

Topical Lunch Summary

Organizers: Chris Barrett, Alex Travis, Wendy Wolford

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Prospective Proposal to USAID on Critical Issues in Contemporary Agrarian and Rural Developmen

A large group of approximately 27 people gathered to discuss the USAID Higher Education Solutions Network draft RFA and the prospect of a Cornell proposal to this new five year program. We discussed participation in consortia versus a single university center. The consensus of this group was that our efforts would be targeted at a proposal for a single university center. The group spent time discussing the merits of preplanned, specific content to the proposal program versus a specific process for (competitively) selecting specific subprojects in the proposed program, or a hybrid of the two and seemed to lean toward a hybrid model. Most of the time was spent discussing key, compelling questions/issues around which the proposal might be structured. Part of that discussion involved reviewing some of the major science-based innovations for the developing world that Cornell has made in recent years and opportunities for scale-up. Another important thread of the discussion revolved around appropriate countries and sites for such a project, as well as partners. There was broad-based agreement on the value of a multidisciplinary focus on rural development writ large, coupled with capacity building and playing up the extensive external partnerships Cornell has for guiding and diffusing innovation in various regions of the world.