Summary of the 3rd Face to Face Meeting of the CGIAR Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Community of Practice (MEL CoP)

ILRI campus, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Oct. 16-20, 2017

Meeting Objectives

The overall meeting goal was to contribute to the development of the CGIAR Performance-Based Management Framework. Confirmed through needs assessment, the following three main objectives were identified for the meeting:

1. Contribute to the development of the CGIAR Performance-Based Management (PBM) Framework and develop a shared understanding of MEL requirements and roles of MEL CoP & ECOP members.
2. Exchange and share exciting Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) work that is going on in the CRPs, Platforms, Centers, projects, partners, and non-CGIAR org.
3. Share ideas towards a strategy for how to work together and with external partners to measure progress and contribution towards common indicators, using Ethiopia as a case study.

Key results

The 5-day meeting of MEL representatives of the CGIAR Centers, Research Programs (CRPs), and Platforms (PF) pursued the production of very concrete products, of which the key ones (in no particular order) are:

1. Overview of history and contribution of the MEL CoP into the CGIAR to-date
2. Stock take of CGIAR Results-Based Management (RBM) experience
3. Contribution to the validation of a concise set of common reporting indicators (8) covering the spheres of influence and control for SC05 and review of their description in a handbook
4. Final harmonization of a monitoring, evaluation, and learning glossary
5. Proposal for aligned planning and reporting templates and recommended submission deadlines for the transition year 2017-18
6. Commitment to prepare a consolidated feedback on the IEA RBM evaluation, and IEA proposed CGIAR Evaluation system
7. Components of an improved marketing of the value of the groups of expertise to the system
8. Work plan and priority areas for the next year for the community

Purpose and added value of the MEL CoP

The MEL CoP over the two years of its existence pursued two strands of work. On the one hand, there is the work on standardized MEL at the system-level for CGIAR entities (Centers, CRPs, and Platforms) to be proposed to Science Leaders and SMO. On the other hand, the purpose of the community is to share experience and exciting innovative approaches and

examples of applied monitoring, evaluation and learning. Striking a healthy balance between these two objectives was one of the objectives for the 3rd f-2-f meeting.

What was different about this 3rd f-2-f meeting

This 3rd f-2-f meeting of the MEL CoP was the first joint one with sessions integrated of the evaluation community of practice (lead by the Independent Evaluation Arrangement). Topics that were hosted and facilitated by the two independent CGIAR evaluation units were:
1. IEA Results-based Management Evaluation – near final recommendations
2. IEA proposed Evaluation System for CGIAR
3. SPIA's impact assessment plan

The conscious decision for organizing the meeting at a location of where some on-going monitoring, evaluation and learning could be looked at on the field level was a successful addition to the meeting (in comparison to earlier ones). The Africa Rising program (Feed The Future and USAID funded) shared by many Centers and CRPs was presented to the MEL CoP members and colleagues had the chance to look at some of the work (field trip) and exchange with program participants.

When looking at the evaluation of the meeting by participants, this third meeting was the most successful in terms of satisfaction of range of discussed topics, location, and structure of the meeting.

What is next for the CGIAR MEL CoP

A conducted survey of its members showed a clear commitment to the group and its continuation even if funding situation for future f-2-f interactions is uncertain at this point. Sub-groups were established to address the intention of the group to continue to strengthen the sharing of MEL work of the community. Some of the work areas are for example:
- Updated terms of reference for the CoP,
- Series of webinars on innovative approaches and examples of applied monitoring, evaluation and learning alternating with updates for the CoPs monthly virtual meetings
- Compilation of MEL tools, best practices, approach into a CGIAR MEL support pack,
- Interoperability of management information systems (MIS), such as MARLO and MEL, using the same standards
- Guidelines for CGIAR MEL standards, and implementation of peer assist and auto-evaluation mechanisms.

The group agreed on putting some focus on marketing its contribution more strategically. An initial step was made prior to the meeting in form of the setting up of a website presentation to make its work more visible.