



## Science Granting Councils Initiative

### Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Systems Support Workshop

Workshop report

Venue:

Skylight Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,

26-27 June 2019

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Canada





**Workshop Participants**





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## 1.0 Introduction

This two-day training workshop organized by the Association of African Universities under Theme 3 was designed to focus on the development of organisation wide M&E systems and how they can enable more effective management of research activities, especially collaborative research efforts. This workshop had synergies with Theme 1 (research management) and Theme 2 (STI indicators) and has been organised in consultation with Southern Africa Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) implementing themes 1 and 2, respectively.

## 1.1 Rationale

Despite the critical role played by the SGCs in supporting the consolidation of a country's national system of innovation, they still grapple with a number of challenges including limited capacity, inadequate funding, overlapping roles, and poor coordination with other agencies, lack of appropriate legislation, and poor implementation of science and research funding policies<sup>1</sup>. In order to effectively conduct their activities, well designed and functioning monitoring and evaluation (MEL) systems are required.

Specifically, SGCs engaged in the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) are enhancing efforts to manage research grants through collaborative efforts with other Councils and with the private sector. Such efforts require M&E systems to be in place to enable effective management and analysis of these activities. However, a recent needs assessment survey conducted by Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) revealed that with the exception of the Ethiopian and Namibian Science Granting Councils, the majority of the Science Granting Councils in sub-Saharan Africa do not have a robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Systems to design and monitor research programmes. Also, most of the SGCs indicated that they do not have adequate training and expertise in MEL, grant management and Policy influence level- MEL for National Programmes on Research, Science and Technology.

To address this gap, the Association of African Universities under Theme 3 Consortium (led by the African Centre for Technology Studies, ACTS), in collaboration with the members of the Theme 1 (led by SARIMA)<sup>2</sup> and Theme 2 (led by the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD)<sup>3</sup>, organised a MEL systems support exercises targeting all the SGCs through a peer-learning workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 26th – 27th June at the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel 2019 combined with dedicated case studies of three Francophone countries who expressed first interest in receiving a dedicated MEL systems assessment and capacity building support. The Systems support workshop and the case studies were managed by members of the Theme 3 consortium team based out of the African Association of Universities (AAU), led by Ms. Ruth Dickson.

This set of planned activities were expected to contribute to the achievement of Theme 3's objectives to enhance long term collaborative activity by providing SGCs with knowledge and one-to-one guidance on how to develop MEL systems that will enable them to track progress of collaborative research (grant) agreements within the wider context of their organisational wide results matrix and national level STI indicators. This is particularly pertinent at this time as SGCs consider what impact

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<sup>1</sup> These challenges were identified in a scoping study supported by IDRC in 17 Sub-Saharan African countries. <https://www.idrc.ca/en/initiative/science-granting-councils-initiative-sub-saharan-africa>

<sup>2</sup> SARIMA is one of the SGCI collaborating technical agencies based in South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> NEPAD is one of the SGCI collaborating technical agencies responsible for supporting Councils to design and monitor research programmes and to formulate and implement policies based on the use of robust science, technology and innovation indicators.

they would like to see from Phase II of the SGCI. In particular, the MEL systems support workshop provided SGCs with a template for developing a results-based matrix on which they will be able to assess Phase II and collect indicators which can act as individual SGC level baselines for Phase II activities.

## 1.2 Objectives of the training

The general objective of the MEL systems support workshop was to strengthen the capacities of SGCs in the area of MEL and to ensure that participating SGCs can design robust MEL systems using the STI indicators, organizational theories of Change, MEL frameworks and Plans. Specifically, the MEL peer learning visit sought to achieve the following:

- a. Promote knowledge transfer and networking among SGCs.
- b. Provide participating SGCs with a practical but basic understanding of the purposes, processes, norms, standards and guiding principles for planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning within the SGC using the STI indicators.
- c. Enhance the results-based culture within SGCs and improve the quality of grant management, monitoring, evaluation and learning using a digitized system.

## 1.3 Topics that were covered

- a. Findings of a survey conducted from seven SGCs
- b. MEL basics (Theory of Change, Monitoring & Evaluation Framework, Monitoring & Evaluation Plan and Data collection Tools)
- c. Knowledge exchange on Monitoring Tools using Indicators
- d. MEL digitization using Uganda case study of grant management system

## 1.4 Materials used for the Workshop

- a. A baseline study was conducted through a specific site visit to each SGC in Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire and Senegal to inquire about the M&E needs.
- b. A webinar was conducted for Anglophone SGCs
- c. A Course concept note was developed and shared with IMT, CTAs, and participants in advance of the training
- d. Presentations were made by SGCs, MEL consultant and CTAs
- e. Group exercises and discussions were an integral part of the workshop program: Questions and exercises were prepared beforehand, and discussions - both during group work and plenary - facilitated. Questions focused on experience sharing – trying to bring together theory and practice.



## 2.0 Training proceedings: Day 1 – 26 June 2019

Miss Ruth Issambo Dickson chaired the sessions of the first day of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems support workshop for MEL Officers of Science Granting Councils (SGCs). She welcomed all the 9 SGCs and other participants that were present. She explained that the broad goals of the workshop were:

- a. Promote knowledge sharing and networking among the SGC MEL Officers
- b. Create an understanding of MEL principles, tools, and processes among the SGC MEL Officers
- c. Enhance the results-based culture within the SGCs by specifically improving the quality of grants management

Dr. Rebecca Hanlin from ACTS and the Project Manager of Theme 3 of the SGC Initiative made her welcome remarks and explained that the systems support workshop was being held in response to the needs expressed by SGCs. This workshop, therefore, aimed to contribute towards building the MEL capacities for SGCs at their institutional levels.

Mr. Ellie Osir from IDRC also welcome the participants and emphasized the importance of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning for the SGCs to be able to measure their impact and strengthen their interventions. He reminded the participants that MEL was handled differently in the various countries represented in the SGC Initiative. He also shared information concerning that Phase 2 of the SGC Initiative would be about how to support SGCs to strengthen their MEL systems and practices. The focus on MEL capacity building was in response to the need expressed by SGCs

Ms. Nodumo Dhlamini from the Association of African Universities (AAU) added her voice to welcome the MEL Officers to systems support workshop. She emphasized that MEL was important for supporting research organizations to learn from their work and improve, track the impact of their work and attract more support by telling their impact stories. She explained that the AAU led the MEL capacity building needs assessment in April 2019 in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Ivory Coast. The aim of the assessments was to assess the MEL institutional capacities. The same questionnaire was also sent to the SGCs that were not physically visited by the AAU team.

### 2.1 Findings from the MEL Capacity Building Needs Assessment led by AAU

Mr. Samuel Agyapong presented the findings from the MEL capacity building needs assessment led by AAU in April 2019. He explained that 3 francophone SGCs (Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Burkina Faso) were physically visited and 4 others (Ghana, Malawi, Botswana, and Mozambique) had completed the survey questionnaire online. A webinar had been held by AAU to explain the questionnaire to the SGCs that were not visited by the AAU team.

The objectives of the MEL capacity assessments were: (1) Understand the current MEL systems in the SGCs; (2) Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the MEL systems in the SGCs and (3) Make specific and practical recommendations for strengthening the MEL systems of the SGCs

The AAU Team facilitated the discussions with each SGC team and the SGCs did an institutional self-assessment by reflecting on their MEL strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The assessment was conducted using a participatory rapid assessment approach. The data was collected using a MEL Capacity Assessment Tool (CAT). The CAT was divided into three complementary sections: Section A - MEL Minimum Operating Standards (MOS) – 13; Section B – MEL SWOT analysis and Section C- Capacity Building Plan (CBP). Data collection techniques used included interviews, field interactions and documents reviews.

The key findings included the following:

- a. 6 out of the 7 SGCs indicated that there exist a designated staff to fulfil the mandate of the MEL function.
- b. Majority of the MEL staff have undergone MEL training. Thus, 6 out of 7.
- c. 6 out of 7 SGCs indicated that there is a budget allocation for MEL activities.
- d. Out of the 7 SGCs assessed, only 1 SGC has an organisational ToC in place.
- e. Apart from Ghana and Malawi, the other SGCs do not have in place MEL plans/guidelines, log frame, and data collection tools.
- f. None of the 7 SGCs assessed have in place a functioning online MEL system.
- g. Except for Ghana and Malawi SGC, the other 5 SGCs assessed do not have Evaluation Plans in place to guide the evaluation process.
- h. Majority of the SGCs do not conduct an evaluation of its interventions.
- i. Most of the SGCs indicated that there is no learning framework in place to guide organisational learning.
- j. Despite not having a learning framework, most of the SGCs indicated that time is allocated for reflection and learning.

The following recommendations emerged from the MEL capacities needs assessment:

- a. Training on the following aspects of MEL - Theory of change; Monitoring frameworks; Evaluation frameworks; MEL plans; Data collection tools and learning frameworks
- b. Support for the digitization of the MEL systems

### Questions and answers

**QN:** There seems to be a conflict. The study results indicated that the majority of SGCs have dedicated staff in place, the MEL staff have been trained and the SGCs have dedicated some budgets for MEL. Is there a real problem with MEL capacities?

- a. This was a very high-level exercise using minimum operating standards most of the SGCs partially met the minimum operating standards.
- b. The totality/comprehensiveness of MEL systems and processes was not identified in any of the SGCs that were reviewed

**QN:** Seven out of 15 SGCs responded to the survey. Why didn't the others respond?

- a. The non-response might have been caused by time constraints, their need to consolidate their self-assessments or their unwillingness to share such information

**QN:** Did AAU consider the other MEL capacity strengthening initiatives within the SGC Initiative?

- a. Yes, AAU consulted SARIMA and NEPAD. The SARIMA reports were taken into consideration to inform the background of this AAU-led assessment.

## 2.2 The MEL System of FONRID, Burkina Faso

Mr. Coulibaly M. Ardjouma the MEL Officer of FONRID presented the status of their MEL system. The highlights of his presentation were:

- a. FONRID is over 10 years old. FONRID is a tool for financing research according to national priorities



- b. There is an agreed process and cycle for managing grants that are issued by FONRID. Currently, 69 projects are being implemented and they were funded through FONRID
- c. The FONRID MEL system facilitates the production of log-sheets displaying project beneficiaries, MEL templates, MEL reports and a documented granting and monitoring process
- d. FONRID have commenced the digitization of the MEL system but it is not yet complete – they are using a Microsoft Access Database and attempting to develop the system internally

### Questions and answers

**QN:** Pertaining to the FONRID MEL System – what is not working well?

- a. The manual grants tracking processes cause inconsistencies in reports production
- b. As the number of projects being managed increases, it is becoming more complex to effectively track them
- c. We are limited in terms of our staff technical capacities, low budget and lack of skills to automate the MEL processes

**QN:** Of the 69 projects – how many are funded by the Government of Burkina Faso?

- a. 45 projects are funded by FONRID and 14 by other partners

**QN:** Explain what aspects of the MEL system have been automated?

- a. We use Excel Sheets. Proposals submissions are done via emails.
- b. We are attempting to digitize using in-house skills

### 2.3 SARIMA's Report on previous MEL training for SGCs

The highlights of the SARIMA presentation were:

- a. SARIMA invited the other implementing partners to share information concerning the SGC Initiative so that SARIMA uploads this on the SGCI website which is maintained by SARIMA
- b. SARIMA is implementing Theme 1 which includes MEL systems support for the SGCs. In 2015 SARIMA did a needs assessment in the 15 SGC countries. They also provided online based training programs in the areas of Research Grants Management, Program Evaluation and MEL for research grants
- c. SARIMA have also done onsite trainings for selected SGCs
- d. SARIMA has provided technical assistance support for the SGCs. They have collaborated with the Association of Commonwealth Universities in the Benchmarking of the SGCs. Benchmarking is not a competition but a tool for leverage
- e. SARIMA agreed with the findings from capacity needs assessment conducted by the AAU – i.e. that SGCs needed support to digitize their MEL systems.

FNI Mozambique supported the SARIMA presentation and shared the following information:

- a. Even though some of the target trainees had language challenges – Mozambique benefited from the SARIMA trainings and technical support
- b. FNI is using the SARIMA Guideline on High-Quality Research Competitions
- c. FNI benefited from SARIMA courses on Research management – but they suggest content customization to make it relevant

- d. Materials translated to Portuguese were difficult to follow. There is a need to carefully review the translated content
- e. FNI Mozambique SGC is currently developing an online Grants Management system. They are also maintaining a database of researchers

### Questions and answers

**QN:** Why have there been limited attendees to some of SARIMA’s online courses

- a. Mozambique and Senegal target participants had challenges with the English language which was the medium of instruction
- b. In future SARIMA needs to consult the SGCs concerning the training schedules

**QN:** Can the Program Evaluation Training content be upgraded to suit the other capacity needs of MEL Officers

**QN:** How did the target participant’s limited online learning culture impact on the delivery of the SARIMA trainings?

- a. Some individuals did not complete the training because they did not understand the instructions or were overwhelmed by the process of learning online.

**QN:** The number of trainees – are these numbers relating to since the start of the SGC Initiative?

- a. Yes

**QN:** Why are there no online MEL systems in the SGCs?

- a. The main reasons seem to be limited technical capacities and funding challenges

**QN:** Do attendees get credits for SARIMA courses?

- a. SARIMA has partnered with international peer organisations to provide accreditation in Research management and Innovation/Technology Transfer management

**QN:** Is SARIMA considering partnering with a university in e.g. Dakar and or Mozambique to support the delivery of the programs in French and Portuguese?

- a. This is a good suggestion

**QN:** Why the focus on research capacity strengthening in universities only? Why are innovation hubs being established in universities? SGCs operate within the larger national and regional STI systems – and therefore the capacity building support strategies must reflect this.

- a. This is well noted, and we agree

### 2.4 MEL Basics by Mr. Donnelly Mwachi (MEL Consultant for the SGC Initiative)

Mr. Donnelly Mwachi covered the MEL basics that SGC MEL Officers need to know. These included the Theory of Change, the Monitoring Framework, the Evaluation Framework, data collection tools, and the MEL plan. The key takeaway messages from the presentation were:

The Theory of Change describes how change is assumed to come about in a prevailing context. The theory is laid out in a diagram showing the connections between strategies and outcomes (short-term, medium term and long term).

The purpose of a Theory of Change is to form the basis of a Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) plan. This also includes designing interventions logical model - helps to identify SMART outputs, outcomes, and impacts, in an open and transparent way

There are six steps to be followed in designing a ToC - *Step1: Define the purpose of ToC Process; Step2: Define Goal/Impact; Step3: Analyse current situation; Step4: Identify Domains of Change; Step5: Map Pathways of Change and Step6: Map Assumptions*

The Monitoring Framework uses the terms Log-frame and results framework inter-changeably

A results/monitoring framework includes the following:

- a. Indicators
- b. Indicator Definition
- c. Means of Verification
- d. Method of Collection
- e. Frequency
- f. Responsible person
- g. Analysis
- h. Disaggregation
- i. Data Quality Assurance
- j. Dissemination/Use
- k. Baseline
- l. Overall Target

An Evaluation Framework collects information about an intervention and considers Evaluation Questions, Intended Results, and Evidence

A MEL Plan compiles the following information

- a. Overview and Purpose
- b. Theory of Change
- c. Monitoring Framework
- d. Analysis, Interpretation, and Use of Data
- e. Research Framework
- f. Evaluation Framework
- g. Learning Framework
- h. Data Quality Plan
- i. MEL Coordination and Reporting

## Questions and answers

**QN:** how do you link the activities with the domains of change?

- a. Design for the perfect change
- b. Don't think about how you will do or achieve the change
- c. Think about what needs to change
- d. Strategies are different from activities

**QN:** How do you identify your stakeholders?

- a. The stakeholders will emerge as the pathways of change
- b. Do your stakeholder analysis

**QN:** At what stage do you work with the stakeholders?

- a. You make judgement based on the problem identification
- b. You could also involve them in the validation process

**QN:** What is the practical organization that will result in a change?

**QN:** The definition of assumptions? What kind of organization is needed in order to have the participation of many stakeholders and the linked activities?

**QN:** Can the change be estimated in terms of costs?

- a. Strategy, implementation plan informs the costs

**QN:** If we get the theory wrong, we get the process wrong – Is it possible to have a menu of methods besides the rich picture method? We need a systemic approach. How do we include Political Economy Analysis? How is PESTEL?

- b. There are many methods – problem tree analysis, etc
- c. A guide has been developed to guide the development of TOCs
- d. The PESTEL approach is accommodated within the PEA (Political Economy Analysis)
- e. PEA is quite complex. The power dimensions between institutions are key. The power analysis is critical

**QN:** Without thinking about the money – how can we think about the change?

- a. TOC and detailed implementation plan are key to support the budget requests

**QN:** We are here to learn how to develop a TOC for the national STI system. Malawi Case – we are learning that we can also develop our own TOCs at various levels: program, project, organizational, etc. Could you give us examples of TOCs?

**QN:** MEL system versus Information Management System. We need to harmonize the terms

## 2.5 Monitoring Framework

The traditional method is to come up with an outcome – then append the indicators. It is best to identify your indicators from your pathways of change. If you already have existing indicators – align them to your TOC and add any new ones. We don't want to re-invent the wheel: align the national and continental indicators. Indicators don't tell us why or how change occurs. Indicators tell us the extent to which we are making progress. Indicators test your assumptions.

### Questions and answers

**QN:** What should we monitor and measure?

- a. Collect data to interrogate your TOC. Collect data to inform learning and re-learning, planning and decision-making.
- b. Have annual reflection meetings. Collect both negative and positive data.

**QN:** Negative results – are they part of the risk mapping

- a. Examples of negative results? Participants not understanding the TOC concept or Participants not applying the TOC concept.
- b. If you document the negative of participants not applying the TOC concept – it gives you an opportunity to interrogate this negative

**QN:** What is the minimum number of domains of change?

- a. Possible to have 10 domains of change
- b. Normally 4-5 domains of change

**QN:** At which stage should we consider the TOC

- a. At strategy development. But most organizations develop the TOC first. Then the TOC drives the strategy.
- b. The TOC is a high-level document. TOC can be used to strengthen the strategy

**QN:** Who should oversee the TOC?

- a. MEL Officer can champion the process by selling the TOC idea to their superior
- b. Map all the stakeholders that need to be involved

**QN:** Please include a practical example for the TOC

- a. Will share some examples
- b. Backward thinking: look at the domain of change and think about the outcomes needed to achieve the domain of change

**QN:** Uganda – question on how to come up with KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).

- a. You identify the KPIs out of a list of the priority indicators

## **2.6 What are the possible barriers that may hinder the SGCs from designing an effective TOC?**

- a. Lack of buy-in because they think it will be expensive and too much work
- b. Institutional structure. How the organization works. Lack of understanding of the importance of the TOC. Might think it will conflict with the strategic plan
- c. Lack of vision from the decision makers
- d. Resistance and fear of change – since they have not conceived this idea. Lack of trust
- e. The leaders always ask us to say where the financial resources will come from
- f. Institutional barriers – when a minister changes, things change, people change, etc. New people don't carry forward existing initiatives.
- g. MEL Officers are not at the level where they can champion the TOCs
- h. Humans are afraid of change. Everyone is in their own corner doing their own things.
- i. The limited understanding amongst our stakeholders and colleagues
- j. Slowness in adopting new things
- k. It's a THEORY – people perceive it as such. Limited understanding of the importance of strategic planning.
- l. Cost issues – PE informs the development of the TOC. It is not a zero-cost process to develop the TOC.

- m. Ownership of the strategic planning process is still very weak in the SGC. The limited appreciation of evidence/apathy towards evidence.
- n. It's a mindset thing, it's a culture thing – it's the absence of champions
- o. Limited engagement and communication among the various units.
- p. The African Union Commission needs to pressurize our Africans to change and to take actions.





### 3.0 Day Two – 27 June 2019

A recap of day one's activities was done, and the following questions emerged:

- a. How are we linking to the STISA 2024 and other continental STI strategies and initiatives?
- b. Are the SGCs not looking at micro-level issues  
We cannot have simplistic MEL Systems. We must build the capacities of SGCs to collect data on STI indicators and also be able to respond to the data/statistics needs at a national level.

### 3.1 Responses from the SGCs

- a. Countries need to link to their national STI policies. We need to be able to contribute to the measurements being led by NEPAD
- b. Can we conceptualize a nested Theory of Change? So that we accommodate the various initiatives that we are working with. There are many moving parts in our systems. The Political Economy Analysis can help us to tease out some of the issues.
- c. Let's focus on the TOC in terms of how the different programs are contributing to the national science systems
- d. Malawi – unable to capture the data that is required by NEPAD. Macro indicators – data collected in different thematic areas.
- e. Tanzania – are currently developing their MEL Framework
- f. Senegal – we just have an excel sheet to track projects. We need to do a lot to track indicators and put tools in place.

### 3.2 IDRC Feedback

- a. We hosted this workshop because the SGCs told us they wanted assistance to build stronger M&E systems at an organizational level.
- b. We are aware of the importance for SGCs to respond to their national STI MEL needs.
- c. We are trying to link to the continental policies. The needs of the countries need to be linked to the whole structure – regional, continental and international levels

### 3.3 Feedback on the support needed by SGCs

- a. Coordination is very important - the CTAs seem not to be coordinated themselves
- b. There are capacity gaps in the SGCs. We need to create a forum for engagement to engage our stakeholders concerning strengthening our MEL framework – an engagement at national levels.
- c. We need to be more organized at an SGC level. Need a good plan and a good calendar.
- d. Various stakeholders should be well-trained
- e. We need a platform – for the various SGCs
- f. It's important to know what is going on in each country, in each SGC
- g. This is a huge “ask” on the two people in the Uganda SGC concerning taking this forward. We need to escalate the role of MEL in the SGCs – by raising the profile of MEL
- h. CTAs have done a lot – but they need to avoid collision and duplication.
- i. NEPAD – prior to this meeting we needed to engage. All the tools that the CTAs have – we need to put them on the table and have one tool for the SGC MEL approach
- j. The workshop was very useful and we have learned a great deal.

### 3.4 MEL Digitization - Nodumo Presentation

Nodumo Dhlamini made a participatory presentation on the digitization of MEL systems. The highlights of the presentation were:

- a. **What is a digitized MEL system?** Automated procedures, Computerized procedures and or available online
- b. **What to digitize in our MEL systems?** E.g. the grants management processes.
- c. **How to digitize MEL Systems** - Understand the work that you do, decide on who will support your digitization project and decide between in-house developments or off the shelf purchase.
- d. **The benefits of having a digitized system** - Access, Archiving, Tracking trends, Efficiency, and Effectiveness
- e. **The challenges to having a digitized system** – Poor Connectivity, Information Technology Literacy, and Resistance to change
- f. **Lesson 1:** software development methodologies - Choose a robust software development methodology such as AGILE to manage project risks such as (1) Scope Creep: Agile projects should add the missed requirements to the backlog, push off lesser value requirements, and drop unnecessary requirements. (2) Requirement Error: Agile fleshes out the requirement when it is being implemented providing much more visibility and a shorter time frame to reduce costs.
- g. **Lesson 2:** workflow understanding and change management - Encourage users to think more about the way that they work – use a retreat for reflection. During system testing encourage users to capture records to ensure the workflow is better understood. Involving some types of users (e.g. researchers at universities) at the discovery phase was perhaps premature - would have been helpful to demo other systems in order to get useful input. Online project management tools were foreign to team members - accustomed to face to face interactions – help users deal with their fears.
- h. **Lesson 3:** budget Versus Needs - Aim for basic functionality – and improve the system as you become clearer on additional needs. Reduce “nice to have” functionalities. Use open source software development tools. Build internal capacity for support
- i. **Lesson 4:** sustaining Digitized Systems - Need for a function in the organization to sustain the computerized MIS - to handle future changes requested by users and to administer the databases. Ensure that there is a clear champion for the MIS – don’t rely on consultants. Ensure buy-in from the CEO and user departments
- j. **Conclusions** - A well-articulated and accepted monitoring and evaluation framework is critical in the development of fitting computerised and web-based management information systems. Online tools for supporting project management could cut down budget costs for developing management information systems. Capacities and experiences of product owners need to be understood and training provided. Managing the scope of computerized Management Information Systems Projects is critical – link to the available budget. The procurement of software development consultants needs to be handled carefully. Ensure there is a team member in your organization who has experience managing software development projects

### 3.5 Presentation by Mr. Geoffrey Sempiri - MEL Digitization: The Ugandan Case Study on Grants Management

Geoffery Sempiri presented. The key highlights of this presentation were:

- a. The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) facilitates and coordinates the development and implementation of policies and strategies for integrating Science and Technology into the national development process.
- b. He explained the UNCST Research Granting Process
- c. UNCST has been trial running a partial on-line research grants management system. The results so far obtained show potential for efficiency gains and cost-effectiveness in research grants management when the system is scaled-up to cover the entire research management cycle from issuing of call for research proposals to submission of project completion reports.
- d. The process entails the integration of various grants management functions that are performed by UNCST divisions.
- e. The digitization of the UNCST Grants Management System has focussed on the following functions
  - i. Publishing new Calls for Proposals
  - ii. Applications/Submissions
  - iii. Response to Calls
  - iv. Submissions Management
  - v. Review management
  - vi. Results Management
  - vii. Reporting and Reports Management
  - viii. Financial Management

#### Questions and answers

QN: Does your system check duplicate applicants?

- a. The system can manage double applications as per the rules of the call

QN: We are excited. Does it track the applicants?

- a. We have removed attachments. We force the entry of team members. You can't have one PI featuring in more than one proposal team

QN: Cost of the system

- a. USD15,000 to date

QN: Do you rely on in-house capacity?

- a. [team of 10 people and once in a while we co-opt other ICT experts]

QN: Where are the constraints?

- a. Budget, Time, Team has other tasks
- b. QN: Where else has the SGCI assisted
- c. SARIMA Good Practices, Motivated by NRF learning visit?

QN: Can you query the system?

- a. We are working on queries and graphs

QN: How long does it take to build such a system?

- a. Have been working to slowly build the system

QN: How do you account for multi-disciplinary applications?

- a. We are still to address this

QN: Can the system pull out biodata for returning grant applicants

- a. Yes, it does.
- b. It's important that as a Grants Officer I own the product

## 4.0 Wrap Up Presentation by Dr. Rebecca Hanlin

### 4.1. Why this workshop?

We hosted this workshop because the SGCs expressed their interest in receiving an assistance from CTAs to build stronger M&E systems at an organizational level. It fits within Phase 2 plans to have SGCI theory of change to fit with SGCs' own theories of change i.e. SGCI 2 is designed to fit your own SGC's strategic plans – idea of nested theories of change. Generally, there is substantial evidence that having an M&E department that monitors and evaluates organisation progress is good practice

#### Overview of the situation

- a. Some SGCs have M&E departments/others do M&E by department – so people here have different roles
- b. Everyone has different tools and at different levels of embeddedness
- c. But..... do we all get enough support from our bosses? Do we have sufficient evidence to make the arguments to get the support (resources/ funding etc.) that we need?
- d. We have seen that e.g. private sector engagement could be strengthened if there is a more holistic M&E system

#### What is a holistic MEL system?

- a. It is a MEL system that is organisation-wide, fits within the strategic plan of an organization, provides data to make broader arguments than those within department remits e.g. around private sector engagement (which involves research department, innovation department, policy department, etc.).
- b. SGCs can start from a theory of change from the organisation... e.g. look at the theories of change for UKRI (UK Research & Innovation) and SA NRF (South Africa National Research Foundation).

#### No system is best

- a. It's all about what is best for you
- b. Organisations work best if there are organization wide systems and procedures
- c. We wanted to ask you to consider what MEL systems you have and to start a debate on whether there are improvements and lessons that can be learnt from others on how to make improvements or deal with challenges faced
- d. Question we leaving you with: what assistance do you need in this area?

### 4.2. The Action Plans from the MEL Officers – Mr. Donnelly Mwachi

Mr. Donnelly Mwachi led the last session where he guided the MEL Officers on how to complete the MEL capacity building plan template to be submitted to Ruth at AAU by 11<sup>th</sup> July 2019. The template requires the following information from the SGCs:

- a. List about 3-5 critical capacity gaps
- b. For each identified capacity gap state the following:
  - i. What change do you want to see?
  - ii. How will you know the objective has been achieved?
  - iii. What will you do to bring about the change you want to see? (state the SGC activities and support needed from the SGC Initiative)

- iv. Name of staff and # days required to implement the activity
- v. By when will this activity be completed?
- vi. Is funding required? Indicate the cost in US\$ and the source of funding)

To ensure that participating SGCs can build robust MEL systems, the AAU team from Theme 3 ACTS consortium will conduct several follow-up visits and surveys at different times with the case study countries.

The Theme 3 consortium also plans to use an online survey to track the immediate outcomes of the peer learning workshop review of existing, and/or implementation of new, MEL system framework including data collection instruments. Three months after the peer learning visit the AAU team will do a follow-up visit to assess the progress made by the SGCs; identify their challenges and make appropriate recommendations.

In addition, a knowledge product will be produced in the form of a case study report whereby the challenges and opportunities of setting up a robust MEL system within the three Francophone countries will be highlighted and discussed. The case study area of focus will be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified prior and/or during the visit and during the process of establishing the Ethiopian SGC MEL systems. The main aim of this case study is to share with other Science Granting Councils the importance of setting up a robust MEL system, the processes of setting up the system and the challenges one could encounter during the process.

#### KEY FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

TASK	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
Support SGCs to establish an online Grant Management system using Uganda as a case study	AAU	Phase I and Phase II
Compile SGCs MEL needs using a capacity assessment tool for follow up activities	AAU	15 <sup>th</sup> July 2019
Share with SGCs the report from the baseline study conducted in the Francophone SGCs and the online survey from the Anglophone SGCs	AAU	02 <sup>nd</sup> July 2019
Create a link for Addis Ababa Workshop evaluation and send to participants for feedback on the organization of the event and the additional needs.	AAU	02 <sup>nd</sup> July 2019
Share with participants the overall initiative Theory of Change and log frame	AAU	02 <sup>nd</sup> July 2019
Share workshop Files with participants	AAU	02 <sup>nd</sup> July 2019



Share findings from SGCs Action plans with Theme members for follow up activities	AAU	17 <sup>th</sup> July 2019
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LINK TO THE MEL WORK FILES: <https://tinyurl.com/y5p8nyha>

## Overall Objectives

- Promote knowledge transfer and networking among SGCs.
- Provide participating SGCs with a practical but basic understanding of the purposes, processes, norms, standards and guiding principles for planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning within the SGC.
- Enhance the results-based culture within SGCs and improve the quality of grant management, monitoring, evaluation and learning

<b>Science Granting Councils Initiative MEL Systems Support Peer Learning Visit, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.</b>		
<b>26th – 27th June 2019</b>		
<b>Director of Ceremonies: Ruth Dickson</b>		
<b>Day 1: Wednesday 26th June 2019</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
0800 – 0900	Arrival and Registration	<b>Association of African Universities (AAU)</b>
0900 - 0930	Welcome Remarks	<b>Loise Ochanda – IDRC Dr. Rebecca Hanlin – ACTS</b>
0930 – 0950	Keynote address and the Objectives of the visit	<b>Ms Nodumo Dhlamini - AAU</b>
0950- 1020	Share findings and learning from eight SGCs	<b>Samuel</b>
1020-1030	Group photo	<b>All</b>
1030-1050	Coffee Break	<b>All</b>
1050–1130	Presentations of MEL Systems 1. Each SGC will make a presentation on its current MEL System, this will include sharing documentation with all SGCs	<b>Ethiopian SGC MEL officer  Burkina Faso MEL officer</b>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Introduction – how M&amp;E sits within the Council – number of staff’s et al? and all MEL procedures</li> <li>3. Components of their MEL systems – e.g. Theory of Change, M&amp;E framework, M&amp;E work plan ---</li> <li>4. What is working?</li> <li>5. What is not working</li> </ol>	
1130 - 1230	SARIMA Report on previous M&E training with SGCs	<b>SARIMA</b>
1130 –1330	<p>MEL basics. What the Council need to know.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of Change</li> <li>• Monitoring Framework</li> <li>• Evaluation Framework</li> <li>• Data Collection Tools – Significant Moments Reporting</li> <li>• M&amp;E Plan</li> </ul>	<b>Donnelly</b>
1330 -1430	Lunch	<b>All</b>
1530 –1630	Group Work: Linking Theory of Change to our work (both at design and implementation stages)	<b>Donnelly</b>
1630 - 1640	Coffee Break	<b>All</b>
1640 - 1730	Plenary - Reflection	<b>All MEL officers</b>
<b>Day 2: Thursday 27th June 2019</b>		
0900 - 0910	Recap of day 1	<b>Ruth Dickson</b>
0910- 1100	<p>Group Discussions:</p> <p>Knowledge exchange on current MEL systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is considered as strengths in the current MEL system?</li> <li>• What is considered as weakness in the current MEL systems?</li> <li>• Recommendations for improvement?</li> </ul>	<b>All MEL Officers</b>
1100 - 1130	Coffee Break	<b>All</b>
1130 - 1300	<p>Knowledge exchange on of Monitoring Tools using Indicators</p> <p>SGCs will be required to come along with their data collection tools</p>	<b>Donnelly/NEPAD</b>

	NEPAD will assist MEL officers to design M&E tools using indicators	
1300 - 1400	Lunch	<b>All</b>
1400 - 1500	MEL Digitization What is a digitized system What are the benefits and challenge to having a digitized system Uganda case Study	<b>Nodumo/Samuel</b>
1500 - 1520	Coffee Break	<b>All</b>
1520 - 1630	Actions Plans MEL officers would be required to draft their action plans based on the MEL training. There would be activities that would need follow ups	<b>MEL Officers</b>
<b>End of Training</b>		

## Participants

Day 1					
Botswana	Ms	Evelyn	Reetsang	F	MoTE
Burkina Faso	Mr	Coulibaly	Ardiouma	M	FONRID
Cote d'Ivoire	Ms	Zeinebou	Ouattara	F	PASRES
Ethiopia	Mr	Abebual	Molla	M	MInT
Ethiopia	Mr	Semere	Gelthenos	M	MInT
Ghana	Mr	Lawrence Kafui	Kuwornu	M	MESTI
Malawi	Mr	kondwani Victor	Gondwe	M	NCST
Senegal	Mr	Tafsir Babacar	Ndoye	M	DFRSDT
Uganda	Mr	Steven	Sebbale	M	UNCST
Zimbabwe	Mrs	Linda	Goredema-Kembo	F	RCZ
Ghana	Ms	Ruth Issambo	Dickson	F	AAU
Ghana	Mr	Samuel Nyarko	Agyapong	M	AAU
Kenya	Dr	Ashalew	Tigabu	M	ACTS
Kenya	Dr	Nicholas	Ozor	M	ATPS
Kenya	Dr	G. K.	Kosimbei	M	KU
South Africa	Dr	Tichaona	Mangwende	M	NEPAD
South Africa	Mr	Lukovi	Seke	M	NEPAD
South Africa	Dr	Gideon	Nimako	M	NEPAD
South Africa	Ms	Zimasa	Sobuza	F	SARIMA
Kenya	Mr	Donnelly	Mwachi	M	SGCI
UK	Dr	Chux	Daniels	M	SPRU
Tanzania	Dr	Gussai	Sheikheldin	F	STIPRO
Day 2					
Botswana	Ms	Evelyn	Reetsang	F	MoTE
Burkina Faso	Mr	Coulibaly	Ardiouma	M	FONRID
Cote d'Ivoire	Ms	Zeinebou	Ouattara	F	PASRES
Ethiopia	Mr	Semere	Gelthenos	M	MInT
Malawi	Mr	Kondawni Victor	Gondwe	M	NCST
Mozambique	Mrs	Dirce	Maderia		FNI
Senegal	Mr	Tafsir Babacar	Ndoye	M	DFRSDT
Tanzania	Mrs	Anna Godwin	Ngoo	F	COSTECH
Uganda	Mr	Steven	Sebbale	M	UNCST
Zambia	Ms	Mupande	Nambala	F	NSTC
Ghana	Ms	Ruth	Dickson	F	AAU
Ghana	Mr	Samuel	Agyapong	M	AAU
Ghana	Ms	Nodumo	Dhlamini	F	AAU

Kenya		Rebecca	Hanlin		ACTS
Kenya	Dr	Ashalew	Tigabu	M	ACTS
Kenya	Dr	Diakalia	Sanogo	M	IDRC
South Africa	Dr	Tichaona	Mangwende	M	NEPAD
South Africa	Mr	Lukovi	Seke	M	NEPAD
South Africa		Gideon	Nimako	M	NEPAD
South Africa	Dr	Nana	Boaduo	M	NRF-SA
South Africa	Prof	Yogi	Naik	M	SARIMA
South Africa	Ms	Zimasa		F	SARIMA
Kenya	Mr	Donnelly	Mwachi	M	SGCI
Zambia	Mr	Clement	Kasaro	M	NSTC

