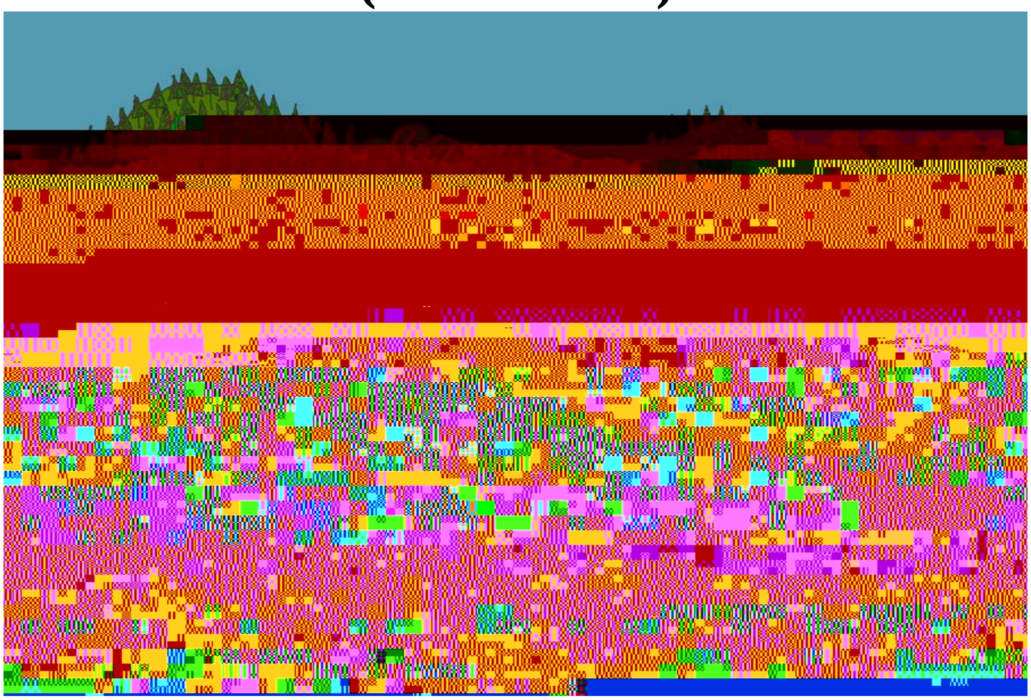
Lessons from implementing a Theory of change M&E system in the Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy initiative

(draft version)



Ricardo Furman
Forest Conservation Programme
IUCN Gland

AEA Conference, Orlando November 2009

I N D E X

Lessons from implementing a Theory of change M&E system in the Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy[1]
-draft version-

Ricardo Furman[2]

1. The programme: Livelihood and landscape Strategy (LLS)

Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy (LLS) is an initiative aims to contribute to the improvement of the livelihoods of rural people through the sustainable management of multi-functional forested landscapes. It is being implemented by the International Union for Conservancy of Nature (IUCN), with the support of The Netherlands. It is a four years program that started in 2007. LLS is a direct response to: (i) to find practical ways to support governments and donors in ensuring that the benefits of national poverty reduction strategies reach the rural poor, and in particular those who are highly dependent on natural resources, in particular forests and trees. Here LLS aligns with nationally development priorities and seeks to broaden the range of actors, notably civil society and private sector partners. (ii) By strengthening the relationship between forests and rural poverty reduction, the Strategy responds to a second global challenge, of how to reverse the lack of momentum in implementing international commitments on sustainable forest use and conservation, and therefore address the slippage of forests-related issues within international development

The

governance of forests including effective forest law; and restoring forests and forest landscapes as assets for rural livelihoods.

LLS plans and implements the program (including the monitoring and on-going evaluation component) with local partners that includes communities, NGOs, government bodies and international organizations working in the landscape. IUCN acts as a facilitator of the process, providing technical guidance, material support and being a trustable broker that convenes different actors. This bottom-up methodology is currently developed in pilot landscapes in 23 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America[3]. These landscapes provide an opportunity to test hypothesis of changes through an action learning approach in different social and environmental settings.

2. What is this paper about?

Local government regulation encourage sustainable NRM through CBFM, sustainable practices for industry, spatial planning process

Policies for CBFM/pro-community forest management protect community rights to natural resources

Kaimana spatial plan balances economic development and environmental protection

Lessons from pilot villages used as a basis for district planning process

Kaimana communities participate in spatial planning process

If there are no private or political interests strong enough to prevent monitoring and enforcement of the spatial plan

Legal map defining area for models of pro-community forest management agreed by Government

Community awareness on environmental issues and importance of the spatial planning process for their livelihoods

Area to be managed for CBFM is delineated within the district spatial plan

Area to be managed for CBFM is delineated within the KPH register map [or other category - village forest? HKM?]

Awareness campaign to diseminate information

If local leaders (Bupati, deputy, Sekda) continue to support sustainable natural resource management

A theory of Change approach has some similarities with the Logical framework, but it is different in that it seeks to describe at each and every level of the theory chain why one outcome leads to the other and why one activity will lead to an intended outcome/ result. In a theory of change approach, the assumptions underlying the internal logic or causal links chain need to be examined and tested (LLS 2009:10).

Learning is understood here as a social process in which individuals and groups learn how to innovate and adapt in response to changing social and environmental conditions. It includes two dimensions: retrospective (focus on monitoring past actions and changes) and anticipative learning (identify through scenario-based techniques the range of changes that might occur)[5]. Both dimensions are developed under an action-learning approach as discussed by Fisher and Jackson (2008).

In this methodology, local perception and triangulation are central to validate the answers to M&E questions. The ToC has been developed basically like an M&E starting tool (as an input to develop the M&E questions as the core of the M&E system). The M&E questions are developed for the mains expected changes (direct outcomes form the intervention) in terms of what and why it has been or has not been achieved. The "why" question provides the clue for learning[6]. It facilitates understanding about reasons for achievement or denial of the expected change, due to the activities and outputs planned and/or to "external factors"[7] (pre-identified or unexpected). Once program changes are implemented, the consequences of the main change are also monitoring in the same way

When the M&E questions were selected as a key element of the M&E system, a methodological issue was the to which dimensions should the M&E questions to look at in terms of monitoring and of evaluation. The 5 DAC evaluation criteria were the departure point, but for local partners

Efficiency is managed internally in IUCN; and sustainability is embedded in the design logic of the interventions as we expect that the outcomes will be replicable and scalable-up, therefore sustainable. Of course, the fact that no questions were included does not mean that the themes are not important. They are, and the analysis would bring up them at any time.

In addition, LLS is going through a mid-term review and a final evaluation that discuss the five evaluation key dimensions from the perspective of external evaluators.

The planning and M&E pathway works as follows:

a. Td( )Tj0.004 Tc34(&)-117.78(al)13(o)3(ur)-8(s s(t)4(an)10(y ti)5.m)7(e)3(.)]T 5(v)-1(

A sample of local communities is selected to develop specific sub-ToCs In each community a group of @10-15 people participates for @2 hours in draft each sub-ToC.

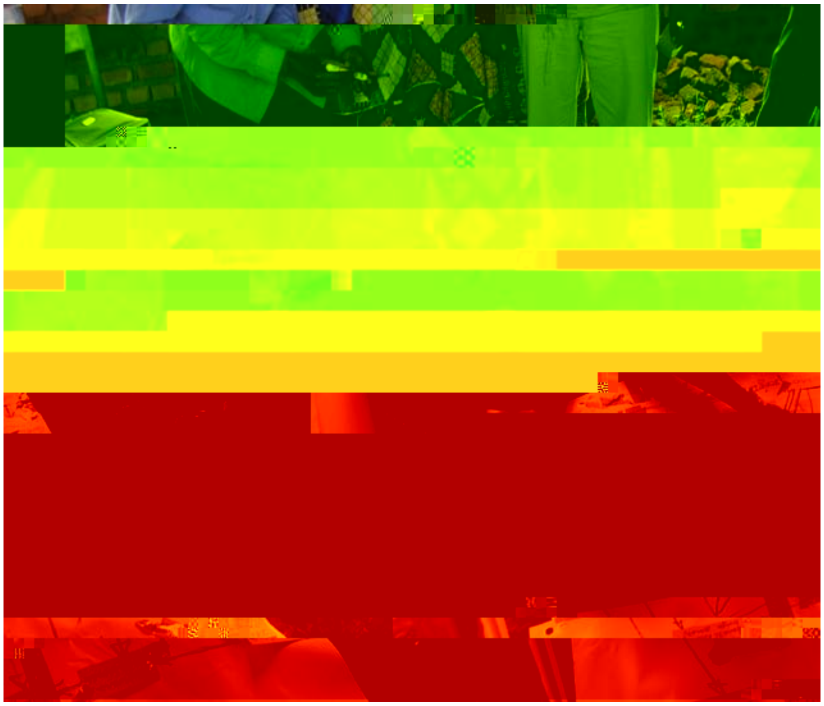


Photo 1. Developing Sub-ToC with communities in Kayanza landscape, Burundi

Later on, with other stakeholders, other sub-ToCs are developed and the different sub-ToCs are integrated in a broader and schematic landscape ToC.

c. M&E questions are elaborated for each sub-ToC

Table 1. Some examples from LLS PM&E Plans to illustrate good information needs formulation (Cameroon, Ghana and Thailand):

M&E question	Information needs	Methodological comment

d. For each M&E question are defined the elements to answer (information needs) and how, when and who will collect and process the data.
e. A schedule and key questions for reflection meetings are defined. At this level, two different models have been implemented: one of 3 days semi-annual meetings of partners (that update every 6 months the monitoring plan) and a second about ad-hoc Action-learning groups on specific themes / outcomes that have periodic meetings.
   The reflection meetings are learning spaces to contribute to generate ownership of the M&E methodology and give a voice to different actors; in addition to the specific goal of planning and adapting from the reflection process.

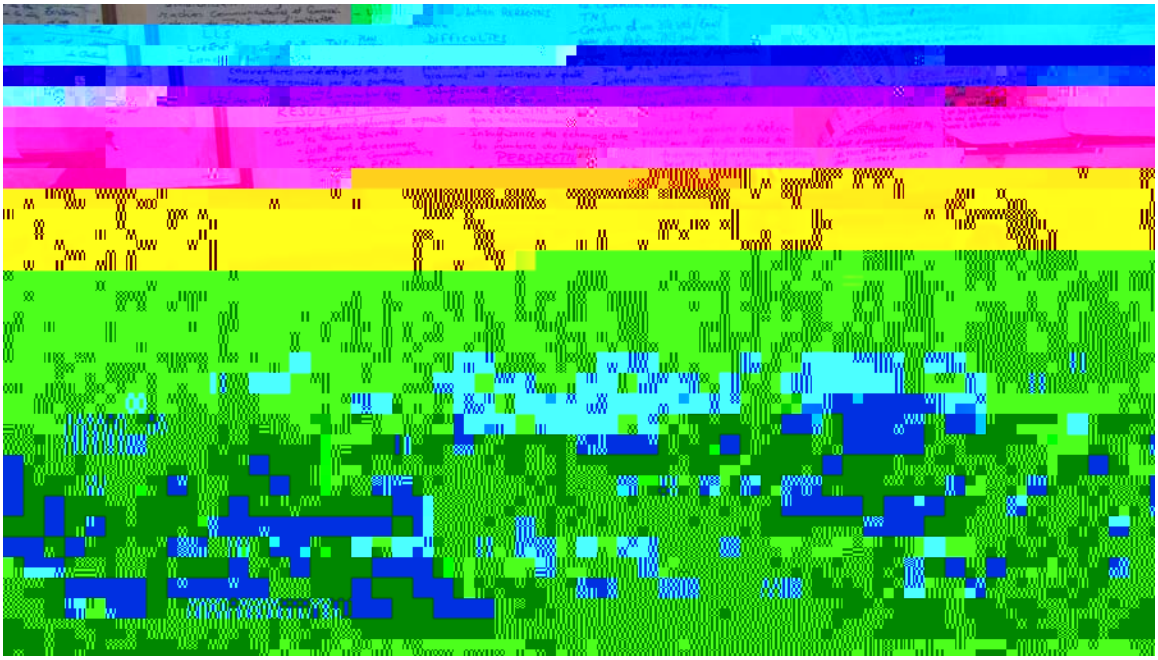


Photo 2. Participants in an M&E Semi-annual meeting in Yokadouma, Cameroon (August 2009)

f. The b, c and d steps are done as much as possible, or at minimum validated, in meetings with partners and communities representatives. Once approved they are recognized the LLS M&E plan and the process to collect and analyze data is rolled out.

This model has been elaborated after implementation in different countries. In real life it presents variations: level of involvement of partners and local population in different steps, action-learning groups already formed, etc.

The essential of the process has been by now to foster a learning culture by reducing the amount of information to be collected and selecting key questions that reflect the understanding and priorities of an intervention.

4. The implementation process

4.1. The institutional setting

Partners and officers in the field are open to learn new methodologies and adopting them beyond LLS, potential for trust and ownership in techniques and approaches are clearly present. LLS has a strong policy of investing in building capacities in different themes such as poverty reduction, access and tenancy rights, markets, advocacy, M&E and so on. IUCN is looking as a good listener and provider of innovative methodologies. Hence, the possibilities to introduce a tool like the Theory of change are there.

At the same time partners' capacities and experience in the M&E field is diverse. Most of partners are local NGOs and local level officers from natural resources ministries and local governments, plus local communities' chiefs, informal leaders and authorities of landscapes' associations.

In terms of capacities, the technical staff comes from needs and the data collection matrix) that for some simplified the work, and ToC formulated without including the central external factors.

Table 2. M&E using M&E questions versus using indicators

5. Lessons and challenges so far…

We bring in the learning captured up to now in this journey. We divided the lessons in two types: what we think should be done in a PPM&E approach with the Theory of change and the M&E questions as major tools (the To Do's), and beyond. Learning is not only about outcomes but also about the M&E process itself.

b. The challenges

- The methodology is focused on the learning dimension of M&E, but people needs to answer also accountability demands (i.e. report to donors).
- The design of realistic and concrete ToCs: what are the bounds of a ToC: how strategic and how realistic has to be a ToC to be practical and at the same time energizing the stakeholders
- When working with various partners in charge of different sub-ToCs how to build a common view of the integrated ToC, in particular the feedback loops

- Do separate meetings with community members and technicians

6. References

Borgoyary M. et al. 2008? Internalizing Monitoring Impact Assessment and Learning process CODI, New Delhi? In www.research4development.info/PDF/Outputs/ResearchIntoUse/MIL-brief_v3_final_1-may09.pdf

Duignan P.

Fischer R.J. & Jackson W.J. 2008 "An introduction to Action Learning and Action Research for Livelihoods and Landscapes" IUCN, Gland.

Guijt I. 2009 Negotiated learning, collaborative Monitoring in Forest Resource Management. Resources for the Future, Washington DC

Guijt, I. & Woodhill, J. 2002. Managing for Impact in Rural Development, a Guide for Project M&E. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome.
www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm

IUCN 2006 Livelihoods & Landscapes, a leverage program to catalyze the sustainable use and conservation of forest biodiversity and ecosystem services for the benefit of the rural poor. IUCN, Gland (unpublished)

LLS October 2009 Learning through Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Guidelines for LLS Geographic Components and Landscapes (draft) IUCN, Gland

Margolius et al. 2008 "Design alternatives for Evaluating the Impact of Conservation Projects". In Environmental Program and Policy Evaluation: Addressing Methodological Challenges. Birnbaumj M. and Mickwitz P. New Directions for Evaluation No 122. Jossey-Bass/AEA, San Francisco.

Reeler D, 20006? A theory of change and implications for Practice, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. CDRA. South Africa.

Sayer Jeff et al 2006 "Assessing environment and development outcomes in conservation landscapes". In Biodiversity and Conservation, Springler

Walters Hettie 2007 Capacity Development, Institutional Change and Theory of change: What do we mean and where are the linkages, a conceptual background paper. Wageningen?