

## Reflections on the ALINE workshop at the Perspectives on Impact Evaluation Conference in Cairo, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Our workshop was attended by approx 80 participants in the morning and approx 60 in the afternoon.

36 participants completed workshop evaluation form. Not all participants completed all sections of the questionnaire.

The evaluation was divided into 4 sections.

1. Identify attributes of workshop participants
2. Identify type of relationships between IPAL actors
3. Preliminary identification of key issues related to current M&E practice
4. Feedback on workshop

This questionnaire aimed to provide the ALINE team with a preliminary overview of actors and issues in current M&E to inform thinking and identify areas for deeper analysis in a more formal consultation later in 2009.

### 1 Participant Attributes

#### 1.1 Role and geography of workshop participants

Of 34 participants who completed the attributes section of the questionnaire, 15 were from African institutions, representing a range of institutions. As this represents nearly 50% of the sample it suggests that there is interest in a potential ALINE in Africa and also that the range of institutions who are interested in agricultural M&E.

Another core group represented in the study are international organisations (10 respondents), including several representatives of UN agencies. More complete information of the geographic and institutional distribution of workshop participants is provided in table 1.

This diverse cross section of organisations that attended the ALINE workshop will make up ALINE's external audience and it is important for us to be aware of their different issues and interests related to M&E so that we can target our communication messages and clarify which groups we seek to influence.

**Table 1: Role and geography of workshop participants**

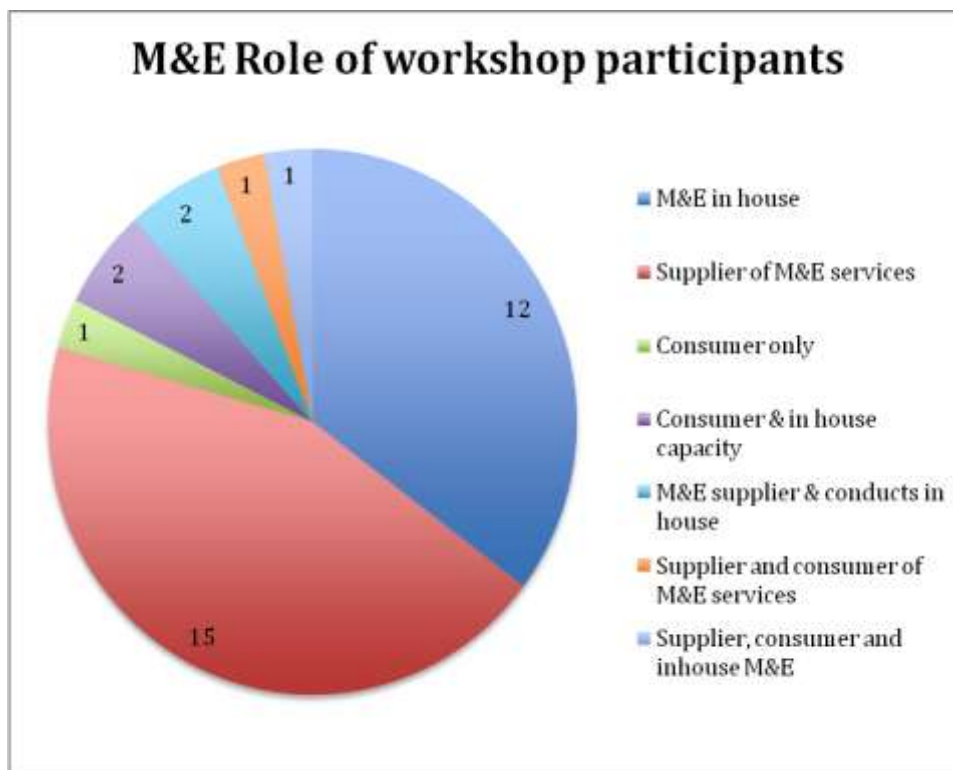
	Africa	Asia	Latin America	Middle East	International orgs	Unknown	Total
NGO	4	1	1		3		9
National Govt	4		1			2	7
Donor	2				2		4
Academic	1	1		1			3
Private Sector	1			2			3
Service Providers	2				1		3
UN					3		3
Other int'l orgs					1		1
Think tank	1						1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>34</b>

Q for ALINe consultation: Which group(s) of stakeholders will ALINe seek to influence directly? What different outreach strategies should be used for different stakeholder groups? Which groups do we hope to influence indirectly?

### 1.2 M&E capacity

Participants were asked whether they considered themselves to be either a supplier or consumer of M&E services or whether they conducted their M&E in house. The majority of participants were either M&E suppliers or conduct M&E in house for their own organisation. 6 participants identified themselves with multiple roles within this spectrum.

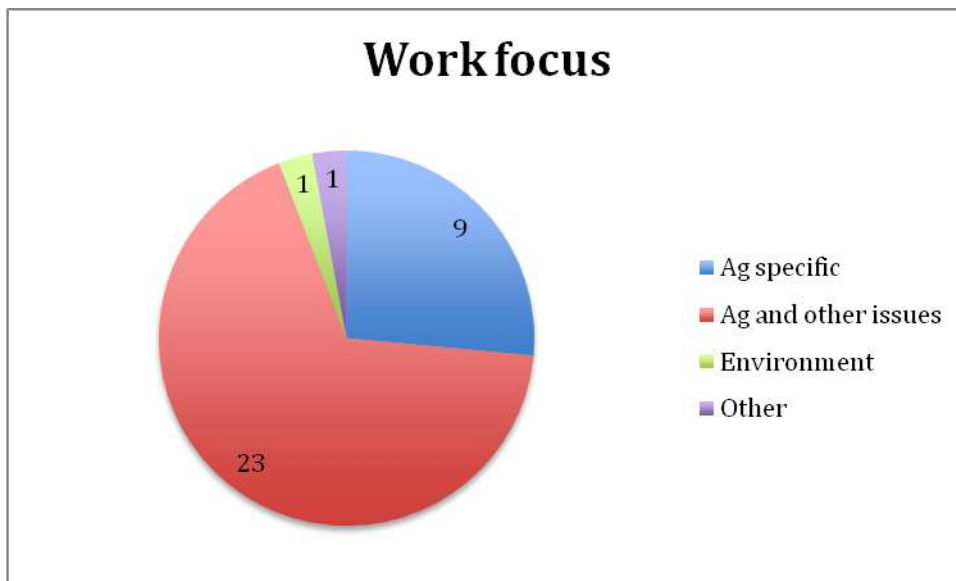
Figure 1: M&E role of respondents



### 1.3 Work focus

Importantly for ALINe, the vast majority of workshop participants do not work solely on agricultural M&E but have a much broader focus.

**Figure 2: Work focus of respondents**



*Question for ALINe*

*How will we balance the specific agricultural focus of ALINe with the broader interests of M&E practitioners?*

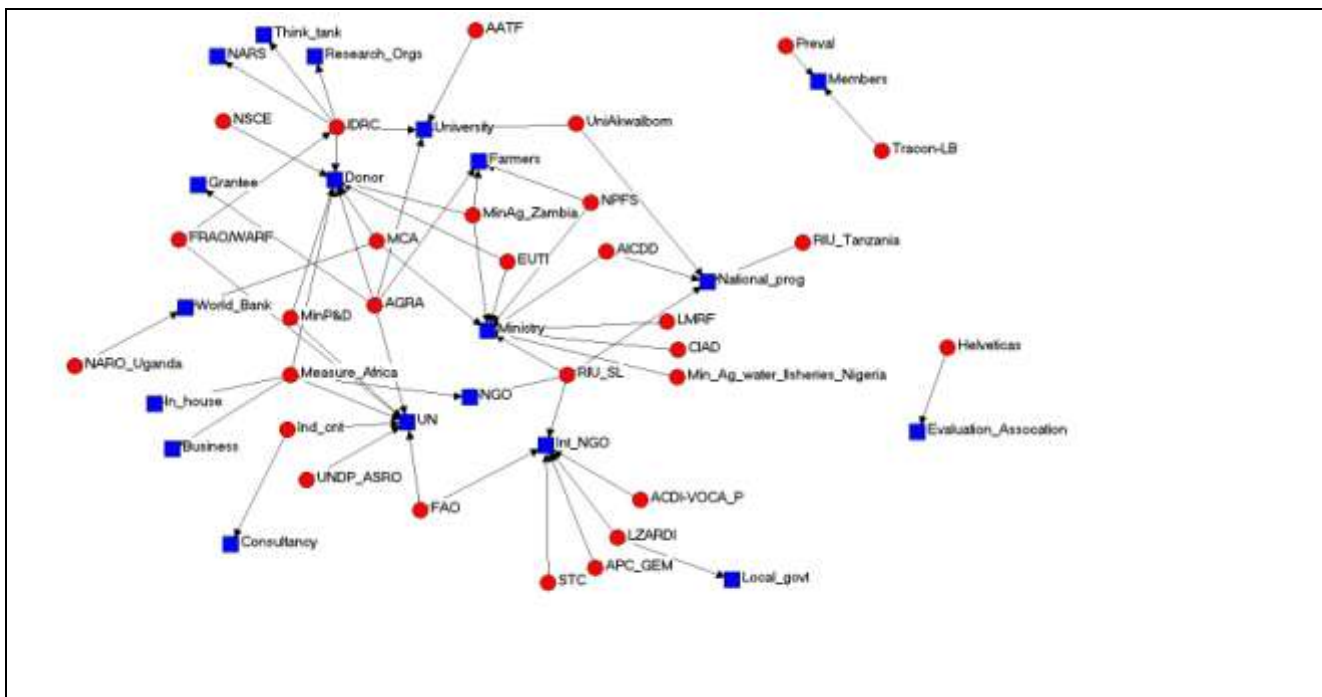
## **2 Snap shot of M&E Relationships**

Workshop participants were asked to name the actors that they worked with most frequently on M&E related issues.

The 34 participants who responded have ties with a total of 75 organisations.

As these responses represent relationships of actors from diverse geographical regions they do not represent any sort of cohesive network. The actors named in the questionnaire have been grouped into generic categories to give an impression of the types of inter-institutional ties related to M&E. To facilitate interpretation and to protect the identity of the actors named by respondents they have been grouped into generic groups as shown in figure 3.

**Figure 3: Respondents' M&E relationships**



Red nodes represent the workshop participants, blue nodes represent the actors that they named. The names of red nodes are representative, a full list of the organisations that these names represent can be found in annex 1.

**Table 2: Organisations' M&E relationships.**

	InDegree
Ministry	10
UN agencies	9
Donor	8
International NGOs	7
National Programmes	4
University	4
NGO	3
Farmers	3
World Bank	3

The types of actors most frequently named by workshop participants were Ministries (10), UN agencies (9) and Donors (8). Other types of actors that were also significant for M&E are named in table 2. Three organisations mention farmers as important for their M&E relationships

### 2.1 Nature of M&E relationships

The questionnaire also asked participants to describe the nature of their M&E relationships.

Of the 75 relationships represented in figure 3, only 21 (28% of) ties represent relationships which are solely related to M&E. The remaining 54 (72% of) ties represent relationships in which M&E is part of broader interactions between the two parties. This suggests that M&E ties are embedded within inter-institutional relationships that cover a broad range of services and skills

Of these 75 ties, only 17 (22.6%) ties were specific to agriculture, 8 ties (10.6%) were specific to other sectors and 50 ties (66.6%) were related to agriculture and other sectors.

This provides further evidence that agriculture is only one element of M&E relationships which will be important for ALINe to consider as it builds relationships with the field.

Only 3 of the 75 ties were both specific to M&E and specific to agriculture and 2 of those were mentioned by FAO representatives regarding their relationship with other departments of the FAO.

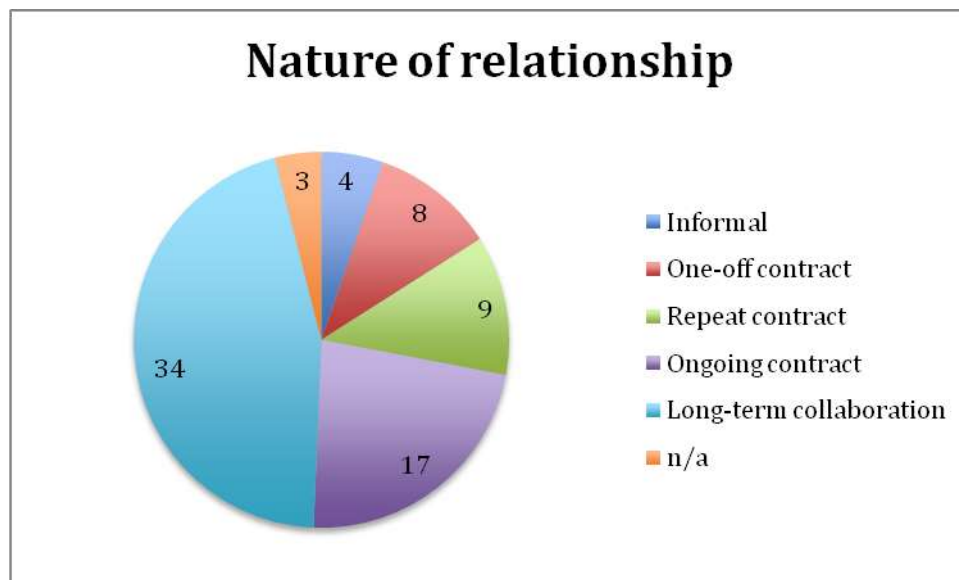
*Questions for ALINe*

*If the majority of M&E relationships are based around broader interactions (financial support, capacity building, information sharing etc), what are the implications for ALINe to influence the field towards an IPAL approach?*

*The data suggest that the majority of organisations conduct agricultural M&E as part of a portfolio of activities, how will ALINe ensure that our approach is relevant to these actors needs with regard to M&E in other sectors?*

Respondents were asked about the nature of their relationships with the organisations with which they worked. 68% of the relationships mentioned were either long term collaborations or ongoing contracts. This provides further evidence that M&E is embedded in inter-institutional relationships and while the data below suggests that the quality of M&E services can be improved it will be necessary to consider the level of institutional inertia that can develop when institutions work together over a period of time and do not see the need to review their practices.

**Figure 4: Nature of M&E relationships**



*Questions for ALINe:*

*How can ALINe influence thinking around IPAL in long-term collaborative relationships?*

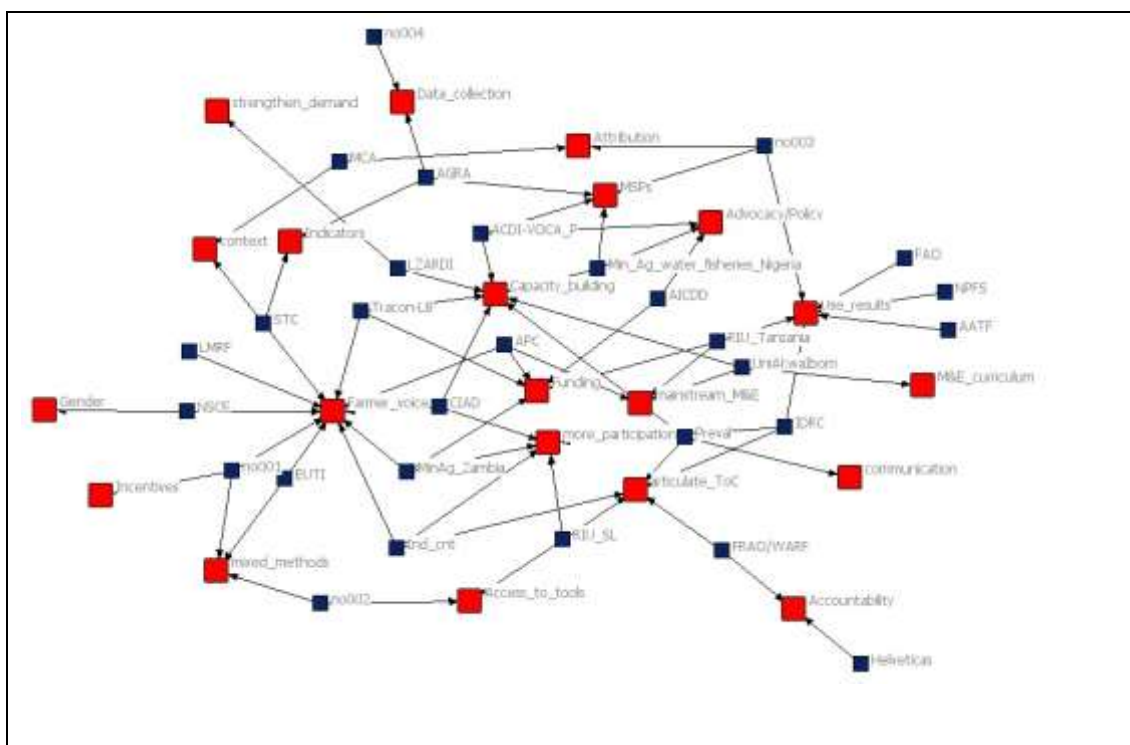
*Is the emphasis on long term relationships due to the quality of these relationships or the lack of alternative service providers?*

### 3 Issues that most urgently need to be addressed in agricultural M&E

Participants were asked to name the 3 most important issues to address to improve M&E. Figure 5 shows the different issues identified by participants. This shows how actors cluster around specific issues. This same data is presented in a table format in table 2.

Farmer voice is the most frequently named issue to be addressed, followed by capacity building and the way in which results of evaluations are used.

**Figure 5: Key issues to improve M&E**



**Table 3: Key issues to improve M&E**

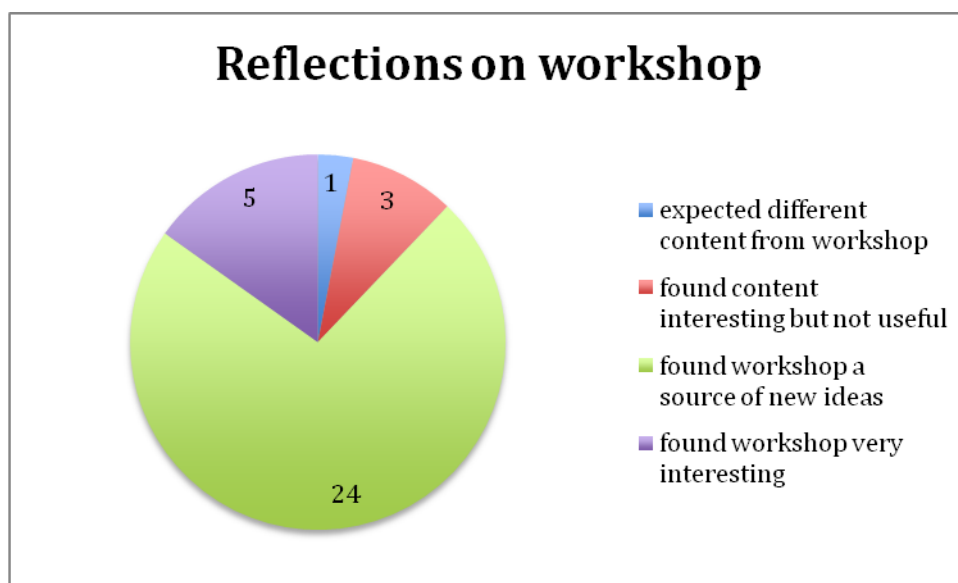
Issue	Score
Farmer voice	10
Capacity building	7
Use results	7
Articulate Theory of Change	5
Funding	5
More participation	5
Use of mixed methods	4
Multi-sector Partnerships	4
Accountability	3
Advocacy/Policy	3
Mainstream M&E	3
Access to tools	2
Attribution	2
Understanding project context	2
Data collection	2

Gender	2
Indicators	2
Communication	1
Incentives	1
M&E curriculum	1
Strengthen demand	1

#### 4 Feedback from workshop

36 workshop participants completed the section to give feedback on the ALINe workshop. The response was extremely positive. None of the participants stated that the workshop had not been useful and the remaining responses were divided as shown in figure 6.

Figure 6: Reflection on workshop



#### 5 Identified role for ALINe

Table 4 shows the responses received from participants regarding the role they see for an Agricultural Learning and Impact Network.

The responses have been grouped into categories and ordered according to the number of times mentioned. This information suggests there is a role for ALINe in information and knowledge sharing. The second most commonly mentioned demand is influencing best practice. This is actually a knowledge sharing function but it was mentioned enough times independently that it merits its own category. Networking was also a key demand, which interestingly is also related to knowledge sharing.

An important finding of this information is the low position in which both developing new tools and constituent engagement as these are currently central elements of the ALINe planning year.

**Table 4: Demand for ALINe**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Additional comments</b>
<b>Information / knowledge sharing (12)</b>	Exchange and share experience
	Information sharing and dissemination; Knowledge base for M&E and impact evaluation issues in agriculture and development
	Generate and disseminate knowledge in the most critical issues regarding impact evaluation;
	Share lessons from elsewhere; disseminate information to other agric actors; lobbying and advocacy for policy and programmatic changes where necessary;
	Information, knowledge management, networking
	Very important, especially if informational advances are accessible at different levels
	Arena for practitioners in Agriculture to share, get information and collaborate
	Good idea to have a network to share experiences; be careful with acronym - ALIN (Arid Lands information network)
<b>Influence best practice (7)</b>	Help provide case studies; help learn from it; share knowledge from it
	Vital for disseminating new ideas such as theory of change
	Providing cases
	Identify what works and what does not work as far as M&E planning and implementation is concerned and how the learning experience is taken on board
	Best practices sharing
<b>Networking (7)</b>	Please liaise with other network wide initiatives happening in southern and eastern Africa already
	Good potential for networking
	Practitioners/consultation group/possible voice group but still work needed to reach greater audience
	Increased alliance with actively implementing projects to influence best practices
	Linking M&E stakeholders
	Motivate for actions and platform for networking; development of database for better learning;
<b>Influence donor agencies (5)</b>	An opportunity to communicate with donor agencies to work for improving their interventions in developing countries in areas related to agriculture
	Provocateur; Advocate; social change agent; critical friend; resident truth-teller
	Aline can influence the full adoption of M&E in various national govt especially in agricultural development / and Ministries. This development will cause the decision makers to plan and budget for M&E in their various projects.
<b>Capacity building (4)</b>	Capacity building, information sharing, to enable practitioners to interact
	Training in impact evaluation and learning
	Proactive engagement in capacity building
<b>Capture / share methodological innovation (4)</b>	Nothing equal specific to agric. Needs to be open in terms of methodology and impact paradigm.
	Influence agricultural evaluation agenda and to introduce a plethora of methods and not leave it to the randomistas
	Melting pot of new innovations in agric M&E
<b>Standards/ guidelines (2)</b>	Develop guidelines for agricultural M&E; Create a roster of ag M&E case studies
	Development of adequate guidelines for impact in agriculture; capacity building
<b>Mainstream M&amp;E</b>	Occupy a central seat in project cycle management

(2)	promoting M&E in rural development projects
Constituent engagement (2)	provide feedback to farmers
	Continue working on client/constituent engagement
No need (2)	Unsure there is a real need
	Just a new network
Support learning (1)	Develop a learning initiative with agricultural research institutions to enhance quality of M&E

## 6 Ideas which workshop did not cover

The final questions participants were asked was whether there are any issues that should have been covered during the ALINe session which were not. In general the responses to this question suggest that workshop participants demanded practical guidance and tools that they could take away which also supports the above finding of the need for improved knowledge sharing in the M&E sector

Lack of practical examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical real case studies based on real theory</li> <li>• The sessions were very generic and the session on constituency voice needed more elaboration with detailed examples</li> <li>• Best practices; giving examples; discussing tools</li> <li>• Should have asked about participants expertise - there are different issues for a very diversified audience (mixed managers/scientists/M&amp;E experts)</li> <li>• Tools for Ag M&amp;E</li> <li>• Case studies to demonstrate how this could work or not work</li> <li>• Success stories, case studies</li> </ul>
Support for data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to analyse collected data (tools and strategies)</li> <li>• More time to illustrate how to combine / aggregate evaluations</li> <li>• sampling - quantitative vs qualitative</li> <li>• Methodologies and developing appropriate measurable indicators</li> <li>• Building capacity of M&amp;E systems where they do exist; governance issues (accountability)</li> </ul>
Context of current debates in M&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donor agendas in M&amp;E use; extent to which good practice can be upscaled</li> <li>• Gold standard (randomista) debate</li> <li>• Distinction between outputs, outcomes and impacts. The fundamental differences between logical framework, result based monitoring and theory of change</li> <li>• Maybe since Gates is emerging as a major donor, some energy should be spent on how does a donor drive such an M&amp;E culture as is needed.</li> <li>• More detailed analysis and discussion of M&amp;E issues in agriculture</li> <li>• Major issues around M&amp;E, need for open discussion on methodology. Still a lot of silent impact that cannot be captured by current M&amp;E methods</li> <li>• Views of african based evaluations on agricultural project evaluation. Too much concern about time - which is a cultural barrier</li> </ul>
Constituency voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key point for downward accountability is to take on other view points. If constituency ratings are used to convince donors to fund a programme the constituency actually is misused! True accountability goes to those who pay - does it need a reversed flow of funds - from donor to constituency to development agency?</li> <li>• Bringing constituency voice: the approach proposed is not for me as such effective</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Issues on advocacy and lobby and media and how to better factor M&amp;E issues</li></ul>
	Also 1 comment = Good job, excellent presentations

## Annex 1: Institutions in M&E Network

Abbreviation	Institution
AATF	Agrican Agricultural Technology Foundation
ACDI-VOCA_P	ACDI-VOCA Phillipines
AGRA	AGRA
AICDD	AICDD
APC	APC
CIAD	Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) China Agricultural University
EUTI	Egerton University Tegemeo Institute
FAO	FAO
FAO	FAO
FRAO/WARF	FRAO/WARF
Helveticas	Helveticas
IDRC	IDRC
Ind_ cnt	Independent consultant
LMRF	LMRF
LZARDI	Lake Zone Agricultural research for development institute
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account (Honduras)
Measure_Africa	Measure Africa
Min_ agwater_fisheries_Nigeria	Fisheries Data Management Ministry of agriculture and Water (Nigeria)
MinAg_Zambia	Ministry of Agriculture (Zambia)
MinP&D	Ministry of planning and development
NARO_Uganda	National Agricultural Research Organization NARO Uganda
NPFS	NPFS
NSCE	North South Consultants Exchange (Egypt)
Preval	Preval
RIU_SL	Research into Use - Sierra Leone
RIU_Tanzania	Research into Use - Tanzania
STC	Save the children
Tracon-LB	Tracon-LB
UNDP_ASRO	UNDP ASRO
UniAkwa Ibom	Dept of Agricultural economics/Agricultural extension Univeristy of Ugbo, Akwa Ibom Nigeria
no001	Wished to remain anonymous
no002	Wished to remain anonymous
no003	Wished to remain anonymous
no004	Wished to remain anonymous