

## Participatory evaluation: Discussion of key issues and the way ahead?

Realisation of outputs 4, 5 and 6, which effectively relate to **scaling-up** – the provision of ‘more quality benefits to more people over a wide geographical area more quickly, more equitably and more lastingly’ (IIRR, 2000 in Gündel *et al.*, 2001) – and participatory project monitoring and evaluation (PM&E), require that we first have an understanding of who constitute the **stakeholders** in this project.

Given that the aim of the project relates to better enabling local people to increase the availability and improve the quality of stored grains, i.e. **storage** issues, project stakeholders will be a subset of storage stakeholders; and specifically those whose mandate or interests relate to small-scale producers and/or poorer householders.

We explored storage stakeholders at the Storage Stakeholder Workshop in Shinyanga, both through the group work, and in preliminary discussions with respect to social differentiation - disaggregating farmers and rural households. Further discussion of project stakeholders was undertaken for and is presented on the project website.

### Stakeholders and project partnerships

Storage (or post-harvest) stakeholder groups with an interest in the project may be differentiated according to:

- **function** (e.g. producer, consumer, service provider, development agency, input supplier, policy adviser, policy maker, planner, networking agency, lobbying agency, research and training agencies); in terms of project promotion, function is frequently represented by intermediate and end-users roles (see definitions beneath)
- **sector** (e.g. state, voluntary sector - secular or religious, private – individual or business)
- **level or sphere of operation** ( e.g. farm, village, district, region, national)
- **agent versus agency**: individual agents, or actors, may have or represent different levels of authority or probity, from that of the impersonal organisational stakeholder (in the SS Workshop, the linkage matrix was based on individual agents’ perceptions of communication flows with other agencies).

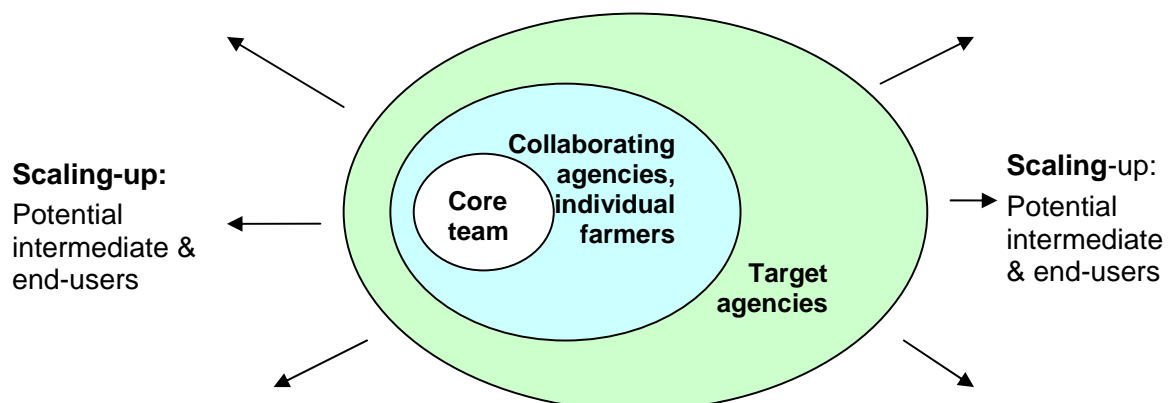


Figure 1. Project partners and target agencies

Moreover project stakeholders may be differentiated according to their degree of involvement or contact with the implementation processes of the project, as represented

by the concentric bands in Figure 1. The **core team** and **collaborating agencies** and individuals in this diagram might be considered to constitute the project '**partners**' (as invited by GFAR - but different from the current website Table). Partner agencies and target agencies are not necessarily mutually exclusive stakeholder types (e.g. by function, sector or level of operation), but differentiated by the level and timing of involvement with the project. **Target agencies** are key organisations that will use the products of research beyond the term of the research product. Thus when implementation is complete, it is anticipated that the project findings will ripple outwards to effect the scaling-up process.

The issue of who comprises the **core team** (which was raised during site visits late last year), and the difference between **partners** and **collaborators** (as portrayed on the website, or invited for consideration by the GFAR), is not only relevant to the three outputs under consideration, but is central to the project approach and all subsequent activities (this is partially touched upon under the 'communication strategy and project stakeholders' section of the website, where reference is made to the 'pluralism, inclusion and empowerment' of recent approaches to sustainable agricultural research).

Does the core team consist of those individuals identified by name in the project memorandum, or should it also include the collaborating agencies and/or target agencies also mentioned there? If it is only the former group, is it then based on the tasks or activities undertaken and associated remuneration (i.e. a contractual arrangement) - in which case should we not also accord those villagers who have undertaken or continue to undertake paid tasks for the project the same status? Perhaps our definition is also influenced by professional status, as represented by years of training, ability to understand scientific articles or facility in written English? I'm unsure as to what the answer is, but clearly it has a profound effect on project decision-making, and specifically implications for the project's **communication strategy** and for output 6, the **participatory evaluation**.

### **Participatory evaluation (PE)**

Participatory Evaluation (PE) is one of a number of terms (e.g. PE, PM, PAME, PIM) used to describe Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) practices. Difficulties in clarifying the definition of PM&E stem from the discourse that surrounds the use of these terms, from the different experiences associated with their use, and from problems associated with the concepts of 'monitoring', 'evaluation' and 'participation'. Monitoring and evaluation are, for example sometimes used interchangeably; participation begs the questions (as above for stakeholders) of *whom*, and the *degree* and *quality* of participation (see Table 1 and Boxes 1 & 2).

#### **Box 1. Participation**

Biggs (1987) has framed the spectrum of participation in terms of researchers' and farmers' *relative degree of control over the research agenda*:

- a) Contract - researchers only set the agenda; farmers' only involvement is that researchers carry out trials on their land.
- b) Consultative - researchers consult farmers in order to diagnose problems and modify research plans, but retain control over decision-making.
- c) Collaborative - researchers and farmers work as equal partners, and decisions over what research should be done, and how, are made jointly.
- d) Collegiate - the research agenda is farmer-driven, with farmers having the final say in all decisions.

### Box 2. Participation

DFID (1995) has portrayed participation in terms of a spectrum with a range of possibilities:

- being in *control* and only consulting, informing or manipulating other stakeholders
- *partnership* (equal powers of decision-making) with one or more of the other stakeholders
- being *consulted* by other stakeholders who have more control
- being *informed* by other stakeholders who have more control
- being *manipulated* by other stakeholders

**Table 1.** Definitions of 'PM&E' as reported in *Learning from Change: Issues and experiences in participatory monitoring and evaluation*

Concept	Definition/Features
Monitoring	Knowing where we are Observing change Regular on-going assessment Routine reflection Feedbacking
Evaluation	Reflection process to look back and foresee Assessment of achievements/impact over a longer period Learning from experience Valuing Performance review
Participation (in M&E)	Shared learning Democratic process Joint decision-making Co-ownership Mutual respect Empowerment

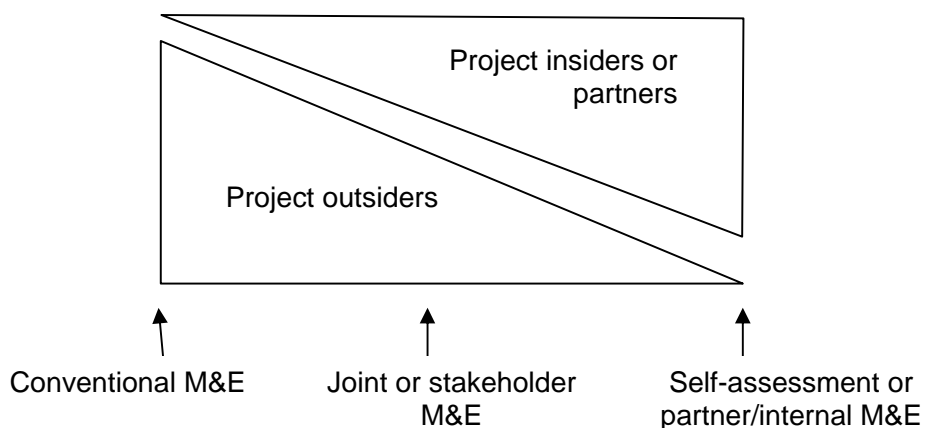
Conventional M&E is typically associated with serving the needs of 'outsiders', a subset of those project stakeholders outside the project partners (e.g. donors, administrative and management entities [e.g. NRInt, UoG finance], policy making bodies), and typically relates to assuring those outsiders of the accountability and transparency of the project. PM&E however is an approach that seeks to involve those actors/stakeholders who actively contribute to or are directly affected by the project. It is an internally driven process, initiated and led by these project insiders (e.g. core team staff, collaborating groups, local people, other stakeholders). It is widely recognized for its potential to (from Sartorius, and Estrella):

- Improving project planning and implementation
- Organisational strengthening and institutional learning
- Enhance local learning, management capacity and skills
- Build partnerships and sense of local ownership over projects
- Build consensus among project staff and partners about project objectives
- Provide timely, reliable, and valid information for management decision making
- Increase cost-effectiveness of M&E information
- Empower local people to make their own decisions about the future

- Inform policy, improve the performance of development and poverty alleviation programs

Table 2 summarises the differences between conventional M&E and PM&E (after Narayan, 1993), while Figure 2 represents diagrammatically the overlap between the two. Although the ‘Small-scale farmer utilisation of diatomaceous earths during storage’ project unquestionably explores a potential solution to specific needs expressed by many groups of farmers and is thus ostensible demand-led, the choice of solution, its research/scientific orientation, and complications associated with the registration requirements of DEs etc, set it slightly apart say, from projects with express social development or poverty reduction objectives (at the output level). It is perhaps therefore not surprising that the representation of PE in the project design as expressed thus far (i.e. in the PM/logframe) lies somewhere between conventional M&E and PM&E as portrayed in Figure 2. Perhaps the challenge for the partners at this stage is to ensure that any change to the existing plans is a conscious movement toward the right end of the continuum in Figure 2, empowering partners, be they partner agencies or individual farmers?

<b>Table 2.</b>	<b>Conventional M&amp;E</b>	<b>PM&amp;E</b>
<b>Why</b>	Accountability, usually summary judgements to determine if funding continues	To empower local people and partners to initiate, control and take corrective action
<b>Who</b>	External experts	Local people, project team and collaborating agencies, facilitator
<b>What</b>	Predetermined indicators of success, principally cost and production outputs	People identify their own indicators of success
<b>How</b>	Focus on “scientific objectivity” distancing evaluators from other participants; uniform complex procedures; delayed limited access to results	Self evaluation; simple methods adopted to local culture; open immediate sharing of results through local involvement in evaluating processes
<b>When</b>	Midterm and completion; CPHP quarterly and annual reports	Any assessment for programme improvement; merging of monitoring and evaluation, hence frequent small evaluations



**Figure 2. Project ‘insiders’ as primary participants in PM&E** (after Campilan *et al.*)

## Translating PM&E into practice

Four stages are typically involved in establishing a PM&E process (after Estrella):

- Planning the framework for the PM&E process, and determining objectives and indicators
- Gathering data
- Analysing and using data by taking action
- Documenting, reporting and sharing information

The planning stage is when the different partner agencies come together to articulate their concerns and negotiate differing interests. They would together identify the objectives for the monitoring or evaluation, identify what information should be considered, for whom, and who should be involved. This is perhaps the most crucial phase in the process.

If we revisit this process for the DE project, we find that the PM&E framework is outlined in the PM and project logframe (documents incidentally formatted by and geared to the requirements of the management agency (CPHP/NRInt). PM&E typically involves substantial front-end transaction costs as well as longer-term resource requirements relating to capacity building. In this case the additional funds were provided by the CPHP (A1027) for the collaborative development of the PM with Tanzanian colleagues.

Albeit no PM&E rationale is referred to and objectives are effectively subsumed within the rationale of the logframe, two of the six project outputs involve participatory evaluation:

**Output 6:** Project procedures **evaluated** throughout the project cycle, using participatory processes to capture different stakeholders' perspectives.

**Output 3:** User acceptability of diatomaceous earths in terms of efficacy, cost, application method, taste, cooking and brewing characteristics of DE treated stored grain **evaluated**.

Focussing on output 6, for which the given indicator/s (OVI) reads: 'The project is annually evaluated by all the different groups of stakeholders involved by March each year, and planned activities altered as necessary by May'; and with Table 2 in mind, one might conclude that:

- the **Why** is somewhat unclear but by virtue of the logframe rationale leaning toward the conventional M&E
- the **Who** is reasonably clear (but see discussion above)
- the **What** requires further development
- the **How** awaits further development
- the **When** is clear

Accepting that this is almost certainly elevating the PE component beyond what was originally intended or envisaged, we could nonetheless use PM&E guidelines for selecting indicators, such as 'SMART' (**s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ction-orientated, **r**elevant, **t**ime-bound) or 'SPICED' (**s**ubjective, **p**articipatory, **i**nterpreted, **c**ommunicable, **e**mpowering, **d**isaggregated), to develop the activity set associated with this output (and output 3).

First however we need to bring project partners (core team, collaborating agencies and individuals) together to revisit the **why**, **what** and **how** of the PE, within the context of the existing proposal. Given the diverse project locations, each servicing multiple trial sites, resource and time constraints, PE is most likely to be confined to sub-groups of core team members and the collaborators operating at different locations and/or sites.

For a number of reasons it would also be useful to plan inter-location visits at some point in the project cycle, to benefit from optimal sharing.

In effect, a limited version of the sub-group model has already been undertaken at Tengeru, Arusha, in November 2002, albeit the sub-group was only made up of core team members (TS, BM, RM, KM, and MM). The meeting arose partly to address the concerns of MAFS staff, taking the form of a situation analysis, but although the rationale was not explicitly perceived or couched in PM&E terms, it was very much in that mode and several PM&E objectives (see Sartorius and Estrella above) were arguably reinforced.

Key aspects of this process were that:

- a **facilitative** rather than top-down approach is essential
- process takes a fair amount of **time** (<day), but needs to be time-bound to concentrate minds.
- the **agenda** was set by all participants who wrote down '**issues**' pertaining to project processes to date, and/or future concerns, on 'post-its' (one per 'post-it')
- all **issues** (see Box 3.) were considered valid (i.e. no one person could call upon higher authority to relegate others concerns).
- the issues were '**grouped**' by the participants through a process of discussion/negotiation – this involved all in hands-on location and relocation of the post-its until a mutually satisfying pattern was realised.
- participants **prioritised** the grouped issues for more detailed **discussion** and **analysis** (issues most relevant to RM and KM were prioritised, some overarching issues were postponed to await inputs from others and time for reflection).
- **diagramming** and other visual tools were used to explore issues (e.g. team & stakeholder identification, analysis & typology).
- **responses** (e.g. solutions to issues, novel ideas, achievements to date) were **noted**.
- the process ended by **consent** when everyone felt that mechanisms had been identified to address all issues raised.

The visiting team (TS, BM, MM) further analysed the issues raised using the project logframe, and it was agreed that (given time) the exercise would be repeated in Shinyanga (this unfortunately didn't happen). Good facilitation (probably external?) is essential if a take over by the conventional M&E approach (e.g. top-down ideas of accountability, budgetary conditionalities) is to be avoided – which is not to say that the project does not also require conventional M&E. The facilitator must be familiar with the logframe – approach, purpose, outputs and activities – but we shouldn't rule out identifying desirable changes to be negotiated with CPHP; it's far from perfect!

The subsequent analysis classified a number of issues raised as being of overarching significance (i.e. project ownership [operational framework, roles & responsibilities], communication strategy [e.g. reporting, jargon, e-mail issues, website], accountability issues [e.g. budget aspects, reporting]). Other questions with a strategic focus related to outputs 3 (extension material), 4 (AKIS) and 6 (PE), while more practical questions related to activities associated with output 1 [sampling and sample analysis], and output 4 [practical engagement with the private sector]. Progress and reporting issues applied generally across all project activities.

There is a good record of this 'situation analysis' (including pictures of the 'post-its' and analytical diagrams), it was never however formally shared between the participants or with other project partners (before today). It could yet however be formally incorporated as a PE exercise, showing also the many changes that it directly wrought?

### **Box 3. Some of the 'issues' raised during team situation analysis**

Sharing understanding of AKIS approach	Budget - funds needed at Tengeru
Strategies and tactics for engaging private sector	How can we ensure that all the necessary equipment is in place for sampling?
Communication issues (x3) - with Arri/Mr Maige, project newsletter, monitoring reports	Reporting system from the group to the project leader
Developing clear understanding of roles and responsibilities	Moisture content analysis at TPRI?
Do project team members feel a sense of project ownership?	Moisture content may be incorrect because of delay
Logframe rationale - is there a shared understanding?	Will sample weighing always be done at TPRI?
Operational framework - is it clear?	Need for own scales at Tengeru
Systems (eg. MAFS, NRI, CPHP) versus project	Payment to seed unit – future?
Participatory evaluation by different stakeholder groups (output 6)	Reporting - what, who, how, by when (x4)?
Extension material - production, timing etc?	Arri follow-up (maize into vihenge, Mr Maigi feedback etc)
Dates of next visits - or other commitments when key people will be away?	Internal project newsletter, monitoring reports
Taking week 24, 32, 40 samples?	Communications with Mr Maige, Arri and Singe
Plan monitoring date for the trial - before taking sample	Payment for labour and sample analysis?
Putting grain into vihenge?	Who is going to be responsible for sampling and sample analysis?
	Written records of payments to villages for project activities, and copies?
	How can future problems be avoided?

The possibility of a **questionnaire** has been mooted to address output 6, the PE of project processes. The above arguments strongly suggest however, that this alone would not be adequate (albeit stakeholders could be prompted to note down whether progress for project processes give rise to concerns), and that for PE to be meaningful a more interactive approach is required.

### **Box 4. What influences people's participation in monitoring and evaluation?**

- perceived benefits (and partial or short term costs) of PM&E
- relevance of M&E to the priorities of participating groups
- quick and relevant feedback of findings
- flexibility of the PM&E process to deal with diverse and changing information needs
- meeting expectations that arise from PM&E, such as acting on any recommendations that are made
- degree of maturity, capabilities, leadership and identity of the groups involved, including their openness to sharing power
- local political history, as this influences society's openness to stakeholders' initiatives
- whether short-term needs of participants are dealt with, while considering the longer term information needs of PM&E (especially in natural resources management)
- incentives to make the PM&E possible (e.g. pens, books etc)

## DEFINITIONS

**Information** (relating to natural resources) has been defined as “patterned data allowing us to give meaning to the environment” (Röling and Engel, 1991).

**Technologies** refer to the application of such information to the activities of human goals, either in the form of hardware (tools, equipment, machines), or as software (knowledge, experience, skills).

Information and technology may be derived from scientific research, or from farmers' own experimentation.

**Grain** refers here to...

**Promotion** is the activity of making potential users aware of the information or technology, and increasing its accessibility.

**Dissemination** is the act of distributing information to various audiences in forms appropriate to their needs. Dissemination aims to increase the wider awareness of research products and, in turn, to enhance the speed of up-take, i.e. the use of research products.

**Uptake** is the application of the information or technology by users. There are two basic categories: '**end users**', which in this case include farmers and others (individuals, households, communities) who engage in grain storage; and, '**intermediate users**', who may use the research findings to produce information, technology and products for end-users, including those needed to create a favourable institutional/policy environment for uptake (e.g. service providers, policy actors, private sector suppliers, educators and researchers).

**Pathways** for dissemination or up-take refer to the routes or channels by which information and technologies reach the users. Pathways are multiple and complex, especially with respect to reaching poor people and responding to their needs.

**Stakeholders** are considered to include all those who affect and/or are affected by the policies, decisions and actions of a given system (Grimble et al, 1995). This definition should alert us to the possibility that stakeholders in a given venture, may not necessarily share the same interest (e.g. grain protectant manufacturers are both stakeholders in post-harvest storage issues and competitors)

**Scaling-up** aims to provide 'more quality benefits to more people over a wide geographical area more quickly, more equitably and more lastingly' (IIRR, 2000 in Gündel et al., 2001)