

MOPAN
2019 ASSESSMENTS

Organisational Performance Brief
CGIAR

CGIAR performance at a glance

CGIAR has a clear understanding of future needs and demands for agricultural science and innovation as shown in the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) and in the CGIAR Research Programs and Platforms (CRPs). It is taking important steps to orient systems and programming to those demands. The formation of the CGIAR System has laid a solid and well-owned foundation for delivering on the SRF. However, there are still challenges around ensuring the even delivery and full ownership of an ambitious reform process, as well as uncertainties about how key systems, most notably evaluation, will be implemented following more recent changes.

CGIAR provides a unique global public good and does so in a way that is responsive and relevant and that delivers large-scale results. It operates around a strong comparative advantage both as a corporate body and with each of its long-standing Research Centers. That said, not all parts of CGIAR function optimally, and inconsistencies in capacity make replication of systems and streamlining of functions an imperative and a challenge. CGIAR has taken important strides to ensure that its contributions can be effectively measured, and initial outputs from the performance reporting system are promising both in their functioning and in demonstrating that CGIAR makes an impact. While the trajectory is largely positive, this system is still under development and performance management and demonstration of results is an area where CGIAR has been playing catch-up.

One of CGIAR's biggest strengths is also a significant challenge, and that is the diverse and multi-layered partnership that the CGIAR System encompasses. With stakeholders and programmes spread around the globe, CGIAR's ambitious agenda for reform represents an important initiative for the organisation and also one that presents real challenges to implementation. CGIAR will need to continuously ensure reforms are well-owned and implemented across its myriad of stakeholders while moving forward in a timely manner that is well-oriented towards its central objectives. This is particularly true as it embarks on designing the next round of CRPs, with promising work already underway that builds on the theories of change and experience of implementation.

CGIAR KEY FACTS

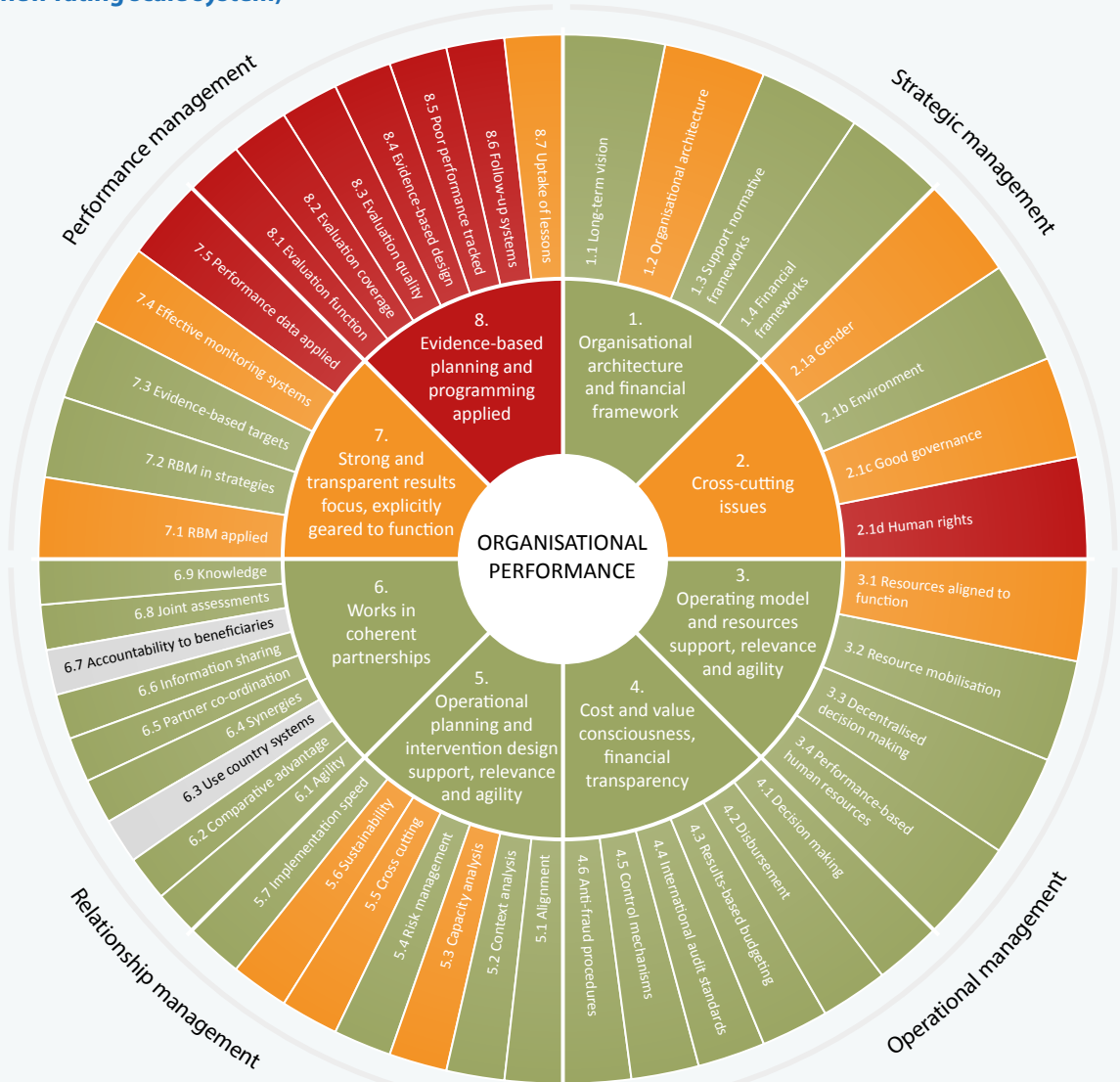
MISSION AND MANDATE: CGIAR is dedicated to reducing poverty, enhancing food and nutrition security, and improving natural resources and ecosystem services. CGIAR works to advance agricultural science and innovation to enable poor people, especially women, to better nourish their families. It also helps them improve productivity and resilience so they can share in economic growth and manage natural resources in the face of climate change and other challenges. CGIAR was originally established as a global research partnership between 15 independent and autonomous Research Centers in 1971.

GOVERNANCE: Aside from each Research Center's own governance structure, the CGIAR System Council along with the System Management Board work together to review the effectiveness of the CGIAR System, to adopt and monitor compliance with CGIAR policies, procedures and guidelines, and to review the relevance and results of the CGIAR Portfolio of agricultural research for development.

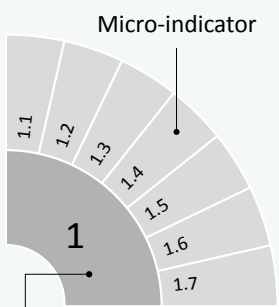
STRUCTURE: The CGIAR System obtained international organisation status in 2012. It refers to the Research Centers; the CGIAR System Organisation; the Independent Science for Development Council; the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment; the CGIAR System Internal Audit Function; CGIAR Research; as well as the Funders, the System Council and the System Board. The System Organisation headquarters are in Montpellier, France, though some central functions are hosted at different Research Centers around the world. The CGIAR System as a whole has approximately 10 000 staff working in more than 70 countries around the world.

FINANCE: The annual revenue of CGIAR in 2017 was USD 840 million. The CGIAR Trust Fund represented 56% of total funding, whereas bilateral project grants made directly with Research Centers and other income accounted for 41% and 3% of the total funding respectively. From 2016 to 2017, total funding fell slightly (6%); however, CGIAR Trust Fund funding for CRPs and the System Organisation and for specific CRPs (designated Windows 1 and 2) fell 24%. Bilateral project grants increased slightly (4%) over the same period.

PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY FOR CGIAR
(MOPAN 3.0* – new rating scale system)



How to read these charts



Key Performance Indicator

Highly satisfactory
(3.51-4.00)

Satisfactory
(2.51-3.50)

Unsatisfactory
(1.51-2.50)

Highly unsatisfactory
(0-1.50)

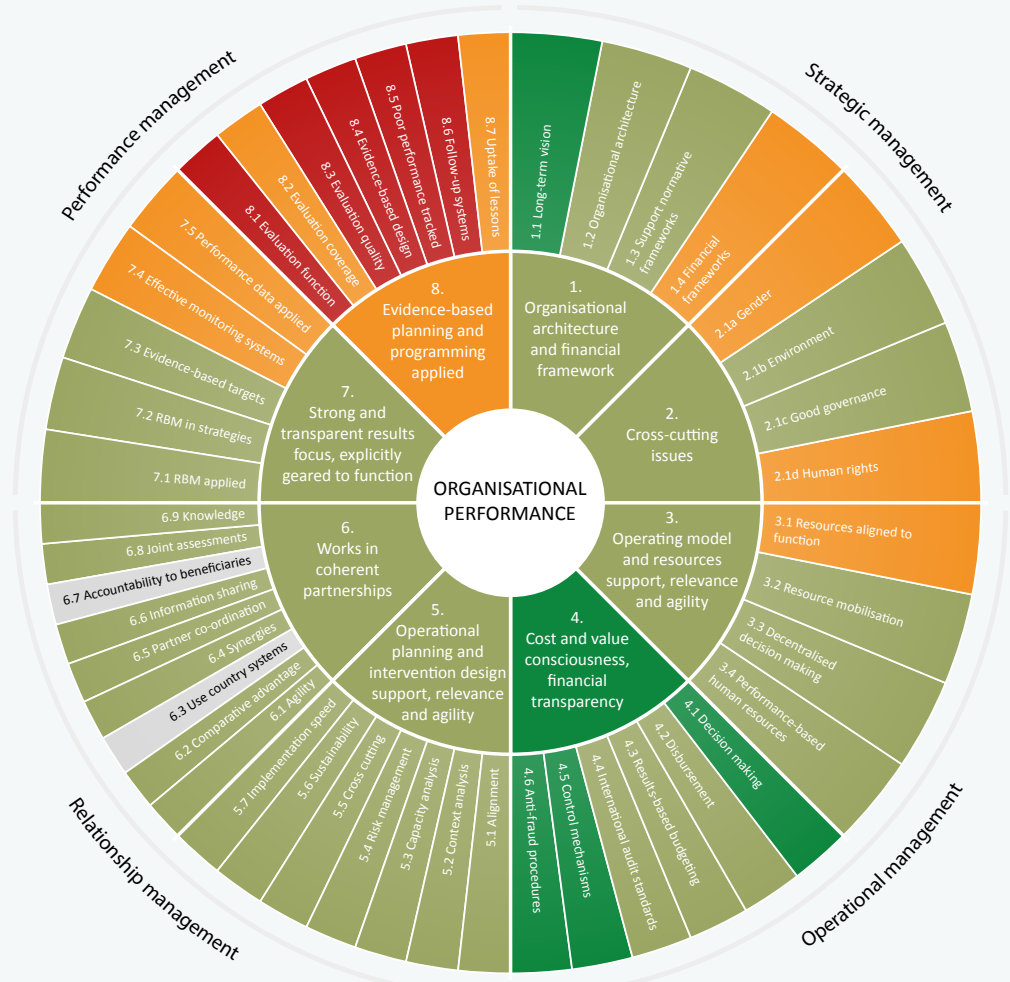
No evidence / Not applicable



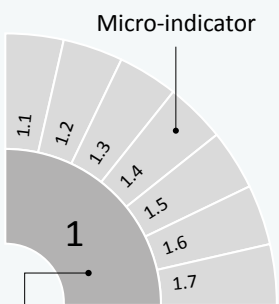
**PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY FOR CGIAR
(MOPAN 3.0 – old rating scale system)**

**Changes to MOPAN rating system
(MOPAN 3.0* scales)**

The 2019 Assessment Cycle under MOPAN 3.0* includes a notable change on how ratings (and their corresponding colours) are applied based on the scores at MI and KPI level. Compared to previous cycles, the threshold for a rating has been raised to reflect the increasing demands for organisational performance in the multilateral system. The underlying scores and approach to scoring are unaffected. Further information can be found in the MOPAN 3.0* methodology manual.



How to read these charts



Key Performance Indicator

Highly satisfactory
(3.01-4.00)

Satisfactory
(2.01-3.00)

Unsatisfactory
(1.01-2.00)

Highly unsatisfactory
(0-1.00)

No evidence / Not applicable



Key findings

CGIAR largely delivers its intended results, including by providing a unique and invaluable international resource for the interface between agricultural research and innovation.

CGIAR is a uniquely structured organisation consisting of independent and autonomous Research Centers supported by a central System Organisation. This structure presents unique strengths and challenges for CGIAR, which has been undertaking major reforms in recent years. Its direction of travel towards greater streamlining of systems and coherence across the Research Centers, for example in performance management, is positive, but the challenge remains of bringing all parts of the partnership forward together as it reforms.

CGIAR has a coherent and strategic long-term vision.

Its Strategy and Results Framework for 2016-30 (SRF) lays down the aspirations of the CGIAR System, with the 15 Research Centers working towards their attainment. Broad understanding and ownership of CGIAR's comparative advantage and strategic vision are evident within the organisation and among partners. The SRF is for the first time backed by a business plan and a research financing plan presenting a single budget for CGIAR's strategy. The financing plan focuses on transparency around the allocation of resources and the potential challenges that CGIAR might face as it works towards its long-term objectives. However, while the SRF broadly aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), further work is needed to set out achievable and measurable outputs and outcomes for the CGIAR as a whole, adjusted to the SDGs.

CGIAR plays a unique and important role providing a global public good of agricultural research and innovation knowledge.

CGIAR regards the results of its research and development activities as international public goods and aims to make its research data and associated information findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable in order to enhance innovation, impact and uptake. The 2017 Performance Report shows considerable evidence that CGIAR's research results have contributed to national and international level policies. There are also specific examples, such as in the Annual Report of the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry, of

partners using knowledge products to inform advocacy at national and regional levels. CGIAR is a well-trusted knowledge broker that provides information for its partners that is relevant and responsive to the contexts in which they operate. That said, CGIAR has recognised that the reach of its main knowledge product, peer reviewed articles, can be somewhat limited, though it is taking steps to expand the range of its knowledge products to address this issue.

CGIAR makes excellent use of its comparative advantage in partnerships.

The SRF and business plan set out ambitious goals for contributions to the SDGs and high-level objectives, and they articulate CGIAR's comparative advantage for each, though some work on refining this still remains. One clear aspect of CGIAR's comparative advantage is the combination of its deep-rooted and long-standing ties with the countries in which it works and its reputation globally as a solid scientific partner. Bringing together a diverse range of partners, CGIAR effectively capitalises on several aspects of its comparative advantage as a single entity and System, while maintaining flexibility and agility through work carried out by Research Centers. For example, the Global Integrating Programmes bring together CGIAR's research as a whole to respond to key crisis areas, including climate change and the management of important natural resources. CGIAR also effectively draws on and manages its national partners, helping ensure that programming is relevant and reactive to local contexts while also utilising the often unique resources partners bring.

While partnerships are central to CGIAR's work, the approach taken is not consistent across all parts of the organisation, and there is no central partnership strategy.

Establishing and maintaining strong relationships with a diverse range of partners has always been a key aspect of how the Research Centers work. CGIAR's Research Programs / Platforms (CRPs) have further extended partnerships by creating greater horizontality across the System and encouraging Research Centers to take a more collaborative rather than competitive approach. The SRF and the business plan also highlight the centrality of partnerships, both within and outside the System, in the functioning of CGIAR.

However, CGIAR lacks a clear strategic position on how to deal with the variety of partners in a consistent way while also promoting the spread of best practice. A 2017 Evaluation of Partnerships found the organisation to be missing a coherent strategy on partnerships and capacity development, often adopting a narrowly focused or ad hoc approach, which impedes innovation. CRP-level partnership strategies were found to be variably effective and the selection of partners occasionally a function of opportunity rather than strategy. Further, while it is recognised that capacity development is a central part of CGIAR's work, there is very limited evidence referenced in documents that detailed capacity analysis takes place as part of CRP development or that such analysis is carried out with partners.

CGIAR's complex structure has created significant challenges around decision-making, reform implementation and consistency, which has impeded valuable mainstreaming of key organisational systems.

CGIAR's 15 independent and autonomous Research Centers and its System Organisation are governed by a complex set of entities with a myriad of interests and priorities. Decisions must be carefully negotiated across this set of stakeholders that represent bodies with their own fiduciary responsibilities and interests. This decentralised and multi-layered organisational structure, while a strength of CGIAR in some regards, can lead to slow decision-making and implementation of key reforms, which could bring more consistency and effectiveness to CGIAR. There are significant differences in capacities and progress across CGIAR and its Research Centers, which manifest themselves in variations in how key organisational systems and mechanisms have developed and have been effectively used. There has, for example, been limited progress in making use of economies of scale across CGIAR's 15 Research Centers, with replication of the necessary systems and mechanisms, such as human and financial resource management, accountability and audit functions, and monitoring and reporting systems being ad hoc or uneven.

Centralised programming and funding mechanisms have made important strides, but more needs to be done to support and guide CGIAR to move forward as a whole. CRPs have had a major impact in moving Research Centers towards a co-operative and synergistic culture. However, programming at the System-level still too often

resembles a collection of individual projects rather than a cohesive approach. System-level funding has also posed some challenges. Research Centers have had to cope with unrealistic expectations about the level of resources coming through the CGIAR Trust Fund, with high variability in funding from year to year. As a result, many Centers have had to divert efforts towards resource mobilisation in an unexpected and less than optimal way. Although the situation has somewhat improved very recently, Research Centers are in some cases struggling in what has become a highly competitive funding environment, where funding for organisational management-related activities in particular is scarce. This creates tensions with regards to key aspects of organisational reform – on the one hand, there is a need for ongoing reform in order to build trust in the continued effectiveness of CGIAR for the Funders, while on the other, there is a need for longer-term and more consistent funding support in order to carry out the necessary reforms.

CGIAR has increased focus on performance management by implementing results-based management, though challenges to finding a common and effective approach still exist. CGIAR's commitment to results is evident in the organisation's strategic documents, and ongoing reform processes have yielded important steps towards results-based management (RBM). Supported by an active Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Community of Practice and efforts by the System Organisation, there has been an increasing harmonisation of the concepts, approaches and information technology systems for RBM across CGIAR since 2017. CGIAR published its first Annual Performance Report in 2018, which drew from the 2017 Management Information System data from CRPs and Research Centers, as well as evaluations and impact assessments from across CGIAR. Despite the progress evident from this report, there have been conceptual and operational tensions with implementing RBM in practice. Conceptual tensions include the complex pathways between scientific outputs and high-level development outcomes described in the SRF, which initially led to setting inappropriate indicators and targets in CRPs. Consequently, measurement and tracking has also been challenging. Operational tensions arose from the fact that RBM development was mobilised first within CRPs, rather than at a System-level. Further, RBM is

under-resourced, existing resources are fragmented and staff training in RBM has been inconsistent. CGIAR particularly struggles with incorporating performance data in planning and decision-making. There are acknowledged misalignments between results, performance and planning cycles, and evidence that the management makes use of performance data to inform future research planning is lacking.

CGIAR's recently reformed evaluation function raises uncertainty. Many of the good practices established under the previous evaluation function have not yet been implemented under recent and significant reforms. Evaluations under the former function included robust quality assurance mechanisms and resulted in a set of high-quality, independent, external evaluations and syntheses in 2015-17. While quality assurance will be carried forward in policy, it is too early to see whether practice will follow suit. In terms of a feedback loop, there is a process detailed in the evaluation policy for integrating past lessons into new interventions; however, evidence suggests that this has mostly happened on an ad hoc basis. Steps are being taken, including enhanced performance reporting and more systematic use of lessons under the business plan, but implementation was not yet there at the time of assessment.

The aforementioned set of quality evaluations were used by CRPs to inform programming but were less used by CGIAR's governing bodies, mainly due to a lack of alignment with decision-making needs and cycles. This disconnect was in part the impetus for changing the evaluation function from being a separate, independent entity with a Head of Evaluation that reports directly to the System Council to only having a Senior Evaluation Officer under the shared advisory services secretariat. This poses a potential risk to the structural independence of the evaluation function and may have an impact on the operational independence as well, though again there is not yet evidence as the reforms were still in the process of being implemented. Evaluation programming may also be less independent under the reformed function, which of course poses a risk, but it may also help with uptake and ownership of the outputs by the governing bodies. Funding for evaluation has been secured for a three-year programme; however, some evidence indicated uncertainty in particular about CRP-commissioned

evaluations, and there was not yet evidence to show sufficiency of funding in practice. Being attentive to and managing these risks as CGIAR's reformed evaluation function takes shape will be essential to its success.

CGIAR's approach to mainstreaming gender equality may only be superficial. CGIAR has been working to incorporate gender equality and women empowerment in its science and workplace since 2011, though the process has been partial in coverage and slow in implementation. Gender equality indicators are integrated into the SRF, and gender is set out as a research priority. There is a risk, however, of CGIAR applying a superficial "gender fix". The indicators are only at an outcome level and do not monitor the integration of gender issues into the design and implementation of research and human rights policies. Interviews also suggested that the gender accountability system is not consistent. Further, there has been no systematic or strategic implementation of capacity development of staff in gender issues. The Evaluation of Gender in CGIAR (2017) recommended a comprehensive system-wide training programme on gender and diversity. This was, however, not supported by the management and was left to the Research Centers to manage.

CGIAR has contributed to tackling the issue of environmental sustainability and climate change and does well to mainstream it. Though there is no dedicated policy statement on the issue, it forms one of the core focus areas of the organisation, commitment to which is clearly expressed in various strategic documents. The cross-cutting issue is well integrated into system-level strategies, Research Centers and research programmes through the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). CCAFS, through a collaboration between the 15 Research Centers, seeks to address the challenge of global warming and declining food security on agricultural practices, policies and measures through strategic, broad-based global partnerships. Further, the environmental sustainability and climate change indicators are fully integrated into CGIAR's accountability systems. The assessment, however, points towards the need to build the capacity of scientists to integrate climate change more strategically into projects and flagship portfolios.

About this assessment

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) is a network of 19 countries¹ that share a common interest in assessing the effectiveness of the major multilateral organisations they fund, including UN agencies, international financial institutions and global funds.

The Network generates, collects, analyses and presents relevant and credible information on the organisational and development effectiveness of the organisations it assesses. This knowledge base is intended to contribute to organisational learning within and among the organisations, their direct clients and partners, and other stakeholders. Network members use the reports for their own accountability needs and as a source of input for strategic decision-making.

The MOPAN 3.0* methodology employed in this assessment uses a framework of 12 key performance indicators (KPIs) and associated micro-indicators (MIs). It comprises standards that characterise an effective multilateral organisation. As part of MOPAN's efforts to ensure its assessments remain relevant to stakeholders and aligned to international best practice, the MOPAN methodology is continuously evolving. The methodology used in the 2019 Assessment Cycle includes two notable changes from the previous iteration. The first is that the threshold for the ratings (and their corresponding colours) applied based on the scores at KPI and MI levels has been raised to reflect the increasing demands for organisational performance in the multilateral system. The underlying scores and approach to scoring are unaffected. The second is greater flexibility in the selection of partners and geographies for the survey line of evidence.

This approach allows for more relevant sampling of organisations' external partners and geographic coverage. More details are available in MOPAN's methodology manual 3.0*.²

This was the first MOPAN assessment of CGIAR. It was championed by Norway and the United States on behalf of the Network. The assessment addresses organisational systems, practices and behaviours, as well as results achieved during the period 2016 to mid-2019. It relies on three lines of evidence: a document review, interviews with individuals and groups, and an online partner survey. The assessment covers the CGIAR System, including the System Organisation and the Research Centers. A sample of Centers was used for data collection to enable good coverage with limited resources. Research Centers were also used to target respondents for the partner survey, rather than specific countries.

MOPAN's evidence lines for CGIAR

- Review of 105 documents
- 50 interviews with individuals and groups
- Online survey of external partners with 162 responses

This brief accompanies the full assessment which can be found on MOPAN's website at www.mopanonline.org. CGIAR's management response will be made available on that website as well.

Organisations assessed by MOPAN in 2019:

- CGIAR
- UNCTAD
- UNODC
- MLF
- UNIDO

1: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and the United Arab Emirates

2: Available at www.mopanonline.org