



RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
**Climate Change,
Agriculture and
Food Security**



CCAFS Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

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CCAFS is led by



Strategic partner



Introduction

Started in 2011, the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) is one of the first 16 Research Programs (CRPs) under CGIAR. At the moment, CCAFS is transitioning into Phase 2 with the focus shifting from outputs to outcomes, defined as changes in people's practices and behavior. By mid-2015 CCAFS will be structured around the following four Flagship Programs (FPs): Climate-smart agricultural practices; Climate information services and climate-informed safety nets; Low emissions agricultural development and Policies and institutions for climate resilient food systems. The Flagship Programs will be carried out in the already existing five regions, East Africa, West Africa, South Asia, South East Asia, and Latin America, and contain cross-cutting topics such as gender and data management. This radical shift, officially starting in 2017, requires a number of systems in place in order to be successfully implement.

According to us, the CCAFS Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system should be organized around two key documents: a monitoring and evaluation strategy accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation support pack.

The M&E strategy is currently being developed for the CCAFS results-based management (RBM) trial with the intent that this will be a good model for CCAFS as a whole for its extension phase (2015-2016) and Phase 2 (from 2017). It outlines the strategic M&E framework that supports CCAFS operations in the extension phase and into Phase 2, helping the program achieve its goal: to catalyse positive change towards climate-smart agriculture, food systems and landscapes for the 1.3 billion people involved in agriculture globally, the vast majority of whom live in less developed countries.

CCAFS operations include its regional Flagship programs and projects and their implementation and work to achieve results within the new framework and focus on outcomes. The support pack elaborates and exemplifies how the M&E strategy can be implemented and is accompanied by practical suggestions. The support pack should be seen as a living document, where lessons learnt and tips for how it can be used are to be captured. The tentative content for the M&E support pack is given at the end of this document.

This draft Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy is structured into three main sections: Goals and Objectives; Theoretical Framework and Thinking and Monitoring and Evaluation Elements.

Our audience: Who is this for?

During the design and trial phase, the main audience will be Flagship Program 4 (FP4) Results-based management **projects and implementing partners**. That embark on doing something new and better, as much as possible, rather than doing something old better (that had not worked in the past). This is as wide a field in terms of technical support and backstopping and in terms of good management practices including monitoring and evaluation, learning and knowledge sharing to build and maintain an innovative operational unit.

Beyond the trial phase, the core audiences for this work are the following groups:

- **CCAFS Flagships, regional programs and implementing partners** (extension phase and Phase 2). FP4 offers piloting and testing of processes, documentation and lessons that can be taken up by the other FPs to avoid "reinventing the wheel" and pitfalls and allow for more efficient and effective programmatic management.

- **CCAFS knowledge and data management and communication groups.** We see the products from the M&E activities as suitable sources for communication products for a wide range of audiences. We would rely on the resources and competencies of the CCAFS communications team to support M&E efforts while supporting the implementation of the CGIAR open source and access policy.
- **Consortium Office and other CRPs** to learn from the RBM trial and take what is useful and works well – very much in the mode of appreciative inquiry as an approach to change management.

Goal

The proposed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system aims to develop an “evaluative culture” within CCAFS that encourages self-reflection and self-examination, seeks evidence, take time out to learn, encourages experimentation and change so that M&E becomes an integrated mechanism.

Through our monitoring and evaluation activities, we will be able to answer the following questions in relation to our efforts: What has changed? • For whom? • How significant was it? • Will it last (in cases where it should last)? • In what ways did we contribute to these changes?

Objectives

The CCAFS monitoring and evaluation strategy has the following objectives for its conceptualization guided by the overall CCAFS principles for partnership, engagement and communications.

- **Focusing on users, utilization of monitoring and evaluation and accountability:** We want the M&E system to be user- and utilization-focused that ensures that when we invest in M&E measures it is for a specific audience, who have some demand and use for the information and results it produces, e.g. project teams for their annual planning, donors to find out about progress and achievements. This requires CCAFS to take its accountability very seriously, i.e. its responsibility for the use of resources and the decisions made, as well as the obligation to demonstrate that work has been done in compliance with agreed-upon rules and standards, and to report fairly and accurately on performance results vis-a-vis mandated roles and/or plans.

- **Emphasis on learning through the monitoring and evaluation activities:** It is key that the M&E activities are linked to learning and integrated into each flagship and region. The questions, whose learning and whose learning counts, should always be carefully considered when implementing and building in M&E activities or when selecting a suitable M&E methodology. Like in the Climate Change and Social Learning ([CCSL](#)) initiative, the aim is for “transformational learning”, or triple-loop learning. CCAFS teams and partners learn from their work and make necessary adjustments in an outcome-focused project and program; i.e. to its theory of change and impact pathway. They are given reflective spaces and tools to learn how best to learn from their work and improve towards better performance and achievements of development outcomes.

Single-loop learning is the most basic type of learning and behavioural change that can take place within a system and is described as incremental learning. Double-loop learning, also known as reframing, contrasts with single-loop learning by questioning the purpose and function of work being done within an organization and does not take existing organizational structures for granted. Triple-loop learning, involves the questioning of work processes and the basis for tasks within an organization and the reflexive examination of individual's attitudes and points of view.¹ It occurs when there is a shift in perspective and transformational change within a person or organisation. Transformational learning could lead to increased knowledge sharing and better-informed decision-making, and to options for solutions being raised and evaluated. It can enable people to build their capacity to distill key lessons from reflection (hindsight) and make best use of any lessons (insights) for future planning (foresight).

¹ <http://www.business.com/guides/single-loop-learning-key-terms-32794/>

- **Encourage adaptive management:** Working in a constantly changing environment requires a strategic approach with built-in reflection, monitoring and evaluation and flexibility for corrective actions to strengthen predictive capacity. This means working with theories of change and making assumptions on how we anticipate change to happen (to address requirements for planning and linear/ordered systems thinking) on the one hand and knowing that, especially when working in complex systems, change does not always happen as predicted on the other hand. This requires that we have the ability within the system to make necessary adjustments, well-documented and justified, along the insights that we gain through our work.

- **Allowing blurred boundaries:** By proposing an integrated monitoring and evaluation system with the overall goal of creating an evaluative culture, there are linkages and overlaps with a number of other areas, like social and organizational learning, knowledge management, communications, data- and information management. Instead of entering into discussions to define the boundaries, we acknowledge that some of the boundaries are not clear-cut. However, even with these blurred boundaries there is a need to ensure complementarity, collaboration and value-adding, capitalize on overlaps and close linkages to knowledge management, learning and communications by identifying synergies, and avoiding duplications.

Theoretical Framework and Thinking

With this shift, focus on outcomes influenced by multiple factor that are beyond direct control of CCAFS, the traditional practice of assigning accountability to individual researchers for delivering outputs is no longer adequate.

Result-based Management (RBM)

Accountability for outcomes encompasses Result-based Management (RBM), which places a lot of emphasis on a systematic, constructive learning from past mistakes and experiences and subsequent adaption.² RBM follows the logical chain that project activities produce tangible concrete outputs. The strategic use of these outputs will help transform outputs into appropriate outcomes (changes in practice and behaviour). Often changes in practice are preceded by a change in knowledge, attitude, and skills that eventually will lead to impact.

By tying the RBM approach with nested impact pathways, CCAFS is bringing in an additional key dimension, namely people, since they are the ones that will make the changes happen or change themselves.

A modular RBM M&E system offers the following added values:

- Understand why the program and projects are believed to contribute to the outcomes sought—the theory of change.
- Set meaningful performance expectations/targets for key results (outputs and outcomes).
- Measure and analyse results and assess the contribution being made by the program to the observed outcomes/impact.
- Deliberately learn from this evidence and analysis to adjust delivery and, periodically, modify or confirm program design, i.e. have an adaptive management in place.
- Report on the performance achieved against expectations—outcomes accomplished and the contribution being made by the program³.

² UNPD Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating & Evaluating for Development Results Chapter 8 Section 2 on Learning and generating knowledge from monitoring and evaluation Accountability for learning, <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/ch8-2.html>

³ adapted from the UNDP understanding of RBM

Combination of ordered - and complex systems

It is important to keep in mind that CCAFS work is within and around complex systems, with multi-sectors, cutting across various scales and with the involvement of many different people.

Also, CCAFS takes accountability towards its donors and stakeholders very seriously. Therefore, it requires a specific approach that allows for planning according to a linear logic with assumptions for how desired changes can happen and be supported. At the same time though, this approach needs to allow for flexibility to react and change according to the lessons and opportunities that are presented through reality during implementation. CCAFS previous “Priority setting and monitoring and evaluation strategy” from 2012 summarizes CCAFS operations as guided by three elements: foresight and priority setting, work planning and reporting. These are still key while this M&E strategy introduces additional pieces, like impact pathways, M&E modules, and explicit RBM. Additionally, in some cases, CCAFS has to provide evidence in terms of what did not happen because of its work, which requires specific consideration.

We propose a combination of elements from different monitoring and evaluation theories and methodologies to address the two - often contrary - realities, i.e. structured linear thinking and planning and complex systems thinking. Therefore, this monitoring and evaluation system can be best described as a modular system with different key elements that need to be considered by CCAFS teams, and in most cases with a variety of tools for implementers to choose from and find the best match for their work and its specific context.

Impact Pathways (IPs) and Theory of Change (ToC)

The framework for this modular approach is set through the development of Impact Pathways (IPs) and Theory of Change (ToC) across CCAFS operations for its different areas, i.e. CCAFS overall, regional programs, flagships and projects. The framework will be a lean, presentable and simple front end for CCAFS IPs and TOCs, describing how CCAFS flagships, regions

and projects regard anticipated changes happening and their role in it. However, there are other levels that can be elaborated if needed or wanted by stakeholders, users etc.

CCAFS investment into the development, harmonization and use of IPs and more elaborated ToC has three main reasons:

- To ensure that CCAFS plan of work is targeted at achieving outcomes (= changes in people’s behavior) and requires tasks that address the ‘use of outputs’ built into each activity plan. Previously, this was not as explicit or often project planning and mandates stopped at the production of good and sound scientific evidence through publications.
- To strategically encourage communication and collaboration among colleagues in different leadership functions and guide cross-disciplinary exchanges and improved work plans through the process of building and harmonizing different IPs.
- To revisit the trajectory of CCAFS contributions to change and use them as an ex-ante impact assessment. They serve as a measure for progress towards anticipated changes and are also subject to be adapted (revised and corrected) according to what has been learnt about how valid projections were. Therefore, the minimal up-front system is an obligatory requirement.

However, in terms of lessons already emerging, there is a need for having a simple and minimal front end of IPs that can be presented e.g. to donors, stakeholders and partners for discussion and explanation of what we try

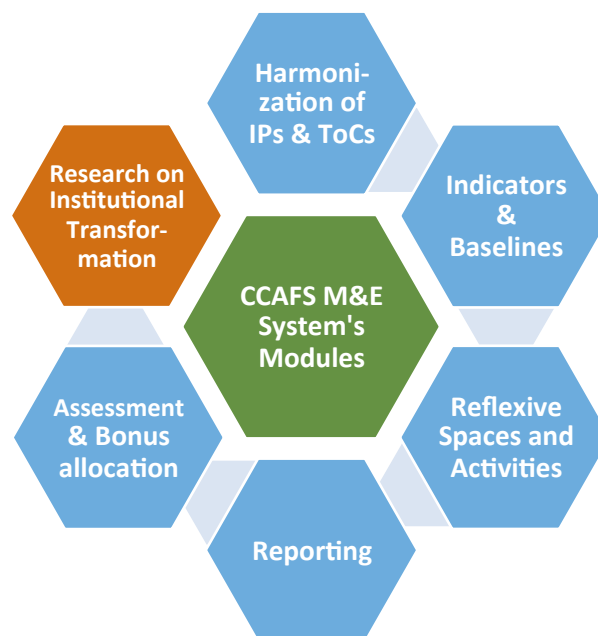
**Focus on outcomes and
people**

to achieve with a fuller set of pieces that would help with the development of a project or program and more detailed analysis e.g. of stakeholders, users of research results, problems and opportunities if considered useful and wanted.

Impact pathways are similar to a logframe approach with a key difference that they put the focus on people and emphasize outcomes, i.e. behavioral changes and incentives for change.

Monitoring and Evaluation System Modules

With the proposed M&E system we provide practical mechanisms and tools to ensure a balanced quantitative and qualitative monitoring. Especially for the latter, we acknowledge and want to consciously work with subjectivity and the fact that the ‘truth’ lies in the eyes of the spectator and thus requires the presentation of different perspectives to show the multifaceted type of our work. The system is therefore made up of a set of modules, elaborated in more details in the M&E Support Pack.



Monitoring and Evaluation Support Pack

The support pack will be available online and user-oriented, i.e. the content will be built for the different groups of colleagues who we anticipate to be involved with and contribute to the CCAFS M&E system.

The content of the support pack will be dynamic and its development interactive, where people will be able to add new tools and share experience with specific methods. Below is a first indicative list of anticipated content for the CCAFS M&E support pack:

- Glossary
- Phased Implementation Plan
- Illustration on how CCAFS is contributing to the Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs) and CGIAR System-Level Outcomes (SLOs) how we will aggregate up to those
- Training materials, e.g. we could have the materials on building IPs and TOC developed for and by a CCAFS working group on Impact Pathways (GIMPS)
- Detailed description and explanation of each M&E module (including templates, where appropriate):
 - Tools for measuring progress, learning and change, e.g.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Knowledge Attitude Skills and Practice Surveys ✚ Significant Change / Outcome Stories ✚ Event, activities, workshop evaluations ✚ Outcome Journals with progress markers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Expectation management (before and after) ✚ Key Informant Interviews ✚ Focus Group Discussions ✚ ...
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 - Harmonizing IPs and TOCs
 - Indicators and Baselines
 - Reflection mechanisms
 - Reporting → Updated P&R Planning and Reporting support system
 - Assessment and Bonus allocation

- Lessons, limitations and challenges encountered when implementing RBM M&E
- References other resources on the different concepts we draw upon in our strategy, e.g. on triple loop learning, RBM, complex systems, and to other useful training resources and tutorials
- Discussion and sharing platform for more detailed thinking, e.g. on the issue of nesting IPs and TOCs, on partner engagement and working across different teams.