

Workshop Report # 3

E-Conference on GO-AFU Concept and Initial Implementation Online May 17-26, 2004

Organized by IFPRI¹

August 24, 2003

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The Task Force of the CGIAR Initiative – Global Open Agriculture and Food University and other relevant personnel of CGIAR Centres met virtually from May 17-26, 2004. During the 10-day e-conference, the participants focused their attention on the following five objectives:

1. Building consensus among the GO-AFU Task Force members around the GO-AFU Concept;
2. Sharing experiences of working with distance learning;
3. Initiating discussion on needs assessment methodology;
4. Discussing mechanisms for collaborating with local and regional partners; and
5. Developing the agenda for the August 25, 2004 GO-AFU Task Force Business Meeting.

The questions used to guide the discussion are in Appendix 1. Throughout the e-conference the moderator summarized the recommendations from the discussion.

Through this systematic discussion and the efforts made prior to the e-conference, the Task Force has made much headway into this new CGIAR initiative. The ideas generated through this dialogue will have tremendous impact in how GO-AFU continues its development. The experiences of the Task Force members and their involvement in distance learning at the CGIAR and with other institutions have begun to provide the needed technical knowledge to launch this initiative. The knowledge-base found within the CGIAR for distance learning is demonstrated in the summarized discussion of this e-conference presented below. This report summarizes the discussion by objective.

OBJECTIVE ONE: BUILDING CONSENSUS AMONG THE TASK FORCE MEMBERS AROUND THE GO-AFU CONCEPT

Delivery Mechanisms

The choice of the delivery mechanism or strategy should be based on sound knowledge of who is going to learn what, by what means, in what kind of circumstances, to what effect, and with what purpose. Distance education can take various forms.

1. Distributed learning (same time different places). This uses technology such as audio/video conferencing facilities to connect distance learners with classroom-based learners. Both receive instructor-led courses at the same time in different locations. Used by traditional-based institution.
2. Independent learning (different time different places). Mostly used by online and virtual universities. Uses computer-based technology with occasional use of telephone and postage mail. Learners receive course guidelines, course materials, and assignments through the Internet, fax or mail. Interaction with instructor, facilitator, and other students occur online, by e-mail, the telephone or a combination.

3. Open learning. This is similar to the independent learning model but uses synchronous tools and telecommunication facilities occasionally for group discussions or the learners are brought together in one place.

The technology used to deliver the courses can be broken into four groups:

1. Audio-based: Telephone, audio conference, audiotapes, and radio
2. Video-based: Still images, pre-recorded videotapes, video CD-ROM, DVD, TV, and videoconference
3. Computer-based: Interactive multimedia on CD, DVD and Internet (web, e-mail, discussion groups, e-conference, videoconference)
4. Print-based: Books, journals

In designing a distance-learning package, a single technology may not satisfy all the training needs and learning functions of the student. In selecting a particular combination of course delivery mechanisms, there is a need to see how they best support the interaction between instructor and student, student and student, student and instructional material, instructor and administrator, and student and administrator. The delivery mode should also support individual and group learning.

GO-AFU should keep in mind that the choice of the delivery mechanism will impact the student's ability to access the course. Some costs the student could incur include fees, pencils, paper, postage, textbooks, travel, equipment (such as computers, radios, televisions, tape recorders, VCRs, printers), telecommunication facilities, and ISP providers.

An approach that GO-AFU could adopt is outlined below:

1. Content delivered through e-mail, web page, CD-ROMs, and DVDs;
2. Interaction through e-mail and on-line discussion tools;
3. Access to learning resources given by links to related journal articles or web pages;
4. Evaluation criteria are assignments submitted through e-mail, fax, or web page;
5. Support service being provided online by instructor and technical staff.

The mechanisms for distance learning are constantly evolving. In light of this constant change, international standards have been established to regulate the adaptability of the content output from the technology.

Fundraising Strategy

Most donors have a stated interest in supporting capacity building, but do not necessarily allocate funds specifically for this purpose. However, donors would probably support, in principle, the transfer of knowledge from the CGIAR system to developing country partners. Some donors have specific regional priorities, while others have thematic or programmatic priorities with support for capacity building. Furthermore, donors may prefer to support specific Masters of Science programs that fall within their priorities, rather than to fund the activities as currently listed in the budget. Targeting donors would require that proposals for GO-AFU to donors are formulated to fit within donors' specific thematic or regional priorities.

The funding strategy should look very carefully at the financial needs at the different phases of this initiative and then approach different donors according to their speciality and GO-AFU's needs (e.g., curriculum development, content development, teaching methods, monitoring and evaluation, new ICTs for education, scholarships, and equipment). It is

recommended to contact the CGIAR Secretariat, who maintains a database of traditional CGIAR donors. It is also recommended that GO-AFU approach non-traditional donors. The GO-AFU Task Force may need to mobilize assistance from partners within CGIAR member countries to identify potential non-traditional sources of funds from their Governments.

Examples of donors that support higher education initiative include the European Union and United States Department of Education - Office of Postsecondary Education. In a report last year, the Board of International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) recommended that USAID increase its investment in global long-term agriculture and rural development training and capacity building.

The Budget

The initial phase would need additional funds to develop the learning content and to purchase the necessary hardware and software. The relatively high fixed investment costs in developing instructional materials implies that there should be a funding mechanism that reflects not only the number of students in the system, but also the number of course modules being developed and maintained.

The budget should reflect the various activities involved in the instructional design process - analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The existing budget is broken into key activities of the initiative. Coalition building must be considered as a costly on-going process for finding new partners and maintaining old ones. There will also be costs involved in writing grants and contacting donors that would fall under this category. Assuming an iterative/ incremental development model, situational evaluation would occur throughout the whole process. With regards to content creation, the initiative would have to develop a clear learning object strategy. The On-Line Learning Resource (OLR) and the Virtual Academy for Semi-arid Agriculture (VASAT) can contribute to the content creation. Furthermore, subject matter experts may need assistance in designing courses, thus, a mechanism needs to be established in organizing this effort. A clear internationalization strategy is needed for localizing learning material. The evaluation process should begin in the first year by making it already a part of the development process (formative evaluation).

Incorporating GO-AFU into the CGIAR Centres

CGIAR Centres' strategy

Once the program document aligns itself more fully with the CGIAR mission statement, several approaches can be taken to incorporate this initiative into the Centres' strategy. The Centres could include a brief statement in their strategy that acknowledges the role and importance of the GO-AFU and the Centre's willingness to support this initiative by partaking in the various activities. This support could be negotiated at the Centres' Director Committee (CDC) level or the individual Centre level.

Another approach for incorporating GO-AFU into the Centres' strategy could be in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For example, Target 18 of the MDGs refers to new information and communication technology. It states that "In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications." Incorporating the MDGs into the Centres' strategy will provide an opportunity for distance learning effort such as GO-AFU to take place. CIP, for instance, has incorporated the MDGs during its recent visioning exercise.

Incentives for Staff

The incentives for Centre's staff to participate in this initiative should vary based on the role/ level of involvement, e.g., course author, content media/ developer, course instructor, technology support, and administrative support. GO-AFU should set up a system that would reward or compensate the additional work. For instance: incentives grants for course development, release time, overload pay, computer equipment purchase, software purchase, ISP costs coverage, funding for graduate/ research assistants, instructor travel, and conference fees. Contributions to this initiative should also be considered during the annual staff evaluation, perhaps as an additional category, if applicable.

Also, the issue of authorship needs to be addressed as well as copyright. Although we are dealing with global public goods, the individual staff member involved in the process of developing/ delivering a course may appreciate acknowledgement.

Human resources

The human resources needed for this initiative should be based on the tasks involved in the following areas:

- Course development (e.g., course authoring, media development)
- Instruction
- Administrative support (e.g., marketing, admission, registration, mailing)
- Technical support
- Student support
- Faculty support
- Library services
- Evaluation

Furthermore, the need for human resources could also be assessed in how far these tasks can be shared with collaborating CGIAR Centres and/or other institutions. Thus, the initiative would need a mix of content experts, instructional design experts, content/ media developers (graphic designers, photographer, videographer, etc), technical support, higher education administration personnel, librarians, evaluation experts, editors, computer programmers, and web developers. Translation services (internationalization / localization) are also needed.

Previous experience illustrates that a 10-person Information Technology department was needed to support 300 faculty and 1000 students at a U.S. university with regards to on-line instructional design and delivery needs and audio and video media related questions. It also has a helpdesk with about 20 staff members who provided technical services. There was also additional staff for telecommunication/ networking/ server issues as well as for admissions and other administrative tasks.

It is suggested that the Centres' researchers and scientists in collaboration with local and regional partners will be the content provider and subject matter specialists. In addition to the subject matter specialists, several centres' have specialists that can already contribute to this initiative. At CIP, there is one instructional technologist content author, one multimedia developer, and one instructional designer who could assist in this initiative. At ICARDA, the Communication, Documentation and Information Services is staffed with an instructional designer/multimedia developer, two editors, one translator, three graphic designers, two photographers, one videographer, and two web designer. The computer unit could provide programmers. ICARDA's Human Resource Development Unit (HRDU), who coordinates

training activities could provide the required administrative and support services including evaluations.

Work with local partners to deliver courses

Staff members of several CGIAR Centres have work in non-CGIAR Centres or collaborated with non- CGIAR Centres in offering distance learning. Depending on the partners' technology-base, there are several ways in which GO-AFU can collaborate with partners to deliver courses. One way is to have a GO-AFU Resource Center (GO-AFU_RC) in each local partner institution that GO-AFU has a MOU. The GO-AFU_RC could have a catalogue/brochure of available courses. The Resource Center could be physically available with traditional institutions and/or part of the website of online institutions. The GO-AFU Secretariat and individual Centre training coordination unit (TCU) maintain contact with the local GO-AFU_RC.

In the traditional case, physical facilities are available. GO-AFU could establish physical GO-AFU_RC where traditional learners, lecturers, and other professionals would have access to GO-AFU course materials (physically and online). Partner faculty could handle course registration. The faculty sends a list of registered learners in GO-AFU courses to the GO-AFU Secretariat. The GO-AFU Secretariat provides information to the instructors through the training coordination unit (TCU) at each CGIAR centre. Instructors maintain direct contact with learners throughout the instruction period, receive assignments, review questions, and interact with learners asynchronously or synchronously. At the end of the instruction period, the instructors send the assessment and evaluation ratings through the TCU to the GO-AFU Secretariat who will send compiled ratings of registered learners to the partner faculty.

In an online case where GO-AFU_RC is online, a Learning Content Management System (LCMS) would be necessary. In some distance education institution, the registrar/administration office mostly for financial reasons does course registration and learning materials distribution. The registrar or administrative officer sends a list of paid register learners to the instructors. It is only then that the instructors enter in direct contact with learners. In that setting, GO-AFU Secretariat could receive the list of GO-AFU learners from the partner administration and then contact individual centre instructors through the TCU. Another approach is to have the students register online. The students would also download course material through the LMS and submit assignment depending on how the LMS is set up and what technologies are available to the learners. Materials that are not available online could be sent by the TCU to the learners.

Where possible, it would help both the instructor and learner if GO-AFU courses are self-learning packages with clear statement of performance objective(s) or intended learning outcome(s) and a sufficient set of instructions, reference, and further reading materials for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Some examples to review are [Gateway to Educational Materials](#), [BEN BioSciEdNet](#), [iLumina](#), [Western Governors University](#), and [Massachusetts Colleges Online](#)

Another aspect of course delivery with partners is who will instructionally design the course and who will teach the course. One approach is to have the content expert design and teach the course. If this approach is taken, it is recommended that GO-AFU offer special training to those involved in offering the training on how to use the technology and what are GO-FU expectations in delivering the course. A second approach is to have the instructional design of

the course done by an in-house instructional designer. In this approach, the content expert would give the course outline to the instructional designer, who would then develop the individual elements of the course in close collaboration with the individual faculty member. A third approach is to outsource the instructional design. The advantage to producing in-house is to maintain control over the development process and to build competencies and know-how. The disadvantages are that additional people and equipment are needed and the responsibility lies on the institution if there is a problem. The advantage of outsourcing may be that possible problems are with the external producer. If there is a problem, the contractor can be pushed for better results because of contractual obligations. The disadvantage is the loss of control over quality, and expertise and know-how is not fostered at the organization.

Working with partners will offer GO-AFU many human resources for course delivery. Traditionally, the course content expert also delivers the course and guides the student, but with many partners, facilitators could be included as well as additional assistants who would help coach the learners. Traditionally, the course content expert is expected to maintain direct communication and interaction, synchronously or asynchronously with the learners, sends comments and remarks to the learners, participate in online discussions where possible, and provide assessment and performance ratings to the institution. If a facilitator is used, some of these responsibilities would be shifted to them.

Other questions raised that need further discussion under this topic are:

1. Will all or some GO-AFU courses be credit courses?
2. Will individual partner institution accept GO-AFU courses as credit courses or be left to determine which will be credit courses based on individual partner evaluation and accreditation criteria?
3. How do partner institutions deliver courses?

OBJECTIVE 2: SHARING EXPERIENCES OF WORKING WITH DISTANCE LEARNING

Collaborating with CGIAR Activities

The CGIAR has several initiatives and activities that GO-AFU can collaborate that would make this initiative more efficient and effective. GO-AFU can collaborate with ICT-KM. ICT-KM suggests activities for making the most efficient and productive use of the knowledge being generated in-house, through partners, and available elsewhere. Two of the four pillars of ICT-KM—Knowledge sharing and Knowledge brokerage are relevant to the concept and objectives of GO-AFU. Knowledge brokerage is when a particular institute is aware of the knowledge material available at a particular organisation and comes across a clientele who is in need of such knowledge. The institute facilitates such a knowledge brokerage to the advantage of both. Recently, IWMI had a very successful experience of knowledge brokerage between Indian and African organisations.

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) sees to the preparation and development of quality learning objects on CGIAR Centres training activities. An analogy will help illustrate how LRC and GO-AFU can collaborate. LRC products are passengers and GO-AFU is the vehicle that transports the passenger to its destination. As part of the "Content for Development" thrust, the ICT/KM "On-line Learning Materials and Resources" project would provide a repository of CGIAR teaching and learning materials and resources. The OLR would help to identify, organize, and convert existing materials. It would also assist in adopting these materials to a distance learning setting. The e-publishing group could look

carefully at knowledge management, workflow, and XML standards. The Virtual Library project may provide important information in providing the necessary literature on-line. The Video Conferencing project could help deliver the distance learning courses. The ICT/KM in general can contribute primarily in linking knowledge management with e-learning. The ICT/KM initiative is a means to provide technical input as well as to serve a foundation on which the GO-AFU could be build.

Other CG activities like the challenge programs would certainly serve as content resources. In particular, the [Gender & Diversity Program](#) would be of importance in addressing issues of gender mainstreaming.

Working with non-CGIAR Institutions

A collaborative approach to GO-AFU is a strong foundation that will ensure that appropriate course content and delivery mechanisms are used. It is recommended that a minimum standard be set for selecting partners. One minimum standard recommendation is to select partners that meet the accreditation requirements of their country. It is also recommended that there are minimum technology standards set.

Several CGIAR centres have offered distant learning courses in collaboration with 1 or 2 other institutions. CIP jointly offered the course “Potato seed-tuber production” with Texas A&M. CIAT has also offered a distance learning course with two non-CGIAR partners (National University of Colombia; REDCAPA) and with one CGIAR partner (IPGRI) on *Ex-situ conservation of plant genetic resources*. This multi-institutional partnership built on complementary strengths. REDCAPA gave access to its LMS platform before and during the course, handled student administration, promotion, and other administrative/logistical details. The National University of Colombia collaborated with CIAT and IPGRI in content preparation. The University also provided a tutor, who accompanied the students during their 3-month learning period, graded assignments, and provided the diploma.

Experience with distance learning technology

Several Task Force members have either used distance learning technology to conduct a course or as a student themselves. One Task Force member took part in a course that used ChatSpace.com. It was a same-time-different-place chatting tool. The program has a section for a list of participants, another section for posting messages, and rooms for one-to-one chatting or private talk or gossiping with instructor or a student. It is a very good alternative to face-to-face student/teacher, and student/student interactions.

Another Task Force member has worked extensively with WebCT (<http://www.webct.com/>) and Blackboard (<http://www.blackboard.com>) as an instructor as well as an administrator and designer. WebCT is a very sophisticated and stable product. From the view of a developer / course designer it provides a very flexible environment, but with a steep learning curve. Blackboard was very much liked by the faculty because of its easy to use interface. Both products provide similar tools for communication, assignments, assessments, and learning paths. However, Blackboard lacks the flexibility of WebCT. Both products are expensive. Another corporate product to review is [HyperWave](#), which a free version is available for certain academic users at <http://www.haup.org/>. Another CGIAR Centre has used “FirstClass”. It is an e-mail based system particularly useful for those course participants that have low-bandwidth internet connections.

In addition to the corporate systems, open source technology can be used. Several open-source products are:

1. [Plone](#)
2. [EduPlone](#)
3. [Stud.IP](#)
4. [Moodle](#)

Some challenges that were face when using distance learning technology were:

1. the use of discussion groups involves a lot of writing, thus a lot of reading and responding is required
2. the management of chatrooms
3. migrating courses from one LMS to another may become a major issue. There was one experienced where half of the courses were deleted due to a software glitch.

OBJECTIVE 3: INITIATING DISCUSSION ON NEEDS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The open university will need to assess the needs for postgraduate distance education in agriculture and natural resources to ensure that the efforts of the university are maximized. Several approaches are available to assess the content gap in postgraduate agriculture and natural resources education at the developing country universities. The choice of needs assessment method depends on which activity we intend to analyze and the population sample. In some cases, starting with a survey questionnaire, which is followed by interviews, might be the right approach. In order to determine which method will be appropriate, it may be important to identify the activity, population sample, location, and human and financial resources that need to be analyzed.

Generally, a needs assessment analyzes the learning problem or need, and then defines it in terms of goals as well as the targeted audience user needs (micro and/or macro level). Furthermore, the constraints, resources, and risks are determined. The assessment may require that one or more solutions be implemented to meet the needs identified. Also, an environmental analysis is needed to specify the context in which the learning environment is embedded (system requirements; physical and psychosocial factors that affect learning).

In conducting a situational evaluation, instructional design (ID) suggests that the learning needs be assessed, and based on the result of this activity construct an ID solution plan. As to needs assessment (NA), the following activities are recommended:

- identify direct and indirect factors that affect the learning need;
- determine the desired vision / theme of a solution to address the need;
- identify the scope of the need (curricular, instructional, course, module, and/or, lesson);
- define the constraints restricting resolution of a given need;
- analyze and define resources to develop, implement, and maintain a solution; and
- risk analysis.

In addition to the needs assessment of the subject matter, other assessments such as assessing the user population (determine learner characteristics, differences, other constituents), determining instructional design competence of content author/team, and proposing instructional design solution plan may be needed.

Below is a quick list of needs assessment methods suggested during the e-conference.

Methods:

- content analysis; records and social indicators from existing sources / databases;
- questionnaire surveys;
- interviews (face-to-face, telephone);
- group techniques: community forum, nominal group technique, focus group interview;
- environmental scanning and strategic planning instruments
- delphi survey;
- electronic groups;
- concept mapping;
- trend analysis;
- goal analysis;
- task analysis;
- learner analysis;
- instructional analysis; and
- environmental analysis

Some methodologies for needs assessments were further discussed. A quantitative questionnaire is useful to sample large groups and it can be used to identify course topics and the needs of the examined groups. Qualitative interviews are suitable to identify individual needs and to plan remedial instructions, but there are restrictions with bigger sample sizes. The establishment of focus groups is also a good way to examine the needs and the discrepancy with existing teaching offers and strategies. An environmental quantitative analysis is suitable to describe the unperceived needs objectives better.

Apart from these common methods, as the initiative may well be dealing also with the use of information technology, methods for assessing technology would be needed. A software engineering assessment approach that looks at user and system requirements might be also helpful. Usability engineering offers a host of techniques that could be applied in this context.

Further, business process analysis may also be a useful approach in helping to clarify how a system that is to be developed can be best integrated into existing business processes. The processes within an educational setting (e.g., teaching and learning, management and administration) can be analyzed and modelled in order to optimally integrate the new instructional system into an existing environment. The application of a scenario-based analysis using UML (Unified Modelling Language) can play an important role. UML would allow introducing an object-oriented approach from the beginning, which would enable the development of learning objects.

Other needs assessments could include gathering data and information on:

- Other bodies proposing distance education agricultural training programs similar to the ones GO-AFU is proposing
- Existing agricultural courses for different degree levels with partners that GO-AFU may expand and build upon
- Areas omitted from either the existing or the proposed course programs that are regarded as important areas by partner faculty of agriculture/agricultural sciences

- Pre-requisites for learners enrolling in GO-AFU courses Distance learning technologies available at learners level

The Role of the National Agricultural Research and Education systems in Needs Assessment

The NARS can be a very good source for the needs assessment. In South Asia, there are several developed National Agricultural Research and Education systems that GO-AFU could collaborate with: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Pakistan agricultural research Council (PARC), the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) and the Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC). Furthermore, there are umbrella organizations like Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutes (APAARI) which coordinates with all the relevant organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. A similar organisation is being developed for Central Asian and Caucasus countries. For Africa, there is Association of Agricultural Research Organisations in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA). Liaising and interacting with these organizations can help GO-AFU to assess the needs of post-graduate education in agriculture and natural resources.

Needs Assessment and Course Contents

The Education Division of ICAR recently stated that at the postgraduate level of agricultural education should build academic brilliance and professional excellence leading to sustainable development. For this objective, it will be necessary to enrich the course curricula by including topics like:

- Bio-diversity conservation
- Modelling global warming
- Preserving quality of soil, water, and vegetation
- Over-exploitation of natural resources
- Changing land use and management patterns forced by rising demand for food and other goods
- Globalization of trade and opening up of economies

Similar feedback can also be obtained from other organisations. Instead of talking to individual universities, broader needs assessment may be made by coordinating with national and regional organisations.

Besides the areas mentioned above, the following additional areas appear to be very important as well:

- Livestock production systems
- Post-harvest technology
- Agri-business management
- Agricultural extension services and community development
- Precision agriculture
- Micro and precision irrigation systems

Existing technical needs assessment on postgraduate education in agriculture

Examples of recent needs assessments relevant to GO-AFU include:

- Distance Delivery of Graduate Education in Agricultural Economics For Middle- and Low-Income Countries by Joe Coffey; C. Richard Shumway, Washington State University
- Distance Delivery of Graduate Education in Agricultural Economics for Middle and Low Income Countries by Peter Wyeth (2002)
- Regional Agriculture Sector Training and Capacity Building Needs Assessment by the World Learning Inc. (2003)
- Assessing the Needs for Distance Delivery of Graduate Education in Agricultural Economics in East Africa by Suresh Babu (2001)
- Assessing the Market for Distance Delivery of Graduate Education in Agricultural Economics in Kenya by Chris Barrett (2001)
- Needs Assessment Survey of the Virginia Greenhouse Industry by Joyce Latimer, Holly Scoggins, Vicky Barden, and Michael Lambur (2002)

Regional Approach for Needs Assessments

The CGIAR Centres are located around the world. It is suggested that the CGIAR centres working in a region undertake the needs assessment. The instruments and methods to be used would be determined and set by GO-AFU and the raw data collected would be sent back to GO-AFU for analysis.

Another approach is to work with the existing local and regional organizations to undertake the assessment or to review the assessments already undertaken in the region.

In South Asia, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), a leading open university in the region, has established a School of Agriculture with the mission to improve and sustain productivity and quality of human life in rural areas through open and distance learning systems (ODLS) in agriculture and allied sectors. The following relevant areas have been identified for its program:

- Organic farming and bio-agriculture
- Seed production and storage
- Watershed development
- Forest management
- Soil and water conservation
- Disaster management (flood/ droughts/ disease/cyclones...)
- Environment management
- Energy management and auditing
- Agro-biodiversity
- Climate change
- Crop-weather advisory services
- Dry land and hill farming

Methods to access the technology capabilities of our national and regional partners

A combination of survey questionnaire (by e-mail), interview, and on-site visit (where possible) could be employed. We would need instruments that probe into the availability and types of telecommunication and computer resources with partners and information on the degree of technology use for distance education. These may include gathering information on availability of technology-based units in partner institutions. Such units include:

- Educational or instructional technology centres or Learning Resource Centres
- Computer Services section or IT section
- Library and information unit
- Language laboratory
- Press unit
- Other laboratory facilities, etc.

The list of equipment available may include:

- Voice/Audio-based technology: Telephone, audio production /audio-conferencing facilities, tapes and radio,
- Video-based technology: photography facilities, Video production facilities, VCD, DVD and video conferencing,
- Computer-based technology: operating systems and software, graphic design facilities, Internet connection, e-mail tools, chatting tools, newsgroup server, computer/video conferencing, etc
- Press/Print technology: types of printing press machines, etc
- Broadcasting technology: radio and television.

OBJECTIVE 4: MECHANISMS FOR COLLABORATING WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

Collaborating with local and regional partners in Distance Learning

In general, GO-AFU is a "borderless" or "transnational" higher education program. GO-AFU could be an educational broker, which does not grant degrees but brings together various partners who deliver the actual education and grant the degrees. The format of GO-AFU could be a networked (virtual) campus consisting of collaborating conventional and distance learning institutions.

The type of programs offered will influence the level and scope of collaboration with local and regional partners. The type of engagement may range from joint development of curricula, modules, lessons, topics, and learning objects; sharing of course materials, procedures and policies to participate in M.Sc. programs, fundamental materials, content knowledge, faculty & student support services, registration, technological infrastructure, and cost of software licenses, hardware, and copyright-protected material, payment of instructors, assistants, and coaches; collaborative research projects as part of curricula; joint staff development; and joint systems for tracking learning progress, marking & grading of assignments, recording attainment, and credit transfer; joint quality control mechanisms; and student retention.

In this context, GO-AFU would also have to look carefully at the legal frameworks of the different countries that are involved in this initiative with respect to accreditation, standardization, and quality assurance. Clear guidelines on how these legal matters may have

an effect on GO-AFU should be developed.

The approaches of collaboration with national and regional partners include:

- Being a Resource Centre for the on-going programs of the partners
- Guiding partners in prioritising their programs and modifying the ongoing or new proposed programs
- Identifying critical local or regional capacity building requirements and designing new programs to address the program gaps
- Acting as an independent capacity building resource to meet the local and regional aspirations and launch new GO-AFU programs
- Assisting local partners in technological improvements for course design, content synthesis, course delivery, monitoring and evaluation, impact assessment and the related areas
- Guiding the development of national and regional Agriculture Information delivery system

Key types of partners that are not already included

GO-AFU has begun to establish partners with developed and developing country universities. The Task Force has already provided a list of universities with current distance learning activities. In addition to universities, technology organization, training organizations, NGOs, and the private sector, the GO-AFU should involve other organizations. It is recommended that GO-AFU joins and/or uses the services of educational technology standards organizations in the United States and the European Union such as

- [IMS Global Learning Consortium, Inc.](#)
- [ARIADNE Foundation for the European Knowledge Pool](#)
- [GENAGRO](#) (agricultural audio-visual training materials)
- [Keystone learning systems](#) (IT training)
- [Element K](#) (IT training solutions)

OBJECTIVE 5: AUGUST 25TH GO-AFU TASK FORCE BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA

A tentative agenda was developed from the discussion during the e-conference. The tentative agenda was then circulated to the e-conference participants for feedback. The feedback was incorporated and the agenda for the August 25th meeting is in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1

Guiding Questions of the E-conference on GO-AFU Concept and Initial Implementation

May 17-18: Building consensus among the GO-AFU Task Force members around the GO-AFU concept

- 1a. What are the various mechanisms that courses can be delivered through distance learning?
- 1b. What is the fundraising strategy for GO-AFU? What category of donors should we approach? Can you recommend donor organizations from that category and provide a contact person?
- 1c. What approach should we use to incorporate GO-AFU into the CG Center Strategies? What incentives can be offered to encourage CG Centre staff to participate?
- 1d. What human resources are needed to support this initiative in each Centre. Do the Centre's currently have these human resources?
- 1e. The name GO-AFU reflects the initiative, but is there alternative names to consider? If so, what are these names? You can consult your colleagues based on the brief description provided below:

Global Open Agriculture and Food University (GO-AFU) is a CGIAR initiative for open distance learning and capacity strengthening that serves developing and developed country universities (traditional and open). Its goal is to strengthen the capacity of post-graduate students, researchers, and other working professionals in food and agriculture (including livestock, forestry, and fisheries) in order to enhance agricultural development, poverty reduction, and food security. To achieve this goal it will fill knowledge gaps, improve existing post-graduate agriculture and natural resources degree programs in the developing world, and help offer high-quality degree programs using a range of distance education technologies: web-based, CD-Rom, traditional text, and other technologies in a variety of languages so that all regions of the developing world may benefit. It will provide course content based on CGIAR research and professional and applied academic teaching in partnership with regional and national institutions to enhance research and analytical capacities necessary for improved food and nutrition security in the developing countries. By complementing and leveraging existing distance education courses, the GO-AFU can provide flexible, affordable, and accessible post-graduate education while rapidly building high-quality capacity for agricultural development

Follow-up questions to the first set of guiding questions

Follow-up Q1a: How do we work with local partners to deliver courses?

Follow-up Q1b: What criteria do we use to select partners to deliver a course?

Follow-up Q1c: In delivering the course, what is the expectation for the course content developer in the delivery of the course? What responsibilities would facilitators have in delivering courses? Are courses facilitated, taught, or a combination of both by local partners?

Follow-up Q1d: How can we facilitate the relationship between the course content developer and the facilitator? Do we offer on-line training or face-to-face or a combination?

MAY 19-20: SHARING EXPERIENCES OF WORKING WITH DISTANCE LEARNING

- 2a. What is your understanding of VASAT, LRC, ICT-KM and how they can collaborate with GO-AFU?
- 2b. Are there other CGIAR Initiatives or CG center activities that can collaborate with GO-AFU or that we can learn from?
- 2c. What has been your experience in working with non-CGIAR distance learning activities?
- 2d. Have you used distance learning technology. If so, what technologies and what has been your experience with this technology? Have you undertaken an assessment of distance learning technology or know of an assessment conducted by a distance learning partner?

MAY 21-22: DISCUSSION ON NEEDS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 3a. Suggest appropriate methods for assessing the needs of post-graduate education in agriculture and natural resources.
- 3b. Any feedback on the preliminary report on capacity needs in South Asia.
- 3c. Do you know of existing technical needs assessment on post-graduate education in agriculture and natural resources? If so, what are they and how can we gain access to these documents?
- 3d. Who could undertake the preliminary needs assessments in the Former Soviet Union, West Africa, North Africa, and China? Are there other regions that should be assessed?
- 3e. In addition to the capacity gaps in post-graduate education in agriculture and natural resources, what other needs should be assessed?
- 3f. What methods should we use to access the technology capabilities of our national and regional partners?

MAY 23-24: MECHANISMS FOR COLLABORATING WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

- 4a. What are the various models that we can use to collaborate with local and regional partners?
- 4b. What experiences have you had using any of these models describe by other CGIAR Task Force members? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- 4c. Are there key partners that we are missing from the initial list?
- 4d. Are there key types of partners that are not included (centers of excellence)?
- 4e. Are there technology partners that we should investigate for outsourcing?

MAY 25-26: AGENDA FOR AUGUST 25, 2004 BUSINESS MEETING

- 5a. We have compiled an agenda reflecting the issues that have not been resolved or newly raised during the e-conference, please review the agenda and provide feedback.
- 5b. Is there other business that should be addressed in the remaining time or at the August 26 meeting?

Appendix 2

Agenda

*Business Meeting of the
Global Open Agriculture and Food University (GO-AFU) Task Force*

Washington, D.C.

25th August, 2004

- 8:30-9:00 **REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST**
- 9:00-9:10 **Welcome** - *Joachim von Braun, Director General, IFPRI*
- 9:10-9:25 **The GO-AFU Concept and Overview: Accreditation, Pedagogy**
Chair: John Dodds, Deputy Director General for Research, CIMMYT
- Presenter: Suresh Babu, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI**
- 9:25-9:45 **Discussion**
- 9:45-10:00 **Briefing and Follow-up of the GO-AFU Concept and Initial Implementation E-Conference**
Chair: John Dodds, Deputy Director General for Research, CIMMYT
Presenter: Edith Hesse, Head, Information and Capacity Strengthening, CIAT
- 10:00-10:20 **Discussion**
- 10:20-10:40** Tea/Coffee
- 10:40-11:00 **How does GO-AFU Link with the CGIAR ICT-KM Initiatives Online Learning Resources Center and VASAT?**
Chair: Elizabeth Doupé Goldberg, Director, Documentation, Information and Training Group, IPGRI
Presenter ICT-KM links: Jan Beniast, Principal Training Scientist, Training Unit, ICRAF
Presenter VASAT links: Rex Navarro, Special Assistant to the Director General and Head, Communication Office, ICRISAT
- 11:00-11:30 **Discussion**
- 11:30-11:45 **GO-AFU's Fundraising Strategy**
Chair: Elizabeth Doupé Goldberg, IPGRI
Presenter: Mark Bell, Head, Training Center, IRRI

11:45-12:00 **Discussion**

12:00-13:15 **Lunch**

13:15-13:30 **Selecting Needs Assessment Methodology for Determining Post-Graduate Education**

Gaps in Agriculture and Natural Resources

Chair: Veryl Adell, Public Relations Manager, ILRI

Presenter: Prof. Levi S. Akundabweni, University of Nairobi, Kenya

13:30-13:50 **Discussion**

13:50-14:10 **Discussing Methods for Assessing Existing Resources Within CGAIR for Implementing GO-AFU**

Chair: Veryl Adell, Public Relations Manager, ILRI

Presenter for IT Resources: Thomas Zschocke, Head, Training Department, CIP

Presenter for Learning Resources: Samir Ahmed, HRDU Head, ICARDA

14:10-14:40 **Discussion**

14:40-15:00 **Tea/Coffee**

15:00-15:15 **Implementation Plan for Distance Learning Training Material Development and Delivery in the GO-AFU**

Chair: Manuel Lantin, Science Advisor, CGIAR Secretariat

Presenter: Karin Roszkopf, Visiting Research Fellow, IFPRI

15:15-15:35 **Discussion**

15:35-15:50 **GO-AFU IP Strategy**

Chair: Manuel Lantin, Science Advisor, CGIAR Secretariat

Presenter: John Dodds, Deputy Director General for Research, CIMMYT

15:50-16:10 **Discussion**

16:10-16:20 **Summary – Bharat Sharma, Senior Researcher, IWMI**

16:20- 16:30 **Closing Comments - Joachim von Braun, Director General, IFPRI**

18:30-21:30 **Dinner Reception**

Appendix 3

Recommended documents and websites

- [Open and distance learning](#)
- http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/agriculture/bifad/long_term_training_june26-03.pdf
- [Networking and Partnership for Strengthening Collaboration in Open and Distance Education](#) (Asian Association of Open Universities)
- AICC "[Hierarchy of CBT Terms](#)" [Doc no. CRS003]
- <http://www.unesco.org/iiep/virtualuniversity>