

# Highlights

## CIAT in Africa

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The Highlights series summarises research results and policy implications from the work of CIAT and its partners in Africa

### Participatory monitoring and evaluation for institutional learning and change

CIAT has been implementing participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) systems as a means of strengthening learning, self-reflection and facilitating institutional learning and change (ILAC) processes within Research and Development (R&D) institutions and local communities for several years. PM&E provides a continuous process of learning and adjustment that is central to ILAC processes and that allows institutions to better engage with their partners and beneficiaries in decision making and collective learning processes throughout the project cycle. The objectives of CIAT's work in PM&E is to develop an iterative process for supporting institutional learning and to understand the role of PM&E systems in improving project performance and the costs and benefits of PM&E to institutions. Tools and guides to facilitate the development of PM&E systems in R&D institutions are also under development. The PM&E approach can be described as: "...an action-oriented process that leads to critical learning and corrective action by involving all levels of stakeholders, and building their capacity and commitment to reflect, analyze, and take responsibility for corrective actions..."<sup>1</sup>

#### Key Steps in establishing PM&E systems

##### 1: Understanding existing M&E practice in institutions

The first step involves making an assessment of the existing M&E system through workshops which bring people together to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) for developing (or strengthening) PM&E in their organisation.

##### 2: Identifying and engaging with stakeholders

Involving all stakeholders is critical to developing successful PM&E systems, integrating different perspectives from those within the community, R&D systems and project participants, and creating ownership in the process. A stakeholder analysis is used to identify stakeholders' interests, their roles and responsibilities and the participation strategy necessary to involve them in the process.

##### 3: Building stakeholders' capacity for PM&E

This process aims to develop a common understanding (and local vocabulary) of the concepts and principles of participation, monitoring, evaluation and indicators, using a variety of tools and methods (including formal workshops).

Result/ process/ activity	Indicators	Information requirements	Baseline	Target	Data source	Who collects? Who analyses? Who reports?	When? How often?	Possible tools
Integrated natural resource management options evaluated with men & women	Proportion of men & women participating in project activities	No. of men No. of women List of activities Nos. participating in activities	0/0	70/30 by yr 1 50/50 by yr 3	Farmers	Farmers collect primary data. Field officer compiles & shares analysis with farmers	Farmers record during each activity Field officer records during each activity & compiles at end of season	Attendance register Field journals

Table 1: Example of a PM&E Plan

It employs methods that encourage participation of all individuals in the group (using graphics, role-plays, and mentoring tools). This is reinforced by the practical implementation of the key steps of PM&E with stakeholders. The capacity building strategy is simplified to ensure ease of replication, adaptability and relevance to other stakeholders.

#### **4: Deciding what to monitor & evaluate**

The team of stakeholders begin implementation of the PM&E process by developing a common vision and agreeing on measurable results and processes that need to be monitored and evaluated. To achieve this, each team develops what is called an 'impact chain' (which includes impacts, outcomes, outputs, processes and activities of the project). In the impact chain, several activities contribute to an output, several outputs contribute to an outcome, and several outcomes contribute to an impact. The impact chain also includes processes, such as approaches, strategies, and methodologies that are applied to achieve results, and describes what is happening to (and between) stakeholders while the project is being implemented.

#### **5: Developing indicators**

This involves identifying both qualitative and quantitative measures (indicators) for monitoring progress made towards the achievement of expected results (indicators). Indicators help to understand "where we are, which way we are going, and how far we are from where we want to be." Our experience has shown us that different stakeholder groups use different indicators for similar goals. The focus of PM&E is to integrate these different types of indicators. Also, we have found that guiding questions (such as 'What would show us that we have achieved our results?') are often more effective in facilitating understanding and development of indicators.

#### **6: Developing a PM&E plan**

The PM&E plan (Table 1) synthesises the results and their indicators and include information requirements, baselines and targets for indicators, the frequencies and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and reporting. Roles and responsibilities are guided by PM&E interests, type of data, source of data, and ease of data collection. Special emphasis is placed on developing targeted baselines that provide a starting point from which to measure change, to develop realistic

targets, and to assess whether change has occurred or not.

#### **7: Data collection, analysis & documentation**

A range of different tools is used to collect, analyse and document data, which includes focus group discussion, participatory impact diagrams, resource maps, social maps, and institutional maps. Simple registers, records, questionnaire surveys, and process journals can also be used. Stakeholders decide which tools should be used to collect information on which indicators, how sampling will be done, who should collect and analyse information on which indicators, how frequently this will be done and how the information will be shared.

#### **8: Reflection & use of PM&E results**

Once PM&E information is collected and analysed the next step is a reflection process that enables the stakeholders to discuss their results, systematically review and reflect on the progress of the project and make adjustments as required. Reflection is based on assessing progress towards the agreed or defined objectives and is focused on the outputs, outcomes, and processes, when compared with targets. A series of questions can be used to guide the reflection workshops, such as: What have we achieved this season/year? What worked/did not work? Why? What do we need to improve? What action can be taken?

#### **Lessons learned**

The PM&E process enables institutions to better engage with their partners and beneficiaries in ways that involve them in decision-making and collective learning processes throughout the project cycle. Our experience has demonstrated that particular skills (in facilitation, analysis of qualitative data, project management and gender analysis) are required for effective support of PM&E. The key to successful application of the skills by stakeholders obtained during capacity building activities is to provide mentoring and practical training to them during the implementation phase. Attitude change is an essential component for PM&E to be successful and requires commitment to the participatory process from all stakeholders. Experience has shown that when stakeholders are involved at all stages, it creates a sense of ownership in the process, leading to better understanding and implementation of PM&E by all concerned.



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1. Estrella M. and Gaventa J. (1999) Who Counts Reality? Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: A Literature Review. IDS Working Paper No 70.