



## Strategy for the Social Sciences at IFS

## IFS

The International Foundation for Science, IFS, is an international, non-governmental organisation, founded in 1972. The mission of IFS is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of developing countries to conduct relevant and high quality research on the sustainable management of biological resources. This may involve the study of physical, chemical, and biological processes, as well as relevant social and economic aspects, important in the conservation, production, and renewable utilisation of the natural resources base.

The strategy to achieve this objective is to identify young, talented scientists who have the potential for becoming the future research leaders and lead scientists in their nations, and to effectively support them in their early careers.

The primary form of support, and the entry point to the “IFS system”, is the small grant awarded in international competition. Once a grantee, the scientist can be supported in many other ways - invited to workshops, purchasing services, travel grants, training, scientific contacts, participation in networks, publishing reports, etc.

To date, more than 3,200 scientists in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean have been supported by IFS.

# Strategy for the Social Sciences at IFS

This paper presents a strategy for proceeding with the Social Science Initiative<sup>1</sup> and proposes a profile for IFS support for social science research that will strengthen IFS's position as a leading international research council promoting strengthened science capacity for sustainable development in developing countries. IFS recognises that multidisciplinary research and communication is a key to the production of knowledge leading to creative solutions to problems of sustainable development. The Social Science Initiative is being launched with the expectation that by integrating support for social science research into the pre-existing Small Grants Programme, the impact of the IFS Programme for the conservation, production, and renewable utilisation of the biological resource base will be considerably increased.

The Social Science Initiative goes beyond simply adding another "area" to the menu of research areas eligible for IFS support. This initiative will support and encourage scientists from both the social sciences and the natural sciences to engage in cross-disciplinary dialogue and research that addresses the prospects for sustainably managing the biological resource base and facilitating knowledge production and transfer for sustainable development. The primary "tools" used to support researchers that take part in this initiative will be IFS research grants (maximum value USD 12,000, renewable twice) and the IFS package of supporting services. Specifically the Social Science Initiative will:

- support social and economic research that is directly relevant to the sustainable management of the biological resource base;
- reduce the barriers to communication between social scientists and natural scientists in the South, and, when appropriate;

- encourage and support social scientists and natural scientists to form multidisciplinary teams addressing high priority research topics in developing countries.

The Social Science Initiative is a long-term project that will evolve based upon the demands of stakeholders in the South, becoming more refined to meet specific needs in particular regions. Efforts will be made to further strengthen links with partner organisations in priority regions and to identify research topics of high priority for regional stakeholders.

## Profile for the Social Sciences at IFS

It is proposed that the IFS make a call for research proposals on the **social and economic aspects of sustainable management of the biological resource base**. Applicants will be encouraged to integrate multiple disciplinary perspectives to address the "complex, dynamic interactions between nature and society" (Clark et al 2002: 4-5) that characterise sites of intensive production (eg agriculture, aquaculture, agroforestry), biodiversity conservation areas, multiple use landscapes and water management schemes. This initiative will encourage applicants to submit research proposals (in teams or individually) that are innovative in their combination of different disciplinary strengths. Proposed research can lead to new knowledge about, or identify and critically analyse:

- institutions (ie formal and informal rules and norms) that promote sustainable use of ecological systems;
- sustainable solutions to conflicts over access to the biological resource base, including water;

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<sup>1</sup> In early 2002 a proposal for the Social Science Initiative at IFS was drafted and circulated to donors, Member Organisations, and potential partner organisations. This document was positively received and discussions with other social science organisations indicates that there is a large demand for research support for social scientists that is not met by current funding sources. Partial funding for the Social Science Initiative has been made available by the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands, and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Nevertheless, additional funding agreements should be secured. Meanwhile, a memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) that provides a foundation for co-operation to support multidisciplinary research in Africa on the sustainable management of the biological resource base. Other organisations have been contacted and reacted positively to the initiative, and have offered their assistance.

- the adaptability, vulnerability and resilience of social-ecological systems;
- strategies for reducing the environmental impact of production and consumption.

Support for research on these topics complements the current IFS Programme research areas and is responsive to recent calls for IFS to concentrate on research that is relevant to local and regional environmental and socio-economic conditions.

It is also proposed that the IFS Social Science Initiative should support individual and team research on the **production and transfer of knowledge** for sustainable development. It is widely recognised that the production and transfer of knowledge and technical innovation is the “industry” that will drive the creation of sustainable livelihoods in developing countries (Juma 1999; UNDP 2001). However, brain drain and limited national investment in research capacity reduce the capacity for generating and utilising knowledge for the sustainable management of biological resources in developing countries. Furthermore, the experience of IFS is that while science is a powerful tool for creating knowledge for sustainable technologies and processes, the transfer of such knowledge from laboratories and field stations to farms, factories and commercial outlets is a complex process involving diverse stakeholders that should not be taken for granted. Often, good ideas go unexploited. Hence, IFS will support social science and multidisciplinary research projects pertaining to the biological resource base that ask questions such as:

- How are sustainable development priorities identified in local, regional, and international contexts?
- How is the generation of scientific knowledge for sustainability promoted (eg policies, incentives, networks, etc) by governments and organisations?
- What are the preconditions for transferring a sustainable technology/biotechnology to new contexts and situations?
- How is knowledge for sustainability generated, transmitted and turned into goods and services?
- How is local knowledge mobilised to adapt technology and processes developed for Northern markets to Southern problems?

- How can Southern actors protect their knowledge and promote sustainable development using international agreements on intellectual property rights (IPRs)?

IFS will particularly encourage research in areas of fast growing relevance to developing countries such as biotechnology and the application of the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

Support for research on the topics and questions identified above will bring the tools of social scientists to bear on critical problems encountered by scientists engaged in innovation for sustainable development. As the Social Science Initiative proceeds, IFS, together with partner organisations and Southern stakeholders, will identify specific, high-priority research topics from the areas described above. These topics will be the focus of future calls for research proposals.

### Encouraging Collaborative Approaches

Under this initiative, IFS should encourage multiple researchers from different disciplines to apply for IFS support to address individual research topics in collaboration. High quality applications of this sort should be given priority for funding. IFS should also accept applications from individual social scientists with projects that address one of the above topics, however the application must be of high quality and the projected results should be relevant to researchers with other disciplinary approaches. Where appropriate, the IFS Secretariat could select multiple individual applicants and support them to gather and co-ordinate their work to meet multidisciplinary objectives. When there exists a critical mass among (social science and natural science) grantees working on related research topics, IFS should organise workshops and electronic discussion groups to encourage cross-fertilization of ideas and collaborative research.

### Strategic Partnerships

IFS should strengthen the Social Science Initiative by seeking strategic partners. Partnerships can be used to strengthen the programmes of both IFS and partner organisations in particular sub-regions and specific research areas. Joint initiatives increase

the services that can be made available to grantees, and increase regional and global awareness of the IFS and partner organisation activities. IFS can offer its partners competence in the administration of small grants problems, access to a network of experienced scientists committed to research for the sustainable management of biological resources in developing countries, and contacts with a wide range of science policy, development, and research organisations. Finally partnerships can include financial agreements to combine resources to further mutually interesting projects.

The most progress made thus far towards developing strategic partnership has been with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Through our partnership with CODESRIA, we are launching the CODESRIA-IFS Sustainable Agriculture Initiative that will sponsor interdisciplinary collaborative research on a thematic and sub-regional basis. It is expected that the collaboration will improve the support made available to grantees under the project, and raise the profile of both IFS and CODESRIA in Africa and among donors. In preliminary discussions, CODESRIA was interested in writing a joint proposal for a larger joint granting programme supporting multidisciplinary research that could be submitted to external donors for funding. Research area sub-themes such as those outlined above could be the basis of such a programme (eg support for research on IPRs, support for research on transfer of sustainable technologies).

As the Social Science Initiative develops, additional strategic partnerships similar to the one with CODESRIA should be pursued with organisations in Latin America (eg CLACSO or FLACSO) and Asia (eg regional environmental economic organisations such as EEPSEA and SANDEE, and national social science organisations).

Other types of partnership might focus on providing additional training opportunities for IFS grantees. For example, CODESRIA organises training workshops on social science methodology and could organise such a workshop for IFS. The University of Roskilde has expressed an interest in sponsoring 6 month training visits for IFS social science grantees.

Another priority should be to discuss the Social Science Initiative with representatives of the United Nations University, especially with the Institute of

Natural Resources in Africa (INRA) which already has an established partnership with IFS for soil science. We should also approach sub-regional organisations in Africa such as ASARECA, CORAF and SACCAR in the context of the Social Science Initiative.

Another potential partner is the Initiative on Science and Technology for Sustainability based at Harvard University. IFS can discuss how the Social Science Initiative and the IFS Programme in general could collaborate with their organisation to support "sustainable science" research.

## Strategies and Services

In addition to the standard package of IFS supporting services, it is proposed that the Social Science Initiative pilot a number of new strategies and services intended to increase the value of IFS support to grantees and to encourage researchers to design projects that are responsive to local needs. Furthermore, the Social Science Initiative should encourage the researchers to discuss their research results in public fora amongst diverse stakeholders, and encourage the transformation of knowledge into commercially applicable goods and services that contribute to local livelihoods and sustainability goals. Given that social science research projects usually require less expensive equipment, the cost of the additional items proposed here could still be accommodated within a total budget of USD 12,000.

Applicants for IFS research support are asked to justify the relevance of their research in terms of local and national socio-economic and environmental conditions. Already when researchers are designing their research proposals, IFS should encourage them to engage in a dialogue with potential end-users and other stakeholders to define research objectives that meet these criteria. Following the completion of an IFS supported research project, grantees will be encouraged to make their research results available in a forum that encourages local organisations, individuals, governmental bodies, etc to understand and use the benefits of the grantees' research.

Applicants to IFS will be encouraged to include a plan and budget in their research proposal for presenting the results of their research to local/regional stakeholders (eg farmers, industry, researchers,

policy-makers). IFS will support activities such as making presentations at relevant conferences/workshops, organisation of local seminars/workshops, publication of a pamphlet, etc. These funds should be made available following the receipt of a satisfactory final report at IFS. Grantees will be eligible to request up to USD 2,000 for the dissemination of relevant results.

It is also proposed that IFS grantees be encouraged to explore ways in which their research results can be commercially applied. While workshops and seminars (discussed above) may put grantees in contact with potential users of their research, it is proposed that IFS go one step further and encourage grantees with successful research projects to explore the commercial applications of their research results. IFS could provide support for grantees to attend entrepreneurs' or innovators' workshops. IFS could also develop closer contacts with organisations that have expertise in this area, and can provide support to grantees.

Given that scientists salaries are often too small to support scientists' families in the poorest developing countries (Gaillard and Furó Tullberg, 2001; Gaillard, Zink and Furó Tullberg; forthcoming), and that scientists awarded grants for research in the areas described above are often required to travel away from their institution and other sources of livelihood, it is proposed that IFS permit applicants (on a targeted sub-regional basis) to request a portion of their research grant be awarded in the form of a small honorarium.

Social science applicants' budget proposals may include equipment (eg computers, printers, software, GPS, recording and transcription devices), however it is recognised that a large proportion of the budget is likely to be dedicated to travel costs, assistants, literature, and workshops. These non-equipment items are essential to social science research, and hence the Secretariat and the SACs should be encouraged to tolerate budgets with a higher percentage of non-equipment items than usual.

## **Internal Organisation of the Secretariat**

The level of emphasis on cross-disciplinary research co-ordination and communication proposed here

is a response to changing demands placed upon science to respond to the multidisciplinary of the environmental problems encountered today (Kates et al, 2001), and is greater than that which has existed previously at IFS. These changes necessarily have implications for the internal organisation of the small grants programme at the IFS Secretariat.

Currently IFS administers applications and research grants in "areas". For evaluating research proposals the key components in each area are the Scientific Secretary that has a competence in a natural science discipline relevant to the area, and the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) that consists of experts in a discipline that is relevant to the area. While IFS is de-emphasising the "area" boundaries in its information to applicants, grantees and donors, this has not affected the internal organisation of the Secretariat or the SACs.

It is proposed that a new SAC is founded in Spring 2003 to evaluate applications that address the research areas outlined in this document. This SAC will be multidisciplinary and consist of experts in a range of areas (eg economics, political science, socio-cultural anthropology, geography, ecology, biotechnology) as they relate to the biological resource base. SAC members will also have significant experience in multidisciplinary research (both within social sciences and between social and natural scientists). As the Social Science Initiative develops, the SAC will be expected to handle greater numbers of multidisciplinary, team research proposals.

An additional SAC is necessary for the Social Science Initiative to guarantee the same level of expert evaluation to social and economic research proposals that is available to proposals on other research topics. A new SAC will also strengthen the social science profile at IFS and serve as an expert panel for further developing the Social Science Initiative.

A new SAC is preferable to handling social science applications in the existing SACs. For the latter option to work, social scientists would have to be added to the existing SACs. However, the existing SACs would not be able to take full advantage of the competence of social science advisers, as most of the applications discussed in existing SACs would still be outside of the social science advisers' areas of expertise. In such an environment, the

role of social science advisers could easily become a marginal one. Furthermore, the cost of an additional SAC will not be greater than cost of increasing the size of already existing SACs to include some social science competence.

Currently IFS receives a number of applications from researchers from natural science disciplines that use some social science methods (eg questionnaires, participant observation) to elicit information from local natural resource users. These applications should be handled separately from applications from social scientists. They should be evaluated in the SAC that is most relevant to their research topic. However, Scientific Secretaries will have access to a large number of social science advisers that can evaluate social science components of the application, and these comments can be sent to the SAC. Social science advisers may also be asked to evaluate the relevance of these proposals.

Research proposals that are either truly multidisciplinary or proposed by multidisciplinary teams and exceed the capacity of the new SAC should be reviewed in multiple SACs, and a final recommendation made by the IFS Secretariat. There is already a precedent for operating in this manner.

## **Impact Assessment**

The impact of the Social Science Initiative will be measured using the tools of the IFS Monitoring and Evaluation System for Impact Assessment (MESIA). The main objectives of MESIA are to analyse how effectively IFS has used the funds it receives to finance its activities (mainly research grants), to assess the achievements and outputs of the grantees, and to assess the effect that the grants and other forms of support provided by IFS have had on the academic and institutional career of the grantees (Gaillard 2000).

## **Status of this Strategy Proposal**

This strategy for the Social Science Initiative was developed by the staff of the Secretariat and revised based upon the comments of an external group of resource persons with a background in both the natural and social sciences. The strategy was approved by the IFS Board of Trustees in October, 2002. In late 2002 and early 2003, the IFS Secretariat will explore additional funding mechanisms for the Social Science Initiative with current and potential donor organisations (see the following page for a proposed budget).

## Proposed Budget 2003-2005

Budget Items	Quantity	Unit price (Euro)	Total Cost (Euro)
<u>I. Research Grants</u>			
year 2003	25	13,300	332,500
year 2004	30	13,300	399,000
year 2005	35	13,300	465,500
<u>II. Supporting Services 2003-2005</u>			
Co-sponsorship of regional workshops	3	28,000	84,000
Grantee travel grants	45	2,800	126,000
Adviser participation at SAC meetings	36	2,200	79,200
<u>III. IFS Staff Travel</u>			
Networking and outreach activities	4	2,800	11,200
<u>IV. Personnel</u>			
Project Secretary (half time)	3 years	27,000	81,000
<u>V. IFS Overhead (15%)</u>			
			236,600
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,815,000</b>

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