Session notes and action points from the Livestock and Fish theory of change-based planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning system workshop, Nairobi, 26-27 January 2016

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CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food secure future. The CGIAR Research Program on Livestock and Fish aims to increase the productivity of small-scale livestock and fish systems in sustainable ways, making meat, milk and fish more available and affordable across the developing world. The Program brings together four CGIAR centres: the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) with a mandate on livestock; WorldFish with a mandate on aquaculture; the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), which works on forages; and the International Center for Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), which works on small ruminants. http://livestockfish.cgiar.org
Workshop objectives

The two-day workshop marked the end of a pilot phase of a ToC-based impact monitoring approach in two Livestock and Fish value chain programs in Tanzania and Ethiopia. The pilot phase started in January 2015.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To review the results of the three pilots in term of both process and content;
- To apply the findings to the development of a robust PMEL system for CRP, phase 2.

The outcomes sought:

- Refreshed understanding of ToC and how it supports learning.
- Reviewed pilot process in depth on Tanzania VCTS and two others briefly.
- Recommendations made for roll out of ToC in ILRI.
- Consider other elements needed by Livestock and Fish CRP in order to develop and implement a robust PMEL system for the whole organization.
- Discussed and agreed next steps.
- Developed a timetable for the next steps.

Participants included the CRP MEL team; staff involved directly in the pilots in Tanzania and Ethiopia; the leader of the Uganda VCTs program, as well as management staff from the CRP.
Day 1: Review of pilots

Day 1 began with a refresher session on the basics of working with theory of change and a complete PMEL cycle.

The second session was an in-depth exploration of the results of the Tanzania pilot, as well as a reflection on the pilot process and what could be improved. Key highlights included:

- The ToC approach had provided insights into the VCTS change process that had not been picked up before; for example, the contributions of other agencies to the change process that create unexpected changes (Tanzania); the capacity challenges in a partner agency that require considerably more investment than previously thought (Ethiopia).
- Difficulties in obtaining key data about behavior changes in partner agencies when they do not have systematic documentation.
- The ToC pilot had captured changes from the documented ‘start’ position that were significant and would not have been captured through existing processes (Tanzania).
- The Tanzania team wishes to conduct a full critical reflection and planning process later in 2016, to build on the insights gained through the pilot.
Feedback on the pilot process

a) What people liked about ToC:
   - Being clear - what we did with whom and why
   - Very clear about assumptions
   - Involves partners
   - Focus on changes and real people
   - Integrates cross cutting issues via Dimensions of Change
   - We need to be clear about Boundaries (we/us/you???)

b) Challenges:
   - Others have other ToCs influencing similar changes
   - How do we align these
   - How do we think about contribution?

c) Questions/ comments around PMEL:
   - How do we deal with projects that are starting and ending at different stages?
   - How can we be confident that we can report to donors across the whole CRP?
   - Looking at technical flagships e.g. genetics – how do we map changes onto whole ToC pathway?
   - When do we give feedback and test assumptions?
   - Which other documents of change should we have?
   - We need a plan to finalise CRP ToC.

d) Comments on different sections of country programme reports – developing and validating ToCs:
   - Thought is needed to introduce ToC to stakeholders – it can be challenging to introduce something new.
   - Entry points can be found, for example a planning and review meeting.
   - It is helpful to come with prepared thinking to a Toc discussion.
   - It is not always necessary to seek ownership from stakeholders - it may be more of a validation exercise.
   - Do View is a useful software tool for capturing important information related to the impact pathway.

e) Comments on different sections of country programme reports – baselines and impact monitoring forms
   - The forms need to be able to handle unexpected changes.
   - Consistency is needed in baseline and assessment.
   - Metrics: a balance of qualitative and quantitative are required.
   - Barriers and facilitating factors are currently at macro level – they should be linked to specific changes.
   - Assumptions also need to be linked more to more specific change areas.
   - For each change area, create a section for explaining what went well and what were the challenges; and where there are areas for improvement
   - Refer to data sources for each change area.
f) Overall recommendations
   - ToCs are required at all levels – need to find ways to report on IDOs SLOs ROs etc etc
   - Revise country programme formats
   - Differentiate between VCTS and other flag ships and make relationships between all levels
   - Need greater clarity on what defines a project and when it becomes a programme (product)
   - We need more clarity on what’s involved, who does what, capacity time resources
   - We need a budget line
   - We need minimum requirements for each mandated step
   - Reflect on how to support partners to gather relevant information.

Actions for the consultants:
- Consultants (MOF and IV) to review and revise Country Programme document and process guidelines to reflect comments and recommendations.
- Other recommendations are documented below.
Day 2: Walk-through the design of the PMEL system

Day 2 was a structured set of sessions to inform the design of the PMEL system for the CRP. The objectives of day 2 were to apply the findings from the pilots to the development of a robust PMEL system for CRP Phase 2. The sessions followed a stepwise approach. There was also a feedback session to colleagues involved in the CRP writing process.

Steps followed in the PMEL design process

The design thinking process followed these steps:

- Introduction to the requirements of the PMEL system for the Livestock and Fish CRP by the director.
- Reflections on the draft over-arching CRP impact pathway and narrative.
- Step 1: Establishing the purpose of PMEL system
- Step 2: Identifying the elements and levels of the system Part 1
- Step 3: What does a good PMEL system like?
- Step 4: Roles and responsibilities at each level of the PMEL system.
- Step 5: How do we make the PMEL system happen? (Action planning)
Reflections on the draft CRP-level Impact Pathway

Two draft visualisations of the CRP ToC were shared. One has been developed by the Phase 2 writing team, the other by the consultants based on the insights from the VCTS ToC pilots and established best practice in working with ToC for PMEL purposes.

The respective differences and potential value of each diagram were discussed, and the following points made:

- The clarification around the “messy middle” was appreciated in the consultants’ version.
- The ‘Dimensions of Change’ 4 quadrants in the centre of the consultants’ version was agreed to be a useful representation that captures the International Public Goods changes, as well as site-specific changes. Some additions to the sub-changes in boxes are needed.
- There is anxiety around being expected to deliver on everything represented in the impact pathway.
- The CRP impact pathways need to focus more clearly on IDOs.
- It would be helpful to add in the ‘spheres of influence’ concept to the final version.
- Element on the left should be added to include a feedback loop around research.
- Dimensions of change should be stakeholder focussed (e.g. ‘markets and enterprise’ dimension of change should include both suppliers and consumers. The overall box was right but there is a need add in access and consumer behaviour.)
- Explain what the arrows mean – for example by articulating interventions and assumptions.
- Rotate boxes by 90 degrees to better reflect closer relationship to research outcomes – so that the are two stages of change, first research system changes and policy/regulation changes, followed by changes for livestock keepers’ livelihood systems and in markets.
- Check stakeholders are in the right boxes (are business partners and research institutions stakeholders or providers?).

Actions for the CRP Phase 2 writing group:
- The group recommended that the Phase 2 writing group integrate both versions into a single and seek additional feedback through appropriate processes to obtain a general consensus and ownership of the CRP-level impact pathway.
- **Important:** The CRP impact pathway needs to reflect desired changes in gender and social norms, and so this is essential to integrate into the CRP impact pathway through involvement of the gender specialists.

Actions for the consultants:
- Provide feedback on the new version, according to established quality and technical criteria.
Establishing the purpose of PMEL

The discussion on clarifying the purpose of the PMEL system highlighted a number of key points, as follows:

- How to reflect in the PMEL system that the CRP does not control all of our resources to implement CRP programmes and projects.
- We need a 30-year plan for e.g. vaccines but a 3-year operational plan for the CRP – how can these tensions be reconciled?
- Research objectives/outputs need feedback loops which include stakeholders.
- The PMEL system should support institute processes too (ILRI?)
- Highlight the need to respond to donor demand in the purpose.
- Connect gathering of evidence to policy influencing.
- Need a process for understanding and reporting on contributions, our own and others.

**Action for consultants:**
- Draft a PMEL system purpose statement for the design document.

**Actions for CRP Management:**
- Take final decision on appropriate statement.

Essential elements to add to the PMEL system diagram (discussion of Steps 2 and 3)

- Aligning CRP ToC thinking with donors’ ToCs is important.
- Make feedback loops more explicit between different aspects of the PMEL system.
- “Start position” needs a very to clarify that this is a baseline positioning.
- “Planning” element needs to include “and design”
- Addition of: “Ongoing research and monitoring of progress and change
- **New Levels proposed: CRP, flagships, clusters, product and project.** Each to follow own protocol and systems through the stages
- **May need a separate way of dealing with pure research (discovery to delivery), and the challenges of longer-term research, e.g. vaccine development, of which only certain time-bound stages are being funded by the CRP.**
- The diagram should reflect the stages of ToC and be less linear.

**Actions for consultants:**
- Incorporate suggestions into the PMEL design document, using an overview diagram.
- Seek feedback from CRP Management team.

**Actions for CRP Management:**
- Take final decisions on PMEL system elements.
PMEL Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities associated with the PMEL system were discussed. The following roles and responsibilities at different levels were identified. Key insights were that very few additional processes needed to be added - PMEL can build on existing activities. New additions that are needed are the introduction of a focus on change – stakeholders, assumptions and outcome/impact - by referring in reporting templates to the ToC, stakeholders, unexpected changes as well as planned changes, and related dimensions already identified through the ToC pilots.

Figure 2: Levels in the PMEL system

Roles and responsibilities identified at each level:

(This will be developed further as part of the PMEL package by the consultants)
### Level 1  
**Project level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Use of PMEL information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual planning and budgeting</td>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reviews</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual learning event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Level 2a  
**Site-specific Flagships level PMEL Roles and Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Use of PMEL information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value chain leaders, PMEL leaders and flagship leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual planning and budgeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual learning event</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Level 2b  
**Technology Flagships level PMEL Roles and Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Use of PMEL information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value chain leaders, PMEL leaders and flagship leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual planning and budgeting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual learning event</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Level 3  
**CRP level PMEL Roles and Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Use of PMEL Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRP Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide technical content and targets, resources and people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop the PMEL framework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess progress against targets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate impact (development outcomes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Incentive – needs to maintain funding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Actions for consultants:**
- Incorporate guidance on roles and responsibilities into the design document for PMEL system, with illustrative templates.

**Actions for CRP Management:**
- Take final decisions on roles and responsibilities.
Step 5: How do we make the PMEL system happen? (Action planning)

a) **PMEL in the Phase 2 proposal**

- Consultants will provide technical inputs to the 6 page PMEL strategy, by 16\textsuperscript{th} Feb.
- Visual representation of the PMEL system: consultants will develop the system diagram – MB and IV feedback by 10\textsuperscript{th} Feb.
- Theory of Change section – narrative and diagram – 2 pages and diagrams, to be produced by the Phase 2 drafting team; consultants to give feedback.
- Resources and skill-sets for PMEL:
  - CRP is considering two new staff posts:
    - a post that is about rigour in evaluation and research designs.
    - a post that is about PMEL – data, but also learning.

b) **Rounding off pilots**

- Ethiopia: Barbara Rischkowsky is keen to complete the first impact monitoring process:
  - Consultants recommended that this process is not complete until the next draft of the Country Programme Pack has been developed. This also allows for a more realistic time line between the ‘start point’ exercise and the collection of the first impact monitoring process.
- Tanzania: Amos Omore would like to use the impact monitoring data for a real planning process.
  - Options: MOF could potentially facilitate a full critical reflection process in August/September 2016.
- What about the Tech flagship?
  - Options: Engage Animal Health Flagship leader Barbara Wieland, in on-going work?
- **Decision:** Go through the PMEL design process, and tailor an approach for the Genetics Flagship before seeking feedback from Barbara Wieland. Request detailed feedback from appropriate individuals when there is a clearer picture.

c) **CRP Stakeholder engagement in PMEL design process**

- **External environment:**
  - Are there key individuals to engage in the Consortium office? Not at this stage.
  - MEL Community of Practice – this groups is active in trying to define the standards for PMEL. It may be worthwhile presenting the Livestock and Fish PMEL approach, once it is more developed, to engage the wider group.
- **Who in ILRI should be engaged?**
  - Ian Wright
  - Jane Poole - Research Methods
- **Champions?** Not yet emerged.
d) **PMEL Design document**
   - IV and MOF will draft the document and send for feedback as each module is drafted.
   - Feedback: Michael and Pat will manage feedback process and consolidate feedback for consultants.

e) **Process and sequencing for the PMEL system design and implementation**

This is not yet clear, but key milestones in 2016 include:

- **31 March**: IV and MOF Produce the design document for the PMEL system, and recommendations.
- **31 March**: MOF and IV to produce revised Country Programme pack based on comments and recommendations.
- **March – May**: Flagship leaders informed about the PMEL system.
- **May**: IT system build should commence.
- **July, then Oct**: Phase 2 proposal submitted.
- **Late 2016**: training in PMEL processes should begin; staged roll-out is advised.
- **November 2016**: Last SPAC held, possible need to approve launch of PMEL system?
- **Early 2017**: PMEL system is launched, using a staged approach.