



Brief of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

**Strengthening Knowledge Management for Greater Development
Effectiveness in the Near East, North Africa, Central Asia and Europe**

25 November 2020

About ICARDA

Is a treaty-based international organization, established in 1975, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) is an autonomous non-profit, international institute governed by a Board of Trustees and, under the auspices of the CGIAR System in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, ICARDA focusses on delivering innovative solutions for sustainable agricultural development in the non-tropical dry areas of the developing world. ICARDA provide innovative, science-based solutions to improve the livelihoods and resilience of resource-poor smallholder farmers. ICARDA is developing that through strategic partnerships, linking research to development, and capacity development, and by taking into account gender equality and the role of youth in transforming the non-tropical dry areas.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Ramya Kulkarni, Valerio Graziano, Enrico Bonaiuti, (25/11/2020). Brief of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Beirut, Lebanon: International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

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Contents

1. What is a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	4
1.1. Why is it important	4
2. The structure of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	4
3. The Strengthening Knowledge Management for Greater Development Effectiveness in the Near East, North Africa, Central Asia and Europe (SKiM) M&E Plan	5
3.1 M&E plan Table of Contents	5
3.2 The Project Logical Framework Matrix	6
3.3 Indicators and Key Evaluation questions	8
3.3 Research Based Lessons Learned & Learning Questions	9
4. Why to develop a M&E Plan?	10

List of Tables

Table 1 Results Based Logical Framework	6
Table 2 SKiM Custom Indicators	9

Revision History

Version	Date	Originator(s)	Reviewer(s)	Description
1.1	25 November 2020	Ramya Kulkarni		

1. What is a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan defines the approach the project takes on conducting Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and the roles and responsibilities during the M&E process. Its role is to specify and provide guidance for the operationalization of the monitoring and evaluation system.

The M&E plan will bridge the logic model (e.g. logical framework, impact pathway, theory of change) that underpins the project with the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system. Also, it helps in organizing the learning processes that occur during and at the end of every project. Additionally, it is a powerful time-saving tool that foresees and keeps track of all the connections between the assumptions, the activities, and the expected outcomes of the project. This will contribute to intervene quickly and effectively when modifications to the project's activities are required to maintain the objectives identified by the action.

1.1. Why is it important

Efficiency – How are we implementing the project? Are the identified assumptions respected? The M&E plan identifies in advance problems and ways to solve the problems. It allows a rapid and efficient response to those.

Effectiveness – Are we reaching our outcomes? Are we achieving results? A M&E plan helps us to ask these questions both during the planning stages, throughout implementation, and after completion. It also encourages the culture of systematic learning for future projects.

Donor alignment – Are we matching the donor's framework? How can we better describe our work to the donor? The identification of the project's alignment with the donor framework helps the institutions implementing the activities to describe the intervention's level of fitness with the strategic view of the donor.

A M&E Plan can work like a machine. Its components are interconnected; they work jointly and help us in managing the flow of information that comes from the implementation of the project.

2. The structure of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A M&E Plan is composed of three main parts: **Monitoring**, **Evaluation** and **Learning**.

The **Monitoring** component provides a clear picture of the relations between every activity undertaken by the project and its final goal. Those relations are identified in the Theory of Change, the Impact Pathway and the project's Logical Framework (Logframe) matrix. It includes the collection and the analysis of routinary data and

information through to support the decision-making, communication, evaluation and learning processes for Project managers and stakeholders.

The **Evaluation** part contributes to verify the correct implementation, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability¹ of the project as a whole. The identification of evaluation questions is essential to assess whether the project has been implemented consistently with its purpose. Quantitative and/or qualitative indicators are established ex-ante as a mean of verification of the correct implementation of the project.

The **Learning** component is designed to systematize the learning-by-doing aspect that is present in every project through the identification of explicit learning questions, the collection and analysis of data and the sharing of lessons learned.

3. The Strengthening Knowledge Management for Greater Development Effectiveness in the Near East, North Africa, Central Asia and Europe (SKiM) M&E Plan

The M&E Plan of the SKiM project provides stakeholders as overview of the design and implementation of M&E processes in the context of the project's Results-Based Logical Framework, as well as the strategic frameworks of ICARDA, CGIAR and IFAD. The plan has the following structure and contents:

3.1 M&E plan Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
 - Project overview*
 - Project Goal, Objectives, and Outcomes*
 - Project Components*
 - Project Management Structure*
 - Purpose of this document*
- **Framework**
 - Results based Logical Framework*
 - Impact Pathway and Theory of Change*
 - Risks and Assumptions*
 - Alignment with Strategic frameworks*
 - IFAD Strategic Framework
 - CGIAR-GLDC Strategic Framework
 - Alignment with CGIAR Framework
 - Alignment with ICARDA Strategic Plan 2017-2026

¹ OECD (2011), "Section 10: Monitoring and Evaluation", in *The OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice*, OECD Publishing.

- **Performance Monitoring Systems**
 - Routine Monitoring*
 - Routine Indicator Definitions
 - Reporting of Planned and Unplanned Deliverables
 - Data access and privacy
 - Periodic Monitoring*
 - Timeline of Evaluations
 - Key Evaluation Questions
 - Periodic Indicators Definitions
- **Learning and Adaptive Management**
 - Routine Learning Processes*
 - Periodic Learning Processes: Adapting the Theory of Change*
 - Knowledge Management and Learning Outcomes*
- **Implementation Structure**
 - Data collection, Aggregation and Validation*
 - M&E Governance and Leadership*
 - M&E Information Systems and Knowledge Management*
- **Work Plan**
- **Annex**

3.2 The Project Logical Framework Matrix

Through the identification of the connection between **Goal, Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs**, it is possible to analyze how the activities implemented are related to the ultimate goal of the project. Those connections are expressed in the below Logframe matrix. The matrix provides a concise summary of the project, identifying the hierarchy between the objectives of the projects, underlining the assumptions at the base of every connection, and providing a list of means of verification of the objective's achievement.

Table 1 Results Based Logical Framework

Level	Objectives-hierarchy	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Goal	Develop effective and long-term knowledge management-related capacities in target countries (#5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased budgetary commitment for KM-related activities (target $\geq 60\%$ of participating rural institutions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final independent evaluation report • National institutions budget plan for the 3-5-10 year plan after the closure of the project and if not available survey of key stakeholders on their commitments to KM activities. 	Institutional commitment to KM-related investments

Level	Objectives-hierarchy	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Objectives	<p>1. Assess capacity and enhance knowledge management skills of key rural institutions and other stakeholders in Moldova, Morocco, and Sudan (with possibility to add two other countries)</p> <p>2. Foster and promote knowledge exchange in-country, cross-country and among trans-regional partners to foster knowledge management and transfer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of knowledge management skills of target institutions (target $\geq 80\%$ of participating rural institutions) Level of knowledge sharing capacity of target institutions among each other and across countries (target $\geq 80\%$ of participating rural institutions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project mid-term external evaluation Completion survey 	<p>National governments, particularly the ministries of agriculture and other relevant institutions, are willing to improve their KM systems, instruments and processes.</p> <p>Commitments to upscale and replicate by development partners.</p>
Outcomes	<p>1. Improved understanding of KM capacities of the key rural institutions in 3 (+2) target countries in NEN region</p> <p>2. Effective learning systems established and embedded across organizational processes with strengthened human and institutional capacities to manage the systematization of good practices</p> <p>3. Improved knowledge exchanges among stakeholders based on increased adoption of good practices and knowledge transfer for increased SSTC, replication and scaling up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants adopting improved KM approaches and practices in their particular function (target $\geq 60\%$) Frequency of use of knowledge products (target = 600 downloads per year and 3,000 visits per year) Number of innovation platforms, learning alliances, CoPs or other multi-stakeholder platforms established (target = 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project KM assessments (method: systems analysis disaggregated by theme, gender and country) Project evaluations Online tracking tools Survey on adaptation patterns/behavioral changes among target groups 	<p>High commitment and sense of ownership from relevant rural institutions, as well as individual officers, particularly those in strategic positions, to engage in the process.</p> <p>International development partners are supportive and acknowledge the progress and updates.</p>
Outputs	<p>Components:</p> <p>1. KM capacity assessment for enhanced formulation of learning needs</p> <p>2. Capacity development and knowledge systematization</p> <p>3. Enhanced regional knowledge exchange</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of KM capacity & learning needs assessments (gap analysis) conducted (Target: at least 5 pre-selected institutions per country) Number of Approach Paper developed Number of KM training courses organized (target = 8; at least 160 participants; $\geq 80\%$ satisfaction/effectiveness rate) Number of learning routes organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project KM assessments Peer-reviewed papers submitted and accepted for publication Attendance records and online surveys and key informant interviews to assess the level of satisfaction and effectiveness of training, learning routes, symposia and knowledge products 	<p>Commitment and participation of target group and effective collaboration with strategic partners.</p>

Level	Objectives-hierarchy	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
		(target=3; at least 75 participants, >=80% satisfaction/effectiveness rate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of symposia rolled-out at country level (target = 5, >= 80% satisfaction/effectiveness rate) • Number of knowledge products generated (target = minimum of 30 produced and disseminated to 5,000 people) • Online interoperable repository and portal established 		

3.3 Indicators and Key Evaluation questions

The M&E plan, in line with the general M&E principles, identifies two aspects of the Monitoring and Evaluation activities: **routine monitoring** and **periodic evaluation**. **Routine monitoring** is ensured by the production and the analysis of the planned project's deliverables identified in the Proposal. The **Periodic Evaluation** can be implemented according to the needs and the decision of the project's implementers and gives a tangible indication of the project's efficacy.

Key evaluation questions are essential to identify the purposes of the evaluation of a project. They are also important to provide a guide for the design of the routine monitoring and periodic evaluation. Several donors and institutions developed Evaluation principles to refer to when developing a M&E Plan. As an example, hereby are listed the EU project guidelines "Better Regulation Guidelines"².

EU Evaluation Principle	
Comprehensive	The definition of evaluation targets five criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value.
Proportionate	The scope of the evaluation must be tailored to the intervention, its maturity and data available.
Independent and Objective	Independent evaluation is essential to deliver robust and reliable results. An evaluation is independent when: (i) carries out its task without influence or pressure; (ii) is given full access to all relevant information required; (iii) has fully autonomy in reporting the findings.
Transparent	Evaluators must make judgement based on the evidence and analysis available.
Evidence-based	The evaluation is based on the best available evidence which should be drawn from a diverse and appropriate range of methods of sources.

² European Commission (2017). Better Regulation Guidelines. Brussels, 2017.

In order to precisely assess every action implemented by the project, a list of indicators is designed and included in the M&E plan. Indicators guarantee objective evaluations of every phase of the project. They are fundamental for the monitoring phase and can be related to Routine monitoring (easier data collection, less time consuming, directly related to every project activity) or Periodic Evaluation (generally more time-consuming and not strictly connected to a single action). When identifying an indicator to be included in a M&E plan, every characteristic and detail is considered, from the aggregation level of data to be used to the person in charge of the data collection, including the detailed explanation about the reason for using such indicator and how it is calculated.

Table 2 SKiM Custom Indicators

No.	Indicator	Indicator Level	Monitoring
1	Increased budgetary commitment for KM-related activities	Goal	Periodic monitoring
2	Number of institutions reporting enhanced KM skills	Objective	Periodic monitoring
3	Dissemination of knowledge products	Outcome	Periodic monitoring
4	Number of participants adopting improved KM approaches and practices in their particular function	Outcome	Periodic monitoring
5	Number of innovation platforms, learning alliances, CoPs and/or other multi-stakeholder platforms established	Outcome	Periodic monitoring
6	Number of KM capacity and learning needs assessments (gap analysis) conducted	Output	Periodic monitoring
7	KM Approach Paper Developed	Output	Routine monitoring
8	Number of KM training courses organized	Output	Routine monitoring
9	Number of Learning Routes organized	Output	Routine monitoring
10	Number of symposia organized at the country level	Output	Routine monitoring
11	Number of knowledge products generated	Output	Routine monitoring
12	Online interoperable repository and portal established	Output	Routine monitoring
13	Number of men and women participating in KM-related capacity development activities	Output	Routine monitoring

3.3 Research Based Lessons Learned & Learning Questions

Learning and adaptive management is based on two components: Operational Processes (**routine learning**) and Research-based lessons learning (**periodic learning**).

Routine Learning is carried on through the action of the bodies identified by the Proposal that will contribute to generate a critical reflection on the lessons learned during the project implementation (*General Assembly, Project Coordinator*)

The **Periodic Learning** is a reflection of the project staff and other stakeholders on the lessons learned in relation to the research phase and activity of the project (*Learning Questions action Plan*).

Examples of series of questions in the Learning Questions action Plan based on Research based Lessons Learned:

1. Impact Pathway - Questions related with relevance of objectives and outcomes (at the project and SRF level):

- a) Are the SRF outcomes/objectives still relevant to the target beneficiaries of the project? If not, why?
- b) Is the project still aligned to select elements of the ICARDA, IFAD and CGIAR-CRP SRF (as earlier envisaged)? If not, please identify where there are inconsistencies.
- c) Are all relevant SRFs considered in the TOC/impact pathway? If not, what is missing?
- d) Are the project outcomes still achievable within ICARDA and partners' technical and operational capacities, and within the available project resources? If not, why?
- e) Are the project outputs critical for achieving the corresponding 'higher-level' project and SRF outcomes? If not, how can these outputs be adapted?

2. Theory of Change - Questions related with rationale of objectives, outcomes, and causal pathways:

- a) Do the assumptions still hold? If not, how can they be revised?
- b) Are there shifts in the risk profiles of the 'unchanged' assumptions? If yes, then how can the risk mitigation measures be adapted?
- c) Do we now have better or worse evidence for the assumptions made? If worse, how can we seek/generate better evidence?
- d) Based on the changes made following the relevance of objectives and outcomes, are there new assumptions and risks following the revised linkages? How are these assumptions, risks, and mitigation measures integrated into future project activities?

4. Why to develop a M&E Plan?

- To foresee potential problems and to quickly identify the solutions
- To develop side activities (research papers, workshops...) based on data of the M&E Plan indicators
To follow the chain of results (through the Logical Framework, the Theory of Change and/or Impact Pathway) it is important to have a clear overview of the main risks during the project's activities deployment. Indicators will provide information of the project in terms of achievement of results, both during the implementation phase and at the end of the project.
- To contribute to the development of knowledge sharing activities (research papers, briefs, workshops on the project's topic...).