Systems Monitoring Learning & Evaluation (SMLE)

2026

Our Resources

Dive deeper into Systems Monitoring, Learning & Evaluation

MEL 360 Guidance

Case Studies

A series of case studies produced by our initiative documenting innovative ways of working with MLE with a systems lens, within and beyond food systems.

Case study 1:
Making sense of market systems change |ACDI/VOCA's work on Market System Diagnostics in Honduras

Case study 2:
Reflecting on the health of a system |Lankelly Chase Foundation's system behaviours framework

Case study 3:
Embracing Complexity |CALI methodology as a path towards Adaptive Management in complex settings

Case study 4:
Navigating New Horizon |AGRA and Mathematica's framework to document systems changes

Case study 5:
Learning and Adapting in Complex Systems: A Practical Approach

Case study 6:
Learning in the Borderlands: Early Lessons from the Systems MLE Pilot in Karamoja

Case study 7:
Transforming Food Systems from the Ground Up: Lessons from Traditional Markets

Case study 8:
Engaging with Complex Systems in the Peruvian Amazon

Case study 9:
Strengthening Systems MLE capacities in Indonesia

Blog capturing lessons from 3 portfolio cases:
Gauging change in the aggregate across portfolios

Final Case Study Blog:
Spotlight on the Systems MLE project pilots

Testimonials from pilot applications:
Peru and Kenya

Blogs with literature review and practice

These blogs reflect our review and learning of the system aligned MLE thinking and practices from a range of organizations and sectors across the world, within and beyond food systems.

Initial review of general SMLE literature

- Innovative M&E from the Sandbox and beyond

Series of blogs on Rethinking MLE for Food Systems Transformation

- (1/4) — Defining Food Systems
- (2/4) — Food Systems Change
- (3/4) — Documenting Food Systems Change

Learning blogs

- Moving Beyond Projects : Portfolios and Systems MEL

Events

Our initiative includes the MEL Sandbox, an effort led by the UNDP Strategic Unit (SIU) to have an open space to nurture and learn from innovative MLE efforts of different organizations. Here you can find blogs of MEL Sandbox events held since 2023, as well as our "Notes from the Field" blog series. Based on this experience, we also held events with Food and Agriculture practitioners to learn from MLE innovations in this field.

MEL Sandbox Events – You can join the MEL Sandbox LinkedIn group to stay informed about upcoming events.

- Event 1: How to track and report on progress when working with complex problems
- Event 2: How do we measure systems change?
- Event 3: What is ‘good’ systems change and how do we measure it?
- Event 4: Decolonizing M&E: What does African monitoring and evaluation look like?
- Event 5: Transitioning to learning driven M&E
- Event 6: Undertaking the dual transition to a systems informed and decolonized practice
- Event 7: Between prediction and emergence: practitioners’ takes and tactics
- Event 8: Measuring systems change: using pivot metrics to gauge systems change
- Event 9: Working with complexity from the ground up
- Event 10: Learning Partnerships: Collaborative learning in practice

- Event 11: Navigating the Tides of Change: MEL in a World of Funding Cuts and Uncertainty
- Event 12: Learning Partnerships: Reimagining MEL for Foundations
- Event 13: MEL 360: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Systems Change

Notes from the Field

- Blog 1: Navigating the public resources governance System: A reflection on strengthening Systems MEL
- Blog 2: Expanding the evaluator's toolbox: From determining to developing value in Systems change
- Blog 3: Creating the conditions for transformative MEL—the 3Ps
- Blog 4: Mentoring in evaluation & communication: A Trojan horse for adaptive management
- Blog 5: Adaptive MEL for conflict and natural disaster contexts in Mozambique
- Blog 6: "Yikes! You Mean Crises Aren't One-off?": How Critical Moments Reflection Helped Us See the Trend-line
- Blog 7: How Do You Know When a System Is Changing? : Measuring the signs of systems change

Food and Agriculture focused events

- Event 1: Food systems MLE across a sector — the cocoa sector in Honduras
- Event 2: Food systems MLE at landscape level — the example of the 4 Returns Framework

Reflection blogs

As we implement the initiative, we blog about our learning through it, including our experience innovating with our MLE system.

- Practicing what we preach – our experience rethinking M&E in complex settings
- How to do M&E when you're working with complex problems
- Learning by doing – Sharing new steps and reflections on our Systems MLE learning journey
- Learning by doing – Navigating the adoption of Systems MLE
- From Guidance to Practice: Reflections on the Evolving Systems MEL Journey
- From Practice to MEL 360: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Systems Change Guidance

Publications

With support from the initiative, UNDP MLE systemic approaches are being developed and promoted.

- **Causality Assessment for Landscape Interventions (CALI)**
  A guidebook providing an integrated, systems-informed approach for project managers and their teams to continuously reflect on the validity of their Theory of Change, with a strong emphasis on unpacking causality between results at different levels.
  Read the blog.
  Download the Guidebook.

- **Documenting Systems Change through Effective Collaborative Action: The Early Signals of Change Self-Assessment Tool**
  A qualitative exercise aimed at supporting participants of effective collaborative action initiatives to identify and track early signals of change related to their individual and collective journey of transformation. Download the Tool here.