Tropentag, September 20 - 22, 2017 in Bonn

"Future Agriculture: Social-ecological transitions and bio-cultural shifts"

A Web-based Platform for Enhancing Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in Research for Development: Toward Achieving Development Outcomes

Enrico Bonaiuti[1], Claudio Proietti[2], Bastian Müller[1], Richard Thomas[1], Jalal Eddin Omary[3], Al-Najdawi Moayad[4], Winowiecki Leigh Ann[5], Quang Bao Le[1], Bravo Patricia[2], Graziano Valerio[1], Cabello Percy[2], Mazlom Belal[4], Opada Albosh Mohammed[4], Ayyash Bashar[6], Katuah Mustafa[7], Salem Mohammad[4], AlSoudani Omar[4], Wadi Mohammad[4], Nagaraji Satish[8]

[1]International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Jordan
[2]International Potato Center (CIP), CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (CRP-RTB), Peru
[3]Souq.com (Amazon), Jordan
[4]CodeObia, Jordan
[5]World Agroforestry Centre, Kenya
[6]Information Management and Mine Action Program (iMMAP) (US and France), Jordan
[7]World Food Program (UN-WFP), Jordan
[8]International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), India

ABSTRACT

Achieving efficiency in large and complex research for development programs (R4D) is a significant challenge. In 2015, as a response to the lack of a shared monitoring and evaluation system for CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs), Dryland Systems met the needs of participating institutions by developing the online platform Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL). MEL is a multi-program, multi-functional, interoperable system that collates, synthesizes, analyzes, disseminates and reports information generated in four multi-institution CRPs and Programs: Dryland Systems, Roots, Tubers and Bananas, Dryland Cereals, Grain Legumes and the IFAD funded program.

The platform supports CRPs and Centers planning, reporting and knowledge sharing processes, while monitoring and evaluating progress for future institutional learning. MEL facilitates the supervision of activities and projects research for development outputs, CRP reports, Capacity Development (CapDev) implementations, while timely informing performance evaluations and strategic decisions for management, administration, fund raising and partnerships development. The key functions of the platform include 1) research team composition with related staff time allocation and Full Cost Recovery; 2) budget entries by OCS categories and reconciliation with CRP L-Series; 3) risk analysis, risk scoring and development of corrective measures; 4) outputs, outcomes, and deliverables management; 5) milestones definition and tracking; 6) detailed impact pathway and theory of change development.

Unlike other commercially available or in-house systems, MEL is fully customizable and interoperable with other systems (e.g. Corporate Financial and Human Resource Systems-OCS, D-Space repository). Several API (e.g. UN Regions, Agrovoc subject keywords, SHERPA/RoMEO) have already been implemented and virtually any web-service can be adapted and incorporated, thereby increasing its efficiency.

The platform also provides MELSpace, a dedicated Open Access repository, and the Knowledge Sharing tool-set, which includes an internal discussion forum, a technical assistance chat, project dedicated web-

pages, and a communication-friendly module to write and disseminate project related blog stories, utterly boosting the produced knowledge outreach.

MEL implementation comes free of charge, a considerable saving for all adopting partners. As an extraordinary experience of CapDev, any user partner can optionally contribute with its own capacity to the customisation, up-scaling and further empowering of the platform.

Keywords: Analysis, complex context, data management, evaluation, impact pathway, innovation platform, Knowledge, knowledge sharing, learning, monitoring, planning, project management, research for development, return to investment, risk, science communication

Contact Address: Enrico Bonaiuti, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Amman, Jordan, e-mail: E.Bonaiuti@cgiar.org