

Monitoring and Learning Strategy for FIP II - Ms.Mona Dhamankar

Purpose and Scope

Largely the purpose of M&L in the Fodder Innovation Project (FIP-II) is to:

- Ensure effective operations: planning and organising inputs and financial resources in order to implement project activities efficiently according to periodic work-plans.
- Guide action research: provide feedback and information about the relationships and behavioural outcomes of the project activities, to generate insights about the status of the innovation system and to suggest interventions leading to improved innovation capacity
- Create a learning environment: inspire and help those involved in the project to periodically engage in reflective learning processes to generate insights on the progress and performance, breakthroughs and shortcomings in course of implementation of the project.

The M&L system will simultaneously provide information for:

- KPO level feedback and learning loops,
- Project level tracking of resource utilization,
- Research management for synthesis of lessons,
- Socio-economic impact on poor livestock dependent farmers, and
- Capturing wider outcomes of project implementation

Information gathering and organizing

The KPO level learning and feedback loops are organized under five distinct mechanisms:

- Periodic, consultative meetings with relevant stakeholders to promote reflection and replanning in response to field situations

- Quarterly planning and reporting on project management indicators for project related and fodder related activities. This will provide information for log-frame based reporting on project progress
- Systematic recording of changes in individual and collective behaviour of the stakeholders, substantiated with narratives providing evidence
- Maintaining an internal 'score board' to measure performance of the innovation cloud on parameters identified based on the project activities planned to address the bottlenecks in the innovation system. The bottlenecks could be operational, technological, institutional and/or policy related. If possible, also creating another Score Board in consultation with other stakeholders in the cloud and initiating a culture of reflection and self-assessment on a mutually agreed set of network parameters
- Documenting significant events/ anecdotes that occur within the system, beyond the immediate activities planned – these may be narratives of unexpected events or changes in the environment that might have a bearing on project outcomes.

Tools

The project views M&L as a learning mechanism, as a management tool for making mid-course corrections and fine-tuning the approaches and actions taken up by the project team, the research management group as well as the KPOs in the pilot innovation clouds. Therefore the tools for the project M&L system will be derived from on an array of existing tools such as RAAKS, Log-Frame, Appreciative Enquiry, Socio-economic benchmarking, Actor-linkage matrices and Process Documentation. These are listed below:

To Monitor	M & L tool
Project Activities (network related)	-KPO Qtrly Report Behaviour change Documentation

Pilot innovation-cloud process learning	-Diagnostic studies -KPO Score Board -Significant events
Project Activities (livestock/fodder related)	-KPO Qtrly Report Project Management Indicators
Project team process learning	-Team+ KPO consultations -National workshop
Changes in Fodder situation (availability, supply, production, use etc.)	-Socio-economic survey (mid-term)
Changes in poor livestock-keepers socio-economic status	-Socio-economic survey end of project)

Project management information and research information provided in the KPO reports, will be compiled and synthesized by the Project Manager and Post-Docs in the two countries respectively. This will be supplemented by periodic meetings with the Innovation Coordinators on site as well as at national and international events with the KPOs in India and Nigeria.

Measuring the developmental impact of the project

The research information will be used to track institutional changes over time and relate those changes to likely developmental outcomes with reference to fodder scarcity and the needs of livestock-dependent poor people. A combination of quantified, socio-economic benchmarking studies in the pilot sites, periodic re-surveys and qualitative documentation of technical and institutional changes through episode analysis supplemented will provide the basis for assessing the value of institutional innovations to the agendas of the poor.

Progress to date

The M&L strategy was finalised by the Research Management Group in a meeting¹ with the Innovation Coordinators representing KPOs in India. Thereafter they took up the task of creating their own score boards. The scoreboards and quarterly monitoring formats were discussed and refined on site with the KPOs in Nigeria (SG 2000 and JDPC) and one KPO in India (RAGACOVAS); visits to the other two Indian KPOs are scheduled in the first week of March'09. The planning and reporting format was well received and it will be used for the first time at the end of present quarter.

In course of discussions, the KPOs mentioned that it would be difficult to facilitate creation of a community score board ie the common score board for self-assessment by the participating stakeholders. They were apprehensive about the level of openness within the network to be able to accept feedback and criticism on behaviours of actors. They felt that it might affect the relationships built thus far and hamper their contribution towards the common action plans. Therefore they have decided to defer using that tool for the present and look for other ways to carry out a participatory assessment of network behaviour.