Unit (PCU), Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU).

The L&O process was led by PPU with the support of a Learning Advisory Team (LAT) comprising representatives from each Science Group, from Impact Area Platforms, from CGIAR's Risk Management Team, from PPU, PCU, and D&D, and from C&O/Knowledge Management.

Data was primarily collected through an online survey circulated to key stakeholders. The L&O Report and Action Plan also draw on feedback received during Technical Reporting learning deep dives run throughout 2023/2024 by teams involved in CGIAR Technical Reporting; any feedback submitted to PPU throughout 2023/2024; and any independently collected Technical Reporting feedback that was shared with PPU. The findings were coded and analyzed to identify overarching themes, priorities, recommendations, and perceptions.

The reporting process, report development and clearance process, quality assurance (QA) processes, the PRMS Reporting Tool, Type 1 reports, the pause and reflect process, webinars/drop-ins, the Performance & Results (P&R) Hub, report templates and mockups, and bi-weekly update emails all have combined satisfaction rates above 50 percent, indicating strong positive reception in these areas. Guidance documents, the QA Platform, theory of change (TOC) updates and finalization, the time allocated for the various reporting stages/products, the TOC Tool, the Results Dashboard, and Type 1 report elements have combined satisfaction rates between 40-50 percent.

In terms of combined dissatisfaction rates, the **process of reporting results jointly between Initiatives** (32.8 percent), **TOC updates and finalization** (26.2 percent) and the **TOC Tool** (23 percent) are the elements with the highest rates of dissatisfaction, highlighting areas of concern for stakeholders.



The report highlights the following main Technical Report enhancement themes for **2024 Technical Reporting** that emerged from across the different engagement methods:

- Enhancing how results are jointly reported between reporting entities by improving the process of cross-Initiative tagging mechanisms.
- Carefully planning how TOC updates are made, and making improvements to the usability of the TOC Tool.
- Providing better guidance for reporting on impacts, Action Area/Science Group outcomes, and end-of-Initiative outcomes.
- Improving and streamlining IPSR reporting and maintaining and enhancing capacity strengthening efforts in this area.
- Further communicating the use and value of the Risk Management Tool.
- Further developing efficiencies within the QA process, supported by improved guidance for certain reporting elements such as Impact Area tagging; knowledge product types; "other outputs/outcomes", especially where to put engagement activities; locations of virtual capacity sharing events; and CGSpace requirements and standards; along with ensuring access to evidence links for QA assessors and potentially providing longer times for responses to QA assessor comments.
- Carefully considering changes for the final year of reporting for the current Portfolio, including how the summative reports, as required by the Technical Reporting Arrangement, are developed, providing guidance related to this, and considering the allocation of more time for internal review of reports before submission.

Priority actions for 2024 Technical Reporting were identified by the LAT and are included in the Action Plan in Annex 1. Implementation of actions will be reported on through the established Type 3 Portfolio Practice Change Technical Report. A Technical Reporting L&O process will continue to be conducted annually, in line with the new Portfolio's required changes and ongoing stakeholder feedback.

Based on the feedback received as part of the L&O process, recommendations have also been made for **Technical Reporting in the 2025-2030 Portfolio**. Key themes include::

- Further incorporating qualitative reporting and results, and providing greater emphasis on narrative reporting within the Type 1 Reports. Further attempts to disincentivize a focus on reporting numbers, and enhance focus on quality and reporting progress.
- Enhancing the way progress is reported against the planned outputs and outcomes by further incorporating processes and tools that present information on results against set targets.
- Focusing on simplicity and efficiency, without sacrificing robustness and value both for reporting tools and systems, and processes.
- Clarifying governance and decision-making for the PRMS to allow for the proper time and resources to implement improvements and improve functionality. Developing a mechanism for greater engagement of users and Science team representatives on PRMS development, and focusing on keeping the PRMS as simple and lean as possible.
- Building on the achievements, tools, support and communication methods currently used so as not to lose the progress and optimization already made.
- Boosting the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) community of practice.
- Moving to a more tailored support model that would incorporate support across the Portfolio but also at different intersecting levels (Megaprogram, region etc.).
- Supporting the development of optimal data collection methods for reporting for both pooled-funded Programs and Accelerators and bilateral projects integrated into CGIAR Technical Reporting, including standardized data collection forms (potentially in Excel) and a batch upload capability in the PRMS.



1. Introduction

1.1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the findings of the learning and optimization (L&O) process conducted by the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU), with guidance provided by a Learning Advisory Team (LAT), for <u>CGIAR's 2022 Technical Reporting</u>.

The main objective of the L&O process was to identify **key lessons** from the second year of Technical Reporting on the implementation of CGIAR's Portfolio and set out an Action Plan (Annex 1) for improvements to be implemented for 2024 reporting *(recognizing that 2024 reporting is subject to specific constraints owing to the transition to the 2025-2030 Portfolio and closure of the Initiatives and Platforms*) as well as in the 2025-2030 Technical Reporting approach.

1.2. 2023 TECHNICAL REPORTING OVERVIEW

In 2022, CGIAR's Technical Reporting Arrangement, co-developed with members of the System Council's Strategic Impact Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) and CGIAR staff, provided CGIAR with an agreed reporting approach for its new Portfolio. The Technical Reporting Arrangement is operationalized through the components presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Overview of CGIAR's Technical Reporting components.

Implementation of CGIAR Technical Reporting in 2023 built on the first year of Technical Reporting against the Technical Reporting Arrangement, and included the publication of 32 Initiative, 4 Impact Platform, and 2 SGP Annual Technical Reports (<u>Type 1 reports</u>), with quality assured results reported by Initiatives, Impact Platforms and SGPs available on the <u>CGIAR Results Dashboard</u>; an Annual Portfolio Practice Change report (<u>Type 3 report</u>); and a <u>Portfolio Narrative</u>, which drew on the Type 1 and Type 3 reports and the CGIAR Results Dashboard to provide a broader view on Portfolio coherence.

The CGIAR Technical Report constitutes a key component of the overarching CGIAR Annual Report (Figure 2):



Figure 2. The components of the CGIAR Technical Report and how they feed into the CGIAR Annual Report.

Figure 3 shows the overall 2023 Technical Reporting timeline, with key dates and milestones highlighted.



2023 Technical Reporting Timeline

Figure 3. 2023 Technical Reporting timeline.

1.3. Approach

1.3.1 Methodology

The LAT was formed to guide the design and implementation of the L&O process, as well as the content of the L&O Report and its Action Plan.

LAT membership included:

- 3 x Senior Program Managers (1 per Science Group)
- 3 x Science Group MELIA Focal Points (1 per Science Group)
- 1 x Impact Platform representative
- 1 x representative from CGIAR's Risk Management Team
- 1 x representative from the PPU
- 1x representative from Digital & Data (D&D)
- 2 x representatives from the Portfolio Coordination Unit (PCU)
- 1 x representative from CGIAR Communications & Outreach (C&O)/Knowledge Management (KM) team
- 1 x representative for SGPs

The guiding principles of the L&O process were to ensure that the L&O process was light, intentional, inclusive and stakeholder centric, and allowed for engagement and reflection on:

- What worked well, and what didn't work well regarding 2023 Technical Reporting.
- What the priority areas are for improvement in 2024 and beyond, recognizing that 2024 reporting is subject to specific constraints owing to the transition to the 2025-2030 Portfolio and closure of the Initiatives and Platforms.

Given the main aims of the L&O process, a participatory approach that engaged stakeholders in reflection on specific components of Technical Reporting was designed – noting that different stakeholder groups were interested in different aspects of Technical Reporting.

These Technical Reporting components were organized into five key pillars:

1. Conceptual underpinnings

The CGIAR Results Framework and Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness (IPSR).

2. Process

Timeline and sequencing, the Quality Assurance (QA) process, the Pause and Reflect process, the process for report packaging, and SGP integration.

3. Systems/Platforms

Use of the Performance and Results Management System (PRMS) for data entry and its sub-modules on QA, theory of change (TOC), and Risk.

4. Capacity

Training, guidance materials, and support provided through drop-in and scheduled deep dive calls.

5. Products/Outputs

The Results Dashboard, the Type 1 reports, the Type 3 report, and the Portfolio Narrative.

Data collection took place primarily through an online survey. The L&O Report and Action Plan also draw on feedback received during the reporting year and Technical Reporting learning deep dives run throughout 2023/2024 by teams involved in CGIAR Technical Reporting; any feedback submitted to PPU throughout 2023/2024; and any independently collected Technical Reporting feedback that was shared with PPU.

The LAT engaged in sensemaking of the data collected, using AI tools for support, and this Report and Action Plan are the output of the L&O process (Figure 4).



For reference - L&O building blocks

Figure 4. 2023 Learning and optimization process.

The following stakeholder groups were identified and solicited for feedback on 2023 Technical Reporting through the L&O process:

- Initiative/Impact Platform/SGP teams, including PRMS users.
- Science Group representatives (Managing Directors, Senior Program Managers, MELIA Focal Points).
- Global Group Directors (Regions and Partnership, Partnerships and Advocacy, Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization, C&O)/ Knowledge Management.
- Independent Advisory and Evaluation Services (IAES).
- D&D, PCU, PPU.

In addition to the L&O process and associated data and analysis, feedback was also received, and Technical Reporting updates and improvements made, during 2023 Technical Reporting (August 2023-June 2024). Where relevant, any lessons and action points related to this have also been incorporated into the Action Plan (Annex 1).

1.3.2 Data collection methods

Mixed methods to gather primarily qualitative data were employed as the L&O process aimed to determine stakeholder opinion, impressions and recommendations on Technical Reporting. Quantitative and qualitative data collection allowed for authoritative and first-hand insights from stakeholders directly involved in, or with some relation to, Technical Reporting.

The methods allowed for individual insights to inform broader interpretations, patterns, themes and priorities. Using mixed methods enabled the robustness and consistency of the findings to be verified as findings from each method could be used to validate, enhance, or add nuance to the findings of another.

Data was collected in three ways:

1. An online survey

a. The online survey was administered by PPU. Respondents were invited to share how they experienced participating in or contributing to 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting. Questions were framed to reflect the five pillars of the L&O process. Annex 2 provides the list of survey questions.

2. Independently organized learning sessions and initiatives

- a. Feedback was sought from stakeholders involved in the Technical Reporting QA process, and a report developed to consolidate the feedback: 2023 QA brief report. This report also draws on an intermediate report developed after the first batch of QA for 2023 Technical Reporting held in 2023.
- b. Two feedback sessions were held for stakeholders involved in Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness (IPSR). A report was developed to capture the feedback: Report IPSR Feedback Sessions.docx.
- c. A review meeting for 2023 Research Initiatives Outputs was held in March 2024, and a "Synthesis Report on "2023 Research Initiatives Outputs Review Meeting" March 20-21, 2024" produced.
- d. A "Science Group Projects: Lessons Learned from Pilot" report (currently in draft).

3. Ad hoc and voluntary feedback

- a. Feedback across Science Groups was sought and compiled by the respective Senior Program Managers. This feedback was shared with PPU for incorporation into the L&O Report.
- b. User support statistics and feedback on PRMS Tech support received throughout the year via the PRMS Tech Support mechanism.

Data was coded in three stages (based on open, axial, and selective coding used in grounded theory [Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990]). The analysis was conducted using an iterative and interactive process that leveraged AI (ChatGPT 40) capabilities with human oversight.

- Initially, data was coded separately against the five organizing pillars of the study, noting if any responses demanded the creation of a new category or theme.
- Secondly, data was coded within each of these themes to determine any overarching themes, priorities, recommendations and perceptions.
- Thirdly, the data was coded against the findings of the other research methods to distil the key findings and inputs into the Action Plan.

The AI tool's capability to process large volumes of text rapidly made it particularly suited for such tasks and AI analysis was integrated into each step, utilizing advanced text analysis and extraction techniques. Human oversight played a critical role in ensuring the strategic integrity and applicability of the AI-generated content. While AI provided powerful tools for data analysis and pattern recognition, the human element was indispensable for interpreting these patterns within the correct strategic and organizational contexts. This collaborative approach maximized the strengths of both AI and human capabilities.

1.3.3 Prioritization and Action Plan development

As the feedback was analysed, synthesized, and prioritized, the following criteria were considered:

- Frequency of feedback points: If a point was mentioned numerous times by different stakeholders, it was included in the report and Action Plan. An AI tool, under human oversight, was used to group and prioritize feedback based on frequency. However, this was not the only consideration for the LAT; other factors such as feasibility and impact on Technical Reporting were also taken into account.
- Survey satisfaction rate data: The satisfaction rates from the survey influenced decision-making, especially if the rates were particularly high or low.

- Criticality for 2024 Technical Reporting: Points deemed critical by the LAT for the 2024 Technical Reporting were given priority.
- "Easy Wins" for 2024 Technical Reporting: Points considered as "easy wins" by the LAT for 2024 Technical Reporting were also prioritized.
- Suitability for the next Portfolio: Some feedback points were more suited as recommendations for Technical Reporting in the next Portfolio. These points were either more applicable to a longer timeframe, specifically relevant to the next Portfolio, or unfeasible within the context of the final year of reporting for the current Portfolio.

These considerations were made with the understanding that the 2024 Technical Reporting is subject to specific constraints due to the transition to the 2025-2030 Portfolio and the closure of the Initiatives and Impact Platforms.

As much of the feedback has been synthesized for the purposes of this report, more detailed feedback is available on request.

1.4. LIMITATIONS

It was difficult at times to identify the stakeholder group depending on format of the feedback, for example, stakeholder information in the reports stemming from the independently organized learning sessions, and feedback received from Science Groups were often presented at a general level, rather than outlining the roles of individual contributors.

The response rate of the survey was relatively low (approximately 565 surveys were sent, with 52 returned, and 11 partially completed, giving an approximate return rate of 11 percent; however, given the context and experience, although the rate is low, it was to be expected (and is similar to the 2022 L&O survey). Comments and suggestions within responses are still considered valuable feedback, and in some cases, stakeholders had likely given feedback via another feedback channel than the survey. In addition, survey fatigue across CGIAR has been noted, with response rates low for many surveys administered across the organization.



2. Results

2.1. DEMOGRAPHICS

The figure below presents the stakeholder groups that responded to the survey. Respondents were able to select multiple roles; in the graph below *Initiative/Impact Platform Science Group Project lead/co-lead/Work Package lead/co-lead; MELIA focal point* (first item), and *Initiative/Impact Platform Science Group Project MELIA focal point*; *Program/Project Coordinator* (eleventh item) represent respondents who selected two roles.



Roles in 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting

The feedback from different stakeholder groups reveals common themes and specific areas for improvement in CGIAR's Technical Reporting process. Initiative/Impact Platform/SGP Program/Project Coordinators emphasize the need for better communication, more lead time, and capacity building. D&D stakeholders focus on system improvements, governance, and user-centered design. MELIA Focal Points stress consistent QA feedback, improved mapping of results, and reducing reporting burden. Scientists and Project Leads highlight clearer guidance, simplification of processes, and better integration with TOC. Their specific feedback and recommendations are incorporated into the analysis in the following section.



Stakeholder Affiliations

2.2. OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

This section synthesizes feedback across all data collection methods on what worked well and what didn't work well. Note that the summaries provided are concise overviews intended to give an understanding of the main points and do not capture all the feedback gathered.

The survey asked how satisfied stakeholders are with a range of Technical Reporting processes, tools, support modalities and products by choosing very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, or N/A. Overall findings are presented below, with details provided for individual elements in the following sections. Note that entries to specific questions submitted by stakeholders were integrated into the analysis even if the survey response was not fully completed or submitted.

Across the various Technical Reporting aspects covering processes, digital tools, guidance and resources, and reports/outputs, several trends emerge:

 Moderate to high satisfaction: Many tools, processes and products have moderate to high satisfaction rates, indicating a generally positive reception among stakeholders. For example, the **reporting process** had the highest satisfaction rate (70.5 percent combined satisfaction). Other examples include the **PRMS Reporting Tool** (60.7 percent combined satisfaction), the **report development and clearance process** (67.3 percent combined satisfaction), and the **2023 Initiative/Impact Platform/SGP Annual Technical Reports** (60.7 percent combined satisfaction), which show strong positive feedback.



Technical Reporting Elements with Moderate to High Satisfaction Rates

Figure 7. Technical Reporting elements with moderate to high satisfaction rates.

2. Low dissatisfaction rates: Most tools and processes have relatively low dissatisfaction rates. The pause and reflect process (3.3 percent combined dissatisfaction), report development and clearance process (3.3 percent dissatisfaction rate), and Type 1 reports (3.2 percent dissatisfaction rate) are examples where negative feedback is minimal. The Type 3 report and the Portfolio Narrative also had low dissatisfaction rates, however these were accompanied by other notable percentages for "have not read it"/N/A. However, the process of reporting results jointly between Initiatives (32.8 percent combined dissatisfaction), TOC updates and finalization (26.2 percent dissatisfaction rate) and the TOC Tool (23 percent dissatisfaction rate) show areas where stakeholders have significant concerns. These areas require focused efforts to address stakeholder issues and improve satisfaction.



Figure 8. Technical Reporting elements with notable dissatisfaction rates.

3. High neutral and N/A responses: A significant number of responses fall into the neutral and N/A categories across many tools, processes and products. This could indicate that not all reporting elements are relevant to every stakeholder or that there may be gaps in awareness or engagement. For instance, IPSR and the Risk Management Module have a combined neutral and N/A rate of 55.7 percent and 52.4 percent, respectively, and the 2023 Portfolio Practice Change Report (Type 3 Report) has a high N/A rate of 41 percent, and a combined neutral and N/A rate of 70.5 percent.



Technical Reporting Elements with Notable Neutral and N/A Rates

2.3. RESULTS BY PILLAR (SEE ANNEX 1 FOR THE 2024 ACTION PLAN)

In this section, results are first presented according to the five pillars - conceptual underpinnings, processes, systems/platforms, capacity, and products/outputs, and then in the order they were presented in the survey. For each topic, the satisfaction rates from the survey are presented, along with a synthesis of the feedback and suggestions made by stakeholders, across all feedback channels.

2.3.1. Conceptual Underpinnings

Technical Reporting in general

2023 Technical Reporting was praised for maintaining standardization and quality across the Portfolio, with future priorities to focus on addressing inefficiencies, maintaining and ensuring consistency, and continuous improvements. High priorities include incorporating greater linkages between actual results and TOC targets to assess progress, redefining reporting metrics to accommodate more qualitative reporting, and enhancing stakeholder involvement.

IPSR

The feedback on **Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness** indicates a predominantly neutral stance, with 31.1 percent of respondents indicating neutrality. This suggests that a significant portion of stakeholders are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, potentially indicating areas for improvement or clearer communication of benefits. The high percentage of N/A responses (24.6 percent) could suggest that many stakeholders feel this category is not relevant to their work, indicating a need for more targeted engagement or clearer alignment with stakeholder roles.



Figure 10. Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness.

Stakeholders have identified several advantages of the IPSR approach, such as the focus on simplifying processes, driving mission-aligned impact, engaging stakeholders, and enhanced tools, training, and management frameworks to foster an impact-oriented scaling mindset.

Several priority enhancements have also been proposed.

Clarity and communication improvements are essential. Providing more granular guidance on the purpose of enabling/complementary innovations within the IPSR framework would help stakeholders better understand the scope of their work. Simplifying IPSR language; developing simpler reporting templates and online management systems for individual innovation portfolios; and addressing the complexity and time demands of reporting in the PRMS, specifically around providing evidence with CGIAR attribution were also mentioned. Improving communication during training sessions about reporting requirements and offering early and clear guidance on any changes in innovation reporting was also suggested to ensure that stakeholders are well-informed.

Clearer presentation of innovation results is also necessary. Improving the presentation of innovations in the Results Dashboard would ensure clarity on the various concepts used, showcasing the impact of innovations more effectively. Additionally, clarifying the purpose of enabling and complementary innovations within the IPSR framework and simplifying the language used in IPSR communications could enhance engagement and comprehension among stakeholders.

Extending the IPSR workshop duration would allow for deeper partner engagement, while pre-workshop sessions could help align on longterm strategic goals. These changes aim to improve the overall effectiveness of stakeholder interactions and ensure that workshops are more productive and meaningful.

In addition, developing digital alternatives for IPSR workshops and integrating IPSR template fields with the PRMS can simplify evidence provision and reporting processes. A multilingual system and an online version of the IPSR workshop would cater to a diverse audience, making the process more inclusive.

The AICCRA team in Ethiopia welcomed participants to explore two AICCRA project sites: Kulumsa Agricultural Research Center and the Iteya smallholder farmer community. The purpose of the field visit is to showcase the innovations that have been developed by CGIAR Research Centers and scaled by AICCRA partnerships. Credit: Tamirat Getachew / AICCRA

2.3.2. Processes

The survey asked how satisfied stakeholders are with a range of Technical Reporting processes. The results are presented below.

QA processes

Stakeholders generally view the **quality assurance processes** favorably, with 45.9 percent satisfied and 11.5 percent very satisfied. However, there is a considerable neutral response (23 percent), indicating that while the processes are functioning, there may be opportunities to enhance their effectiveness or communication. The dissatisfaction levels, though not extremely high (13.1 percent dissatisfied and 3.3 percent very dissatisfied), suggest that there are some challenges or unmet expectations that could be addressed.



The QA process has received repeated praise for its user-friendly platform, effective training, flexibility, and quality enhancement. Another positive aspect is the acceptance rate of QA assessor comments for 2023 – Initiatives/Impact Platforms/SGPs accepted 78 percent of the comments, which is similar to the 2022 rate (80 percent).

To build on this positive feedback, several key enhancements have been identified.

Firstly, reporting incentives and timing are crucial. Encouraging early reporting in the PRMS can facilitate early QA of results, improving the overall efficiency of the process. Extending the response time for addressing QA comments to at least ten days would allow stakeholders sufficient time to provide thoughtful and thorough responses.

Pre-QA for end-of-Initiative outcomes by the three Science Group MELIA focal points has been suggested to ensure higher quality and consistency. Simplifying the QA process by avoiding the QA of description fields, and utilizing AI tools were suggestions to streamline the workflow. Additionally, providing clear instructions for assessors to avoid editorial comments and not request changes to publication titles was suggested, as well as ensuring feedback is consistent with guidance documents. Another suggestion is to enforce the principle of "one suggestion, one comment" to prevent confusion and improve clarity – although this suggestion would still need further consideration as stakeholder feedback on this point is varied, with some stakeholders suggesting alternative approaches.

Improved guidance and training are also essential for enhancing the QA process. Including more instructions on ensuring evidence files are accessible to quality assessors were identified as key areas of improvement.

It was mentioned that the follow-up and closure on QA disagreements and the third-party mechanism require improvement to enhance transparency.

Additionally, granting third-party assessors the authority to make direct adjustments within the PRMS has been suggested.

Overall, the high priorities for improvement focus on addressing accessibility issues for evidence, ensuring consistent reporting guidance and QA feedback, and providing sufficient time for responses to QA assessor comments. Moderate and more long-term priorities include improving efficiency and exploring cost-effective alternatives, such as integrating AI into the process.

Theory of change (TOC) updates and finalization

The **theory of change (TOC) updates and finalization** process shows mixed feedback, with 34.4 percent satisfied and 13.1 percent very satisfied, but a considerable 26.2 percent dissatisfied. This indicates that while many stakeholders find the process acceptable or positive, a significant portion finds it lacking. The high dissatisfaction suggests that the TOC updates and finalization process might benefit from better alignment with stakeholder expectations or more streamlined procedures, with a respondent, for example, mentioning that developing the TOC section did not always run smoothly; another questioning if frequent reviews of the TOC should be encouraged; and another suggesting that communication on TOC processes needs improvement.





Pause and reflect process

The **pause and reflect process** received a strong positive response, with 42.6 percent of stakeholders expressing satisfaction and an additional 14.8 percent being very satisfied. This high level of satisfaction suggests that the process is well-received and effective for most stakeholders. However, there is still a notable 27.9 percent neutral response, which, while not negative, indicates there might be room for further improvement or customization. The low levels of dissatisfaction (3.3 percent) and the absence of very dissatisfied responses are positive indicators of the process's acceptance.



In particular, the pause and reflect process was mentioned as being beneficial for SGPs, allowing the team to review the Results Framework and make suggestions for future improvements, not just for 2024 but for the next phase. However, other stakeholders suggested that more time for the process should be allocated where possible.

Reporting process

The **reporting process** receives the highest satisfaction rate, with 54.1 percent satisfied and 16.4 percent very satisfied, indicating robust support from stakeholders. The low dissatisfaction levels (9.8 percent dissatisfied and 4.9 percent very dissatisfied) suggest that while there are some issues, they are relatively minor. The high satisfaction rates imply that the process is well-structured and meets stakeholders' needs effectively.



Extended deadlines for results submissions, particularly for knowledge products, and opening the PRMS earlier were highlighted as significant improvements in the reporting process. Positive remarks were made about the process and the good experience working with the team on Technical Reporting. The idea of maintaining the PRMS open throughout the year with multiple QA periods and allowing reporting on a "report as you go" basis rather than rushing at year-end has been well-received.

The 2023 SGP Pilot demonstrated the value of utilizing the PRMS system, enhancing transparency for funders, ensuring CGIAR quality assurance, and fostering alignment with the CGIAR 2030 Innovation and Research Strategy.

High priorities moving forward include opening the PRMS earlier, providing a more flexible timeline that incorporates seasonal and holiday considerations, and aligning SGP reporting timelines with the CGIAR Portfolio year as much as possible. Supporting standardized ways to collect reporting information (e.g. Excel forms and templates) was also mentioned.

Other suggestions include:

Providing a separate, extended deadline for knowledge products from the beginning of the reporting year and improving the system for reporting joint results between Initiatives.

Adequate time for introducing new system features and proactive planning and communication, which are essential for avoiding rushed development and feedback issues.

Implementing the L&O process earlier and deciding on updates to Technical Reporting well in advance to contribute to a more organized and predictable reporting process.

Establishing mechanisms for SGPs to ensure ongoing technical alignment throughout the project implementation phase and maintaining familiarization processes with the CGIAR Performance and Results Framework and the Technical Reporting Arrangement, with minimal additional reporting requirements was also mentioned.

Report development and clearance process

The **report development and clearance process** is highly regarded, with 52.5 percent of stakeholders satisfied and 14.8 percent very satisfied. This process stands out as particularly successful among the Technical Reporting processes included in the survey, indicating strong performance and alignment with stakeholder needs. The low levels of dissatisfaction (3.3 percent) and absence of very dissatisfied responses suggest that any issues are minor and likely addressable through incremental improvements.

Stakeholder suggestions included eliminating back-and-forth communication with designers on the Type 1 report, and allocating more time for internal clearing of reports for thorough review and validation. Providing more time for reporting entities to give feedback on the final formatted document, and allowing flexibility with final deadlines for SGPs, recognizing their more time-consuming validation processes, were also suggested.



Process of reporting results jointly between Initiatives

The **process of reporting results jointly between Initiatives** appears to be contentious, with a balanced spread across responses: 24.6 percent satisfied, 26.2 percent neutral, and 26.2 percent dissatisfied. The high dissatisfaction rate indicates significant challenges or areas of improvement needed in how results are reported jointly. The balanced responses across satisfaction, neutrality, and dissatisfaction suggest that experiences vary widely, possibly due to differing roles or expectations among stakeholders. The process of cross-Initiative tagging mechanisms were often cited as needing enhancement, to avoid double counting and to make the process smoother. This includes enhancing the notification system for linking results to several Initiatives/Impact Platforms to increase the visibility of notifications and reduce the need for individual follow-ups with other Initiatives/Impact Platforms.



Figure 16. Process of reporting results jointly between Initiatives.

Time allocated for each deliverable (i.e. timeline for QA batches; time allotted for reporting, time allotted for Results Dashboard updates and testing, time allotted for development of Type 1 reports, etc.)

Stakeholders are generally satisfied with the **time allocated for each reporting deliverable**, with 36.1 percent satisfied and 9.8 percent very satisfied. However, the neutral response rate (26.2 percent) is significant, indicating that while time allocation is acceptable, there may be variability in how well it meets individual needs or expectations. Dissatisfaction is notable at 14.8 percent, suggesting that for some stakeholders, time management could be improved.



One stakeholder mentioned that the overall timeline was considered good, with a balance of not too much pressure but also some flexibility. However, SGP integration highlighted challenges with the reporting timeline, as project years may not align with the CGIAR research Portfolio year, impacting budget allocations and cash flow.

Summary

The combined satisfaction ratings (very satisfied and satisfied) for the stakeholder feedback on various processes show that four of the assessed processes exceed 50 percent satisfaction. Specifically, the **pause and reflect process**, **quality assurance processes**, **report development and clearance process**, and the **reporting process** all have combined satisfaction rates above 50 percent, indicating strong positive reception in these areas. In contrast, the **process of reporting results jointly between Initiatives**, the **time allocated for each deliverable**, and **theory of change (TOC) updates and finalization** processes fall below the 50 percent satisfaction threshold, highlighting areas where improvements are needed to better meet stakeholder expectations.



2.3.3. Systems/Platforms

Stakeholders were also asked how satisfied they were with a range of Technical Reporting digital tools. The results are presented below.

TOC Tool

The **TOC Tool** has a combined satisfaction rate of 41 percent, with a notable neutral response of 18 percent. The combined dissatisfaction rate is relatively high at 23 percent, indicating significant issues or areas for improvement. The combined 17 percent rate of N/A and no response suggests that some stakeholders might not be utilizing the tool or are unsure of its value, pointing to a need for better training or integration into stakeholder workflows – or it may simply be that this tool is not relevant for their work. One stakeholder mentioned that the TOC Tool is cumbersome; and there were comments that the TOC Tool needs improved functionality and a clearer purpose.

To address these issues, redesigning the TOC Tool is a priority. The tool should be revamped to address its current problems and to make it useful beyond just reporting, for purposes such as monitoring and internal communication. A key focus should be on making the TOC Tool less time-consuming while properly supporting the nested TOC concept, which will help in organizing and visualizing complex TOCs more effectively. Additionally, developing an offline version would allow project managers and MEL colleagues to collect information from teams more efficiently, especially in areas with limited internet access.



PRMS Reporting Tool

The **PRMS Reporting Tool** has a high level of satisfaction, with 60.7 percent of respondents being either satisfied or very satisfied. This strong positive feedback highlights the tool's effectiveness and user-friendliness. However, the neutral response of 18 percent indicates some room for improvement. The combined dissatisfaction rate is low at 6.6 percent, suggesting minimal issues. The 14.7 percent combined rate of N/A and no response could imply limited relevance or awareness among some stakeholders.

Despite the overall satisfaction, there were several areas identified for improvement. The PRMS received positive feedback for its enhanced functionalities, real-time collaboration capabilities, and efficiency, but technical functionality issues were noted. These include delays with unsubmission/resubmission processes, and the possibility for users to delete old results, raising concerns about data integrity.



To enhance the PRMS Reporting Tool further, several suggestions have been made. First, the introduction of batch submission options, and enabling CSV file uploads would facilitate information collection and reduce considerably the data entry burden. Ensuring that all result downloads contain complete fields for each result category will facilitate efficient internal checks and improve data integrity. Enhancing the notification system to improve the visibility of linking results across reporting entities and to reduce the need for individual follow-ups was also suggested. It was suggested to evaluate the usage of Section 5 "Links to results" from 2022-2023 to help decide whether to retain it.

The user interface and experience will benefit from improved filtering capabilities, allowing results to be sorted by submitter, result level, and phase, thus saving time for users. Streamlining the system for adding partners and automatically linking contributing Centers through CGSpace will further enhance the user experience. Additionally, Allowing MELIA study results to be mapped to multiple Initiatives will improve data accuracy and relevance.

Correcting the issue preventing some TOC elements from being available in dropdown lists will enhance usability.

For "capacity sharing for development" results, modifying guidance on how to fill in the location of virtual training events would be appreciated.

In terms of CGSpace enhancements relevant to Technical Reporting, numerous suggestions have been made to enhance the quality of knowledge product reporting. Encouraging product bundling within CGSpace for better organization and maintaining consistency using output templates will improve the quality and accessibility of submissions. Implementing standard workflows to address quality aspects such as copyright, acknowledgments, and plagiarism checks, and including a FAIR checklist during submission to ensure data is Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable, will further elevate the platform's standards. Enhancing search functions, automating metadata input processes, and improving notification systems to distinguish between modified and new items will enhance user experience and data management.

Type 1 Report Elements Module

The **Type 1 Report Elements Module** in the PRMS, which summarizes relevant PRMS data for inclusion in certain sections of the Type 1 report template, shows a combined satisfaction rate of 41 percent, with a significant neutral response of 26.2 percent. The low combined dissatisfaction rate of 6.6 percent indicates few issues, but the notable N/A and no response rates (26.3 percent combined) suggest that some stakeholders might not be using or aware of this module, or do not need it for their work. The relatively low very satisfied rate (4.9 percent) indicates room for improvement in making this module more valuable and user-friendly for stakeholders.



PRMS Quality Assurance Platform

The **PRMS Quality Assurance Platform** shows a generally positive reception, with a combined 49.2 percent of respondents being either satisfied or very satisfied. The significant neutral response (27.9 percent) suggests that while many are content, a sizable group remains indifferent, which may indicate that the QA module was not used by some of the respondents. The dissatisfaction levels are relatively low (6.5 percent combined), but the notable percentage of N/A and no response (16.4 percent combined) suggests some stakeholders might not find this platform relevant to their needs and do not need to use the platform for their work, or are uninformed about it.

In the comments made by stakeholders, the QA Platform was praised, and the system for responding to queries was considered effective. Including IPSR in the QA Platform's main dashboard, rather than just the sidebar, will improve accessibility and integration, making it easier for users to engage with IPSR-related content. Improving access to comments from the menu, thereby avoiding unnecessary scrolling, and providing an option to download all comments in a single file will enhance efficiency and usability for users dealing with extensive QA comments.



Risk Management Module

The **Risk Management Module** shows moderate satisfaction levels, with 29.5 percent of respondents satisfied or very satisfied. However, this should be balanced with the high N/A response rate of 26.2 percent and no response rate of 11.5 percent, reflecting the recent introduction of the tool (first quarter of 2024) and the fact that it is currently being used mostly by initiative coordination Focal Points. Over 81% percent of initiative coordination Focal Points responded as satisfied or very satisfied. The low combined dissatisfaction rate of 6.5 percent indicates few issues with the tool itself, but the significant proportion of respondents who did not find it relevant or did not respond (37.7 percent combined) suggests a need for increased relevance or awareness.



Summary

While the **PRMS Reporting Tool** stands out with over 50 percent satisfaction, other tools exhibit lower satisfaction levels coupled with high neutrality and non-responsiveness. This analysis underscores the importance of understanding the specific needs and usage patterns of different stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness and adoption of digital tools. The overall mixed feedback and significant neutral, N/A, and no response rates suggest that many stakeholders may not frequently use these tools or find them directly relevant to their specific work functions. This could be due to the varied nature of tasks and responsibilities across the organization, where certain tools are essential for some roles but not for others. The high percentage of neutral responses indicates that while the tools may be adequate, there is room for improvement to make them more engaging and valuable.

An analysis of the survey comments and other sources of feedback suggest that most digital tools, **work very well** with very few technical hiccups, and are intuitive and easy to use. The TOC Tool is an exception, with several respondents expressing negative feedback. The standardized procedures to collect and assess outputs were effective, and the digital innovations incorporated into the Technical Reporting process are appreciated.

2.3.4. Capacity

Within the survey, stakeholders were asked how satisfied they are with Technical Reporting guidance, support and resources. The results are presented below.

Guidance documents

Guidance documents show a combined satisfaction rate of 49.2 percent, suggesting a generally favorable view but with considerable room for enhancement. The 21.3 percent neutral response indicates that many stakeholders find the documents adequate but not particularly impactful. The combined dissatisfaction rate of 13.2 percent points to some areas of concern or unmet expectations. The N/A and no response rates (16.4 percent combined) suggest that some stakeholders might not frequently use these documents.

Stakeholder comments suggest that clearer criteria are needed for selecting the primary submitter of an output and defining what constitutes a knowledge product, and more guidance on Impact Area tagging. Providing better guidance on reporting "other outputs", "other outcomes"; distinguishing between outputs and outcomes; what should be reported as an innovation; and Impact Area tagging can help clarify expectations. In addition, adjusting the description field, either by removing it or making it optional, could improve efficiencies within the reporting process, and related processes such as QA. Further simplification of guidance documents can also be considered, with a stakeholder suggesting that guidance documents were too lengthy and complex.



Several other guidance enhancements have been suggested, including:

Providing an update on a future engagement category.

Enhancing the data flow and consistency between CGSpace IA tags and PRMS tagging, and providing clear guidance on using 0-1-2 scores for IAs other than gender.

Offering clearer guidelines on using the CGSpace handle permanent link and detailing what needs to be uploaded to CGSpace to help maintain the quality of the repository.



Reporting templates and mockups

Reporting templates and mockups receive a combined satisfaction rate of 54.1 percent, indicating a favorable perception among stakeholders. The 21.3 percent neutral response rate highlights that while many find the templates useful, there could be enhancements to make them more impactful. The combined dissatisfaction rate of 8.2 percent is relatively low. The N/A and no response rates (16.4 percent combined) suggest that these tools might not be essential for all stakeholders or are not fully utilized.



Performance & Results Hub

The **Performance & Results Hub** is well-regarded, with a combined satisfaction rate of 55.7 percent. The neutral response rate of 16.4 percent suggests that while the hub is functional, there may be opportunities for further improvements. The low combined dissatisfaction rate of 6.6 percent indicates few significant issues. The combined N/A and no response rate of 21.3 percent may reflect the specialized nature of the hub, making it less relevant to some stakeholders. The P&R Hub was recognized as a good support tool during the reporting process. However, it was described as confusing and difficult to navigate by some stakeholders, suggesting a need for improved structure and resource labeling.



Figure 25. Performance and Results Hub.

Bi-weekly technical reporting update email

The **bi-weekly technical reporting update email** receives a combined satisfaction rate of 54.1 percent, indicating a generally positive reception among stakeholders. Stakeholder comments reveal that regular emails, particularly the bi-weekly updates, were a significant improvement and helpful in keeping Initiatives informed about the latest updates and ensuring alignment with the budgeting and reporting process. The 18 percent neutral response suggests that while the majority are satisfied, there is room for improvement to engage those who are indifferent. The combined dissatisfaction rate of 8.2 percent is relatively low, but the notable N/A and no response rates (19.6 percent combined) may indicate that not all stakeholders find these updates relevant to their work or are not consistently engaging with them.



PRMS Tech Support

PRMS Tech Support has in place a feedback mechanism embedded within its support system, whereby users can provide feedback in how their support request was handled and resolved. For the reporting year, 92.9 percent of PRMS Tech Support users found the support they received to be "awesome", indicating strong user satisfaction; a further 6.2 percent found the service satisfactory, and only 0.9 percent found the support service to not be good. Feedback comments emphasized the prompt and efficient support from the Tech Team, and their positive approach to resolving requests.



Webinars and drop-ins

Webinars and drop-ins have a strong combined satisfaction rate of 57.4 percent, reflecting their value and effectiveness for most participants. Training sessions, drop-in sessions, and meetings were highly appreciated for discussing common issues and providing clear guidance. The 19.7 percent neutral response suggests that while many find these sessions beneficial, there is still room for improvement. The low combined dissatisfaction rate of 4.9 percent indicates minimal issues. The combined N/A and no response rate of 18.1 percent suggests that not all stakeholders might find these sessions relevant to their needs or may not have had the opportunity to participate.

It was mentioned that while the PRMS reporting process includes comprehensive guidelines, support sessions, and training, not all reporters can participate. Leveraging internal tools and providing clearer guidance could enhance participation. It was also mentioned that training and drop-in sessions should address unique issues by assigning mentors or guides to specific groups, that more capacity building is needed, particularly for SGP staff and scientists, and that there should be better communication on TOC development and capacity development expectations.



Summary

In general, prompt updates, flexibility, and regular bi-weekly emails were repeatedly praised, making these high-priority areas. The support staff were noted for being helpful, polite, and responsive, making the process much smoother compared to 2022. Effective training sessions, constant support, and clear guidance were frequently mentioned, emphasizing their importance. Additionally, responsive technical support, useful templates, and the P&R Hub were highlighted as essential components.

2.3.5. Products/Outputs

Survey participants were also asked about their satisfaction with Technical Reporting products such as specific reports and the CGIAR Results Dashboard. The results are presented below.

2023 Initiative/Impact Platform/SGP Annual Technical Reports (Type 1)

The **2023 Initiative/Impact Platform/SGP Annual Technical Reports (Type 1)** have a high combined satisfaction rate of 60.7 percent, indicating strong approval. The neutral response of 18 percent suggests there is still room for improvement. The low combined dissatisfaction rate of 3.2 percent reflects minimal issues. However, the combined N/A and no response rates of 18 percent suggest that some stakeholders might not find these reports relevant or are not consistently engaging with them.

The improved graphics and overall design quality of Type 1 reports were frequently praised, highlighting their progress and importance. The inclusion of key result stories was appreciated, though there is a suggestion to include more than one. Updates on Work Package TOC and research questions were noted as beneficial.

Priorities for Technical Reporting products derived from stakeholder comments include ensuring two rounds of feedback for Initiatives on the annual report layout, improving stakeholder and partner mapping, and addressing the ineffectiveness of "bean counting" in section 4. Also, there were suggestions to redesign the TOC diagrams to be more readable, clarify the process for editing/reviewing/sharing the key result story, and remove duplication between sections 2 and 3 and ineffective sections.

BGM coffee nursery in Yangambi- DRC. Credit: Axel Fassio / CIFOR

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Allocating more space for Work Package progress was suggested to better communicate CGIAR's activities. Enhancing the Type 1 template to include multiple key result stories and including links to additional stories will provide a more comprehensive and engaging narrative. There is also a suggestion to consider adding a separate section for MELIA work to highlight its contributions effectively.

Introducing a performance data table to show output and outcome targets versus achievements was suggested. Including an acknowledgements section to credit authors, contributors, and reviewers was mentioned to recognize the efforts of those involved in the reports. Moreover, finalizing an acknowledgement protocol for SGPs will provide more visibility to funders and designated Centers or partners, ensuring proper recognition and appreciation.





2023 Portfolio Practice Change Report (Type 3)

The **2023 Portfolio Practice Change Report (Type 3)** shows a low combined satisfaction rate of 13.1 percent, indicating limited positive reception. Comments suggest that in the Type 3 Report, a priority is to involve the D&D unit in the review process, and develop a PRMS module for better tracking and information provision. The review process could also be reviewed to include a wider range of stakeholders, such as the Senior Program Managers.

The high neutral response of 29.5 percent suggests indifference or that the report may not be particularly impactful. The dissatisfaction rate is relatively low at 3.3 percent. However, the most significant observation is the 41.0 percent N/A rate and the 13.1 percent no response rate, indicating that many stakeholders do not find this report relevant to their work.

Stakeholder suggestions include ensuring the Type 3 report includes sufficient context, re-evaluating the scope of the report to ensure balanced focus and relevance, and seeking feedback from funders on the necessity and utility of the Type 3 report.



Figure 30. 2023 Portfolio Practice Change Report (Type 3).

CGIAR Results Dashboard

The **CGIAR Results Dashboard** shows a moderate level of satisfaction, with a combined satisfaction rate of 42.6 percent. The 21.3 percent neutral response indicates that many stakeholders find the dashboard adequate but not particularly impressive. The dissatisfaction rate of 9.8 percent highlights areas for potential improvement. The significant N/A and no response rates (26.3 percent combined) suggest that some stakeholders might not find the dashboard relevant or are not engaging with it regularly.



One stakeholder mentioned that the feedback button is appreciated; other stakeholder comments suggest that the Results Dashboard requires better clarity, relevance, and usability, and that indicators and targets need to be more specific, with deviation narratives incorporated. In particular, the mapping of partners needs improvement to reduce "noise" and enhance user-friendliness, and issues with the interpretation and relevance of displayed data, and the detail overload in country maps and partner lists need to be addressed.

2023 Portfolio Narrative

The **2023 Portfolio Narrative** has a low combined satisfaction rate of 19.7 percent, indicating limited positive reception among those who have read it. Providing more support for development and ensuring cohesion between various sections were cited as issues to be resolved.

It is important to note that at the time the survey was open, the Portfolio Narrative was still in production, explaining the 52.5 percent of respondents who answered that they had not read the document at the time of the survey.



Summary

The analysis across these graphs indicates varied levels of satisfaction, engagement, and relevance among stakeholders for different reports and the Results Dashboard. The CGIAR Results Dashboard and the 2023 Initiative/Impact Platform/SGP Annual Technical Reports (Type 1) show moderate to high satisfaction rates, while the 2023 Portfolio Narrative and the 2023 Portfolio Practice Change Report (Type 3) have low satisfaction rates and significant engagement issues. However, high percentages of neutral, N/A, or no response across these graphs may be due to the nature of stakeholders' work.

2.4. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO TECHNICAL REPORTING FOR CGIAR'S 2025-2030 PORTFOLIO

The feedback received on 2023 Technical Reporting relevant to CGIAR's 2025-2030 Portfolio includes the following recommendations.

Ensure both qualitative and quantitative reporting

- Improve the balance between qualitative and quantitative reporting; provide clear guidelines to ensure that reporting highlights both quality and progress, not just quantity, and includes the ability to report on the more qualitative aspects of outcomes and impacts.
- Enhance PRMS functions to report qualitative aspects more effectively.
- Further emphasize narrative reporting, including key result stories, outcome/impact stories, and adaptive management in Technical Reports.
- Incorporate some more qualitative indicators to enhance reporting and the Results Dashboard.

Enhance how reported progress is presented

- Consider creating a dashboard summarizing each indicator's targets and actuals to help document and present progress, and to feed into the Type 1 narrative report.
- In the Results Dashboard, avoid incentivizing over-reporting and instead consider providing aggregated high-level information about progress.
- Consider the creation of a reporting category for engagement activities to better capture these outputs.
- Implement a maturity stage framework for "other outcomes" to monitor result development.

Carefully integrate bilateral components

- Utilize existing learnings and work on integrating bilateral projects into the reporting process.
- Include all relevant stakeholders in the development of tools and systems with consideration for the integration of bilateral projects in reporting.

Reduce complexity and increase efficiency

- Recognize the investments made in reporting processes and tools and build on them to avoid institutional setbacks. Facilitate the transition from the current Portfolio to the new Portfolio, including the use of existing tools and products.
- Simplify the PRMS and consider removing the optional fields from the system, and only retaining the mandatory fields. Focus on the most relevant indicators, and provide incentives for reporting on these; focus on avoiding over-reporting and excessive granularity at the reporting stage.
- Aim to lower transaction costs to produce higher quality reports.
- Address the complexity and time demands of reporting innovations in the PRMS while maintaining a logical process flow and structured review for managing innovations.
- Re-think the scope of QA to focus on the most relevant aspects for the 2025-2030 Portfolio; extend the time allowed for responding to QA comments.
- Use AI and automation to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the QA process.
- Ensure QA processes are consistent and reliable by aligning with international standards of data quality.
- Ensure sufficient time is allocated for the reporting process.
- Explore solutions for batch upload of results to the PRMS and support the development of offline results data collection (e.g. Excel templates or similar) for reporting entities.
- Simplify the reporting format/template of reports.

Increase funder/stakeholder engagement

- Engage more with funders to refine their key areas of focus and better reflect those in the reporting products.
- Focus on stakeholder engagement and participatory practices for holistic innovation scaling.

Continue to build capacity and shared knowledge

- Develop a strong community of practice on MEL; integrate MEL functions into program implementation with strong connections to qualitative and quantitative impact assessment.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among QA referents through a community of practice or other existing mechanism.
- Continue and enhance supportive Technical Reporting communication within and by PPU/PCU.
- Continue to offer ongoing training on the reporting process and maintain a two-way dialogue between coordination levels and programs.
- Provide better training and integration of the TOC Tool into stakeholder workflows.
- Ensure grassroots-level scientists and staff are involved in the reporting process and strengthen communication efforts with them.

 Offer more targeted capacity building sessions on reporting to connect better with stakeholders. Assign individual mentors or guides per Program/group of Programs/Projects to address unique reporting issues. Consider providing online or hands-on training in small batches or by program, region, or country.

Further refine Technical Reporting tools and platforms

- Improve the governance structure of the PRMS and reassess the current contractual approach to allow more flexibility in PRMS development and support emerging needs; include more stakeholder representation in PRMS governance to ensure solid priority-setting, broader value and usability; develop the PRMS using user-oriented methodologies and UX principles to ensure it is well-received and not burdensome.
- Review, identify and implement key enhancements to better integrate the TOC system into PRMS reporting.
- Ensure the necessary reporting indicators are standardized within the PRMS early on.
- Introduce further simplifications in the PRMS i.e., consider the possibility of tagging results other than knowledge products as MELIA studies; simplify the process of adding innovation packages in the PRMS to reduce time-consuming aspects.
- Redesign the TOC Tool to make it more efficient and user-friendly, and more useful for monitoring and internal communication.
- Refine the Results Dashboard; for example, improve how country- and region-level reporting is presented; improve clarity and readability of the innovation section of the Dashboard, especially "innovation use" (especially the graph on "innovation users by actor)"; and enhance the connection to the actual data pool to prevent breakdowns when pulling data.

2.5. REFLECTIONS ON THE LEARNING AND OPTIMIZATION PROCESS

For future learning and optimization processes, the following suggestions were made:

- Sufficient time for feedback: Ensure there is enough time for all responsible parties to provide feedback.
- Earlier L&O process: Consider conducting the Learning and Optimization (L&O) process earlier in the year to allow adequate time for integrating ideas and recommendations before the PRMS reporting begins.

References

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Annex 1: 2024 Action Plan

Based on the results above and the strategic input from the LAT, the following areas of improvement are to be prioritized. These will inform Technical Reporting enhancements for 2024. Implementation of actions will be reported on through the established Portfolio Practice Change (Type 3) Report.

GOAL: Optimized Technical Reporting in 2024

Conceptual underpinnings

IPSR: Simplify IPSR language, develop simpler reporting templates, and reduce the complexity and time demands of reporting in the PRMS.

IPSR: Review workshop format and timing.

Process

QA: Refine QA guidelines to ensure they are up to date with the latest reporting guidance for 2024.

QA: Implement pre-QA for end-of-Initiative outcomes by the three Science Group MELIA focal points to ensure higher quality and consistency.

Reporting/QA: Implement incentives to encourage early reporting in the PRMS, which will facilitate early QA of results.

QA: Determine a solution for accessible evidence for QA assessors.

QA: Explore how utilizing AI tools can streamline the workflow.

PRMS: Re-design the cross-Initiative tagging mechanism to ensure accurate and consistent tagging.

PRMS: Open the PRMS earlier in the year. Keep the PRMS open and maintain multiple QA batches.

Timeline: Provide a separate, extended deadline for knowledge products.

Timeline: Allow flexibility with final deadlines for SGPs.

Timeline: Allow for a longer internal review period of Type 1 reports.

Timeline: Allow more time for reporting entities to review the formatted Type 1 reports.

SGP integration: Further develop support and mechanisms to foster effective SGP alignment with Technical Reporting, which take into consideration that project years may not align with the CGIAR Portfolio year.

TOC updates: Review the current process and provide updated support to reporting entities.

Systems/Platforms

TOC Tool: Ensure the tool properly supports the nested TOC concept.

PRMS: Ensure all TOC elements are always visible in dropdown lists.

PRMS: Enhance the notification system for linking results to several Initiatives/Impact Platforms to increase the visibility of notifications and reduce the need for individual follow-ups with other Initiatives/Platforms.

PRMS: Improve the result PDF format to clearly indicate fields and ensure it picks up evidence links.

PRMS: Enhance filtering capabilities for results by submitter, result level, and phase to save time.

PRMS: Foster collaboration with PRMS teams, knowledge management teams and CGSpace curators to optimize knowledge product reporting and quality.

PRMS: Begin to redefine the governance and decision-making processes for the PRMS.

PRMS: Ensure the completion of all mandatory fields.

PRMS: Identify duplicate entries during the reporting phase.

Risk Management Module: Further communicate the use and value of the Risk Management Module.

Risk Management Module: Incorporate a feedback mechanism directly into the tool to allow users to provide insights and suggestions for improvements, which can be used to make continuous upgrades.

QA Platform: Consider granting third-party assessors the authority to make direct adjustments within the PRMS.

QA Platform: Improve access to comments from the menu to avoid unnecessary scrolling and provide an option to download all comments in a single file.

Capacity

Guidance: Update guidance documents and further shorten and simplify where possible.

Guidance: Modify guidance for filling in the location of virtual training events.

Guidance: Develop and implement clearer criteria for selecting the primary submitter of an output.

Guidance: Provide detailed guidance on using 0-1-2 scores for Impact Areas other than gender, and enhance the data flow and consistency between CGSpace IA tags and PRMS tagging.

Guidance: Offer clear and concise guidelines on using the CGSpace handle permanent link and what needs to be uploaded to CGSpace.

Guidance: Provide better guidance on "other outputs", "other outcomes".

Guidance: Encourage the updating of results as opposed to creating new results.

Guidance: Provide better guidance for reporting on impacts, Action Area/Science Group outcomes, and end-of-Initiative outcomes.

Support: Update the P&R Hub and provide improved structure and resource labeling.

Support: Maintain a broad group of testers from the reporting entities, and the SPMs, for new developments.

Support: Provide an update on the engagement category to reporting entities.

Support: Maintain responsive tech support and advisors on PRMS during reporting periods.

Support/IPSR: Provide examples and best practices on the P&R Hub, and have a point of contact from the IPSR team in the case of specific requests and questions.

Product

Type 1 Report: Review the template in the context of the final year of reporting, including the focus on end-of-Initiative outcome reporting, and the need for a summative report.

Type 1 Report: Include an acknowledgements section to credit authors, contributors, and reviewers, and finalize an acknowledgement protocol for SGPs to provide more visibility to funders and designated Centers or partners.

Results Dashboard: Conduct a reflection/L&O type process to determine appropriate updates.

Results Dashboard: Improve the clarity of IPSR in the dashboard.

Annex 2: Survey questions

2023 Technical Reporting Learning and Optimization survey

Welcome to the 2023 Technical Reporting Learning and Optimization (L&O) survey.

To guide optimization of Technical Reporting in 2024, the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) is leading an inclusive **L&O** process to **identify key lessons from the second year of implementation of the** <u>Technical Reporting Arrangement</u>. We will set out an Action Plan for improvements to be implemented for **2024 Technical Reporting** and draw lessons to be incorporated into **Technical Reporting in the Portfolio 2025-2030**.

This survey aims to gather your views on **2023 Technical Reporting** – which includes the annual Technical Reports for <u>Initiatives, Impact Platforms, and Science Group Projects (SGPs)</u> (the Type 1 reports), the <u>CGIAR Portfolio Practice Change Report</u> (the Type 3 report), the <u>CGIAR Results</u> <u>Dashboard</u>, the Portfolio Narrative, and all associated processes, tools and platforms related to the development of these products such as the PRMS, the TOC tool, the quality assurance process, Pause and Reflect, Risk Management etc.

All inputs will be anonymized in the published L&O Report and any other publications related to the L&O process. With your permission, we may associate your comments with your stakeholder group. Feedback will be incorporated into a Technical Reporting L&O Report and Action Plan (see the 2022 L&O Report <u>here</u>).

The survey should take around 10-15 minutes, depending on the level of detail you provide.

Thank you for your support and valuable contribution to CGIAR Technical Reporting.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following questions are all optional.

Process

- 1. How satisfied are you with the following processes for 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting?
 - Quality assurance processes
 - Theory of Change (TOC) updates and finalization
 - Pause and Reflect process
 - Reporting process
 - Report development & clearance process
 - Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness (this refers to all IPSR related components: workshops, team support, IPSR reporting)
 - Process of reporting results jointly between Initiatives

Timeline

• Time allocated for each deliverable (i.e. timeline for QA batches; time allotted for reporting, time allotted for Results Dashboard update and testing, time allotted for development of Type 1 reports, etc.)

For each bullet point above, have the following options:

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- N/A

2. Do you have any suggestions or comments for improving the process and/or timeline of CGIAR Technical Reporting?

Text box

Digital solutions

1. How satisfied are you with the digital solutions you used for 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting?

- TOC Tool
- PRMS Reporting Tool

- Type 1 report elements module in the PRMS
- PRMS Quality Assurance Platform
- Results dashboard
- Risk Management Module

For each bullet point above, have the following options:

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- N/A; did not use

2. Do you have any suggestions or comments for improving the digital solutions for CGIAR Technical Reporting?

• Text box

Capacity

1. How satisfied are you with the guidance and resources which were provided to you related to 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting?

- Guidance documents
- Reporting templates & mockups
- Performance & Results Hub
- Bi-weekly Technical Reporting update email
- Webinars/drop-ins

For each bullet point above, have the following options:

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- N/A

2. Do you have any suggestions or comments for improving the guidance and resources for 2024 CGIAR Technical Reporting?

• Text box

Product

- 1. How satisfied are you with the 2023 Initiative/Impact Platform/Science Group Project annual technical reports (Type 1)?
 - Very dissatisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Neutral
 - Satisfied
 - Very satisfied
- 2. Do you have any suggestions or comments for improving the Type 1 reports (i.e. report's outline; timeline for development; internal clearance process; final formatting, etc.)?
 - Text box
- 3. How satisfied are you with the 2023 Portfolio Practice Change (Type 3) report?
 - Very dissatisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Neutral
 - Satisfied
 - Very satisfied
 - I have not read it

- 4. Do you have any suggestions or comments for improving the Type 3 report?
 - Text box
- 5. How satisfied are you with the CGIAR Results Dashboard?
 - Very dissatisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Neutral
 - Satisfied
 - Very satisfied
 - I have not used it
- 6. Do you have any suggestions or comments for improving the CGIAR Results Dashboard?
 - Text box
- 7. How satisfied are you with the 2023 Portfolio Narrative?

*The 2023 Portfolio Narrative is due for release in June 2024. We understand that you may not yet have had the chance to view the report or may not have been involved in its production. If this is the case, please select "I have not read it".

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- I have not read it
- 8. Do you have any suggestions or comments for improving the Portfolio Narrative?
 - Text box

General questions

- 1. Based on 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting and the 2023 Technical Reports, what worked well for CGIAR Technical Reporting in 2023?
 - Text box
- 2. Based on 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting and the 2023 Technical Reports, what are the **main areas for improvement** for CGIAR Technical Reporting? Your response can refer to any aspect of Technical Reporting, e.g. the reporting process, the tools and systems available, the reporting products etc.
 - Text box
- 3. What are the key lessons and priorities for Technical Reporting for the next Portfolio 2025-2030?
 - Text box

Additional comments

- 1. Do you have any other comments related to 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting that you would like to add?
 - Text box

Organizational affiliation:

1. Affiliation (optional)

Dropdowns:

- AfricaRice
- Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT
- CIMMYT
- CIP

- ICARDA
- IFPRI
- IITA
- ILRI
- IRRI
- IWMI
- WorldFish
- CGIAR System Organization
- Other
- 2. Your role in 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting

Multiple selections possible. Check boxes:

- Initiative/Impact Platform/Science Group Project lead/co-lead/Work Package lead/co-lead
- Initiative/Impact Platform/Science Group Project MELIA Focal Point
- Initiative/Impact Platform/Science Group Project Program/Project Coordinator
- Initiative/Impact Platform/Science Group Project C&O focal point
- Science Group Senior Program Manager
- Science Group Leadership
- CGIAR Senior Leadership Team
- PPU/PCU
- CGIAR Digital & Data
- CGIAR Partnerships and Advocacy
- CGIAR Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization
- CGIAR Communications and Outreach
- CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Services
- Other (please state)
- 3. Do you give permission for your stakeholder group to be associated with any feedback you provide? Your personal anonymity will be retained.
 - Yes/No

Would you like us to contact you to discuss your feedback on 2023 CGIAR Technical Reporting in more depth?

- 1. Yes
 - Your email address
- 2. No

Annex 3: Comparison of 2022 and 2023 L&O findings

Main similarities in content and recommendations

Both the 2022 and 2023 L&O Reports highlight recurring themes and recommendations around specific Technical Reporting areas that focus on consistently improving:

1. Digital tools

Great progress in PRMS development was realized in 2023 and the team has taken steps to increase the user-centric approach (i.e. the creation of a testing group with representatives from reporting entities; appointing a user experience (UX) manager etc.). Indeed, almost all of the 2022 Action Plan points related to the PRMS were implemented in 2023, even in the context of a 50 percent budget cut to D&D, resulting in a reprioritization of their work.

The L&O report in 2023 continues to focus digital tool improvements, with feedback and suggestions focusing on usability and on integrating functionalities that can handle complex data and provide more detailed, actionable insights which are crucial for accurate reporting and decision-making.

2. Quality assurance mechanisms

A consistent theme is the strengthening and refining of the QA process to ensure data integrity and report accuracy, which are critical for the credibility of CGIAR Technical Reporting.

3. Theory of change (TOC) Implementation

Recommendations on better integration and utilization of the TOC across the Portfolio appear in both reports. The emphasis is on ensuring that the TOC is not only well-understood but also effectively implemented to align project outcomes with CGIAR's strategic goals, and to be able to report progress along the TOC effectively.

4. Data management and reporting

Both reports call for improved data management practices and reporting systems to ensure that the data collected is not only accurate but also effectively used to generate insights that drive strategic decisions and project adjustments.

5. Capacity building

Each report notes the importance of enhancing Technical Reporting capacity, specifically in areas like data analysis and interpretation, to ensure that staff and stakeholders are equipped to meet the demands of sophisticated reporting requirements.

Analysis of recommendations

These similar recommendations across the two reports suggest a few critical points:

- 1. **Consistent focus areas:** The ongoing focus on digital tools and data quality assurance indicates that these are critical points for CGIAR's reporting and operational effectiveness. It implies a recognition of the technological and methodological advancements needed to keep pace with CGIAR's developing data and reporting approach.
- Adaptive and responsive strategies: The recurring recommendations also suggest that while improvements are continually being made, the complexity and scope of CGIAR's activities require iterative enhancements to systems and capacities. This reflects an adaptive strategy where tools and processes are refined in response to evolving needs and challenges.
- 3. Deepening Technical Reporting capabilities: The consistent call for improved data management and Technical Reporting capacity building reflects a strategic emphasis on strengthening the foundation of CGIAR's operational capabilities, which is crucial for enhancing the impact and efficiency of its Portfolio.

Notable evolutions from 2022 to 2023

The evolution from 2022 to 2023 in terms of content and recommendations can be seen in the increasing sophistication of solutions and the expanding scope of areas addressed:

• From general to specific: Moving from broader recommendations in 2022 to more specific, actionable strategies in 2023, such as the detailed focus on digital tool functionalities and specific aspects of stakeholder training. This may be due to the way feedback was collected (e.g. different styles of surveys were conducted in 2022 and 2023), but also potentially because stakeholders are more familiar with the reporting tools and processes in the second year of reporting, so they were able to give clearer and more nuanced feedback. Consequently, more nuanced feedback also allows for a more nuanced use, incorporating it into precise areas of the reporting process to ensure these inputs lead directly to improvements.

• **Progressive refinement of tools and processes:** There is a clear trajectory of continuous improvement, with the 2023 L&O process building on the 2022 process to refine tools and processes based on an evolving understanding of needs and challenges faced by stakeholders. While there are core themes that persist across the years, the evolution in how these themes is addressed shows a commitment to providing feedback for improvement on one side and refining Technical Reporting towards improvement on the other. The shift from general recommendations to more targeted, detailed strategies indicate a maturation in the approach to learning and optimization, aiming to achieve more effective, efficient, and inclusive Technical Reporting practices.

Main differences in content and recommendations

Focus on specific technological improvements

- 2022: The report mentions general improvements needed in digital tools.
- 2023: Significant progress was made in achieving the targeted PRMS improvements in 2023, and increasing the user-friendliness of the Tool. L&O feedback in 2023 builds on this progress and provides more detailed focus on specific functionalities within the PRMS, such as enhancing the user interface, improving data visualization capabilities, and integrating advanced analytics features. This shift indicates a move from broad to targeted technological enhancements, responding to more specific user needs and operational challenges.

Data accessibility and integration

- 2022: Recommendations largely pertain to improving data management practices in a broad sense.
- 2023: There is a clear emphasis on enhancing the integration of different data systems and platforms to ensure seamless data flows and accessibility. This includes specific calls for creating interoperable systems that can communicate across different CGIAR Centers and Initiatives, suggesting a more sophisticated approach to handling complex datasets.

Reporting on impact and outcomes

- **2022:** The focus is on improving the quality of reporting outputs.
- **2023:** There is a nuanced approach to not only enhance the output quality but also to significantly boost the reporting of outcomes and impacts. This includes detailed suggestions on how to better capture qualitative impacts and ensure these are reflected in reports, indicating a maturation in outcome-based reporting strategies.

Refinement in quality assurance process

- 2022: General improvements in QA are suggested.
- 2023: There are specific recommendations for streamlining the QA process to reduce redundancies and enhance efficiency. This includes automating certain QA tasks and providing clear, actionable feedback within QA reviews to speed up the process and reduce the burden on contributors.

Advanced training and capacity building

- 2022: Emphasis on increasing training sessions for stakeholders.
- 2023: Focus shifts to more specialized training, particularly in advanced data analysis, interpretation skills, and the use of new tools introduced into the CGIAR ecosystem.

Analysis of differences

These differences indicate several important evolutionary steps in CGIAR's approach to Technical Reporting:

- **Technological advancement:** Moving from general improvements to focusing on specific technological enhancements shows progress in how CGIAR addresses technical needs, emphasizing customization and user-centric developments.
- Data-driven strategies: The increased focus on data integration and accessibility reflects a strategic shift towards more data-driven
 decision-making, aiming to leverage big data and analytics to enhance project outcomes and operational efficiency.
- **Outcome-focused reporting:** The shift towards more detailed reporting on outcomes and impacts demonstrates an alignment with global best practices in monitoring and evaluation, where the emphasis is on demonstrating tangible results and impacts rather than just activities. It also reflects progress from year 1 to year 2 of the current Portfolio, where there was a heavier focus on outputs in the first year, and gradual increased focus on outcomes and impacts in the second.
- Efficient quality assurance: Streamlining the QA process reflects an organizational move towards efficiency, aiming to reduce the time and resources spent on these activities while maintaining or enhancing quality.
- **Specialized capacity building:** The evolution in training recommendations highlights a growing understanding of the skills and knowledge required for Technical Reporting, suggesting that CGIAR is adapting to the needs of a more sophisticated operational environment.