Brief of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan

Use of Conservation Agriculture in Crop-Livestock Systems (CLCA) in the Drylands for Enhanced Water Use and Soil Fertility in NEN and LAC Countries

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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.

Contents

1. What is a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Plan

A Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Plan defines the approach the project takes on conducting Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and the roles and responsibilities during the MEL process. The goal of a MEL plan is to bridge the logical framework of a project with the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system. Its role is to provide a clear overview of the linkages between project's activities and the expected results. Also, it contributes to 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 assumptions identified in the Project proposal and the potential risks that could generate by the project implementation.

1.1. Why is it important

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

Effectiveness – Are we reaching our outcomes? Are we achieving results? A MEL plans 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 interventions level of fitness with the strategic view of the donor.

A MEL Plan can work as a machine. Its components are systematic; they work jointly to help us to manage the flow of information that comes from the implementation of the project.

2. The structure of a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

A MEL Plan is composed by 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 (Log frame) matrix.
The **Evaluation** part contributes to verify the correct implementation 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 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 sharing of lessons learned.

3. The CLCA MEL Plan

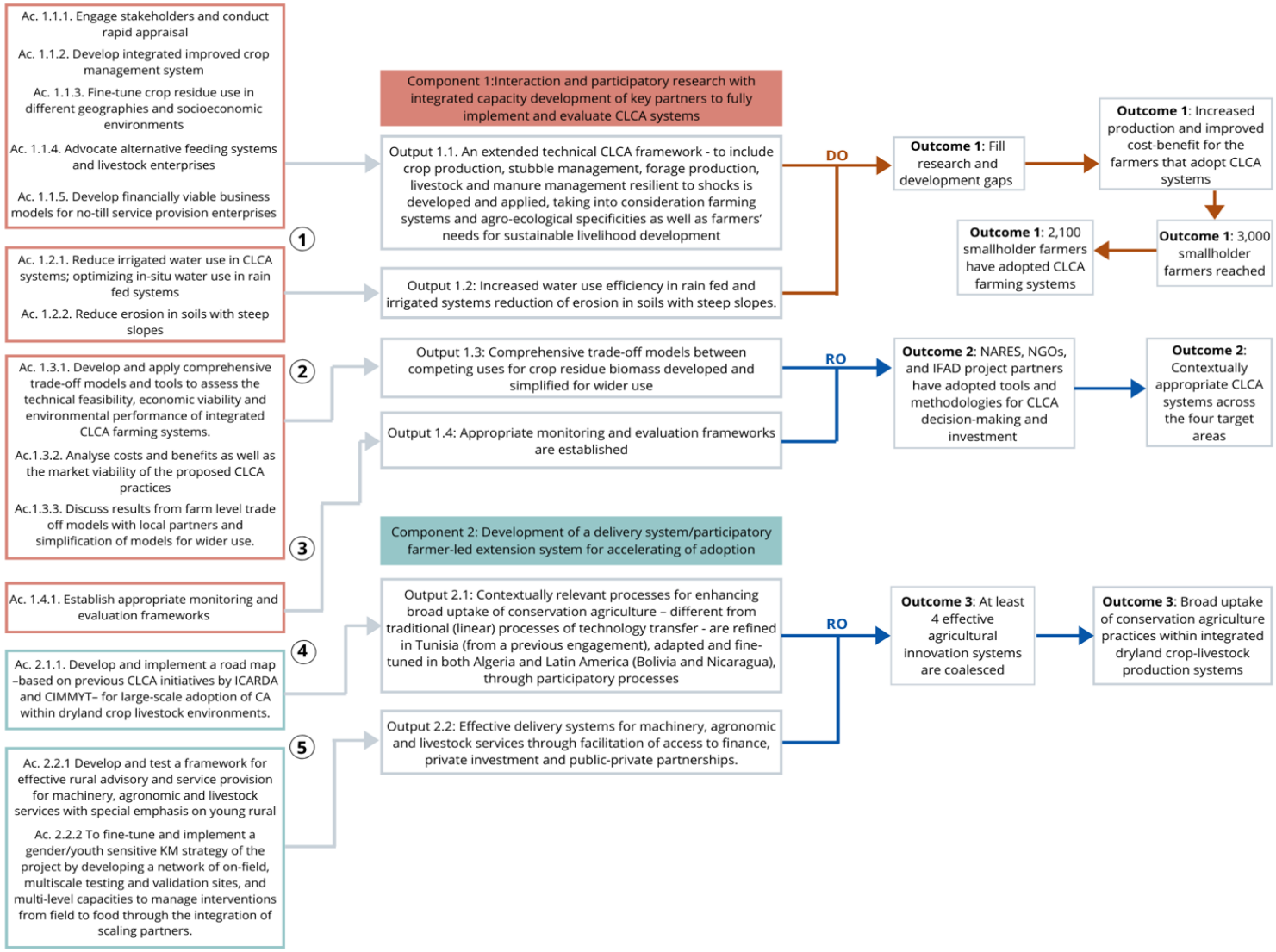
The MEL team of ICARDA develops plans for any new projects as part of its routine activities. This process usually involves young research fellows.

The MEL plan has been developed using the CLCA Project Proposal and CLCA Indicator Matrix. It is structured as below:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Project Results Framework** *(Logical framework, impact pathway, theory of change, and alignment to IFAD, ICARDA and CGIAR frameworks)*
3. **Performance Monitoring Systems** (*Indicators, Routine Monitoring vs Periodic Evaluation, Key Evaluation Questions)*
4. **Data management**
5. **Learning and Adaptive Management**
6. **MEL Support Supervision**
7. **Annual Project Review and Planning**
8. **Reporting**

3.1 The Project Impact Pathway

Through the identification of connection between **activities, outputs, and outcomes**, it is possible to understand how the activities implemented are related to the ultimate goal of the project. These connections are expressed in the below impact pathway.



3.2 Indicators and Key Evaluation questions

The MEL 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 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 provide the mean of the goodness of the project as a whole. See below for the list of indicators that could be used as source of information for the Evaluation of the activities.

Count	Indicator
1	1.1 Change in yield gaps of wheat and barley among CLCA farms in Tunisia and Algeria
2	1.2 Change in weaned lambs among CLCA farms in Tunisia and Algeria
3	1.3 Change in total yield of cereals and legumes among CLCA farms in Bolivia and Mexico
4	1.4 Change in liveweight livestock among CLCA farms in Bolivia and Mexico
5	2. Number of KM models produced that include formative research, tools, and products.
6	3. Number of evidence-based policy briefs that have been produced.
7	4. Number of national innovation systems which have led to uptake of CLCA technologies
8	5.1 Change in soil organic matter on CLCA farms
9	5.2 Change in water use efficiency on CLCA farms
10	6.1 Change in body condition score among livestock on CLCA farms in Tunisia and Algeria
11	6.2 Change in average daily gain among livestock on CLCA farms in Tunisia and Algeria
12	7.1 Change in wheat production cost on CLCA farms in Tunisia and Algeria
13	7.2 Change in fuel cost for wheat production on CLCA farms in Tunisia, Algeria, Bolivia, and Mexico
14	8.1 Number of farmers that have been exposed to the CLCA farmer-led extension system
15	8.2 Number of farmers that have adopted CLCA farming systems
16	9.1 Change in barley and wheat yields among CLCA farms in Tunisia and Algeria
17	9.2 Change in forage biomass among CLCA farms in Tunisia and Algeria
18	10.1 Number of livestock impacted by CLCA practices in Tunisia and Algeria
19	10.2 Change in fecundity rate among sheep on CLCA farms in Tunisia and Algeria
20	11.1 Amount of dry matter (DM) fodder produced in Mexico
21	12. Number of beneficiaries who have participated in knowledge sharing on CLCA practice management.
22	13. Area where soil and water conservation practice is applied
23	14. Number of partners that have adopted CLCA tools and methodologies for reliable decision-making.
24	15. Number of analyses generated on costs, benefits, and market viability of CLCA options.
25	16. Number of farm-level models developed that include multi-criteria assessment and trade off analysis for different farm types and agroecologies.
26	17. Number of simulation tools of optimized CLCA systems produced.
27	18. Number of ICT-based M&E tools developed that include algorithms for data storage and analysis.
28	19. Number of participatory evaluations conducted in CLCA intervention countries.
29	20. Number of surveys conducted to gather feedback from decision-makers and private market actors.
30	21. Number of local innovation systems developed
31	22. Number of knowledge and learning structures within which IFAD's toolkits on HHMs are tested for proof of concept and adaptation.
32	23. Number of CLCA intervention countries in which there is provision of efficient and effective support by extension/advisory services to beneficiaries.
33	24. Number of CLCA guidelines for extension and advisory services developed with partner organizations.
34	25. Number of private machinery service providers supported by CLCA.
35	26. Number of individuals participating in CLCA courses, workshops, or field days.
36	27. Number of groups using CLCA-generated methodologies and knowledge.
37	28. Number of research questions formulated that feed back to component 1

In line with the IFAD recommended criterion[1] and re-known DAC Criterion, the evaluation questions below will be utilized for evaluating the project.

Evaluation Questions	
Relevance	1. Was the project a good idea in terms of improving the situation at hand? 2. Did it deal with the priorities of the target groups? Why or why not?
Effectiveness	3. Were the plans (purposes, outputs and activities) achieved? 4. Was the intervention logic correct? Why or why not? 5. What was done was the best way to maximize impact?
Efficiency	6. Were the resources used in the best possible way? Why or why not? 7. What could have been done differently to improve implementation, and hence maximize impact, at an acceptable and sustainable cost?
Impact	8. To what extent did the project contribute towards the long-term goal? Why or why not? 9. What unanticipated positive or negative consequences did the project have? Why did they arise?
Sustainability	10. Will there be continued positive impacts as a result of the project after the project has closed? Why or why not?

4. Why to develop a MEL Plan?

- To follow the Chain of Results
- To foresee potential problems and to quickly identify the solutions
- To keep track of the project's results
- Develop side activities

To follow the chain of results (through Theory of Change and Impact Pathway) is important to have a clear overview of the main risks during the project's activities deployment.

The Plan will facilitate the identification of potential problems and will contribute to their solution.

Indicators will provide the magnitude of the goodness of the project in terms of result achieved, both at the implementation phase and at the end of the project.

Moreover, they contribute to the development of knowledge sharing activities (research papers, briefs, workshops on the project's topic, etc.).

[1] See: IFAD Guide for Project M&E