

# Capacity-Lift Service

## Service 4

### MEL

## Help Desk Facility

Would you like some help to address Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) challenges in your DeSIRA Project? The LIFT Help Desk facility is available to offer individualized and timely assistance.

The MEL HELP DESK facility provides support in the following areas

- Reviewing issues arising with current MEL systems.
- Reviewing and/or updating an existing Theory of Change.
- Integrating ToC with MEL plans and logic models.
- Drafting Terms of Reference to hire a MEL person.
- Review of MEL-related strategies, presentations and papers.
- Integrating evaluation into communication strategies.
- Introducing specific approaches, methods and tools into a MEL system: Utilization-focused Developmental Evaluation, Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting, Contribution Analysis & Process Tracing, Reflexive Monitoring and Action, ParEvo, etc.

### The DeSIRA-LIFT support can be provided in several formats

- Online discussions to brainstorm and respond to specific needs.
- Written feedback commenting on draft materials received, combined with one or two online discussions.
- Referral to other evaluation resources.
- In select cases, an invitation to co-produce knowledge products reflecting on the learning.
- Helping projects get up to speed to join group mentoring sessions.

### Duration

We do our best to respond promptly based on project schedules.

The average duration will be between one and three online sessions, to link the project to other resources or cluster mentoring opportunities.

The Help Desk is available in English, French and Spanish

### How to contact us

Send your support needs to [service@desiralift.org](mailto:service@desiralift.org) specifying the MEL Help Desk request in the object.

[CONTACT US HERE!](#)

Upon completion of each session, we will send a short feedback form to gather feedback on the value of the Help Desk.



# Capacity-lift Service prototype (CLIFS)

Community-level learning

Supporting AIS networks

## Service 1: Facilitating the DeSIRA Community of Action & Reflexion

Local & internat. organisations of professionals take AIS forward within their field of expertise, e.g. M&E associations, MSP facilitators, etc.

Capacities to manage for impacts

## Service 4: Group coaching on MEL for AIS

Project decision-makers, MEL officers, and IF are knowledgeable of PM&EL for AIS improvement.

Capacities for AIS interventions

## Service 3: Self-paced trainings on the five core capacities to manage for impacts

Online platform that provides access to leaning materials, network of facilitators and trainers, and learning events.

National workforce for R&I projects: innovation facilitators

## Service 2: Training of innovation facilitators in DeSIRA project teams

Projects receive support in development of AIS offered by Local Innovation Facilitators

Project-level learning

Upskilled projects stakeholders  
Implementers

Upskilled projects management teams  
Decision-makers

# Service activities


- **On-line synchronized courses** – MEL officers, researchers, project managers
- **Seminars** with external experts on merging topics – MEL officers, researchers, project managers
- **Mentoring** in regional clusters – MEL officers
- **Help Desk** for individual projects – MEL officers and project managers
- **E-learning** materials – MEL officers, project managers, donors
- **IF MEL training** inputs
- **How to Briefs**, co-writing

DeSIRA LIFT

Asia Cluster – MEL Mentoring 26 January 2024  
**ToC design elements – a reminder**

Contents

1. Categories used in **ToC** design
2. Steps to follow
3. The importance of assumptions
4. Tricks of the trade
5. Embrace visual diversity



# MEL Outputs/Resources

**Materials / outputs** that have been available and to support Help Desk sessions:

- MEL modules (English, Spanish)
- MEL seminars - recordings (English, French)
- Curated collection of Theory of Change (ToC) examples
- MEL How to Briefs
- MEL courses
- E-learning MEL modules



Living lab workshop Cambodia -introducing utilization-focused developmental evaluation; How to Brief co-written with Santés & Territoires project

The "What is" series of briefs is for the use of Pilar 1 project managers (and future managers of R&I projects), to guide them with tips on possible ways forward for upgrading their five core capacities to manage for impacts.

## How to use Developmental Evaluation to track progress and learn from Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (C1. Capacity for Use-oriented MEL)

### Background

This brief offers opportunities to introduce Development Evaluation, a learning-oriented evaluation approach, to support Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs). Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) refer to a wide range of initiatives, (including Living Labs, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and innovation platforms) that gather different organizations and individuals to address complex problems that existing institutions cannot tackle on their own. "Developmental evaluation supports innovation *development* to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments." (Patton, 2011, p. 1) Developmental Evaluation (DE) resides best under the umbrella of Utilization-focused Evaluation (UFE). This How-to-Brief provides guidance on how to use DE to track progress and learn from multi-stakeholder platforms. Ideally, evaluation should be built-in from the start of an MSP (Whicher & Crick, 2019).

**Target audiences:** MEL staff and project managers, MEL staff in funding agencies.

Readers new to this field are encouraged to first review the How to Briefs "How to take ownership over evaluation" and "How to do DE"<sup>1</sup>.

**Keywords:** developmental evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, living labs, multi-stakeholder platforms, adaptive management

### THE RELEVANCE (WHY)

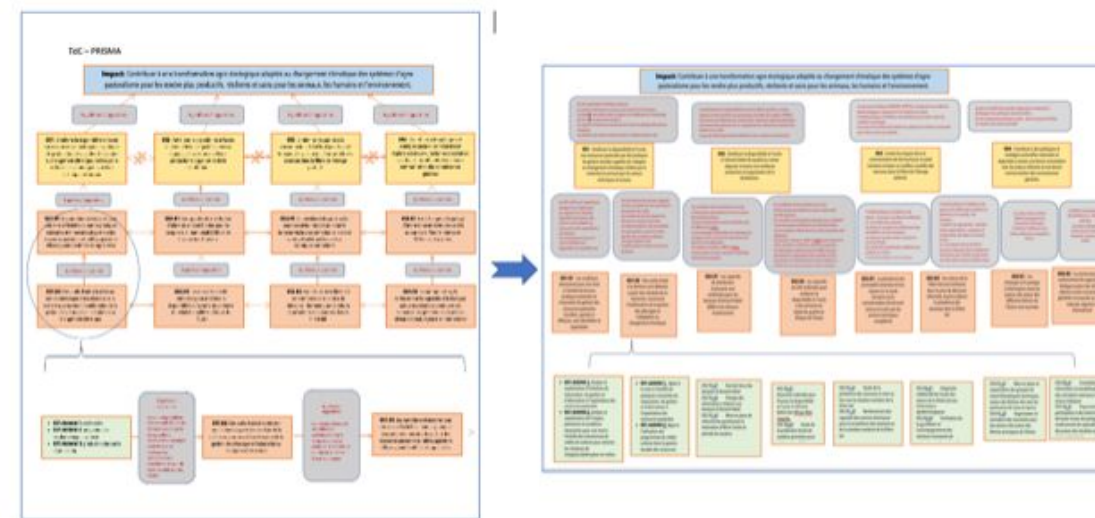
This Brief provides a bridge between two fields: multi-stakeholder collaboration OR processes and utilization-focused developmental evaluation (UFDE). The first field is often referred to broadly as 'multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP)' which encompass a wide arrangement of configurations. They generally "...involve the collective action of various institutions such as governments, private companies, NGOs, and donors, have become a popular approach for developing agricultural value chains to improve the sustainability of food systems" (Maryono et al., 2024: on-line p.1). The points highlighted as social impacts in this article are similar to the uses identified during UFDE workshops facilitated by the [Santés & Territoires](#) project in Cambodia and Senegal<sup>2</sup>. The second field, UFDE, is an evaluation approach that supports learning about experimental and complex interventions where outcomes emerge and evolve (Dinca-Panaitescu, 2020). This brief provides practical suggestions for use of DE to enhance the development and effectiveness of MSPs (Olejniczak et al., 2020).

<sup>1</sup> Add hyper-links to the existing How-to-Briefs on UDE and DE

<sup>2</sup> The UFDE experiences by this project in Senegal and Cambodia have emphasized stakeholder involvement, something that may not be standard practice among living labs.

# Examples of the service in use

*Online participation in to SUSTENTA & INNOVA all-partner meeting to support them in adjusting their Theory of Change*



PRISMA Project: Original ToC (May 2023) and revised ToC with Assumptions added (June 2023)

**Framing phase** **Defining changes for each KEQ**

- Diversity of changes
  - Diverse targeted actors:
    - Project partners
    - Civil society
    - Decision-makers
    - ...
  - Diverse types of changes:
    - Knowledge, skills
    - Interactions
    - Motivations
    - Behavior

How did the project contribute to improve vaccination against diseases and its impacts?

- Changes in knowledge available to inform vaccination strategies (counselors, period of the year, etc.)
- Change in vaccine accessibility
- Changes in vaccination awareness
- Changes in vaccine production efficiency (efficacy, quality, timeliness, ...)
- Changes in vaccination practices (route of administration, frequency, ...)

**Framing phase** **Identifying data needed and designing data collection tools**

- Data needed to assess changes
  - Information about the population of interest
  - Number of people in the population
  - Information about the current status of the population
  - Information about the current status of the population
- Data collection methods
  - Participatory workshop
  - Individual semi-directed interviews
  - Focus group discussions
  - Analysis of Kobo reports
  - Analysis of other reports (vaccination sales, temperature recordings, etc.)
- Data collection tools
  - Guidelines built for semi-directed interviews and focus group discussions

Figure 4. Defining evidence (changes) and data collection tools (LIDISKI Project, 2024: 6-7).

*Support to LIDISKI during a 3-day evaluation planning workshop; while the support was remote, the inputs were provided every evening in preparation for the next day's session*



LEARNING SESSION #02, 2024

## “Utilization-focused Evaluation (UFE): A decision-making framework”

### MEET OUR SPEAKERS



RICARDO RAMIREZ

Ph.D, co-lead DECI-AM core-team member of DeSIRA-LIFT Credentialed Evaluator, CES



JOAQUIN NAVAS

M.Sc, Senior Organizational Learning & Evaluation Consultant, a member of DECI-AM and DeSIRA-LIFT



SONAL ZAVERI

Ph.D, Co-Chair EvalGender+, a member of DECI-AM



DELGERMURUN SUKHBAATAR

Member, MEA Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Specialist, MERIT Mongolia

WEDNESDAY | 21 FEBRUARY 2024 | 20:00-21:30 ULAT

*Association invited LIFT to make a presentation on UFE, at the request of STREAM*

*Support and IDEAS and PRISMA in Theory of Change design*

*In-person training on UFDE for West African team members of Santés & Territoires in Montpellier (expenses covered by the project); followed by remote mentoring for the work with living labs in Senegal and Cambodia*

# Capacity Development Competency Outcomes

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**Reflective practice:** knowledge of theories, practices, guidelines and ethics, and being a reflective practitioner committed to continuous learning

**Technical practice:** strategy, evaluation design, decisions on methodologies, practical application of all steps of evaluation

**Situational practice:** understanding and analyzing context to accommodate an evaluation to its unique context, culture, partners, etc.

**Management practice:** the application of sound project management skills throughout an evaluation process

**Interpersonal practice:** personal communication skills, effective interaction with others, team building and respectful partnerships

*the **MEL masterclasses** provided foundation knowledge about several methods and tools, along with linkages to resource materials*

*the **Help Desk** mentoring provided several projects with **timely support** during the implementation of evaluation planning events*

*the emphasis on **situational analysis and readiness** during all MEL courses, sessions and Help Desk on UFE was **recognized** by partner project teams*

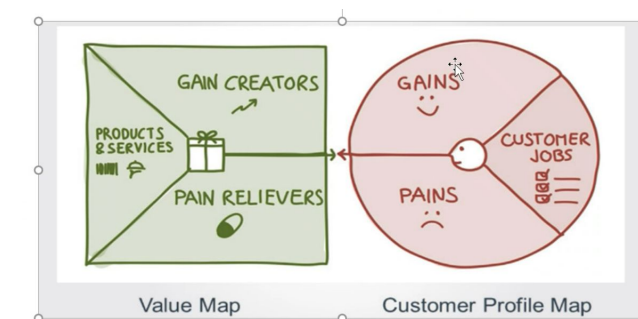
*the **remote feedback on the UFDE planning tables** emphasized priority setting to ensure implementation was **viable***

*the **remote mentoring** for S&T project staff in both Senegal and Cambodia addressed the need to explain the steps/instructions in consultation **with local staff** who spoke local languages, along with the emphasis on using simple language*

# Lessons learnt

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- UFE / DE is a proven, decision-making framework that allows implementors to keep existing tools and reporting requirements under a shared framework.
- UFE / DE can only work when readiness is confirmed
- For evaluations to provide useful findings for AIS interventions, the partners need to witness the power of evaluation for course-correction and adaptive management
- MEL demands by projects are dynamic, they need to timely support as they arise
- Provide face-to-face MEL training and follow-it up with mentoring
- Provide mentoring in Theory of Change as soon as possible and ensure the staff members that will implement the project are the ones designing the ToC so they have ownership and can adjust it



# Key success factors

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- The readiness condition for learning-oriented evaluation need attention at the formulation phase
- Creating trust and building relations is a necessary starting point
- Experiential learning is the best way to create MEL capacities
- Mentoring at the pace of the project allows partners to learn-by-doing
- Projects and programs need to have a say in designing a coherent, unified evaluation approach
- Collaborative approaches to evaluation lead to ownership over the process and findings
- Developmental Evaluation is well suited to dynamic projects working in AIS
- Evaluation in the context of innovations is a tool for transformation