

LME for Systems Change via Networked Coalitions



INITIATIVE ON
Climate Resilience

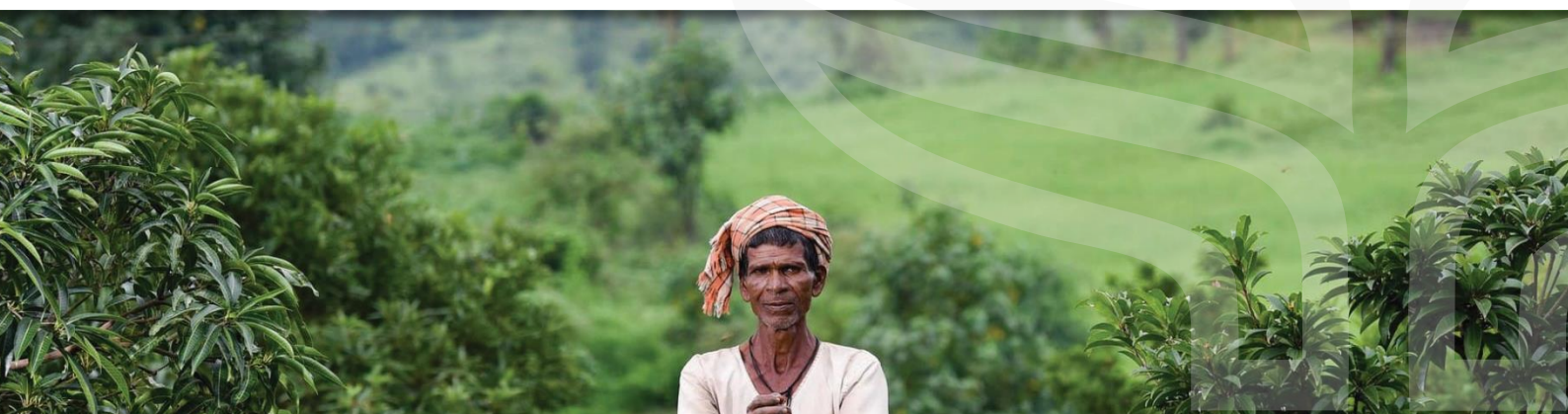
A Synthesis Note Drawing on Experience from the CGIAR
Climate Resilience Initiative's Policy Transformation Work
Stream.

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**DISRUPTIVE
SEEDS**



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Introduction

This synthesis note addressing **LME for networked systems change** efforts builds on the experience of accompanying two networked coalition efforts for systems change in the agri-food sector as part of the CGIAR Climate Resilience Initiative (ClimBeR), within its work stream on **policy transformation**. The distillation of lessons is designed to feed into ongoing conversations about the development of operative LME framework guidance for such efforts, both within CGIAR programming and more broadly.

For the purposes of this note, LME framework guidance is understood as relevant both for the **internal and ongoing strategic decision making** of such coalitions, as well as for broader **external monitoring of the results of investments** in such programmatic efforts over time. Critically, the learnings and principles presented in this note also speak to broader interlinking concerns—held across CSO “doers” as well as major philanthropic, multilateral, and bilateral donors—of how to **design, fund, implement, and evaluate systems change efforts** in the climate resilience and inclusive natural resource governance domains, if not beyond. LME for systems change has bearing on each part of that “design, fund, implement, and evaluate” puzzle.

The Landscape of LME for Systems Change Efforts

Efforts to pursue “systems change” or “systems transformation” present several challenges for traditional evaluation methods and results frameworks.

The first challenge concerns the **complexity of how systems change occurs** and the diversity of strategies used to pursue such change. Frameworks for systems change often identify three interlocking tiers of change that intensify in their complexity, from “structural change” (focused on changing policies, regulations, and resource flows) to “**relational change**” (focused on changing relationships, connections, and power dynamics) to “**transformative change**” (focused on changing mental models, societal narratives, and fundamental norms/assumptions) (Kania, Kramer, & Senge, 2018). Multiple strategy models have been identified as relevant to pursuing these inter-linked levels of change, including an advocacy model (with actions around issue framing, alliance building, generating/sharing new data), a directly targeted policy change model, and a broader social change model that might well rely on policy and advocacy work, but which is “focused far more broadly on changes in physical and/or social conditions” (Reisman, Gienapp, & S.Stachowiak, 2007: 12).

Ideally, both systems change action and ongoing reflection on that action are linked. In general, a concern for LME in systems change is premised **on moving away from “a focus solely on measuring ‘results’ downstream”** as it “misses the opportunity to understand the conditions through which they emerge” (Apgar et al., 2023: 252). Moreover, the **unpredictable, non-linear** ways in which change may unfold has implications for the identification

of suitable LME approaches. “Linear logic models are not always appropriate for complicated and complex system intervention and evaluation designs, which should use **theories of change** and conceptual frameworks that match the complexity of the interventions’ situations. Causal loop diagrams, ecosystem mapping, and participatory impact pathway analysis are more appropriate for complicated system change evaluations...” (Hargreaves, 2010: 13).

A second, related challenge is the **long-time horizons** of interest to analysts of systems change efforts. Assuming standard shorter-term program funding models of between 2-5 years, a practical focus on **interim demonstrations of progress** becomes critical: “As it is quite unlikely that major systems changes can be accomplished in that time frame...evaluations must focus on indicators of short- and intermediate-term change across all aspects of each initiative that are hypothesized to be potential contributors to longer-term goals” (Kreger et al. 2007: 315).

Existing literature on systems change efforts has started to identify at least some types of intermediate measures that are important to take stock of as part of longer-term strategies. Intermediate outcomes that can set the stage for systems change include those that speak to **strengthened organizational capacity and alliances among organizations** pursuing systems change (Reisman, Gienapp, and Stachowiak, 2007). When considering the overarching focus on **empowerment and agency** that many transformative systems change efforts assume, power/empowerment can take concrete form in **increased confidence** to undertake specific actions, **increased relations** as the source of coalition building and/or mutual support, as well as **greater access to financial resources** (Oakley and Clayton, 2000). All of these would be important indicators of advancement for a program that identifies investing in organizational efforts at systems change as part of its theory of change.

Lastly, systems change efforts pose a challenge for traditional evaluation methods and results frameworks because of the **networked and collaborative organizing structures** that such change efforts often rely on. It can be difficult to assess when accomplishments should be attributed to the collaborative and networked efforts of an initiative, or to the actions of an individual member within that initiative who would have taken action and had the resulting effect with or without being part of the larger networked effort (van Tudler and Keem, 2018). This general dilemma concerns whether it makes sense to focus on **attribution versus contribution** to eventual results, with proponents of LME in the context of systems change focusing on contribution as what matters. “The traditional paradigm of evaluation, which focuses on isolating the impact of a single organization or grant, is not easily transposed to measure the **impact of multiple organizations working together** in real time to solve a common problem” (Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer 2012: 5).

Disruptive Seeds and Policy Transformation as part of CGIAR's Climate Resilience Initiative

CGIAR's Climate Resilience Initiative (ClimBeR) has explicitly articulated a concern for **"transformation" in rural climate adaptation**, requiring a focus on both **"agro- and socio-ecological dimensions"** (CGIAR, 2023a). This emphasis on transformation is part of a broader move in the rural climate adaptation space to distinguish traditional "climate-smart" agricultural practices, largely emphasizing technology innovation and deployment, from a more **comprehensive "climate resilient" approach** that takes seriously the "social contexts and power relations" that shape rural peoples' lives (Hellin et al., 2023).

Starting in May 2023, ClimBeR responded to this imperative under its work package for policy transformation by launching an Initiative to support bottom-up organizing of CSO coalitions to pursue systems change in the Guatemalan agri-food sector. The Initiative convened a group of 20+ civil society organizations (CSOs) and social enterprises in Guatemala under the name "Semillas Disruptivas" (or Disruptive seeds in English) to engage in a series of **visioning exercises** around what in the eyes of the convened actors, would constitute **a just and sustainable food system**. As part of the visioning process, this same group of actors then worked collaboratively to elaborate broad pathways towards such a system (CGIAR, 2023b; Veeger et al., 2023). In September 2024, ClimBeR convened a similarly sized cohort of civil society organizations in Kenya to initiate a second iteration of the disruptive seeds process.

The specific efforts in both Guatemala and Kenya are grounded in a broader body of work on "disruptive seeds" concerned with supporting "seeds of transformative change (i.e., niche initiatives or practices) that exist—at least in prototype form—and are currently marginal but have the potential to grow in impact through actively **challenging (disrupting) currently dominant but unsustainable, incumbent systems and associated actors**" (Rutting et al. 2023: 2; see figure 1). In the natural resource domain, directly relevant to rural livelihoods and resilient climate adaptation, systems change has been recognized as being about "more than just identifying local solutions" but rather "also a matter of recognizing and addressing the social, political, and economic roadblocks which made it difficult to implement creative solutions and hence advance collective resource governance" (Farooqui et al. 2021; original emphasis). As is central to the disruptive seeds theoretical approach, the work with the convened set of CSO and social enterprise actors in Guatemala and Kenya is explicitly concerned with **"power shifts"** in sustainability transformations amidst plural and potentially contested stakeholder perspectives (CGIAR, 2023a; 2023b; Rutting and Veeger, 2022).

Questions from “Disruptive Seeds” Approach that are particularly relevant to an LME Framework for Systems Change

- How does a network of “disruptive seeds” organizations exercise transformative power?
- How can transformative power disrupt current regime structures?
- How does a network of “disruptive seeds” challenge dominant macro-trends?
- How does a network of “disruptive seeds” strengthen counter-macro-trends?
- How will actors aligned with the disruptive seeds network disrupt the current regime?

Figure 1 Source: Rutting, L. & M. Veeger. (2022). *Disruptive seeds and transformation pathways for Guatemala’s food system. Working Paper, CGIAR Initiative on Climate Resilience.*

An Emerging LME Framework

In response to the programmatic efforts described above, and as part of direct technical accompaniment of the respective CSO networks convened in both Guatemala and Kenya, CoRe has developed initial guidance for Local Monitoring and Evaluation (LME) in such contexts. The initial guidance, presented here, offers a schematized view of direct LME guidance for each of the respective CSO networks. The discussion emphasizes principles and functions of any such LME framework rather than the details of the domain-specific systems being targeted for change by either CSO network. The goal is that these principles can inform **active deliberations about LME framework design and implementation** as it relates **to ongoing and future policy transformation work** supported by CGIAR (in Guatemala, Kenya, and beyond), as well as initiatives grappling with similar considerations of LME for systems change in other contexts or domains.

Principle 1. A two-track approach to understanding outcomes

When the goal of a program or initiative is to invest in networked or coalitional efforts for systems change, any understanding of outcomes needs to be articulated as operating on two related tracks, as illustrated in figure 2. At the first level, and most conventionally, one of the outcome tracks should focus on evaluating whether **long-term changes** or transformations are being achieved relative to the system being targeted for change. The second track must consider **internal organizational cohesion and coordination advances** achieved by a network as an important outcome in itself.

Essentially, the process of consolidating a network capable of regularly meeting, communicating, and coordinating collaborative action toward broader systems change goals is a critical milestone in a larger process. This milestone, on its own terms, seeks to leverage the power of networked civil society coalitional/collaborative efforts in service of broader systems change. This requires distinguishing the objective of establishing a network capable of acting on systems change priorities as both a goal and an outcome of this type of process, related to but distinct from the goals of long-term systems change or policy transformation impact to which the network hopes to contribute.

The establishment and consolidation of an operative network becomes a building block or foundation in achieving broader systems change impact. Investments that help CSO networks develop organizational capacity yield a **social capital dividend**. In essence, such investments can foster an open-ended social good that is well-documented as having lasting, sometimes unanticipated, positive impacts in the communities and networks where

such investments are made (for example, see the case of Community Forest User Groups in Nepal; Ojha, Persha, and Chhatre 2009; Gentle et al. 2020).

In simpler terms, track 1 focuses on **external changes in the system itself**. Key questions relevant to this outcomes track include: What does regime or system disruption look like? How do we know when disruption is achieved? Is that disruption sustainable or long-lasting? Are there intermediate stages of progress toward alternatives or disruption that are important to pay attention to? Examples of interim indicators of advancement and progress for this externally oriented outcome track could include:

- Recognition and reputation of the network by non-network members
- Ability to convene external actors (nationally, regionally, locally)
- Ability to influence policy and media discourse
- Ability to reach a broad population using network's own communication channels

Track 2 focuses on internal advances in network consolidation where the goal is to establish a network of diverse actors capable of pursuing/effecting systems change. Key questions relevant to this outcomes track include: Is participating in the network seen as valuable to its members? Is the network self-sustaining? Does the network have the leadership and resources it needs to endure? Is the network effective at enabling specific actions that it believes will advance systems change goals, as well as adapting to address emerging challenges/opportunities? Examples of interim indicators of advancement and progress for this internally oriented organizational outcome track could include:

- Perceptions of the network's value to participating organizations
- Perceptions of inclusion / equity / democratic decision-making within network processes
- Matching and coordinating resources / capacities among network members
- Social and collective learning within the network (capacity building/training/new knowledge)
- Operational sustainability / longevity / runway of resources

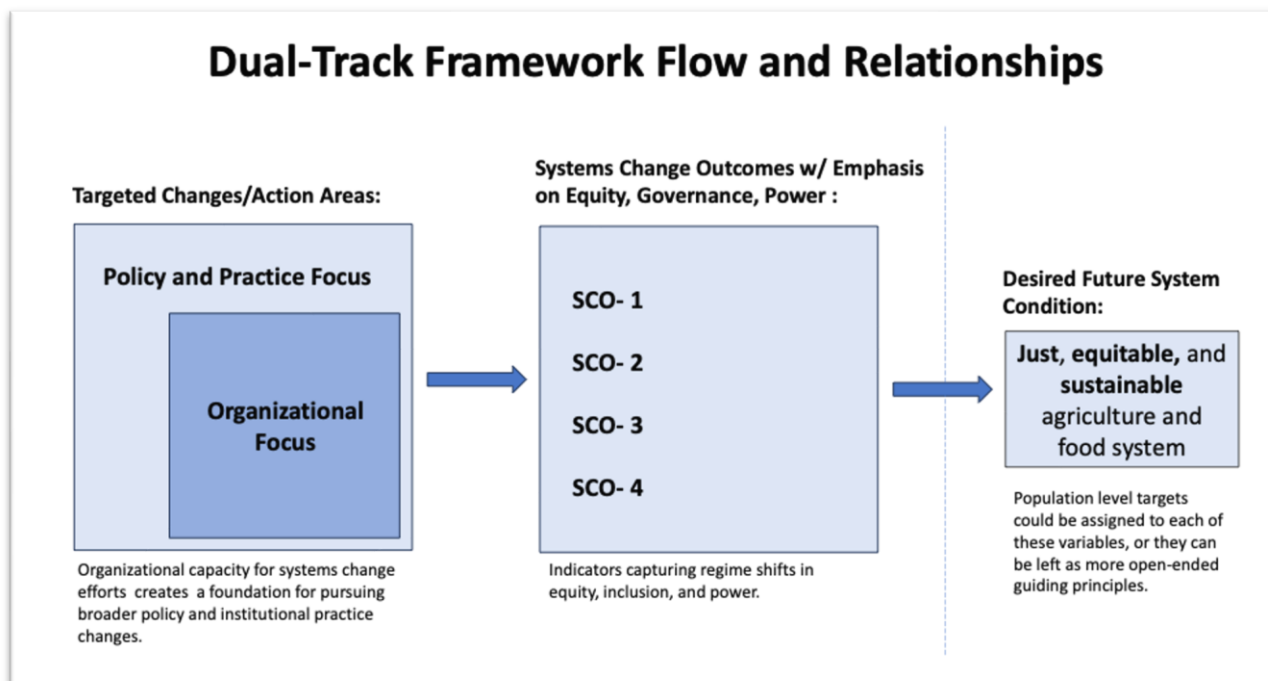


Figure 2 The above figure is influenced by LME framework design efforts that CoRe has undertaken in partnership with a national collaborative action initiative for inclusive governance of the Commons in India, Promise of Commons (PoC, 2022), which in turn was influenced by the LME framework guidance of one of the initiative's major philanthropic funders, Co-Impact (2021).

Principle 2. Understanding and distilling ongoing advancement-impact chains

It is important to characterize early signs of progress and advancement as accomplishments unto themselves, potentially even as **early or intermediate outcomes**. Conventional evaluation literature accentuates outcomes and impact only as something achieved at the end of a process, with interim indicators and/or outputs usually being the operative concepts used to represent anything in between actions taken and final outcomes or impact achieved. In systems change efforts that explicitly rely on networked or coalitional efforts, this approach is inadequate. Given the predominance of end-stage focused ideas about outcomes and impact in evaluation literature, to speak of early outcomes can read as a misnomer to some. But conceptualizing instrumental program actions as having the potential to generate meaningful and significant effects in the short term is an important part of adaptive and ongoing LME for systems change. This requires paying explicit attention to those interim effects, as opposed to simply cataloguing instrumental actions as outputs achieved that will hopefully accumulate to yield some larger end-stage outcome or impact.

Specifically, this type of perspective creates a foundation for considering the combination of actions that a network or coalition has taken (perhaps conventionally categorized as outputs) and linking them to a consideration of their follow-on effects/short-term impact, discussed here as advances. This is about not neglecting the **middle part of systems change work**, even and especially as it concerns LME practice. Reporting outputs or a list of discrete actions as the primary metric of early or interim progress is insufficient in two ways. First, such an approach does not accurately **reflect and/or validate real progress** that is being made. Second, it de-emphasizes the ongoing reflective work of constructing a chain of actions and linking them to advances or short-term outcomes. Constructing such a chain sets the stage for new actions that will have their own follow-on consequences in terms of advances and short-term outcomes, and so on.

An emphasis on the construction of these short-term outcome chains is a more **accurate and strategically valuable** way to describe the nature of early advancement and progress within networked or coalitional efforts. The strategic value stems from a posture of prioritizing the role of LME guidance to be, first and foremost, about helping networked or coalitional efforts make more informed and effective decisions—about **what to do next**—in

the service of long-term systems change, and only secondarily about externally reporting on the achievement (or not) of those long-term systems change goals.

For example, a major policy victory might be more of an output—rather than a marquee outcome as it might be more conventionally described, especially in a policy transformation work stream—until it has yielded grounded impact in the lives of the constituencies the systems change effort is seeking to serve. The point is that any network or coalition should have in mind **what to do next** once a given advance is achieved (regardless of whether that advance is major or relatively minor). This requires deemphasizing a focus on predetermining long-term outcomes and impact targets early on in a systems change effort (which, especially when calculated at the population level, can present a false sense of precision anyway). Instead, the goal is to orient LME efforts to focus on the **mechanics of how (even small) change is happening**, which in turn **informs the next round of actions** meant to yield a next round of changes.

Prioritizing a focus on actions always linked to an understanding of short-term effect or advancement, sets the stage for thinking about how to further build out and extend action-advancement chains (in various configurations) and to distill patterns of action-advancement as part of a broader view of understanding **what does and does not work** as part of **building momentum and progress** toward ultimate impact (see figure 3). Such a perspective can also help networks themselves (and those accompanying them) consolidate an operational understanding of strategies and actions that they can then consider as part of their **strategic repertoire** and which they can combine and sequence in different ways.

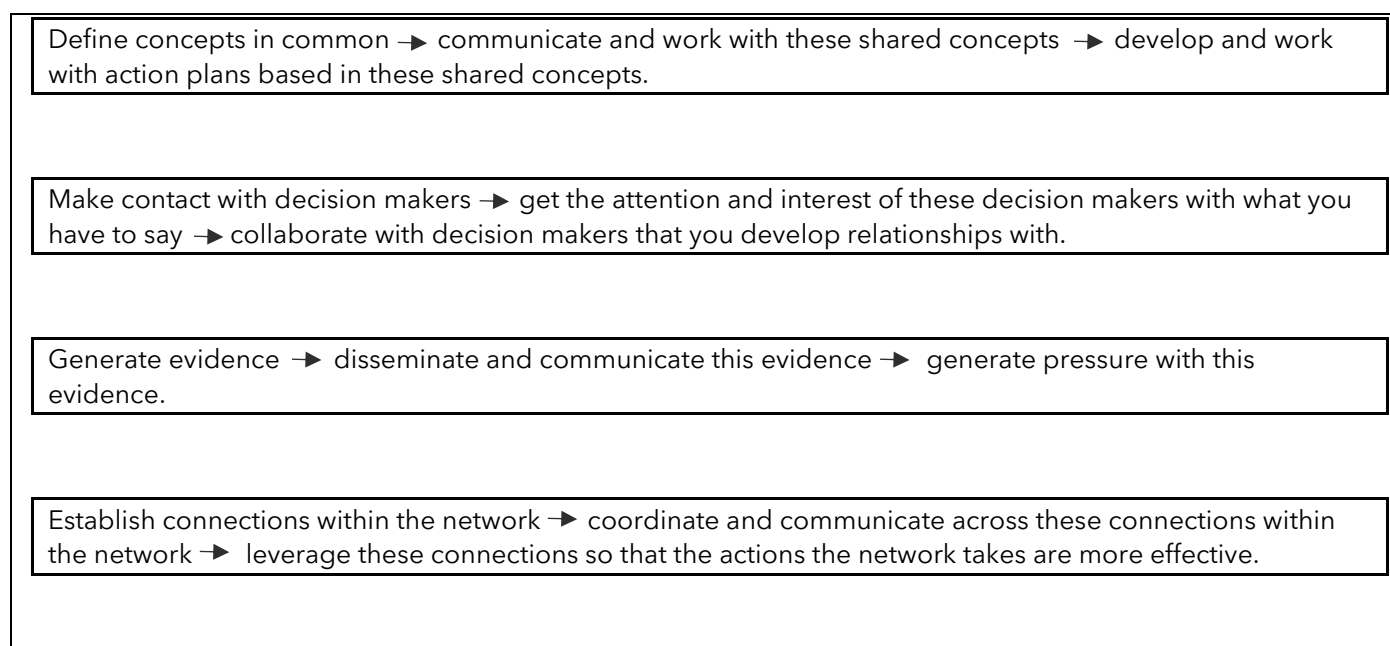


Figure 3 Examples of schematized action-advancement chains derived from the self-described accomplishments of one of the networks operating with support from the broader ClimBeR “disruptive seeds” initiative

Principle 3. Emphasizing network member perspectives and experiences

While a range of tools could be used to **validate advances** of networked coalition efforts for systems change (regarding both internally and externally focused advances), in practice, **network self-perceptions** are an important and strategically valuable source of information that should be prioritized.

At one level, this principle simply conforms with frameworks of **utilization-oriented participatory evaluation** (Global Evaluation Initiative, 2021). Such frameworks call for engaging the actors of a complex process (like a coalitional systems change effort) in developing a self-articulated understanding of advancement and progress, including a consideration of dynamics that are not advancing or progressing as planned, as part of fostering adaptive learning as part of LME observations feeding back into ongoing **strategic action planning decisions/deliberations**. At another level, it speaks to the realities of both understanding and practically documenting advancement in **voluntary networked efforts** that are pursuing complex and interlinked actions.

External, independent observers are not likely to be especially well-equipped to quickly make sense of the **internal dynamics and inter-linking relationships** that are being formed as a network of 20+ CSOs gets to know one another and attempts to pursue multiple streams of interlocking actions under the umbrella of complex theories of change and broader visions of system transformation. Of course, external independent evaluators with enough resources (namely, time, contextual knowledge, and rapport) might be able to parse and link diverse aspects of the complex internal and external dynamics being pursued. But in reality, working from the **perspectives of network members**—in this case drawn out via the relatively light-touch intervention of ongoing technical assistance partners to help facilitate a process wherein the network can articulate its own understandings of progress—gets relatively quickly to a set of LME tracking and early outcome observations that is operatively usable by the network and arguably quite realist. Such an approach prioritizes an emphasis on **quick and relatively resource-light methods** that meaningfully contribute to strengthening the capacities of a network or coalition to **learn and adapt their own efforts with strategic intent**.

In a voluntary network, for which there is no substantive remuneration beyond covering incurred costs (with the exception of a part-time stipend for a limited set of members assuming logistical coordination responsibilities), there is arguably little incentive for network members to misrepresent or exaggerate internal and external accomplishments. The degree to which participating in the network is something that members still see as a **valuable use of their limited time** is a determining factor of whether the work of the network will continue. As such, their perceptions of internal network dynamics and external accomplishments are a critically important LME information source. Member organizations have their own commitments to uphold to their own constituencies regarding demonstrating advancement toward the systems change goals that are most important to them. If they see participating in the network as a useful mechanism for helping them reach those goals, that is central to the **viability of ongoing coalitional work**.

Foregrounding network members' perspectives and experiences also decenters evaluator independence as a primary indicator of **LME rigor**. That technical assistance partners who are involved in providing broad-based and ongoing process accompaniment to the larger networked effort are also involved in facilitating LME tracking processes with the network is a strategic advantage. This **proximity is valuable** (a) because of the familiarity they have with the complex interplay of internal and external dynamics mentioned above, and (b) because building rapport and trust with a politically sensitive coalitional/networked process is a necessary prerequisite for probing, as well as interpreting and distilling, relevant and candid understandings of progress, or lack thereof.

The additional value of a focus on network member perspectives is that it positions LME efforts to support the increasingly **autonomous management of the network** by its members. There is a delicate balance that external partners should be cognizant of as regards exerting influence via efforts to offer tools to define goals, priorities, and strategies as and when they are invited to continue participating in ongoing network efforts. The team of external partners that ClimBeR has mobilized in support of this process, of which CoRe is a part, can be understood as process "insiders" to some degree, while in other respects remaining "outsiders" to the change dynamic. The type of LME framework guidance and principles being developed here are attempting to grapple with that dual role simultaneously.

To this end, the field-tested methodologies described in the Annex all **foreground network members' perspectives and experiences** as a first principle, while also providing avenues for cross-referencing, triangulation, and additional validation.

Lessons Learned from Early Implementation

This final section draws on experiences with the two national CSO networks supported by ClimBeR—in Guatemala and Kenya—to introduce implementation-oriented learnings derived from the above-discussed LME principles for systems change. Each represents an initial reflection at this relatively early stage in the arc of CGIAR's investment in and accompaniment of these two networks. In the Guatemala case, the network-building process began in May 2023, and in the Kenya case, the network-building process began in September 2024. Each of the tentative lessons described briefly here is ripe for further exploration and consideration.

Bringing internal organizational advances into view. Network members don't necessarily identify internal organizational network/coalition consolidation advances as reportable early outcomes, even if such internal consolidation is seen as a pre-requisite and constitutive part of achieving externally observable policy and practice changes. When asking the Guatemala network to self-describe their achievements and advances over the roughly 12-month period during which they had been collaborating most directly on developing and implementing action plans, the stories initially all revolved around external accomplishments and progress toward externally focused goals. It is not that network members did not have a strong sense of what had happened regarding network consolidation gains internally. It is simply that when asked in the context of a workshop organized, at least partially, around distilling early outcomes of the network, advances on internal consolidation were not immediately reported, and it took additional prompting to elicit reflections among network members on internal consolidation as a type of progress unto itself.

Follow-on capacity as part of outcome chains. Across outcome stories told in the context of the Guatemala network, the need for consistent follow-on action to continue pushing forward action-advancement-impact chains was highlighted. Requesting and having a meeting with government officials or other decision-makers is just the start of an action-advancement-impact chain. In multiple instances, the need to pursue creative follow-on strategies to advance the actions or priorities discussed and agreed upon in meetings with decision-makers became abundantly clear as the actions or priorities were not necessarily going to proceed of their own accord. That the network has demonstrated self-directed capacity to strategize, consider, and pursue multiple routes of follow-up to keep their government engagement strategies moving is an important capacity, the consolidation of which should be understood as a type of operational outcome unto itself. Further, it highlights, in practice, the work that is required to extend action-advancement-impact chains. A certain number of ministerial meetings achieved is a relatively meaningless standalone indicator. By contrast, a learning focus on the capacity and strategies for follow-on work is much more meaningful, revealing for example how policy or government engagement is working (or not).

Matching and integrating different scales and scopes of indicators. In both the Guatemala and Kenya cases, a diversity of indicator types are being proposed as part of the LME-influenced action planning processes that each network has engaged in. This is true both across the networks and within them. For instance, with each network being comprised of at least two thematically specific working groups that are pursuing specific action plan strategies, some of those groups have identified quite short-term, operationally focused indicators of progress.

For example, one working group established an immediate short-term goal of getting a letter of commitment from a relevant public decision-maker regarding a particular pilot project that the working group had identified as a priority action item. This goal was set with a 3–6 month implementation time frame in mind. It provided a target around which to take specific and direct action wherein securing a letter of commitment (or not) would be an objectively verifiable indicator of whether their strategies were working, or if alternate actions might need to be considered. Alternatively, another working group identified a numerical target for the number of villages to be reached by a line of work that the working group had identified as a priority. This target indicator was articulated for something more like a 2–3-year implementation period. The indicator reflects a concrete and orienting ambition, but it is not verifiable in the short term as a means of assessing whether specific actions/strategies are working and/or need to be recalibrated. Both types of indicators are valuable, but they serve different purposes. Understanding how best to link and translate across indicators of different scope and time scale will be an ongoing task of any embedded LME efforts, specifically when thinking about indicators as internal (near real-time) checkpoints relevant for strategic decision making and not necessarily as data points mostly relevant for reporting to external constituencies. There is an opportunity for sensitization here regarding the utility of embedded and operational feedback LME practices for systems change, both among network members and external supporters/donors.

Networked efforts beget more networked efforts. As the network case in Guatemala has demonstrated, networked/coalitional efforts at systems change are likely to yield action strategies that involve yet more engagement in broader networked or coalitional efforts. For example, as the action planning of one of the working groups in the Guatemala network has advanced, in multiple instances, network members are leveraging connections with other networked efforts, specifically with sub-national regional coalitional efforts that involve organizations that are not members of the network as such. The reasons for pursuing expanded networked collaborations are potentially multiple, but in the context of this synthesis note, it speaks to the need for developing and sensitizing LME mental models and tools that can expand and grow alongside expanding networked and coalitional efforts. The same LME challenges around understanding non-linear and less discrete ideas of contribution within the efforts of the network proper are relevant when thinking about the role of the network contributing to the outcomes or advances of additional networked or coalitional efforts. There is a need for thinking about designing and linking multiple LME tools that are flexible and sensitive enough to still apply and be strategically useful (as a matter of direct feedback for action planning) amidst this type of networked effort expanding into collaborations with yet more networked efforts. This is both a practical imperative as well as a conceptual imperative that involves sensitizing and experimenting with ways to track and understand what is and is not working (linked to an understanding of advancement) even and especially as the non-linearity of the efforts being tracked continue to increase and their boundaries more difficult to ascertain.

Working toward self-directed learning. The goal in a networked effort for systems change supported by external resources is that the need for technical accompaniment of any network by international partners will decrease as the operational autonomy and capacity of the network increases. One key indication of the advancement and consolidation of networked efforts is their ability to self-direct learning and evaluation efforts as part of their own internal, ongoing processes, ultimately responding more to internal deliberations and needs for information than external prompting. In the Guatemala network, which has been working together for more time than the Kenya network, needs assessments via ongoing LME efforts to track progress and feed into strategic decision making is increasingly revealing dynamics and topics that have already surfaced for the network in their internal deliberations. That what is being surfaced as part of explicit LME efforts are matching what is already being deliberated as a matter of course within ongoing network engagements demonstrates an increasingly sophisticated and integrated ability to self-direct learning and evaluation of efforts in terms of both assessing progress but also assessing needs to be able to make yet further progress. In this type of instance, LME for systems change is an ongoing way of strategic thinking as part of action planning/taking on behalf of a network. At the same time, it is a set of tools to be used periodically as part of concerted LME exercises, whether internally or externally facilitated. Part of moving forward in a way that pays attention to both ongoing strategic learning as well as more discrete LME evidencing tasks involves helping different members of a networked or coalitional effort bring different types of expertise to bear on the task of assessing and learning from progress (or lack thereof) in

different areas of the network's efforts. For example, understanding whether policy engagement efforts are working, and how they might improve, is one type of strategic LME concern. Understanding whether efforts to reach and generate interest among small-holder producers regarding alternative cultivation practices, and what might need to happen next, is another type of strategic LME concern. There is an opportunity for an LME framework of this type to assist networks in **bridging, distributing, and leveraging the strategic perspectives of differently situated members** to inform ongoing strategic LME thinking across diverse streams of work. The goal of an LME framework in this situation then is to move beyond mainstream evaluation approaches that clearly distinguish evaluators from evaluation subjects, instead shifting to a more **collaborative and joint approach to ongoing strategic LME** efforts.

Conclusion

This synthesis note is meant as an interim stock-taking exercise on LME for systems change in networked or coalitional efforts. The work of accompanying both CSO networks as described in this note is ongoing. The goal of developing at least initial framework guidance that builds on the experience of the two current networks is to spur reflective thinking in service of further developing and refining practicable approaches to meaningful LME that can offer inputs into ongoing strategic deliberations and action planning within such networks. By outlining principles and sharing lessons learned, this note is designed to help further open and extend, not conclude, conversations about strategic LME approaches and practices as part of long-term, networked system change efforts.

More broadly, advancing this field of practice is of increasing relevance amidst **growing global policy and multilateral donor interest** in efforts to invest in **transformational change**. For example, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the Global Environment Facility has identified investing in "civil society engagement" to "catalyze transformational change" as well as fostering "early and adaptive learning and networked knowledge management" as critical components of a larger strategy to align programmatic funding efforts to "accelerate positive tipping points of change..." (STAP, 2024). The type of LME framework guidance for networked systems change being developed here directly speaks to the intersection of these two priorities, specifically as it lays groundwork for more **integrated and adaptive discussions and experimentation** across CSO "doers" and a growing range of philanthropic, bilateral, and multilateral donors interested in better understanding how to **design, fund, implement, and evaluate systems change efforts** in the domain of climate resilience and inclusive natural resource governance, and beyond.

Annex: LME Tools and Methodologies for Systems Change in Networked Efforts

Partner Network Analysis (PNA) is a set of survey tools that can provide a structured view of patterns of interaction and relationships in either established or emergent networks or coalitions of actors, as well as sense of the capabilities represented in the network.

The first survey within the PNA approach focuses on **network configuration**, asking respondents to characterize the nature and degree of their relationships with other network or coalition members and what those relationships have (or have not) helped them accomplish. Results from the network configuration focused survey can yield a detailed network map, and when conducted at 6-monthly or yearly intervals, can also demonstrate change over time trends in network connection and relationship. The results are not evaluative, as there is no good or bad network default configuration per se. The suitability of a network's configuration and patterns of interaction needs to be considered with regard to the goals the network hopes to achieve and whether the current configuration (or the trajectory of relationships) is helping advance the network toward those goals. The network configuration focused survey is designed to help guide strategic planning of investments in collaborative structures to achieve intended goals. Results can be used to anchor strategy deliberations and reflections around questions such as:

- What does it mean to say that the configuration of a network is functioning well?
- What are the principles of interactions that a network thinks are important?
- What are the functions of interactions that a network thinks are important?
- Centrality and connection are not good or bad features unto themselves, what is the purpose of how the network wants connectivity and centrality to be working?

The second survey in the PNA approach focuses on **member perceptions** of the network, with a view toward both internal and external network considerations. Overall, the perceptions focused survey is designed to answer whether, and in what ways, members see the network as being well positioned to advance the collective work they have set out for themselves. Internally focused considerations include, for example, whether network members feel positively about the trajectory of the network, whether they feel they can raise concerns if they disagree with something, and whether the network has sufficient leadership and resources to accomplish its goals. Externally focused considerations include, for example, whether members feel the network is able to effectively influence government and/or private sector actors; whether the network is known and respected by external actors; whether the network has sufficient connections and relationships with international partners or other strategic alliances. Similar to the configuration focused survey tool, repeat administration of the survey can reveal change over time trends, including identifying shifts in perception that might warrant further inquiry by the network as part of ongoing strategy deliberations.

Outcome harvesting (OH, see Wilson-Grau and Britt, 2012; Paz-Ybarnegara and Douthwaite, 2017) is a **participatory methodology** well established in evaluation practice literature that involves convening critical stakeholders to **jointly identify and distil** out **outcomes or accomplishments** from particular efforts or programs. Participatory OH, also sometimes spoken of as "outcome evidencing," is intended to be an **open-ended assessment** of a group's understanding of its achievements. In its simplest form, it relies on network members to

collectively **"tell a story"** about their most significant accomplishments, as a network. What happened, how did it happen, and why was it important? The narratives that are shared allow for a meaningful description of outcomes to potentially report, but perhaps more importantly, they offer a view on **how and why** the network was able to achieve certain advances or outcomes. The OH approach is useful in that it can help develop sensitive understandings of shorter-term but still substantive progress or advancement, going beyond simply reporting on intermediate outputs, even if the network has yet to achieve its longer-term outcomes or systems change/goals. It is an approach that centers network member's **self-articulated understandings of accomplishments** but in doing so also draws out the **implicit logic models** informing those understandings, which in turn can be further tested and verified, as appropriate, via triangulation with other data or information sources.

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