

# Highlights

## CIAT in Africa

### Community-driven participatory monitoring and evaluation

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

Community-driven participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) systems offer new ways for people to strengthen learning and change at the community level. This approach to PM&E is unique as its focus is on a system that is developed, managed and supported by local communities for their own purposes. In this process, communities agree on their goals and what they need to do to achieve them, what changes they expect, what local indicators they can identify to track these changes and finally what the factors can make their projects succeed or fail. Throughout these processes local people are involved in collecting and analysing their own data, and make their own decisions on how to adjust their activities accordingly using locally defined indicators.



The facilitator aims to build practical skills and confidence within the group while remaining sensitive to social behaviour, gender and equity issues.

CIAT's research in community driven PM&E focuses on the development and refinement of the PM&E process, the role it plays in empowering rural communities, strategies for scaling out of the process and the costs and benefits of it to both the communities and to the research and development (R&D) institutions working with them.

#### Key steps

The process of community-driven PM&E (outlined in the six steps below) is achieved through participatory and practical learning sessions. The facilitator aims to build practical skills and confidence within the group while remaining sensitive to social behaviour, gender and equity issues.

#### 1: Collectively developing a common understanding of PM&E

A graphical representation of the agricultural cycle (represented by a crop or an enterprise familiar to the community) is presented to the community group and they are encouraged to discuss it. Questions centred on the cycle (such as what it means to them, whether this is relevant to what happens in their lives), help communities to conceptualise monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and its benefits. Community members are invited to cite practical examples of when



Materials prepared by Katundulu farmers group, Malawi

they have used M&E concepts in their lives. The development of local terms for M&E and the development and use of graphics that represent local situations has been central to developing a common understanding of M&E at community level.

## 2: Agreeing on what to monitor: developing goals

Visualisation tools (such as force-field analysis and the river code<sup>1</sup>) are used to enable communities to develop shared goals and a common vision on what to monitor. The river code is a role-play (acted out by the community members) that enables them to analyse their current situation (one side of the river), their desired future situation (the other side of the river), what they need to do to move from the current to the desired situation (steps to cross the river) and the strategies they need to employ (how to cross the river). In force field analysis the community use a diagram to think about and record their opportunities, and the constraining factors, in reaching their goals.

## 3: Developing indicators for measuring change

The concept of indicators for community driven M&E (which show whether the group is making progress, which direction it is moving in and how far it is from its predefined goals) is discussed using graphics and familiar stories from the farmers' lives (such as signposts to the market, for example).

Community indicators for measuring change are developed during a brainstorming session of groups of farmers for each result or objective. Small group sessions ensure that there are contributions from the majority of the members of the community, representing its diversity. Different members have different perspectives on the indicators, influenced by their involvement in the project, their gender, wealth status or their expectations of a particular activity.

## 4: Organising communities

A committee is elected by the group and charged with the responsibility of data collection, analysis and providing regular feedback to the community. This process involves a) the development of criteria for the selection of committee members; b) facilitating the development of simple tools for data collection, and c) training the committee on how to manage the PM&E processes (for example, when to collect data on the indicators, how to analyse, when to report).

## 5: Data collection and analysis

Communities manage the process of M&E using simple tools for collecting and analysing data. Some common data collection tools include resource maps to collect baseline data and changes that occur, attendance

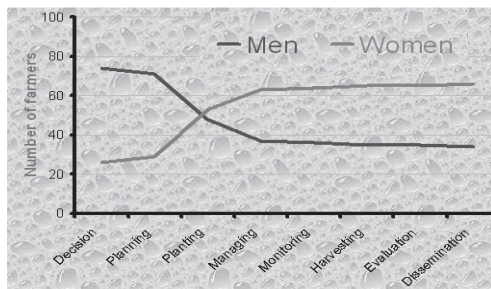


Figure 1: Participation in activities by men & by women from Karambo community group,

registers to record participation in community activities (Figure 1), visitors books to record linkages with others, and input, output and account registers to record enterprise profitability. The community perform simple analyses on their data (for example attendance levels data to demonstrate trends) with the assistance of the facilitator.

## 6: Reflection

This is a process that helps the community to analyse what is working, what is not working and why. Reflection allows members to reflect on the progress of the project towards achieving its goals and to adjust activities as required. It provides a forum for exchanging and evaluating information; and it allows community members to systematically review their activities. Reflections need to be carried out for each result (or activity or process) and its indicators, one at a time. This can be done using simple graphics or questions to examine the results of any data analysis. Decisions should be made within the group about the implications of the analysed information for stakeholders and on decision-making within the project.

## Benefits of community driven PM&E

The purpose of community-driven PM&E is to empower the local community to initiate control over their own development projects and to take corrective action when necessary. Learning to manage the PM&E process builds the social and human capital assets of the rural poor, often resulting in better rural livelihoods through more relevant and timely improvements in local agro-enterprise projects. Effective PM&E systems are also useful in building local communities' capacity to make effective demands on service providers and in improving information flow between communities and R&D institutions.



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1. Both techniques were developed by the World Bank to empower communities to conceptualise, plan, and carry out their own projects. For more information see: Rietbergen-McCracken, J. and D. Narayan. 1998. Participation and Social Assessment: Tools and Techniques. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 1818 H Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20433, U.S.A.