Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

ACDI/VOCA’s approach to data management

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Setting the Stage

- ACDI/VOCA and what we do
- Transitioning our data management to ActivityInfo
- Our approach to M&E for accountability and learning
  - Project level
  - Corporate level
  - Utilizing data for adaptive management and corporate learning
- Summary, Lessons and recommendations
ACDI/VOCA and what we do

- A nonprofit international development organization based in Washington, D.C and founded in 1963
- It has worked in 146 countries, currently in 20 countries
- Focus on delivering technical and management assistance in agribusiness, financial services, enterprise development, community development and food security in order to

  Promote broad-based economic growth and vibrant civil society
ACDI/VOCA’s Approach to M&E

• Our MEL approach is to ensure accountability and learning
  • MEL must ensure that we accountable to our clients, partners, and donors
  • Our data is a management tool for evidence-based decisions
  • Data must have the highest quality and secure
  • Use our data to assess the effectiveness of project implementation approaches and the critical success and/or failure factors.
• We analyze our data to learn about the quality of each projects' performance, and
• Analyze data across projects to identify concepts that work or don’t work well in certain contexts or countries to
  • Adaptive management,
  • Enable evidence-based project design and implementation.
GLOBAL MIS Support

HQ MERL STAFF SUPPORT PORTFOLIO OF PROJECTS

EACH PROJECT

MIS HQ SUPPORTS ALL PROJECTS*

M&E AND MIS STAFF
Timeline

- Assessment of Available MIS platforms
- Signing with ActivityInfo
- ACDI/VOCA corporate stakeholder feedback and testing
- Four Initial Projects Piloted in ActivityInfo
- Rollout of ActivityInfo to all other projects
STEPS: Designing the Database

Donor-Approved List of Project Indicators

Stakeholder Engagement – Project MERL and MIS Teams
- Brainstorming Session – Focus on Indicators
- Common understanding of each indicator
- Disaggregates
- Frequency of data collection and reporting

Schema Design (in visio) – Tables and Relationships for each Indicator

Build tables in ActivityInfo based on the schema
- Test Forms with dummy data
- Training of Trainers (ToT)

Development of Project Indicator Dashboards in PowerBI
Sample Database Schema

Individual Registry
- ParticipantID (PK Key)
- VSLA ID (FK)
- First Name
- Last Name
- Other Names
- Region
- Zone
- Ward
- Kabale
- Individual Type
- Year of birth
- Gender

VSSA Loan Tracker
- IndividualID (PK)
- Type of Loan (Debt/Non-Debt)
- Type Debt-Ind-Hind/Cash
- Date of Disbursement
- Loan Value(ETB)

Finance Tracker
- Type of Finance (Date/Non-Date)
- Type Debt-Ind-Hind/Individual
- Source Fund (Individual)
- Date of Disbursement
- Value(ETB)
- Financial Institution ID (FK)

Technology Practice Tracker
- ParticipantID (PK)
- Type of Technology
- Date of Application
- Area(s)
- Commodity
- Type of Seed (if Tech type: Seed)
- Volume of Seed (kg)

Sales Tracker
- ParticipantID (FK)
- Type of Crop
- Total Quantity Produced (Q)
- Quantity Sold (Q)
- Highest Price Sold(Q)
- Lowest Price Sold(Q)
- Fiscal Year of Sale

Training Attendance Tracker
- ParticipantID (FK)
- TrainingID (FK)
Sample Power BI Dashboard
Database Maintenance & Support

• Two Levels for Field Project Teams
  • First line Support - Project MIS team
  • Second Line Support - ACDI/VOCA HQ MERL Team

• Project Support Areas
  • Database modifications
  • Access Control
  • Data Integrity Checks
  • Bulk Data Uploads
  • Data Synchronization Issues
  • Dashboard modification

• HQ Support Areas
  • Corporate Indicator Reporting
Using the ActivityInfo

- Mobile app component of AI has simplified data synchronization
- Bulk Data Upload
  - Easy to use bulk upload feature
  - Ability to allow partial upload in case of validation issues
  - Upload Summary Review before final upload
- Syntax – Excel like syntax makes it easy to adapt
- User Interface
MEL at the Project Level

• Each project has a set of donor-required indicators
  • Each project database is built around these indicators
  • Routine data for output indicators is uploaded directly into the database
  • Outcome data is typically collected through annual surveys

• A Data Management Manual contains details on indicator calculations, sampling, verification documents and more

• Data at the individual & organization participant level must be non-duplicative, to the extent possible

• Data must be dated and auditable (with associated verification documents)
MEL at the Corporate Level

• ACDI/VOCA has a set of corporate indicators that are aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

• Our organization produces a corporate Impact & Learning Report that utilizes data from across projects

• A MERL team space with a document library and conversation streams
Utilizing Data for Learning and Adaptive Management

- MEL Regional Knowledge Sharing hubs promote cross-project dialogue & mentorship

- The MERL & CLA Communities of Practice provides capacity-building webinars/opportunities
• Our MEL system is designed to serve accountability and learning functions
• Data quality and integrity are critical
• The data management and information system must have adequate analytical tools to enable rigorous data analysis

• We chose ActivityInfo because the platform is:
  • User friendly and integrates online/offline mobile data collection features
  • Data integrity and audit trails,
  • Enables data aggregation from different projects for corporate level analysis (work in progress)
  • Piloting and migration from previous system was managed centrally
Lessons, Recommendations and Challenges

• Involvement of the field teams from scratch
• Visualization
• Use of DAX Functions
Lessons and Recommendations (2)

- Data quality has been enhanced as:
  - verification documents can be directly uploaded;
  - more traceability in data entry;
  - the bulk upload feature identifies data quality issues
- Mobile data entry platforms that interface directly with the database are crucial
- Large number of user tutorials and webinars
- Direct issue/trouble shooting support from ActivityInfo
- Challenges during the pilot phase due to complex projects and the identification of new feature 'asks'
- Standardized MEL policies & resources ensures crucial best practices happen