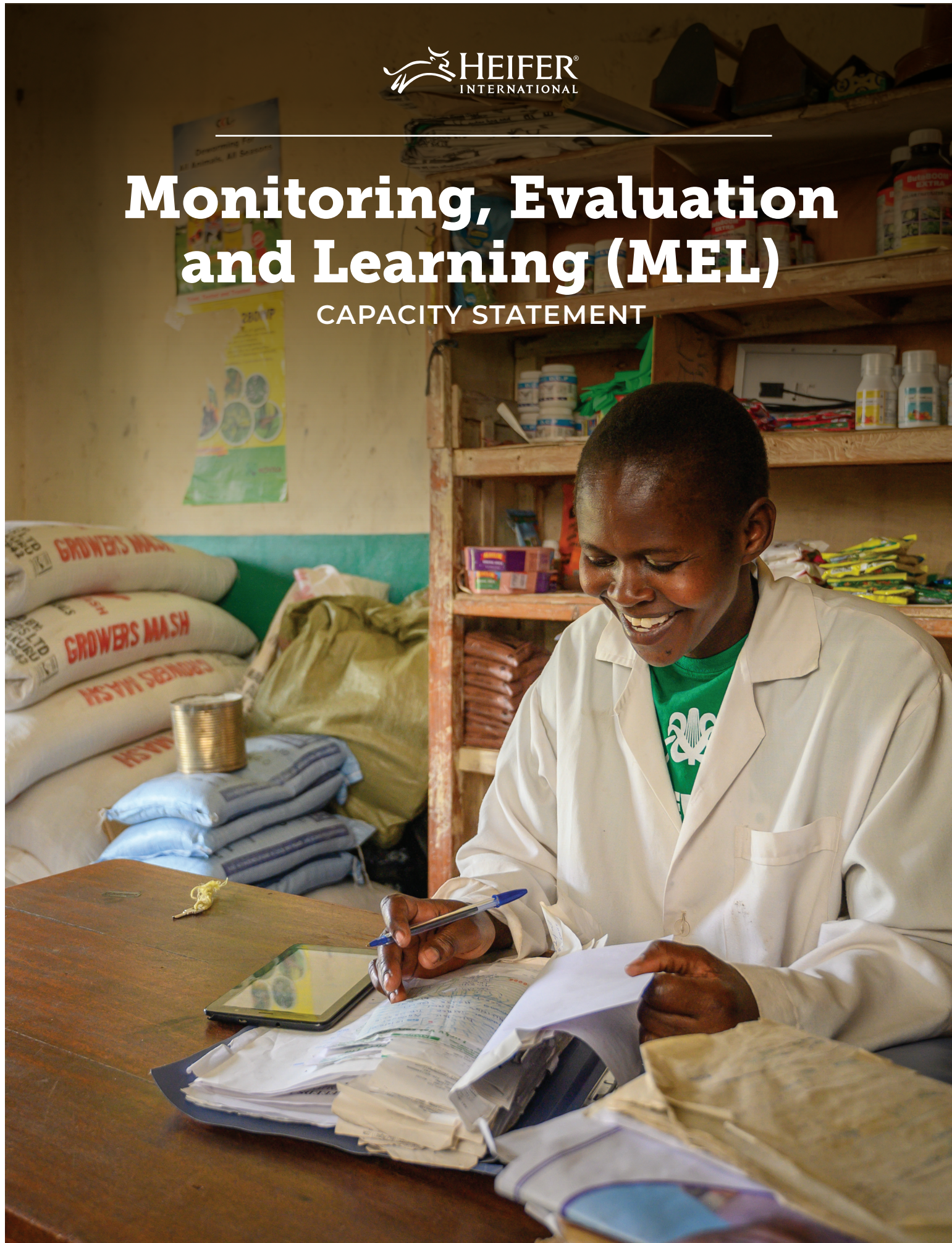


Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

CAPACITY STATEMENT



Introduction

Heifer International has strong Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) processes that guide project progression from data to knowledge. Heifer aims to support farming families achieve a Sustainable Living Income (SLI), a goal that aligns with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In support of this mission, Heifer is committed to high-quality project monitoring, data management, learning, adaptive management and reporting.

Heifer views MEL from multiple perspectives, including the project, organization and funder. At a project level, Heifer's implementation teams assess the project's progress toward the goal. At an organizational level, Heifer's processes ensure that MEL data from implementation enables tracking SLI achievement to a global level. At the funder level, Heifer's MEL practices ensure adequate information for adaptive project management. In addition, standard practices for data collection allow for consistent analysis and project learning in compliance with any funder measurement strategies. Each project's MEL Plan is developed within six months of the funder awarding Heifer money, or sooner if the funder's timeline requires it. A summary of key strengths of Heifer's MEL system is outlined in the sections below.



A Strong and Coherent MEL Plan

Heifer finds MEL fundamental to strong program design and implementation. We have a standardized approach to our MEL activities, which includes:

- ▶ **Logic Model:** Heifer models the causal outcomes needed to achieve desired change, outputs needed to catalyze results, associated indicators at each result level and key assumptions that underlie the success of the theory of change (TOC).
- ▶ **Performance Indicators:** Each Heifer project has an indicator at every component of the project's logic model. These can be a Funder Specific Indicator, Heifer Global Indicator, or a Project Specific / Custom Indicator. The indicators are designed to adequately disaggregate important aspects of the population to consider gender and social inclusion issues.
- ▶ **Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS):** These provide detailed definitions of project indicators, rationale for use, data sources, data collection methods and frequency of collection, analysis and use, including any disaggregation requirements.
- ▶ **MEL Calendar:** Describes the standard dates for priority MEL activities and roles and responsibilities of staff.
- ▶ **Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT):** Summary indicator data from baseline to final evaluation. Updated semestery using data from routine monitoring (output data) and annually with outcome data.
- ▶ **Learning Plan:** Learning agenda discussed in section four.
- ▶ **Participants Counting plan:** Stakeholders, disaggregated by gender, age and other criteria, who have contact of diverse types and intensities with direct project activities and resulting outcomes.

Data Management System

An arrangement of several partners jointly managing a project. This section of the MEL Plan describes how data will be consistently handled across partners to ensure high-quality aggregated data, and consists of:

- ▶ **Data Collection Plan** to explain how data is managed from collection to reporting. Heifer projects collect data using standard templates and questionnaires developed by the Headquarters MEL (HQ MEL) Team via SurveyCTO, an online data collection system.
- ▶ **Summary of data collection methods** and an explanation of the method and frequency with which data will be gathered, including potential limitations or challenges. Projects must clarify disaggregation needs and whether data collection methods will result in disaggregated data.
- ▶ **Data quality assurance procedures** to verify and validate the measures of performance.
- ▶ **Data storage system** specifying the format in which data will be stored and processes for data sharing internally and externally.
- ▶ **Data security protocols** to ensure data and information is safeguarded.

Evaluations

Each project conducts evaluations depending on the number of years of implementation.

<p>a.</p> <p>Baseline evaluations must be completed within six months (or as per funder guidance if timings differ) of project start-up to establish benchmarks for all indicators, unless existing programming means baseline data is already available.</p>	<p>b.</p> <p>Mid-Term evaluations are conducted for projects with three or more years of implementation.</p>	<p>c.</p> <p>Final evaluations are required for all projects. Final evaluations are carried out within the last two quarters of project implementation and after core project interventions are finished.</p>	<p>d.</p> <p>Outcome monitoring is conducted annually (except for evaluation years) for projects with more than three years to measure project participants progress toward the goal.</p>
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If the project is funded externally, all evaluations must meet the funder's requirements, which could include performing additional assessments. An external party conducts evaluations for objectivity, using specific terms of reference set by Heifer to ensure validity. Heifer or the funder guides the evaluation designs, including the sample size.



Learning Plan

As noted above, projects incorporate a Learning Plan into the MEL Plan. The Learning Plan includes:

- ▶ Learning questions addressing critical knowledge gaps in the TOC, or for new products/services being tested during implementation.
- ▶ Activities to answer the questions (e.g., surveys/Randomized Controlled Trials, etc.)
- ▶ Strategy to disseminate findings.

The Learning Plan also includes activities to ensure that formal and informal feedback and monitoring and evaluation information is continuously used to revise the project's TOC and make course corrections to implementation, outcomes and impact.



Roles, Responsibilities and Schedule

The Project MEL Officer is responsible for implementing the MEL Plan. They oversee capacity building of program staff and for reporting and supervising general MEL approaches, practices and tools. The Country MEL Manager and Project Manager provide MEL oversight, assuring that the MEL Officer meets the project's needs and responds to the funder's and Heifer's information needs. HQ-MEL staff provide technical support to both the country's and project's MEL staff, especially on the MEL Plan Manual and the funder's measurement strategy.

Resources

All Heifer projects must have a budget for all activities listed in the MEL Plan, managed by the MEL Officer. Detailed guidance on how to operationalize the MEL Plan in the form of templates, methods and manuals are also available. The project's MEL Officers are regularly trained and updated monthly on activities within MEL Community of Practice groups.



For more information on Heifer International MEL, contact:

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