Semi-Annual Report

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy Research, Capacity, and Influence (PRCI)

August 1, 2020

Period Covered: 6/1/19 – 7/31/20

PRCI leadership and its USAID AOR agreed that Year 1 of the program would be considered to run from the date of award (May 15, 2019) through 9/30/20. The first semi-annual report would be due April 30, 2020, covering the period through March 31, 2020. Due to intensive new work responding to the COVID-19 pandemic that erupted in early March, 2020, PRCI delayed completing its first semi-annual report until 7/31/20. To be as complete as possible, we report here on all activities and accomplishments through that period. The Annual Report will be delivered by October 30, as scheduled, and will cover the originally anticipated period of 5/15/19 through 9/30/20.

A. Summary of workplan progress

The PRCI consortium led by MSU achieved success during the period in two major ways: (1) by putting in place the processes it laid out in its winning proposal to put local research centers in the lead, within a consultative partnerhsip approach, in defining their capacity development needs and research and outreach priorities, and (2) by adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic through (a) new work to guide the programmatic response to the pandemic and (b) quickly and effectively moving to a 100% online approach to activities that were to have major in-person components. Key highlights for this reporting period include:

1. **Timely selection of African CPLs and holding of Internal Lab Launch Consultation per agreed procedure**. The MSU-led consortium put great thought into the processes it would use to ensure that local partners played a leading role, within a consultative partnership model, in defining their capacity needs and their research priorities. The selection of CPLs and the structure of the ILLC were key components of these processes, as they set the tone for the way in which US-based consortium members would relate to our local counterparts. By remaining committed to the designed processes, PRCI was able to set this tone.
2. **Successful launching of the Core Center research program.** PRCI remained committed to its "semi-competitive" process for selection of research topics per priorities defined by our local partners, formation of joint research teams to constitute the Core Center research agenda and launching of collaborative research. Teams are now actively working on their topics.
3. **Launching of the STAAARS+ program nearly on time and moving it entirely to an online platform**. This was a major challenge, as the original program anticipated one full month of in-person engagement on the Cornell campus early in the research process. Learning from this

experience and adapting as needed once COVID-related travel disruptions end is a major challenge for PRCI.

4. **Unanticipated, major, and successful assistance to ReNAPRI to carry out its 5-year strategic planning exercise entirely online.** See C.2.1 below for more detail.

5. **Movement of the PICA process 100% online**. This posed perhaps the biggest challenges for PRCI, given the nature of the process that emphasizes intensive interaction. Yet the duration of the disruptions from the crisis made this adjustment necessary. See next section for brief discussion of challenges in this regard going forward.

6. **Launching and effectively running the Core Center technical training program 100% online**. This involved effectively eliciting center researchers' assessment of their technical training needs remotely and designing and launching a 100% online technical training program featuring extensive interaction among researchers around the training topics.

B. **Key challenges going forward**

By forcing PRCI to make major adjustments to its operations, the COVID-19 pandemic created conditions for important new learning. We conceive this learning in two phases. First was how to move activities that had been anticipated to have major in-person components to a fully online platform. Doing this rapidly and successfully was central to PRCI's ability to pursue its mission, and as discussed above, was largely accomplished. The second phase of learning relates to the post-crisis period: once travel restrictions are lifted, what should PRCI activities look like?; what that was moved online should remain online, and what should return to in-person events?; of that remaining online, how can we do it better? Answering these questions effectively can result in equal or greater effectiveness of the program at lower cost, allowing the redeployment of financial resources into new activities. Learning these lessons will be a major focus of PRCI going forward. Below we provide brief additional detail on the key challenges we see moving forward:

1. Assessing the effectiveness of the PICA process as run 100% online and adapting as needed to be sure we have effectively addressed planning for center institutional capacity development needs. Will new, in-person consultations be needed?

2. Managing the transition to the post-COVID-crisis world to make the right decisions, from a cost-effectiveness perspective, regarding the balance between in-person and remote implementation of program activities.

3. Assessing learning outcomes from the Core Center and STAAARS+ research mentoring and technical training and adapting that training as needed.

4. Ensuring learning across the Core Center and STAAARS+ research and training activities so that each is as effective as possible.

5. Ensuring effective integration of local center-led policy outreach strategies into all research activities. See 5.0 under "D. Status of originally programmed activities" below on the creation of the new position of Research-to-Policy lead to address this issue

C. The COVID-19 pandemic and PRCI

PRCI successfully adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic by (a) launching work to respond to the crisis with information and perspective meant to drive decision-making, and (b) reorganizing activities that were to include a major in-person component to run entirely online. We briefly review each below, and speak in more detail as relevant in the body of the report.

C.1. New work driven by COVID-19

C.1.1	Launch of website	Starting in late March, David Tschirley in his capacity as FSG co-director and PRCI director spearheaded the development of a website dedicated to analysis and perspective related to COVID-19 and food systems (https://www.canr.msu.edu/fsg/COVID-19/Index). Hosted on the FSG site, the COVID-19 site explicitly draws on PRCI and broader FSG work.
C.1.2	Preparation of proposals for COVID-19 special fund, and launch of that work	David Tschirley worked with Tom Reardon, Saweda Liverpool-Tasie, Mywish Maredia, and Ben Belton to prepare two proposals under the unsolicited proposal window for COVID-19. The first was a joint proposal with Northwestern University Institute for Public Health and Medicine (Lori Post, director), and was not funded. The second proposal was a scaled-down version of the first, and was funded in the amount of $200,000. Funds are being used to roll out two rounds of cellphone surveys in 7-9 countries of Africa and Asia, focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on household livelihoods, access to food, and food shopping patterns. The work will be done jointly with collaborating local centers and will include a strong policy outreach component.
C.1.3	Contribution to USAID-sponsored analytical piece on COVID-19 and food systems	PRCI, through Tom Reardon and Saweda Liverpool-Tasie, and with input also from David Tschirley, made major contributions to an analytical piece on COVID-19 and food systems funded by RFS, spearheaded by Jim Oehmke of the bureau and led by Carl Pray of Rutgers.
C.1.4	Participation in online conferences/webinars on COVID-19 and food systems	MSU faculty and IFPRI researchers supported by PRCI made presentations at 20 online webinars related to COVID-19 and food systems. See bottom of this file, Annex A, for list of presentations.

C.2. Reorganizing programmatic elements to run online

C.2.1	Intensive assistance to ReNAPRI in moving its strategic planning process 100% online	ReNAPRI's strategic planning exercise was to have taken place in Malawi during March, but was disrupted by travel and other restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, ReNAPRI leadership and its Secretariat requested assistance from PRCI's institutional capacity strengthening team (Medendorp and Goddard) to conduct the exercise online. PRCI leadership decided this was fully consistent with the project's objectives with respect to ReNAPRI, and planning proceeded. That process is now nearing its end, with strong participation from ReNAPRI leadership and all centers.
C.2.2	Phased move to entirely on-line approach to the PICA Process	As an immediate response to the pandemic, the institutional capacity strengthening team (Medendorp and Goddard) organized to conduct the systems mapping exercise - the opening portion of the PICA Process - entirely online. As it became apparent that the travel disruptions from the pandemic would last longer than a couple months, the team moved to a full online approach. The launch of the full process was delayed as the team responded to the request from ReNAPRI to assist with its strategic planning exercise (see entry immediately above) but the initial systems mapping excercises have now been completed the team is beginning the joint review of them with each CPL. Medendorp and Goddard anticipate that the full PICA process will be completed by end September. We note that both members of the ReNAPRI Secretariat are participating in this process and will move into incresingly active roles as the process is rolled-out with the CPLs. Year 2 will see potential roll-out of the process with ReNAPRI and its centers, led by the Secretariat.
C.2.3	Design of technical capacity strengthening program to be 100% online	Following finalization of research teams and topics, and revision of their proposals with the full team, Drs. Saweda Liverpool-Tasie and Nicole Mason-Wardell were tasked to develop PRCI's technical training program. Intensive work during April and May resulted in a three-phase approach : Phase 1, running June-August (cross-cutting and background topics related to conducting high quality research with attention to gender, human subjects protection, and other ethical issues); Phase 2 running September-December (quantitative analytical methods, especially econometrics); and Phase 3 running January-March (writing for peer-review and policy audiences). These phases are based on the approximate timing of the work under the research topics, with serious empirical analysis expected to begin late summer, and intensive writing after the new year. A training calendar is available on the PRCI website, along with technical material (the portion that is appropriate for open sharing) as it becomes available.

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
C.2.4	Movement of STAAARS+ Fellows training to 100% online		A key event in the STAAARS+ program, as originally conceived, was to be a one-month session on Cornell campus in September, in which mentors and fellows would interact intensively as teams and across teams to critique and revise their research proposals to stand eventual peer review. Covid-19 meant that this entire process had to be moved online. Liz Bageant of Cornell has spearheaded that process, which is now unfolding and scheduled to complete by September.
C.2.5	Launch of webinar series		PRCI quickly launched a webinar series as the seriousness and likely duration of the pandemic became clear. Three webinars have been held to date, including the Global Lab Launch Webinar. See PRCI's webinar site for all materials (https://www.canr.msu.edu/prci/Webinars/).

D. Status of originally programmed activities

This section uses the GANTT chart format of the Year 1 workplan to report on the status of originally programmed activities.

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
	Kickoff meeting (July 1/2)	wk 1 July 2019	Done	
0.0	**USAID DELIVERABLES**			
	Develop 1st year workplan	wk 4 Aug 2019	Done	Workplan was submitted on time end August.
	Develop MEL plan	wk 1 July to wk 4 August 2019	Done	MEL was submitted on time end August
	Workplan, MEL plan DUE (Sep 1)	wk 1 Sept 2019	Done	Delivered on time
	Workplan revisions. Resubmission	wk 1 Dec 2019 to wk 1 Jan 2020	Done	Comments received in September and final workplan submitted 6 January, 2020

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
	MEL revisions, resubmission	wk 1 Dec 2019 to wk 4 Jan 2020	**Pending**	MEL comments were received 26 September. Revised MEL plan has not yet been submitted
	Semi-annual report DUE (April 30)	wk 4 April 2020	**Pending**	
	Annual report DUE (Oct 30, Year 2)	wk 4 Oct 2020	Not due	
1.0	**PROJECT LAUNCH ACTIVITIES**			
1.1	**Select African CPLs**	wk 4 June to wk 3 Oct 2019	**Done**	CPLs were selected in October
1.2	**Local Stakeholder Consultations (LSCs)**			These were not done, for two reasons: (1) all CPLs had done stakeholder consultations either immediately prior to or as part of their preparation of the proposal to be considered as a CPL, and (2) selection in mid-October left too little time by the ILLC to conduct a consultation that would be of real use to the CPLs. Going forward, LSCs will be considered in two instances: (1) as each current research team develops its policy outreach strategy, based on the systems mapping being finalized in July 2020 and engagement with Danielle Resnick, who will be functioning as a new "Research-to-Policy lead" in PRCI, and (2) in the run-up to the next round of research proposals to be considered second quarter of FY2021.
	Discuss CPL approach to stakeholder engagement during ILLC	wk 4 Nov	**Done**	This was done during the ILLC, led by John Medendorp and Cait Goddard, with participation of David Tschirley. It was clear to us that each center had active, regular engagement with a range of stakeholders.
	Decide on need for new LSC during multi-day cap strengthening workshop	Feb-April	**Pending**	COVID-19 pandemic made these impossible to date. In response, PRCI leadership with the PRCI Acting Research Lead (Resnick) ensured that a policy outreach strategy would be built into the Core Center research plans. This was done to some extent, but will be strengthened s indicated in 1.2 above.

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
	Conduct LSCs if and as agreed	May June	**Pending**	See above
1.3	**Internal Lab Launch Consultation (ILLC)**	wk 1 Oct-wk 4 Nov 2019	**Done**	ILLC held on time in Kampala Uganda. Report can be found at …
	ReNAPRI Conference	wk 3 Nov 2019	**Done**	ReNAPRI conference preceded the ILLC, as planned
	Annual Lab Consultations (ALC) (1st in November 2020)		Not due	First ALC tentatively green-lighted for in-person consultation following annual ReNAPRI conference, as originally planned. However, both events may be held virtually, depending on the status of COVID-19 pandemic in Africa and US. Decision targeted for early September, 2020.
1.4	**Asia center selection**			
	Consultation, travel, selection of RLs	wk 1 July to wk 4 Dec 2019	**Done**	Babu from IFPRI and Tschirley from MSU travelled to Asia late October. They visited India (New Delhi; meeting with RIS), Thailand (Bangkok; meetings with TDRI, Kasetsart University, and USAID), Cambodia (meeting with CDRI and USAID), and Myanmar (Yangon; ReSAKSS bi-annual meeting, consultations with USAID). KU for Southeast Asia and RIS for South Asia were tentatively chosen as RLs, and confirmed early in the new year.
	Beginning of collaboration with other centers	Wk 1 to wk 4 Feb 2020	**Has started**	Collaboration started later than initially planned, due to pressure of launching Core Center Research process and STAAARS+ Fellows program.
1.5	**Global Lab Launch Webinar**	wk 4 April 2020	**Done**	The GLLW was delayed by two months as a result of needed adjustments to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (See above). It was held on June 23, 2020.

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
1.6	**Community of Practice (shared dropbox structure + Slack channels; Gender 1st)**	wk 2 Dec 2019 and Wk 4 Jan 2020	**Has started**	The first COPs were anticipated to be for gender and research. Some progress has been made, but full COPs have not been established. **Actions to date to promote cross-center researcher interaction and learning**: (1) A shared dropbox structure, to which all teams have access, has been established. (2) The PRCI website also holds information on each study, available pubically. (3) The GLLW brought together each Core Center research team (local researchers and mentors) to present their research plans, with STAAARS+ Fellows and mentors observing. Similar events will be held for STAAARS+ Fellows (August) and for Asian researchers (September). (4) The technical training program brings together researchers from all four centers involved in this year's Core Center research program (3 CPLs plus Sokoine University of Agriculture - an ReNAPRI member - in Tanzania) around isssues of research methods and ethics, with facilitated break-out rooms in each session that promote interaction, followed by plenary sessions. Mentors from all teams are tasked with presenting various pieces of the technical training program, further broadening participation. **Future plans for research:** (1) While being conscious of the multipe time commitments of all PRCI researchers (none of them are full-time on PRCI), hold 2-3 internal PRCI webinars between August 2020 and March 2021 (when this round of research ends) for facilitated discussion of research challenges that teams have faced (challenges would be identified based on a survey of research teams). **Actions to date to promote cross-center interaction and learning regarding gender**: The first PRCI webinar and the first technical training were on gender, and all PRCI researchers participated. **Future plans for gender**: Engage with Ruth Meinzen-Dick (Gender Lead), Elizabeth Bryan, and Veronique Theriault on the best way forward that promotes sharing and learning while being conscious of multiple time commitments.
2.0	**RESEARCH**			
2.1	**Global research agenda, local grounding**	wk 1 July to wk 1 Sept 2020 and wk	**Done**	Global research agenda document was completed on November 22 (See Annex B). This document was used as the basis for developing templates for competing Core Centers to use in the first round of competition for supported PRCI research topics.

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
		2-4 Feb 2020		
2.2	**Core Center research team formation and specific topic definition**	wk 4 Nov 2019 to wk 4 Feb 2020	**Done**	The competitive process for PRCI support to research topics among Core Centers was launched in early January, with proposals due by end February. Following engagement with MSU and IFPRI researchers around the topics to identify mentors, and review by the ExComm, four teams were selected by mid-March.
	Vet broadly within RFS	wk 3 Feb to wk 4 March 2020		
	Present Global Rsch Agenda in GLLW (Date TBD)	wk 4 April 2020	**Done**	GLLW presented on June 19, 2020
	Conduct research	wk 1 Mar to wk 4 Sept 2020	Not due	Ongoing
2.3	**STAAARS+**	wk 1 Dec 2019 to wk 3 Jan 2020, wk 2 Mar to wk 4 Sep 2020	Underway	The STAAARS+ selection process was phased to note compete with the Core Center process, with calls for proposals going out beginning of March and selection of four teams (following review by the ExComm) mid-April. Researcher-mentor teams are now actively working on their research topic. Liz Bageant of Cornell has led the movement of all STAAARS+ training activities to an online platform.
3.0	**INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING (PICA)**			
3.1	**Build institutional capacity**	wk 1 Oct to wk 2	**Done**	Medendorp and Goddard gave presentation on PICA process then held separate sessions with each CPL to plan for conduct of the work with each

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
	strengthening into ILLC	Nov 2019		
3.2	**PICA capacity strengthening workshops then quarterly check-ins**	wk 2 Mar to wk 4 Apr, Wk 4 June	**Ongoing**	First phase of systems mapping has been done; review with each CPL during August; workshops for rest of PICA Process held September and October.
	(Side events at annual conferences)	None listed	Not scheduled	NA
4.0	**GENDER**			
4.1	**Plan gender integration into ILLC**	wk 1-4 Oct, 2019	**Done**	Meinzen-Dick made presentation on gender integration into research and institutional planning
4.2	**Gender Capacity Needs Assessment**	wk 1 Dec to wk 4 Jan, wk 3 March	**Done**	Meinzen-Dick and Bryan conducted the gender capacity needs assessment with CPLs during January
4.3	**Pro-WEAI**	no date assigned	**Ongoing**	Use of pro-WEAI was covered during the gender webinar
4.4	**Webinar(s) on gender research (3, date TBD)**	no date assigned	**Ongoing**	First PRCI webinar and first technical training focused on gender. Further webinars TBD
4.5	**IFPRI Gender Toolbox**	Y2	Not due	Still planned for Year 2
5.0	**POLICY INFLUENCE**			

During July, a decision was made to create the position of Lead for Research-to-Policy, filled by Danielle Resnick. This position formalized the role that Dr. Resnick was beginning to play in PRCI. In it she will (1) engage with the institutional capacity development team (Medendorp and Goddard) as they develop, review, and revise policy systems maps with each CPL and SUA (the four centers in the Year 1 Core Center research portfolio); (2) Liaise with MSU and IFPRI mentors along with each Core Center team to use the results of the systems mapping to develop explicit strategies for policy influence around each Core Center research topic; (3) adapt and apply again this approach with the groups involved in the Year 2 Core Center topics; (4) do the same, though without the systems mapping, with STAAARS+ teams; and (5) lead the conduct of comparative cross-country analysis on the relationship between characteristics

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
of policy systems and likelihood of being able to achieve policy impact. Se Annex C for TORs for this position.				
5.1	**Global Activities**			
	Mid-term research conference (early year 3)	Y3	Not due	NA
	Near-end research conference (mid year 5)	Y5	Not due	NA
	ICAE, 2021	2021	Not due	NA
	Various global events in which PRCI-supported researchers will participate	TBD	Not scheduled	See above references to COVID-related outreach by PRCI-affiliated researchers, and Annex A for a complete list. Other presentations will be tracked over time.
5.2	**Country Activities**			
	CPL LSCs as agreed during PICA workshop	TBD	Not scheduled	These are on hold pending outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic and government response to it.
	CPL ongoing policy engagement at country level	May-Sept.	Not due	This will be an outcome of the activities of the Research-to-policy lead, Dr. Resnick. Activities will continue past September, through the end of the Year 1 research program around March, 2021.
	Other Core Center ongoing policy engagement	May-Sept.	Not due	
	Build outreach strategy into all research plans	May-Sept.	**Ongoing**	See above and Annex C for description of activities of research-to-policy lead.
5.3	**Continental Activities**			

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
	PRCI contribution to Core Center research feeding into Abuja II	Apr-Sept.	**Ongoing**	PRCI supported Thom Jayne to work with ReNAPRI (in the strategic planning exercise facilitated by Medendorp and Goddard, see above) in developing its research plan, which includes studies to contribute to Abuja II. PRCI has established a small fund to support *ad hoc* requests for research, and will consider a small grant to support this work.
	PRCI-supported engagement of Core Centers with AfDB African Development Inst.	May-Sept.	**Pending**	Jayne in his dual role in AFDB/ADI and PRCI, will facilitate this engagement
	PRCI facilitation of Core Center participation in AGRF (every September)	wk 1 Sept	**Pending**	Jayne facilitating
	PRCI participation in Re-SAKSS/Asia bi-annual conference	wk 1 Sept	Year 2	Still planned for Year 2
	Other outreach activities as agreed with ReNAPRI leadership	TBD	**Pending**	PRCI will engage with ReNAPRI leadership around the outreach component of its soon to be completed strategic plan, and agree what elements to support and how.
5.4	**With USAID**			
	Participation in AfricaLEAD & Rutgers events	wk 4 Oct 2019	**Done**	Jayne and Resnick participated in portions of these events in DC

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
	(Vetting of research agenda more broadly in USAID)	wk 3 Feb to wk 4 Mar	**Not done**	
	Special Year 1 "status check" in Washington (immediately following GLLW)	wk 4 April 2020	**Pending**	To be scheduled in consultation with PRCI AOR. However, COVID-19 makes an in-person status check impossible at this time.
	Yearly "status check" in Washington (early December each year)	wk 1 Dec 2019	**Pending**	At this time we plan to do this, as scheduled, following the ReNAPRI annual conference. Details, including how to do it if in-person meetings are not possible, to be worked out with PRCI AOR.
	(mid-term and near-end conferences will also include USAID)	TBD	**Pending**	We still plan to do this
6.0	**MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNIN**			
6.1	Performance monitoring data collection	wk 1 Mar to wk 4 Sept 2020	**Ongoing**	
6.2	Context monitoring	Y2	**Pending**	To be done year 2, as programmed
6.3	Internal evaluation	no date assigned	**Pending**	Still planned
6.4	Collaboration with external evaluators	During 2022/2	**Pending**	Still planned
7.0	**CONSORTIUM MANAGEMENT**			

	Activity	Due Date	Status	Comment
7.1	Weekly check-in calls with USAID (each Wednesday)	each week	**Ongoing**	Weekly calls have been held with few exceptions
7.1.1	Use first call of each month for workplan check-in, with ExComm on call	Monthly	**Changed**	This is done during the monthly ExComm meeting
7.2	Monthly ExComm calls (1st Friday every month)	monthly	**Ongoing**	All ExComm calls have been held as scheduled
7.3	Other calls among ExComm members as needed	Variable	**Ongoing**	Management is in frequent contact with ExCom members
7.4	Semi-annual overview by ExComm during April as preparing semi-annual report	Apr-20	**Not done**	
7.5	Annual overview by ExComm during October as prepare annual report		**Pending**	To be3 done during September, 2020

ANNEX A: Presentations by PRCI staff on COVID-19 and food systems

1 Liverpool-Tasie, Saweda. June, 4 2020. "Interventions in Nigeria: A Case Study." USAID Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) 181st Meeting (Virtual). Link.

2 Liverpool-Tasie, Saweda, June 19, 2020. ICABR/IFAD/FAO Virtual Conversation on *The Effects of Covid-19 on Food Security with Evidence from Nigeria.*

3 Liverpool-Tasie, Saweda. July 2, 2020. "Findings on the Effect of COVID-19 Policy Responses on Food Supply Chains in Nigeria." USAID webinar organized by Bureau for Resilience and Food Security Policy Division on *Policy, Food Systems, and COVID-19 Learning from USAID Missions and Partner Researchers.*

4 Maredia, Mywish. May 28, 2020. "Mobile Phones as a Research Tool: Modes, Pros & Cons, and Resources." PRCI Webinar Series on Using Mobile Phones for Survey Research in the Times of Covid-19 Lockdowns and Beyond. Link.

5 Meinzen-Dick, Ruth. May 28, 2020. "Gender Considerations in Phone Surveys." PRCI Webinar Series on Using Mobile Phones for Survey Research in the Times of Covid-19 Lockdowns and Beyond. Link.

6 Reardon, Thomas. Series of Virtual Meetings from March 29, 2020 – Present. "USAID Policy Guidance to COVID-19." Creating an internal and external report for USAID.

7 Reardon, Thomas. April 8, 2020. "COVID-19 and Africa Supply Chains." Gates Foundation Virtual Meeting.

8 Reardon, Thomas. April 8, 2020. "COVID-19 and Africa Supply Chains." The Economist Virtual Meeting.

9 Reardon, Thomas. May 18, 2020. "COVID-19's Disruption of Africa's Transformed Food Supply Chains." AfDB virtual seminar on *Building Resilience in Food Systems and Agricultural Value Chains: Agricultural Policy Responses to COVID-19 in Africa*.

10 Reardon, Thomas, June 1, 2020. FAO webinar on *Processed Food Revolution*.

11 Reardon, Thomas. June 12, 2020. "E-Commerce Diffusion Accelerated by COVID-19 in Developing Regions." IFAD Webinar on Bridging Research and Policy Responses to COVID-19. Link.

12 Reardon, Thomas. June 22, 2020. African Development Bank (AfDB) Webinar on *The Dynamism of SMEs in Africa and Post COVID Innovation.*

13 Reardon, Thomas. June 30, 2020. IFPRI Webinar on How are Food Businesses Coping with Covid-19 and its Aftermath? Link.

14 Reardon, Thomas. July 2, 2020. "Supply Chains Nature and Response in Africa and Asia." USAID Webinar on *Policy, food systems, and Covid-19: learning from USAID Missions and Partner researchers*.

15 Resnick, Danielle. April 30, 2020. "Informal Food Trade in African Cities: Government Responses and Citizen Compliance." IFPRI COVID-19 virtual Policy Seminar on Covid-19: Emerging problems and potential country-level responses. Link.

16 Resnick, Danielle. May 18, 2020. "Building Resilient Food Systems: Strategic Policy Responses – Short, Medium, & Long Term." AfDB virtual seminar on *Building Resilience in Food Systems and Agricultural Value Chains: Agricultural Policy Responses to COVID-19 in Africa*.

Resnick, Danielle. May 28, 2020. "COVID-19 and informal food traders in Africa." Placemaking X virtual seminar on *The New Frontlines: Highlighting Actions to Promote Healthier Informal Communities through Placemaking*.

17

Resnick, Danielle. June 12, 2020. "The Covid-19 Policy Response Portal (CPR) Tool," virtual presentation to the Food and Nutrition Security Collaboration Space, co-hosted by Oxfam and IFPRI.

18

Tschirley, D., Reardon, T., Liverpool-Tasie, S., May 18-19, 2020. "Data and knowledge gaps that limit our ability to respond quickly and precisely to the COVID-19 pandemic." AfDB Virtual Brainstorming Session on "Building Resilience in Food Systems and Agricultural Value Chains: Agricultural Policy Responses to COVID-19 in Africa."

19

Tschirley, D., June 10, 2020. "Data and knowledge gaps for properly responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa." AAP Public Dialogue Series: The economic, food security, and livelihood impacts of COVID-19 in Africa: Lessons learned and policy responses"

20

ANNEX B. PRCI Global Research Agenda[1]
22 November 2019

Introduction

One major objective of PRCI is to develop a locally grounded global research strategy that will drive the research of the Lab and its partners over the next five years. In developing and then delivering on this strategy, PRCI must confront and creatively address three core tensions. First, the strategy needs to be grounded in locally-relevant research issues that are identified by, deliberated on, and agreed by the Centers for Policy Leadership (CPLs) and the other centers in the broader ReNAPRI network. However, if too many discrete issues are selected that are only narrowly relevant to the countries in which the centers are located, there will not be a cumulative research agenda to address higher-level questions that are relevant across countries, continents, and stakeholders.

Second, in building the capacity of CPLs and other centers, a key emphasis is strengthening their abilities to engage with policymakers and exert influence. As such, the selected research areas must be policy-relevant in order to influence the policy agenda and increase the visibility of the CPLs and other centers as credible, informative partners for the government, private sector, and civil society. Yet, if the centers work only on demand-driven issues – if their stance is only of response to short-term policy priorities of government – they will fail in their mission of preparing policy makers to address new challenges on the horizon of agri-foods systems. Such prospective research, not just responsive research, must also be integrated into PRCI if the program is to achieve its goals.

Third, while PRCI primarily remains focused on building the research capacities of the CPLs and other centers, it needs also to assess the theory of change on which it is grounded. This theory of change argues that building the institutional capacity of local research institutes and universities will provide policy makers with access to a more robust set of credible evidence for decision-making and that, in turn, policymakers will adopt policies that do a better job of advancing food security for their populations. The global research strategy should, therefore, ensure that this overarching theory of change regarding the policy process is properly tested during the life of the project. Among other things, doing so requires identifying the characteristics of policy systems that are more likely to make this theory of change realizable.

Broad Global Research Themes

To address the first two tensions, PRCI will begin with a global research strategy that focuses on three broad themes that allow for the generation of cumulative knowledge and are also broad enough to be tailored to country and regional dynamics:

---

[1] Prepared by Danielle Resnick with input from David Tschirley, Xinshen Diao, and other PRCI staff

- Inclusive agricultural and rural transformation to raise rural household incomes and to create decent jobs, particularly for young women and men;
- Development of healthy food systems, including by addressing regulatory issues and engaging with the private sector, in ways that address food safety and the triple burden of malnutrition; and
- Enhanced resilience at individual, household, national, and regional levels (to climate and other sources of shocks) to achieve economic and environmental sustainability

These broad and interconnected themes address key issues of concern to a diverse range of policymakers in developing countries. In this way, particular topics chosen under each theme can be demand-driven and responsive to immediate, local needs while also engendering a range of longer-term questions that can contribute to transformative research by the consortium and the centers. Moreover, the themes can help address trade-offs across agriculture, nutrition, and resilience that policymakers need to grapple with in the short- and long-terms in order to determine how to prioritize their interventions and investments.

For instance, as economies and diets transform, agriculture is called on to play a different role in providing food security: shifting from staple grains to more diversified crops, and creating jobs throughout agricultural value chains, not just on the farm. While productivity-enhancing technology and inputs remain critical, trade and the private non-farm sector play an increasingly important role. Finding the appropriate enabling environment for the private sector to engage with farmers and rural workers is a key policy issue. While commercialization, diversification, and agro-processing create opportunities for increasing incomes, these opportunities often go to those with the most education or other assets; women in particular are often at a disadvantage. The security and distribution of property rights can both contribute to, and be affected by, such transformations. Analyzing the constraints and opportunities involved in agricultural and rural transformations is key to ensuring equitable outcomes.

The transformation of food systems and diets, with more processing, greater distances traveled from farm to market, more diverse foods whose quality and safety have to be ensured, and more intervening actors from producer to consumers, also creates opportunities and challenges. Opportunities exist to reduce "hidden hunger" stemming from micronutrient deficiencies, but many processed foods have high fats and sugar content that can contribute to obesity and noncommunicable diseases. Appropriate regulatory systems are required to ensure food safety, without imposing undue costs on the private sector, including small-scale processors or vendors.

Refining the Global Research Strategy

The three broad research themes will be presented at the ILLC in November 2019. Participants from the CPLs and other centers will be asked to react to the themes and whether there are additional themes that have been overlooked and might be relevant to their country or regional contexts. If possible, participants from the centers will be asked to start brainstorming on the specific research questions related to the three (or more) global research themes would be most appropriate given the policy

context and agri-food system dynamics in their countries. In determining the final list of research questions and themes to be pursued, the following criteria will be provided as guidance:

1) **Areas of synergy across the CPLs and other participating research centers** – topics that have a higher degree of relevance across more centers will be prioritized over those that are only relevant to one CPL .
2) **Availability of staff within the CPLs and the other participating research centers** – research questions that can be addressed given the current training of the staff in the CPLs and other centers should be prioritized. While capacity development is a key component to PRCI, the research pursued should build on existing skill sets.
3) **Availability of mentors within the consortium** – research questions that can leverage the expertise of the staff from MSU, IFPRI, Cornell, ISSER, and ReNAPRI should be prioritized. Such expertise could be either thematic or methodological.
4) **Availability of required data** – due to budget limits, especially in the first year of PRCI, research questions that can be addressed using extant data from the CPLs, other participating centers, or the Consortium, or which can leverage and add value to other-funded data collection efforts, should be prioritized over questions that would require a substantial amount of new primary data collection that is currently unfunded.

After selecting the final group of research questions, the participating centers need to select one or, at most, two specific research activities that will address those questions in the first year. Where needed, mentors from across the Consortium need to be identified to work with staff at the CPLs. The mentor liaisons from each Consortium partner will be responsible for organizing these teams in coordination with center's research directors. A competitive mechanism may be established to help select which research activities are prioritized with additional funding support that can facilitate team coordination. For those activities that are selected, a workplan for delivering on the discrete research outputs will be needed by the teams that are formed. These team workplans may need to be slightly modified based on the feedback on the finalized Global Research Strategy that is expected from the PRCI Global Lab Launch Webinar.

Ensuring the Emergence of Global-Level Research Outputs

It is expected that at the subsequent ALCs, the research teams will present their findings. Every year , the research plans will be reviewed and potentially revised if participating centers identify additional research questions that should be examined with respect to the originally selected three (or more) broad research themes. This reiteration every year allows for the flexibility to consider new policy developments while also generating cumulative knowledge under each of the themes. Mid-way through PRCI, or at the ALC held at the 2021 ReNAPRI annual conference, areas of complementarity or divergence across the various research teams should begin to be consolidated into a series of synthesis papers related to the three (or more) broad themes. This will ensure that country- or regional-specific research can still inform a larger cross-country, or cross-regional, research agenda of value to the broader international policy and research community.

Linking the Global Research Strategy to PRCI's Theory of Change

To address the third tension related to the theory of change, the Global Research Strategy should be linked to the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) agenda of PRCI. In early 2020, a series of indicators can be collected that link with the theory of change. Specifically, the capacity development workshops that will take place with each center offer a great opportunity to capture initial indicators about the policy ecosystem in which the CPLs are operating as part of the CPLs' general list of strengths and weaknesses. A non-exhaustive list of indicators related to the policy ecosystem could capture the following:

- **How diffuse or concentrated is policymaking on food security in this country?** This gives an indication of how many entry points exist for credible research into the policy process. More ministries, greater decentralization, and a parliamentary system indicate greater diffusion than fewer ministries, less decentralization, and a strong presidential system.
- **How many other credible policy research institutes or universities work on food security in the country?** This indicates how many different sources of information exist that policymakers can rely on to make decisions. More institutes/universities can suggest a more robust foundation for empirically-based decision making but also may result in less influence of any one institute or university.
- **How receptive are policymakers to evidence over ideology when making food security policy decisions?** A system where evidence is already valued means that building the research capacity of the CPLs should have a notable impact on policy outcomes while in settings where ideology prevails, building research capacity alone may not be sufficient.

At each subsequent ALC, the CPLs and other centers would update their assessments of the above indicators, as would other CPLs that might join during the life of the project. During the final year of the project, the Consortium will conduct a separate research analysis of how not only the MEL indicators have changed but also those related to the policy ecosystem. This can allow the PRCI to assess whether it succeeded at its original objectives, either in spite of or because of the policy ecosystems in which the participating centers operate.

ANNEX C: TORs for PRCI research-to-policy lead

1. During 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, assist the three CPLs and SUA (the four centers currently carrying out PRCI's "Core Center Research Program, and hereafter referred to as "the Centers") to identify a strategy for integrating their research into their respective country's policy processes to increase the likelihood of recognition and uptake by relevant decisionmakers
   a. Participate in the policy system mapping validation led by John Medendorp and Cait Goddard with each Center
   b. Provide each Center and their research mentors with a de-brief document about which institutions/agencies/individuals should be considered for outreach during the lifecycle of the research project
   c. Work with each Center and their research mentors to draft a plan for policy influence and coordinate with John, Cait, and center leadership about the implications of the plan for communications capacity building
   d. Provide a webinar on the role of evidence in the policy process that can help guide PRCI researchers as they aim to enhance the influence of their research.

2. As the second round of PRCI Core Center research gets off the ground in early 2021, adapt the process just outlined to apply with the centers involved and research teams involved in this second round.

3. Assist the STAAARS+ program with tools and feedback on possibilities for policy influence by coordinating with Liz Bageant and the Cornell/MSU researchers working with the STAAARS+ fellows

4. Work with colleagues within the PRCI network to conduct comparative cross-country analysis aimed at informing how the characteristics of agricultural and food policy systems affect the likelihood that research outputs and strong local research institutions exert an influence on decision-making
   a. Define characteristics of policy systems with regards to structural features such as, but not limited to, degree of (de)centralization, inclusivity, transparency, and accountability
   b. Devise metrics that can be used capture those structural features
   c. Compare the agricultural and food policy systems in the countries in which the Centers are operating and consider the implications for the role of research
   d. Integrate the metrics into the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) agenda for PRCI to consider for tracking over the life of the project in order to identify whether providing rigorous research and building stronger research institutions has an influence on policy even as the policy system may evolve