

# Monitoring and Evaluating Social Learning: A Framework for Cross- Initiative Application

Working Paper No. 98

CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change,  
Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS)

Marissa Van Epp  
Ben Garside



RESEARCH PROGRAM ON  
**Climate Change,  
Agriculture and  
Food Security**



Working Paper

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## **Abstract**

The Climate Change and Social Learning Initiative is a cross-organisation group working to build a body of evidence on how social learning methodologies and approaches contribute towards development targets. Together with a select number of participating initiatives from a variety of organisations, we are working towards establishing a common monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for new projects and programmes using a social learning-oriented approach. The aim is to more systematically collect evidence, analyse results and share learning on when and how research initiatives and beneficiaries may benefit from a social learning-oriented approach in the context of climate change adaptation and food security. This working paper presents an M&E framework consisting of a theory of change and 30 primary indicators across four key areas: iterative learning, capacity development, engagement, and challenging institutions. This framework will be accompanied by a forthcoming implementation guide for participating initiatives, as well as a strategy for peer assist, data collection and analysis by the CCSL Initiative.

## **Keywords**

Social learning; Climate change adaptation; Food security; Evaluation.

## About the authors

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## Introduction

The Climate Change and Social Learning (CCSL) Initiative is a cross-organisation group working to build a body of evidence on how social learning methodologies and approaches contribute towards development targets. Together with a select number of participating initiatives from a variety of organisations, we are working towards establishing a common monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for new projects and programmes using a social learning-oriented approach. The aim is to more systematically collect evidence, analyse results and share learning on when and how initiatives and beneficiaries can benefit from a social learning-oriented approach in the context of climate change adaptation and food security.

The CCSL Initiative has developed the following definition of social learning:

*Social learning approaches help facilitate knowledge sharing, joint learning and co-creation experiences between particular stakeholders around a shared purpose, taking learning and behaviour change beyond the individual to networks and systems. Through a facilitated iterative process of working together, in interactive dialogue, exchange, learning, action and reflection and on-going partnership new shared ways of knowing emerge that lead to changes in practice.*

The value of the social learning approach is that it provides a way to address complex problems by integrating diverse knowledges and value systems at many different levels and through different learning cycles. It engages relevant stakeholders in co-framing challenges at community, regional, national and global scales with the aim of mobilising technical, institutional and social knowledge to unlock the potential that can accelerate change. Social learning is step change because it is more than just a process of inclusivity; it is a continuous iterative process of co-learning. It implies more than individual learning, but more importantly demands change at institutional level.

It is important to note that while the CCSL Initiative promotes social learning as an approach to complex problems like climate change adaptation and food security, it is not always the most appropriate or the only approach for achieving certain development outcomes.

Incremental change is also important, and this kind of change may not require social learning.



This document presents an M&E framework for social learning. The framework builds on the outcomes of the M&E workshop held in London on the 16th-17th of June, 2014. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the CCSL Sandbox, which consists of additional social learning resources on a [wiki page](#)<sup>1</sup>, and peer support given through the social network [Yammer](#)<sup>2</sup>. This document is not a guide to the social learning approach – if you are new to social learning and need help getting started, methodologies, case studies and more information can be found in the online [CCSL Social Learning Framework & Toolkit](#)<sup>3</sup> on the wiki.

<sup>1</sup> <http://csl.wikispaces.com/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.yammer.com](http://www.yammer.com)

<sup>3</sup> <http://csl.wikispaces.com/CCSL+Framework+%26+Toolkit>

# 1. Problem Statement

In order to better understand whether social learning is happening and when and how it is beneficial, there are a few different questions we can ask:

- 1. Is a social learning-oriented approach being used?**
- 2. Where is effective social learning occurring?**
- 3. How and when does social learning contribute to better and more sustainable development outcomes?**

At the June workshop, participants debated which of the above they wanted to answer. The outcome of this debate was that ultimately we want to answer the third question, but that in order to do so, we must first answer the first and second questions. In other words, in order to test the hypothesis that effective social learning contributes to better and more sustainable development outcomes, we must first ensure that social learning is intended and understand the conditions in which it occurs effectively.

Assuming that all projects participating in the CCSL initiative are endeavouring to use a social learning-oriented approach, the distinction we are making is primarily between the second and third questions. This distinction is an important practical one, in part because measuring long-term development outcomes—let alone their sustainability—requires a longer time horizon than the initiative currently has. If extended, more traditional M&E methods—e.g. Most Significant Change—might be used to monitor development outcomes.

## 2. Looking for social learning

To begin to answer the second question, “where is effective social learning occurring?”, we need to know where to look. Participants at the June workshop worked together to identify key characteristics of social learning and social learning-oriented approaches. A background paper produced for the workshop was used as the basis for brainstorming. This paper pulled together a list of key characteristics of social learning identified in six CCSL outputs, including:

1. [CCSL Framework & Toolkit](#) and [social learning checklist](#)<sup>4</sup>
2. “Happy families of social learning” learning brief (forthcoming)
3. “Factors paper” for pilot project selection
4. [Sandbox discussions](#)<sup>5</sup>
5. [Working paper #38](#): “Social learning in practice: A review of lessons, impacts and tools for climate change adaptation”<sup>6</sup>
6. [5 change areas paper](#)<sup>7</sup>

Using this background paper and participants’ own experience of social learning in practice, five essential elements were distilled:

- 1. Looped learning**
- 2. Change**
- 3. Capacity building**
- 4. Engagement**
- 5. Institutional opportunities**

These areas are ones that a majority of participating projects agreed are crucial to the social learning approach—in other words, these are the first places they would look when assessing the context in which effective social learning occurs. While social learning can also take place in the absence of any planned participatory process, in theory, most projects in which social learning is happening effectively would see positive changes in each of these areas. Thus, these are the areas projects would want to monitor. For more details on the group brainstorming around these five areas, please see Appendix 1 Workshop Results.

## Refining key areas

Building from the results of the workshop, the CCSL Initiative has worked to further develop a social learning monitoring framework. The first step was to review and refine the five areas

<sup>4</sup> The CCSL Framework and Toolkit is available at: <http://ccsl.wikispaces.com/CCSL+Framework+%26+Toolkit>. The social learning checklist is part of the first section of the Framework and Toolkit, the Baseline Self Assessment. It can be found here: <http://ccsl.wikispaces.com/Toolkit+-+where+are+you%3F#x--2> Social Learning Checklist

<sup>5</sup> You will need a Yammer account to access the CCSL Yammer group at [www.yammer.com/ccsl](http://www.yammer.com/ccsl). You can create an account at [www.yammer.com](http://www.yammer.com). You can then request access to the CCSL group.

<sup>6</sup> <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/33841/WorkingPaper38.pdf?sequence=2>

<sup>7</sup> <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/32782>

for monitoring. Looking at the five areas, it was apparent that some were apples and others were oranges:

Apples = specific activities that may indicate good social learning is happening. These are processes but can also be phrased as outcomes.

- 1. Capacity building**
- 2. Engagement**

Oranges = things that may indicate that social learning is happening, but are not activities. These are outcomes.

- 3. Looped learning**
- 4. Change**

Pears = other things that may contribute to social learning, which are not apples or oranges. These are neither processes nor outcomes.

- 5. Institutional opportunities and barriers**

The next step was to revise the areas to ensure they were all in the same category. Change, which we found to be crosscutting (i.e. each of the other areas could be discussed in terms of change), was removed from the list but integrated into each of the remaining four areas. For each area, we want to monitor: 1) the kinds of changes occurring, 2) how much change is occurring, and 3) who is making the changes/how the changes are being made.

Looped learning was rephrased as iterative learning to better fit the “apples” category. This area now captures the evaluation-related indicators that the group developed under change. Institutional opportunities and barriers was also rephrased as an “apple”, and is now challenging institutions. Finally, capacity building was rephrased as capacity development to match current terminology in the development field.

The final list, with definitions:

- 1. Iterative learning**

Collective or group learning that occurs continuously or cyclically in order to co-create knowledge.

- 2. Capacity development**

The development of an individual's or group's knowledge and skills. In social learning this is not limited to a uni-directional transfer between two parties (e.g. researcher to farmer) but instead is multi-directional and involves multiple parties (e.g. farmers to researchers, farmers to farmers, researcher to farmer, etc.).

### **3. Engagement**

Outreach to and involvement of individuals and groups as part of the problem definition and learning process. Engagement as part of good social learning targets women, youth and other marginalized groups.

### **4. Challenging institutions**

Active questioning of institutional practices and values, potentially leading to institutional change. In social learning, "institutions" refers not only to the formal, bricks-and-mortar sense of the term (e.g. government bodies or research institutes), but also to the informal, and intangible sense (e.g. local community organizations or cultural practices).

Other areas discussed but not prioritized at the workshop included:

- **Facilitation & process support**

Facilitators and other modes of support used throughout the initiative to engage different target groups, encourage even participation and interaction between groups of disparate power levels, and ensure learning moments, among other key tasks.

- **Social differentiation**

Maintaining awareness of the characteristics of different stakeholder groups that may impact their needs, desires, participation, and capacity in relation to an initiative. Characteristics include gender, socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, historical context, etc.

- **Endogenous processes**

Relevant political, economic, cultural and other processes in the context of an initiative.

- **Timescales**

All of the different time horizons used by stakeholder groups. In relation to climate

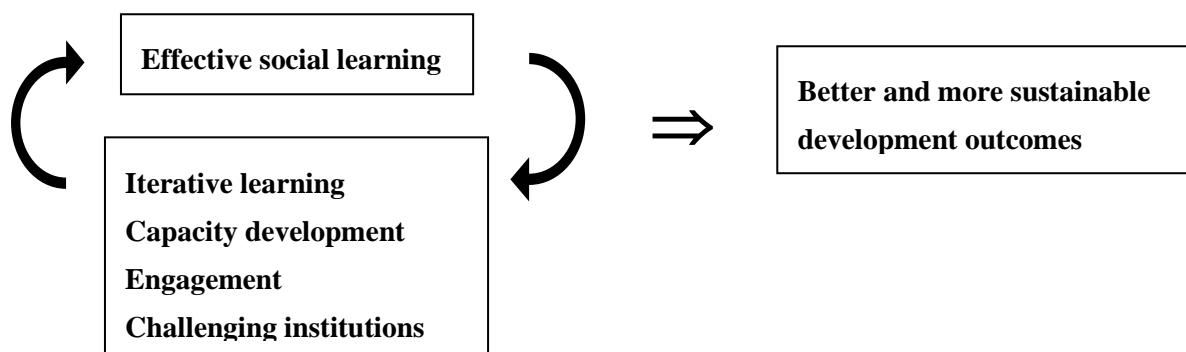
change and food security, policy makers' timescales may be tied to their term limits, scientists' timescales may be tied to long-term climate trends, and farmers' timescales may be tied to their daily or annual needs.

Though these did not become separate areas in the framework, most of them are noted within the four areas that were chosen. For instance, facilitation and process support is noted in the framework as part of the engagement process. It is crucial to engaging different target groups/individuals and ensuring their active, even participation and interaction, as well as to fostering the emergence of champions. Social differentiation is also implicit in engagement, as it is necessary for identifying target groups/individuals to engage and tailoring communications with them. We note that engaging women, youth and other disadvantaged groups should be emphasized where possible. Incorporating endogenous processes is crucial to challenging institutions and capacity development: understanding the context in which institutions and the individuals within them operate is key to challenging them successfully; knowing about capacity building avenues that already exist can reduce duplication of effort. Lastly, taking timescales into consideration helps with engagement and challenging institutions, in which different actors with different time horizons might frame the problem differently.

### 3. Theory of Change

Before we get to indicators for these monitoring areas it is important to clarify the relationship between these characteristics/areas and the desired impact of the social learning approach. As elaborated above, they can be both key processes in, and outcomes of, good social learning:

**Figure 1: A theory of change for social learning**



The overarching theory of change is: a combination of iterative learning, capacity building, good engagement and challenging of system and institutional barriers and norms [process indicators] may lead to more effective co-learning and co-creation of solutions to ‘wicked’ problems – social learning. Effective social learning should lead to different learning change outcomes that can be tracked [learning outcome indicators]. Learning change outcomes can be normative (related to norms), relational (involving relationships), or cognitive (focused on knowledge)<sup>8</sup>. Together, these three kinds of learning changes can in turn generate changes in values and practice occurring across individuals, networks, institutions, and systems [value/practice outcome indicators]. The anticipated overall result is evidence of these changes having a positive impact on sustainable development with increased impacts where systemic change at institutional/system level also occurs [impact indicators].

## 4. Summary of Indicators for Key Areas

The proposed indicators for each monitoring area can be found on the following pages. Indicators have been developed across the structure defined in our theory of change, as shown in Table 1 below: process indicators, learning outcome indicators, and value/practice outcome indicators (abbreviated ‘P indicators’, ‘L indicators’, and ‘V indicators’, respectively) for each of the four monitoring areas. See Appendix 2 Indicators by Type for a full summary of all indicators in a single table.

**Table 1: Summary of indicator organization by type and area**

	Iterative Learning	Capacity Development	Engagement	Challenging Institutions
Process	P indicators	P indicators	P indicators	P indicators
Learning outcome	L indicators	L indicators	L indicators	L indicators
Value/practice outcome	V indicators	V indicators	V indicators	V indicators

<sup>8</sup> Lebel, L. et al. 2010. The role of social learning in adaptiveness: insights from water management. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 10(4), pp.333–353, referenced in CCSL Working Paper 38.

The aim of this approach is to find out what works in a given context. Cross-comparison between different types of projects will then allow us to assess how context-dependent it is. It is important to note that we do not mean to imply that the indicators selected represent the only or obligatory elements of a social learning-oriented approach, rather that they are common elements of the types of approaches we want to monitor.

The framework also adopts and integrates indicators used for tracking aspects of social learning developed by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) as part of monitoring a number of projects in South and South-Eastern Asia<sup>9</sup>.

## 5. Implementation Process and Methodologies

The implementation strategy will depend on the individual initiative. In developing a strategy, initiatives should answer the following questions:

1. **Who should be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of social learning?**
2. **Who should be asked about social learning in order to measure the indicators in the framework?**
3. **How will the information gathered be documented?**

A separate guide for implementation is forthcoming, and will include guidance on integrating this framework with your initiative's existing M&E system.

With regards to measuring particular indicators, many of the M&E methodologies you may already be familiar with can be used. The table below maps some of these methodologies onto the different types of indicators outlined in the theory of change.

**Table 2 Methodologies for specific indicator types**

Methodology	Description	Process indicators	Learning outcome indicators	Value/ practice outcome indicators
Participant observation	An informal, qualitative way of capturing individual participants' thoughts and feelings at a given moment. Observations could be	✓	✓	✓

<sup>9</sup> CSIRO is a participating organisation in the CCSL Initiative.



	recorded in personal journals, for example.			
<b>Focus group discussions</b>	A more formal, qualitative way of capturing participants' thoughts and feelings in a group setting at a given moment	✓	✓	✓
<b>Stories of change, stakeholder portraits and follow-up interviews</b>	Three qualitative tools to help researchers to track participants' transformations—changes in knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, actions, etc.—over the duration of a project/program.		✓	✓
<b>Surveys/ Questionnaires</b>	Aids in the collection of data from larger groups of people in a format that can be quantitatively analysed.	✓	✓	✓
<b>Social Network Analysis</b>	Aids assessment of the nature of networks relevant to the project/programme and participants.			✓
<b>Community self-assessment</b>	Enables a community to collectively reflect on a given topic, e.g. needs, transformation, social differentiation and endogenous processes etc.			✓
<b>Outcome Mapping</b>	Allows project designers to systematically outline the anticipated steps/pathways for bringing about the desired changes (outcomes) of the project. This is ideally done prior to or at the beginning of a project/program, and would be revisited at key stages to aid reflection.		✓	✓
<b>Policy change analysis</b>	Helps to determine the success of a project/program based on the extent to which it influences policy (measured by, e.g. citations)			✓

## 6. Narrative Example

To assist with understanding of how the indicators might be applied in a particular project context, a narrative case study example is given in Appendix 3 Narrative Example. The example is hypothetical to facilitate illustrating the range of indicators, but is drawn from real examples extracted from materials reviewed and analysis undertaken by the CCSL Initiative. The example is not intended to demonstrate all of the indicators and methodologies, but a

selection as indicated in the table. It is also not intended that this kind of narrative will be used as a methodology itself.

## 7. Indicator Areas

Each of the key areas are described below along with definitions of indicators across the indicator types i.e. process, learning outcome, and value/practice outcome indicators.

Indicators in grey italics are optional/secondary indicators. A full list of indicators in a single-table format can be found in Appendix 2. There is an average of 10 core indicators for each of the indicator types – 30 in total.

### Engagement

**Definition:** Outreach to and involvement of individuals and groups as part of the problem definition and learning process. Engagement as part of good social learning targets women, youth and other marginalized groups.

**What we are asking:** How do you measure effective social learning in terms of engagement?

**Specific theory of change:** Good engagement allows the right stakeholders to form better relationships and a more nuanced understanding of the problem, enabling more effective co-learning. This in turn allows stakeholders to formulate better solutions and to build the community of practice.

**Table 3: Indicators for engagement**

		What do we want to measure?	Proposed indicator
<b>Process</b>  <i>Y/N</i>  <i>How</i>  <i>Who</i>  <i>Extent</i>	P1	[Y/N] Whether target groups/individuals are identified through an inclusive process	Women, youth and other disadvantaged groups are identified and targeted
	P2	[How] How relevant groups are being engaged	Groups/individuals identified are engaged through appropriately tailored means <sup>10</sup>
	P3	[Who] 2 parts: a. Who is being engaged b. Who is doing the engaging and why	2 parts: a. All target groups/individuals are actively participating in the project b. <i>Facilitator role identified as trusted and effective by all parties</i>

<sup>10</sup> Women, youth and other disadvantaged groups identified and targeted should be engaged through tailored means, and supported throughout the project/program.

	P4	[Extent] The extent to which the engagement process is self-sustaining	Emergence of champions is fostered
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	L1	[Cognitive] The effect of engagement on individuals' knowledge of the issue	Knowledge of the problem enhanced by interactions
<i>Cognitive</i> <i>Relational</i> <i>Normative</i>	L2	[Relational] The effect of engagement on group dynamics and relationships	3 parts: a. Engagement has led to better relations between target groups/individuals b. Trust created c. Engagement has led to awareness and valuing of other stakeholders
	L3	[Normative] The effect of engagement on collective understanding of the issue	2 parts: a. Different knowledge types successfully integrated b. Engagement has led towards a change in collective understanding of the problem and solutions
<b>Value and practice outcomes</b>	V1	[Value] Engagement leads to a change in target groups' /individuals' values regarding the problem and solutions	Engagement leads to increased commitment on the part of target groups/individuals in reaching the goal of the project
<i>Value</i> <i>Practice</i>	V2	[Practice] Engagement empowers target groups/individuals to continue and/or expand their involvement in finding a solution.	3 parts: a. New social networks established b. New initiatives and projects c. Empowerment of most vulnerable beneficiaries (communities) inc. women & children

## Iterative Learning

**Definition:** Collective or group learning that occurs continuously or cyclically in order to co-create knowledge.

**What we are asking:** How do you measure effective social learning in terms of iterative learning?

**Specific theory of change:** through iterative learning stakeholders will be able to continually incorporate the results of co-learning into the project, setting the stage for looped learning. Learning spreads to relevant social units and communities of practice outside of the project, generating broader-scale changes in understanding.

**Table 4 Indicators for iterative learning**

What do we want to measure?	Proposed indicator
-----------------------------	--------------------

<b>Process</b>  <i>Y/N</i>  <i>How</i>  <i>Who</i>  <i>Extent</i>	P5	[Y/N] [Who] Whether iterative learning / evaluation is taking place and by whom - 1 <sup>st</sup> loop <sup>11</sup>	Cyclical and inclusive learning and evaluation “moments” are available for the group
	P6	[How] Whether iterative learning / evaluation* is good quality - 1 <sup>st</sup> loop	Learning and evaluation processes are supported and facilitated
	P7	[Y/N] Whether there is a forum for trialling innovations - 1 <sup>st</sup> loop	Systems are in place to foster and implement new ideas
	P8	[Extent] Is learning reaching the 2 <sup>nd</sup> loop <sup>12</sup> ?	Questioning the TOC itself and key assumptions is valued and happening regularly
	P9	[Extent] Is learning reaching the 3 <sup>rd</sup> loop <sup>13</sup> ?	Questioning of values, norms and governance underlying problem is valued and happening regularly
<b>Learning outcomes</b>  <i>Cognitive</i>  <i>Relational</i>  <i>Normative</i>	L4	[Cognitive] Is learning being incorporated into the next iteration of the project?	2 parts: a. Results of learning/evaluation are incorporated into the project strategy b. Creative solutions and innovations are developed
	L5	[Relational] Does iterative learning lead to participants understanding how to interact more constructively?	Evidence as learning/evaluation takes place that people understand the reason to change relations and behaviours between people and groups
	L6	[Normative] Does iterative learning lead to an understanding of the need to allow for failure and alternative pathways?	Participants understand the need for alternatives and room to fail
<b>Value and practice outcomes</b>  <i>Value</i>  <i>Practice</i>	V3	[Value] Does an understanding of the need for more constructive interactions between stakeholders spread to stakeholders outside of the project/program?	Wider stakeholder groups understand the reasons to change their relations and behaviours
	V4	[Practice] Does this understanding lead to better relations between stakeholder groups outside of the project/program?	Wider stakeholder groups relate to each other differently
	V5	[Value] Does the need for alternative pathways and room to fail spread to spread to other projects/programs?	The need for alternatives and room to fail is evident in other projects/programs
	V6	[Practice] Does this understanding lead to other projects/programs building these in?	Alternatives and room to fail are built in to other projects/programmes

## Capacity Development

**Definition:** The development of an individual’s or group’s knowledge and skills. In social learning this is not limited to a uni-directional transfer between two parties (e.g. researcher to

<sup>11</sup> Single loop learning: reflecting on whether an activity is being done well.

<sup>12</sup> Double loop learning: reflecting on whether an activity is the right activity to achieve the desired outcome.

<sup>13</sup> Triple loop learning: reflecting on why the desired outcome is desired, and alternative outcomes.

farmer) but instead is multi-directional and involves multiple parties (e.g. farmers to researchers, farmers to farmers, researcher to farmer, etc.).

**What we are asking:** How do you measure effective social learning in terms of capacity development?

**Specific theory of change:** By building capacity stakeholders will be able to engage more effectively and in a more informed way in co-learning. More effective co-learning should lead to different change outcomes (normative, relational, cognitive).

**Table 5 Indicators for capacity building**

		What do we want to measure?	Proposed indicator
<b>Process</b>	P10	<i>[Y/N] Whether capacity development is a core component of the project</i>	<i>Capacity development activities are integrated into the project/program</i>
<i>Y/N</i>	P11	<i>[Who] Whose capacity is being built</i>	Capacity development activities target all participants in appropriate ways (e.g. governments, farmers, scientists)
<i>How</i>	P12	<i>[How] How this capacity is being built</i>	Capacity needs are determined collectively in a bottom-up manner
<i>Who</i>	P13	<i>[Extent] The extent to which capacity development needs are integrated into the components</i>	<i>Capacity development needs are systematically integrated into all project components</i>
<i>Extent</i>			
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	L7	<i>[Cognitive] Level of understanding of issues by individual stakeholders</i>	Similar level of understanding of the problem by all stakeholders
<i>Cognitive</i>	L8	<i>[Relational] Level of understanding between different members/sub-groups</i>	Increased understanding between different participant groups of different needs and perspectives
<i>Relational</i>	L9	<i>[Normative] Level of collective understanding of best methods for capacity development</i>	<i>Increase in collective challenging/understanding methods of building capacity for particular stakeholders</i>
<i>Normative</i>			
<b>Value and practice outcomes</b>	V7	<i>[Value] Capacity development leads to changes in participants' values regarding the problem and other stakeholders</i>	More informed stakeholders
<i>Value</i>	V8	<i>[Practice] Capacity development leads to changes in participation and ways of working</i>	2 parts: a. Capacity development leads to different groups working together better b. Capacity development leads to changes in practice that reflect a better understanding of the problem and solutions
<i>Practice</i>			

## Challenging Institutions

**Definition:** Active questioning of institutional practices and values. In social learning, “institutions” refers not only to the formal, bricks-and-mortar sense of the term (e.g. government bodies or research institutes), but also to the informal, and intangible sense (e.g. local community organizations or cultural practices).

**What we are asking:** How do you measure effective social learning in terms of challenging institutions?

**Specific theory of change:** By identifying institutional opportunities and barriers and working with key people to exploit/reduce these, stakeholders create an enabling environment for social learning.

**Table 6 Indicators for challenging institutions**

		What do we want to measure?	Proposed indicator
<b>Process</b>  <i>Y/N</i> <i>Who</i> <i>How</i> <i>Extent</i>	P14	[ <i>Who</i> ] Are target individuals/institutions identified?	Key individuals/institutions who will support/champion change are identified
	P15	[ <i>How</i> ] A systematic plan is developed	A change strategy is developed
	P16	[ <i>Extent</i> ] The extent to which context is examined and integrated	Existing norms and endogenous processes are mapped
	P17	[ <i>Y/N</i> ] Whether institutions are being challenged based on 1-3 above	Key institutions are challenged to make changes that facilitate social learning
<b>Learning outcomes</b>  <i>Cognitive</i> <i>Relational</i> <i>Normative</i>	L10	[ <i>Cognitive</i> ] Whether project participants’ understanding changes as a result of identifying institutional opportunities and barriers	Project participants understand the importance of particular opportunities and barriers
	L11	[ <i>Relational</i> ] Whether project participants’ relationships with institutional stakeholders change as a result of challenging them	Key institutional and project actors share a common understanding of the problem and approach to solving (social learning)
	L12	[ <i>Normative</i> ] Whether institutions understand why change is needed	Institutions understand that a shift in values or practice is needed to foster social learning
<b>Value and practice outcomes</b>  <i>Value</i> <i>Practice</i>	V9	[ <i>Value/Practice</i> ] Effect of challenging institutions on reducing barriers and increasing opportunities for SL	Reduced number and severity of barriers; increased number and potential impact of opportunities
	V10	[ <i>Value</i> ] Whether institutional attitudes change in response to social-learning oriented programmes	Challenges lead to changes in institutional openness towards SL-orientated approaches (evidenced in e.g. attitudes, conflicts)
	V11	[ <i>Practice</i> ] Whether institutional practice changes in response to social-learning oriented programmes	Challenges lead to changes in institutional support for SL-oriented approaches (evidenced in e.g. policy/roles, and resources made available for implementation)

## Conclusion

This working paper presents the CCSL Initiative's M&E framework for social learning. The framework consists of a theory of change and 30 primary indicators across four key areas: iterative learning, capacity development, engagement, and challenging institutions. The aim is to establish a common framework for projects and programmes using a social learning-oriented approach. The CCSL Initiative will use this framework to collect evidence from participating projects on when and how research initiatives and beneficiaries may benefit from a social learning-oriented approach in the context of climate change adaptation and food security. To this end, it will be accompanied by a forthcoming implementation guide for participating initiatives, as well as a strategy for peer assist, data collection and analysis by the CCSL Initiative.

The process of developing the framework illustrated many of the challenges inherent in talking about social learning and using social learning-oriented approaches. It is worthwhile to reflect on some of these challenges and the solutions we found:

1. **Social learning: something you do?** There is often confusion and differences of opinion regarding whether social learning is something you do or an organically-occurring phenomenon. Our answer is that it is somewhere in between: while we are not advocating a checklist of activities that will guarantee that social learning takes place, we do feel that social learning can be encouraged through certain intentional actions – many, but not all, of which lie within the four key areas that the framework is structured around.
2. **Knowing which questions we want to answer, and when:** Though the question we ultimately want to answer is “how and when social learning contributes to better and more sustainable development outcomes?”, we felt that we would need to ask an intermediate question: “where is effective social learning occurring?”. Understanding the conditions in which social learning takes place is an important and practical stepping-stone to being able to attribute results to social learning-oriented approaches.
3. **Process vs. outcome:** The monitoring areas selected as the basis of the framework are all framed as key processes (“apples”) that contribute to social learning. That said, each area can also be thought of as an outcome of social learning. For instance, a focus on engagement could be one element of a social learning-oriented approach; effective social

learning, if achieved, should lead to better engagement. The indicator tables for each area reflects this duality: indicators cover process and outcomes. This combination of indicators should allow projects to monitor the conditions in which social learning occurs and to evaluate whether effective social learning is taking place. Qualitative descriptions of the context of a given project and of changes/adaptation in project implementation will be crucial in untangling process and outcome.



# Appendix 1: Workshop Results

## Iterative Learning

Was the right question asked?

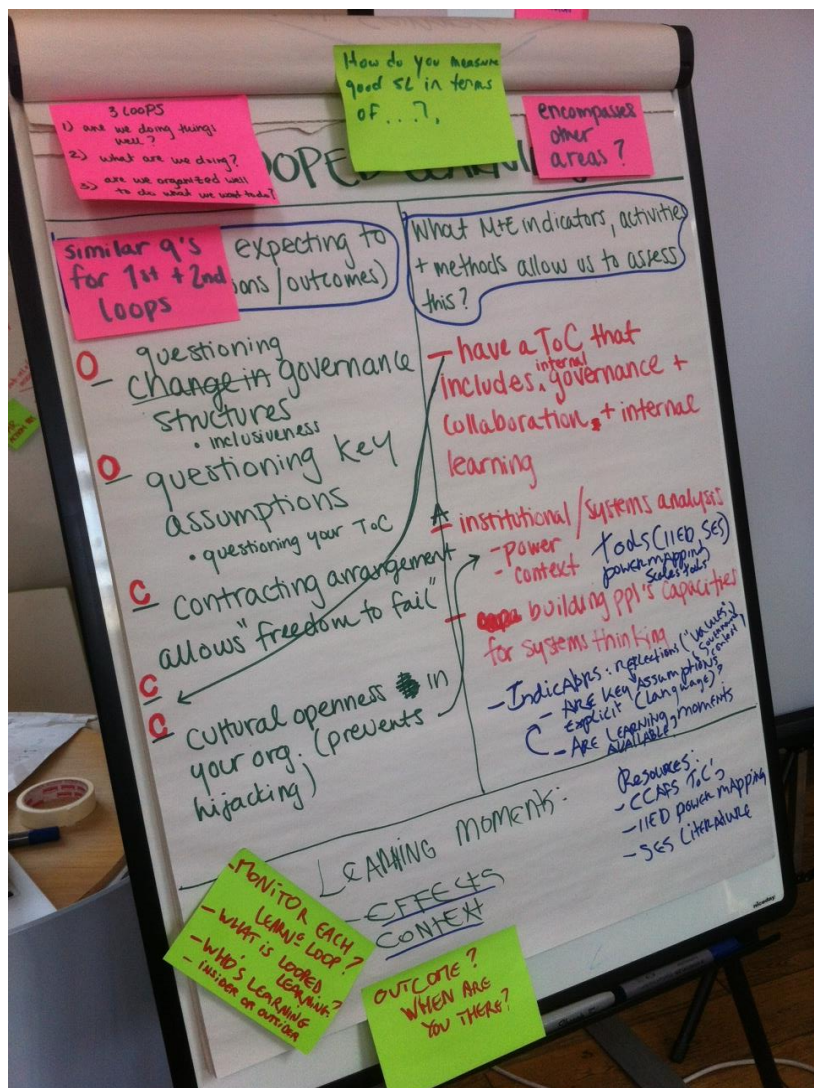
Yes, but for looped learning

Were outcomes and indicators defined?

Some, but mixed with pre-requisites for looped learning, which need to be separated out

Was a method of measurement defined?

Some, but unclear



Group work on looped learning at the June 2014 CCSL workshop in London.

## Capacity Building

Was the right question asked?

No, “how does SL influence capacity building?” was the question asked

Were outcomes and indicators defined? Yes, but too specific

Was a method of measurement defined? No

## CAPACITY INDICATORS

*How does SL influence capacity?*

### FARMERS (Poor + Vulnerable)

#### 1. Capacity to innovate/adapt

- No. of groups trying something new.
- Extent of social networks
- Level of knowledge + willingness to put into practice/act
- Collaboration in joint activities – with community members and others

#### 2. Capacity to Negotiate (for adaptation)

- Within + between communities (e.g. marginalised actors, women)
- With others (e.g. govt)

*Inclusion in community + external activities + inc in decision making.*

#### 3. Capacity for Collective NRM

- Restoration for NRS (e.g. level of crop diversity)

### SCIENTISTS

#### 1. Respect different source of knowledge inc farmers knowledge + values

*a) Research methods – extent of farmer participation in research design + decision making.*

b) Extent to which farmers have a say in the use of research funds.

#### 2. Extent to which scientists use learning in dialogue w. policy makers

#### 3. Extent to which they try to promote in their own organisations.

### GOVERNMENTS

#### 1. Extent of support for farmer participation in R+D progs (inc. investment/extension)

#### 2. Multi-stakeholder process (e.g. x dept)

#### 3. Capability + willingness to try new approaches (not just 1 model for all)

## CAPACITY INDICATORS, cont'd.

### Next steps

\* INFORM CGIAR M+E COP about this

- A way to surface concrete indicators is receive case studies
- Develop joint papers on SL
- A critical peer review group
- Build on PAR etc. M+E away day
- Bring this M+E into research M+E
- Explain more
- Need checklists of tools, SL elements and guidelines for indicators.
- Develop the SL and related areas further
- Clear understanding of SL and Indicators
- Get to an agreed M+E framework + hyit
- List of sensible measurable indicators
- IDCS (May) could include M+E and SL

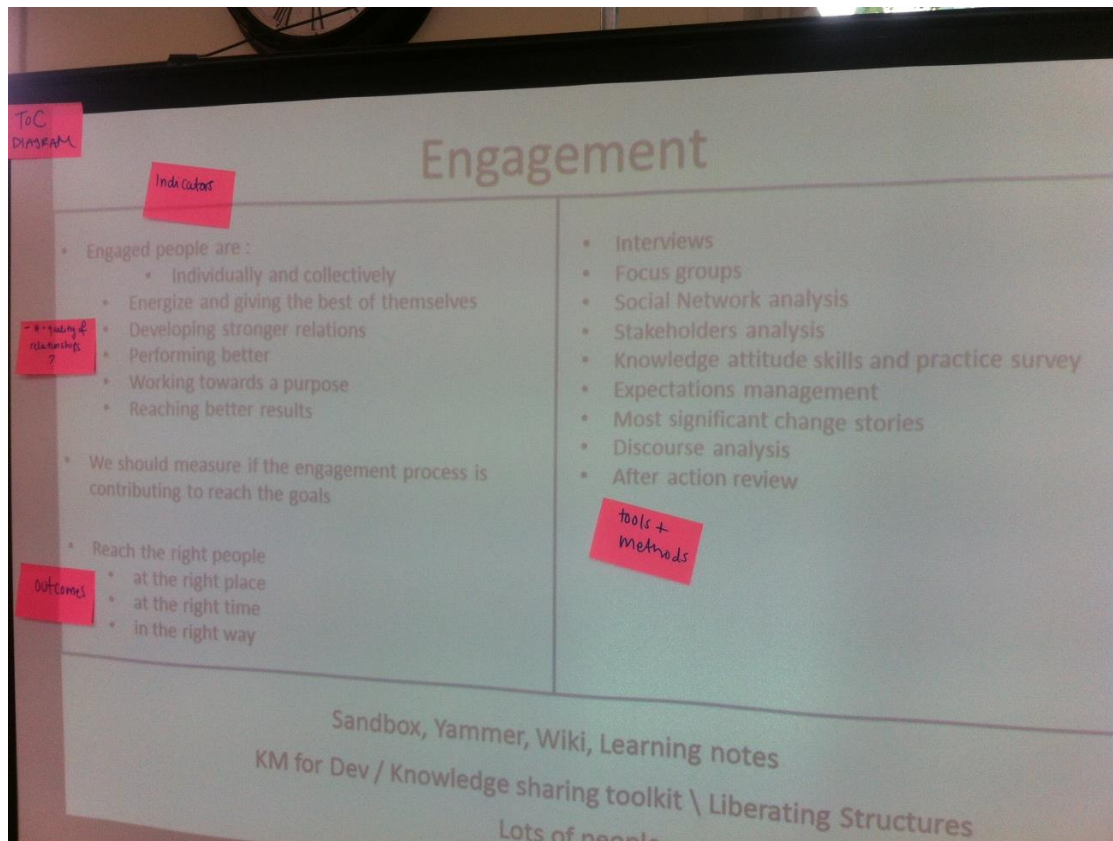
*Group work on capacity building at the June 2014 CCSL workshop in London.*

## Engagement

Was the right question asked? Yes

Were outcomes and indicators defined? Yes

Was a method of measurement defined? Yes



Presentation of group work on engagement at the June 2014 CCSL workshop in London.

## Challenging Institutions

*Was the right question asked?*

No, “How effective is social learning to changing institutional opportunities and barriers?” was the question asked

*Were outcomes and indicators defined?* Yes

*Was a method of measurement defined?* Yes

### How effective is Social Learning to changing institutional opportunities + barriers?

**See** – A social learning process in place that includes institutional actors, that challenges actors to identify institutional opportunities and barriers to our project objective (culture, rules, regs) people redefining barriers into ops.

**Measuring** – Reduced conflicts; change relationships; of opportunities grasped; project has SL plan, do SL opps explicitly address ops for institutional change. Looking at perspectives + attitudes; of actors involved in SL process actively in preparation for ^.

**Indicators** – Time conflicts; roles of actors; actor interactions; opportunities identified, SL plan in place; actor perspectives; of actors involved in a SL platform; of new policies; attitudes.

**How** – Social media; changing stories (interviews). Project research reports; minute's criteria; SL plan assessment criteria; KAPs surveys; observational studies.

**Conflicts:** int & ext

**Media:** External

*Group work on challenging institutions at the June 2014 CCSL workshop in London.*

## Appendix 2 Indicators by Type

30 essential indicators spread across the process, learning and value/practice categories are summarized below. Italics refer to optional/secondary indicators.

	ID#	Process Indicators	ID#	Learning Outcome Indicators	ID#	Value / Practice Outcome Indicators
ENGAGEMENT	P1	Women, youth and other disadvantaged groups are identified and targeted	L1	[Cognitive] Knowledge of the problem enhanced by interactions	V1	[Value] Engagement leads to increased commitment on the part of target groups/individuals in reaching the goal of the project
	P2	Groups/individuals identified are engaged through appropriately tailored means	L2	[Relational] a. Engagement has led to better relations between target groups/individuals b. <i>Trust created</i> c. <i>Engagement has led to awareness and valuing of other stakeholders</i>	V2	[Practice] 3 parts: a. New social networks established b. New initiatives and projects c. Empowerment of most vulnerable beneficiaries (communities) inc. women & children
	P3	2 parts: a. All target groups/individuals are actively participating in the project b. <i>Facilitator role identified as trusted and effective by all parties</i>	L3	[Normative] 2 parts: a. Different knowledge types successfully integrated b. Engagement has led towards a change in collective understanding of the problem and solutions		
	P4	<i>Emergence of champions is fostered</i>				
ITERATIVE LEARNING	P5	Cyclical, inclusive learning and evaluation “moments” are available for the group	L4	[Cognitive] 2 parts: a. Results of learning/evaluation are incorporated into the project strategy b. <i>Creative solutions and innovations are developed</i>	V3	[Value] Wider stakeholder groups understand the reasons to change their relations and behaviours
	P6	<i>Learning and evaluation processes are supported and facilitated</i>	L5	[Relational] <i>Evidence as learning/evaluation takes place that people understand the reason to change relations and behaviours between people and groups</i>	V4	[Practice] <i>Wider stakeholder groups relate to each other differently</i>
	P7	Systems are in place to foster and implement new ideas	L6	[Normative] Participants understand the need for alternatives and room to fail	V5	[Value] <i>The need for alternatives and room to fail is evident in other projects/programs</i>
	P8	Questioning the TOC itself and key assumptions is valued and happening regularly			V6	[Practice] Alternatives and room to fail are built in to other projects/programmes

	ID#	Process Indicators	ID#	Learning Outcome Indicators	ID#	Value / Practice Outcome Indicators
ITERATIVE LEARNING	P9	Questioning of values, norms and governance underlying problem is valued and happening regularly				
	P10	<i>Capacity development activities are integrated into the project/program</i>	L7	[Cognitive] Similar level of understanding of the problem by all stakeholders	V7	[Value] More informed stakeholders
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT	P11	Capacity development activities target all participants in appropriate ways (e.g. governments, farmers, scientists)	L8	[Relational] Increased understanding between different participant groups of different needs and perspectives	V8	[Practice] 2 parts: a. Capacity development leads to different groups working together better b. Capacity development leads to changes in practice that reflect a better understanding of the problem and solutions
	P12	Capacity needs are determined collectively in a bottom-up manner	L9	<i>[Normative] Increase in collective challenging/understanding methods of building capacity for particular stakeholders</i>		
	P13	<i>Capacity development needs are systematically integrated into all project components</i>				
	P14	Key individuals/institutions who will support/champion change are identified	L10	[Cognitive] Project participants understand the particular opportunities and barriers	V9	[Value/Practice] Reduced number and severity of barriers; increased number and potential impact of opportunities
CHALLENGING INSTITUTIONS	P15	A change strategy is developed, including mapping of existing norms and endogenous processes.	L11	<i>[Relational] Key institutional and project actors share a common understanding of the problem and approach to solving (social learning)</i>	V10	[Value] Challenges lead to changes in institutional openness towards SL-orientated approaches (evidenced in e.g. attitudes, conflicts)
	P16	<i>Existing norms and endogenous processes are mapped</i>	L12	[Normative] Institutions understand that a shift in values or practice is needed to foster social learning	V11	[Practice] Challenges lead to changes in institutional support for SL-oriented approaches (evidenced in e.g. policy/roles, and resources made available for implementation)
	P17	Key institutions are challenged to make changes that facilitate social learning				

## Appendix 3 Narrative Example

The following narrative example is provided to assist with understanding how the indicators might be applied in a particular project context. The example is hypothetical to facilitate the illustration of the range of indicators, but it is drawn from real examples extracted from materials reviewed and analysed by the CCSL Initiative. This example is not intended to illustrate all of the indicators and methodologies, but a selection as indicated in the table. It is also not intended that this kind of narrative will be used as a methodology itself.

### **Developing self-perpetuating social learning: moving from constructive intervention to more autonomous group learning for drip irrigation**

In a particular rural context it has been observed that farmers are becoming more involved in managing supply chains, notably through local and regional cooperatives. However, despite the state's attempts to transfer responsibilities to associations of water users, it retains control of large-scale irrigation schemes. In addition, a decline in surface water available for such schemes has prompted farmers to use groundwater from individual tube wells. Meanwhile, government programmes to relieve water scarcity with drip-irrigation technology have not had good uptake by farming communities.

An NGO focused on agricultural research centre for development wanted to help small-scale farmers to better understand drip-irrigation and plan their own group projects. The aim was to use land in ways that better suited the farmers and to encourage farmers to take greater ownership of the process.

The NGO wanted to use a social learning-oriented approach, and to capture the results through M&E. To do this they used a cycle of plan-act-observe-reflect, bringing farmers and local government stakeholders together to discuss whether and how drip irrigation could be used to manage the water shortage problems in their area more effectively.



The table below identifies methodologies (in red) and indicators in each of the key areas (in blue) where the narrative touches on a methodology or indicator. Instances of the latter may be a contribution to measuring the indicator or a specific tailoring of the indicator within the case study. For each indicator the numbering refers back to the indicator in the relevant key area section of the main paper – ‘P’ indicates a process indicator, ‘L’ a learning outcome indicator, and ‘V’ a value or practice outcome indicator.

Narrative	Engagement	Iterative learning	Capacity Development	Challenging Institutions
<p>During the initial phase the NGO worked with different groups locally to map out who was considered relevant to invite to further meetings. They did this using a <b>participatory social network analysis tool</b> that had a snow-ball effect in <b>identifying and prioritising stakeholders</b>. Particular attention was given in <b>using this tool within groups that traditionally had less voice - notably women and younger farmers</b>. The <b>social network mapping tool was adapted</b> during the first few sessions to suit the types of interaction that the different farm groups prioritised e.g. flows of information, goods, money, and power relations. This analysis was used to convene initial stakeholders in a workshop that had a good variety of participants.</p> <p>The <b>NGO was well known and respected by the farmer groups and the local government</b>, as it had been working many years in the area. The Ngo facilitated the initial workshops and encouraged ‘out of box’ thinking on who else might be relevant and what approaches could be used to bring out voices of those stakeholders in meetings - in particular the cooperative leaders were dominated by older men but there were many female farmers and an increasing number of young farmers who were keen to try new approaches. The stakeholders agreed these groups should be allowed space to meet separately and representatives given a <b>weighted vote in any decisions</b>.</p> <p>One technique introduced by the facilitator to assist with understanding of different perspectives in water management was a ‘simulation phase’ where <b>role-playing</b> was used. This was important in abstracting - putting farmers in <b>“scenarios” of other farmers’ shoes as well as those of the local decision makers - as well as building knowledge of the roles within the</b></p>	<p>P1 P2</p> <p>P3b</p> <p>P2a</p>	<p>P5, P6</p>	<p>P10, P11</p>	

**current system.** The role-playing game was first seen as “co-designing farm projects” that used drip irrigation. But it turned out to also be extremely useful in **building common understanding of system complexity** relative to the farm area it was played out in. Participants were encouraged to challenge the roles and point out barriers to better water management, and opportunities to improve. This included **challenging the role of (in their words) “the system” which included local policy and cultural norms** such as the need to bribe officials to get things done.

At the end of each workshop **feedback was taken from each participant through a survey** on their impressions of what they had learned, **what they thought others had learned, and how the group as a whole had improved understanding.** They were **asked to score** their own increase in understanding of the issue and that of the group. This was complemented with **focus group discussions** every 3 months around types of knowledge that had been produced for individuals and the group and how the process of learning could be improved - including any **issues of capacity for individuals or particular groupings of people.** The focus group was asked to describe how learning processes (for example the role-playing scenarios tool) had impacted (1) their own understanding (2) **understanding of the group** (3) **understanding of others outside of the meeting.** For the same three categories they were asked to **describe if/how learning processes had changed the way they interacted with each other and others and how this had changed the attitudes and behaviour of others. They were also asked to reflect on the quality of learning and whether the learning process had resulted in challenges in assumptions on what the group was doing, and the roles of wider stakeholders in delivering drip irrigation. Finally they were asked what elements of their learning had been used as part of the groups’ ongoing work and what the blockages to this had been. Specifically they were questioned on blockages related to lack of resource, lack of capacity, and organisational blockages - how significant they were to different group members and if/how they had been addressed.**

Outcomes over a year period included, projects that farmers had co-created to meet collective system-level water management. Unlike the initial ideas that the NGO considered ‘logical’ in managing the watershed, **the systems created had an element of tailoring to individual farmers including how they shared commonly purchased resources. Local barriers to registering new farm cooperatives were noted as significantly lowered** and the local administration facilitated loans to organised groups to help with start-up capital costs for new

L3

L5, L6

P5, P6

L4b

L5, V3, V4

L6

L4a

P13, L7, L9, V7

P16, P17

L7, L8, V7

V9, V11

drip-irrigation and watershed management schemes.

These projects continued to flourish outside of the NGO intervention as **different farm groups continued to interact and learn from each other - developing their own ways of facilitation and individual champions**. Supporting resources for this were mainstreamed by local government. The NGO concluded that it was more important to enable farmers to engage with an issue as a group - and design irrigation projects together -- than to transfer technology to them.

P4, V1, V2a,b

V3

V10



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