

# **INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH**



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*August 2014*

*Mexico City, Mexico*

**SAC Report**

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**IAI Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)**  
**Report to the Conference of the Parties**  
**SAC Chair: Frank Muller-Karger**

August, 2014

SAC members (2013-2014): Frank Muller-Karger (Chair), Claudia E. Natenzon, Jose Marengo, Walter Baethgen, Carolina Vera, Hal Mooney, Rodolfo Dirzo, Michelle Grunauer, Susana Adamo.

**2013.2014 IAI SAC Accomplishments:**

The SAC and IAI Directorate have fostered a paradigm shift for the IAI, addressing the challenges of developing interdisciplinarity between the human and the natural sciences in global change research. The IAI seeks policy relevant research focused on users and on solving problems, encouraging research that is co-designed through interdisciplinary research (i.e. human and natural sciences). Capacity building that promotes excellence in research and application of scientific knowledge, that facilitates joint work of natural and social scientists, and that fosters continuing education, training, and professional development are at the core of the thinking and activities of the SAC.

Some of accomplishments over the last year can be summarized as follows:

Over the last year (2013-2014), the CRN3 process has been moved forward with implementation of its 10 grants, the additional 7 Science Integration Projects, 6 Argentine CONICET-funded projects, and the continuing 9 SGP-CRA grants.

The SAC defined the following framing questions for the year: how to optimize future calls for proposals, how to evaluate science and its impacts beyond publishing, what capacity building is needed, how to communicate IAI efforts better, how the Directorate can function better, and how to improve the understanding of the relationship between SAC and SPAC.

The SAC maintains an active and healthy relationship with the IAI Director and the Directorate Staff, holding monthly cross-continent teleconferences.

In summary, over the past year the SAC worked on the following items:

**1) CRN project implementation: 17 international CRN3 teams in place (see the Directorate report for a listing of projects)**

The SAC completed the process of review of CRN3 proposals and worked on developing concrete recommendations for the IAI Directorate for strengthening each team.

The review and feedback to the international CRN3 teams is an on-going process, and discussions on guidance to the CRN teams continue through the IAI Directorate.

The SAC has examined “lessons learned” on the IAI proposal review process jointly with the IAI Directorate. SAC members identified the following lessons learned and questions from the CRN3 process: 1. Future round of projects should avoid the add-on of social scientists at the end and involve the social science community and social relevance of the project from the beginning - how to frame questions related to global change from both natural and social sciences? 2. Is the science community prepared to do what is required by IAI? 3. Capacity-building needs to be integrated fully into the science programs; do investigators know how to do this? 4. Will IAI capacity-building/training of its scientists lead to community building among the scientists from different disciplines? Will the impact of the IAI in building such multidisciplinary communities extend beyond IAI-funded investigators?

The SAC has recommended that external reviewers should be compensated in future reviews. Also, the SAC recommends i) establishing mini-grants for proposal development; and ii) having “commissioned” proposals

with investigators from CRNs.

## **2) SAC-34 meeting: Montevideo, 22 - 23 March 2014**

Focus: IAI Science Strategies and Innovation

The main items for SAC-34 were: 1. Evaluating science impact of IAI programs (3 CRN3 investigators and 2 other senior scientists invited to present their views to the group), 2. Possible directions for IAI (role in Future Earth, IPBES), 3. Support of ongoing IAI programs (how can the SAC do this better), 4. Outreach & IAI at international meetings, and 5. SAC membership.

In summary, during this meeting, or focus was on:

### a) Evaluating the science impact of CRN3 and other recent IAI programs

The SAC reviewed:

- the decision-making process in proposal selection
- how selected projects contribute towards the IAI's strategic objectives
- feedback from the CRNs; explore improvements for future calls.

We invited investigators from CRN3 projects to comment on experiences, help identify issues and suggest actions, specifically: Alisson Barbieri (CNR3036), Gerardo Perillo (CNR3038), Martina Chidiak (CNR3094), J.A. Boninsegna, IANIGLA-CONICET, Argentina, H.P. Diaz, University of Regina, Canada. Details of these interventions are provided in the minutes of the SAC 34 meeting.

### b) Scientific directions for the IAI:

Participants discussed opportunities for the IAI in the region and beyond - in the context of the Belmont Forum and Future Earth, focusing on the question: What role can the IAI play in projecting regional efforts into global science processes?

Possible areas of interest:

- Belmont-like coordination model within the Americas  
IAI is planning a meeting of funding agencies in 2014, immediately prior to the 2014 CoP meeting.

SAC will continue to analyze how to identify topics of regional importance for the Americas. One of the topics includes how the IAI, Future Earth, etc., can engage Indigenous peoples of the Americas in capacity building, outreach, and efforts to address the strategic goals of the IAI and Future Earth, and other similar programs across the region.

## **3) Science-Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC):**

The SAC has sought to maintain an active participation in the development of the framework for a SPAC. SAC members see the need for a close integration and communication between the SPAC and the SAC.

#### **4) SAC membership: A looming problem.**

Per IAI statutes, the CoP needs to have a SAC with 10 members. We welcome action on the part of the CoP on nominations, appointments, and re-appointments as needed to maintain a fully populated SAC. The SAC members should be established scientists who:

- have published extensively on the natural and social science of the region in peer-reviewed journals
- have ample experience and established international research networks and collaborations in the region,
- will provide unbiased scientific advice to the CoP and to the IAI Directorate,
- will help to further develop and implement the IAI Strategic Plan,
- will work with teams of scientists engaged in the IAI CRN, other regional science efforts, on capacity building, and developing linkages between science and policy in the region.

#### **5) Implementation of the IAI Strategic Plan:**

The IAI SAC continues to make significant progress in implementing the IAI Strategic Plan. The implementation of the CRN3 teams and projects and IAI Training Institute activities provide the mechanism to implement the strategic plan.

#### **6) Looking into Future Earth: (<http://www.icsu.org/future-earth>)**

The IAI SAC is actively engaged with the IAI Directorate in developing a strategy for using Future Earth as an organizing theme for the IAI.

#### **7) IAI Restructuring and the SAC role:**

The SAC continues to provide advice and support to the IAI Directorate and the Executive Council as needed in the process of developing and implementing the new IAI administrative structure. The SAC requests the active participation of the CoP in implementing a functioning structure for the IAI Directorate Office.

The IAI SAC expects to be informed about the activities of these various offices. The SAC will also help as needed in facilitating the interaction between these offices, defining and carrying out research agendas of the IAI, and will work with the international research, applications and education communities and with the public in general to make the integrated IAI offices a success.

#### **8) Next SAC meeting:**

Action is pending to make a final decision on the location of the next SAC meeting in Ecuador or Dominican Republic, to be held between February and April 2015 (and keeping in mind that this could be a joint SAC-SPAC meeting).