Marketing Scientific Information:
Evaluating the effectiveness of IWMI agricultural water management products

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Objectives

• To evaluate the effectiveness of IWMI’s Agricultural Water Management conferences (2006 and 2008), conference proceedings, and policy brief
• To evaluate the IWMI Website
• To offer recommendations for improving the effectiveness of IWMI’s scientific communication
• To test and modify the methodology created by Brad Virbitsky, who conducted similar evaluations for Bioversity International in 2008
Methodology

• Based on the findings of Mr. Virbitsky’s 2008 report:
  – A qualitative evaluation was emphasized
  – Face-to-face interviews were deemed preferable
Methodology (cont’d)

1. Define the main products/activities to examine
2. Research information regarding the purpose and specific goals of the subject
3. Create inquiry template - qualitative questions for discussion
Methodology (cont’d)

4. Create a list of recipients/consumers to interview

5. Conduct inquiry with selected recipients/consumers

6. Analyze the data
Methodology (cont’d)

7. Verify the validity of the results

8. Process information through the creation of the final report
Products

• **Conferences** in 2006 and 2008
• Published *proceedings* of 2006 conference
• **Policy Brief** based on findings of 2006 conference
• IWMI Website
Findings - Methodology

• Though emphasis was placed on ensuring some form of statistical significance, the qualitative nature of the interview process basically made this irrelevant.

• There were numerous biases in the responses, consistent with Mr. Virbitsky’s findings - Technology, Geography, and Language issues prevented contact with many potentially valuable interview subjects.

• The intended division of questions/subjects did not necessarily reflect the reality of responses/results - better to tailor to specific products.
Findings

2006 and 2008 Conferences

• Reached **Target Audience?** - Unable to evaluate

• **Structure and Medium**
  – Ratio of Presentation to Discussion Time
  – Selection of Themes

• Met **Intended Purpose?**
  – Overall conference impressions
  – Selection of Papers/Exhibits

• **Results and Benefits**
  – Usefulness of conference(s)
Findings (cont’d)

Proceedings

• Marketing and Distribution
  – Effective distribution to relevant persons?

• Structure and Medium
  – Format - book and CD best?

• Met Intended Purpose?
  – Cited or referred to papers?
  – Lent to colleagues/library?

• Results and Benefits
  – Useful to show donors
Findings (cont’d)

**Policy Brief**

- Reached **Target Audience**?
  - High-level policymakers
- **Marketing and Distribution**
  - Only at other events to non-SC members
- **Structure and Medium**
  - Well-designed for policymakers - short with graphs
- **Met Intended Purpose?**
  - Difficult to measure
- **Results and Benefits**
  - Has potentially broadened the debate on AWM
Findings (cont’d)

IWMI Website

• Though not widely used, the website can be a better resource for people working in Water Management in Ethiopia

• Most of the trouble came in finding Ethiopia-specific information
Recommendations

• Begin conference **planning earlier** - call for papers 3-6 months in advance

• **Reduce the number of papers** presented in order to increase discussion time

• Institute a short “**training session**” for discussion moderators

• **Follow up** with attendees, perhaps when the proceedings are distributed, so that progress is directly monitored
Recommendations (cont’d)

- Call for **greater participation** by least represented stakeholder - farmers
- **Formalize distribution** of Policy Brief
- Hold a **follow-up** roundtable with policymakers
- Have a more distinct/extensive Ethiopia/East Africa-specific website
- Conduct further research into creating an Ethiopia/East Africa **IWMi newsletter** (paper or e-mail)
- **Formalize the Irrigation Steering Committee**
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