



RESULTS FOR
DEVELOPMENT



Collaborative Learning Networks Measurement & Learning Framework

Towards an integrated, inclusive and utilization-focused
measurement & learning framework that is feasible and resourced

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCG	Country Core Group
CL	Collaborative Learning
CLN	Collaborative Learning Network
EAL	Evaluation & Adaptive Learning
JLN	Joint Learning Network for Universal Health Coverage
Linked	Linked Immunisation Action Network
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
M&L	Measurement & Learning
MIC	Middle Income Countries
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PEERSS	Partnership for Evidence & Equity in Responsive Social Systems
R4D	Results for Development
SALEX	Schools Action Learning Exchange
SPARC	Strategic Purchasing Africa Resource Center
TA	Technical Assistance
ToC	Theory of Change
UHC	Universal Health Coverage / Universal Health Care

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 - About Collaborative Learning

R4D's Collaborative Learning Networks (CLN) use **Collaborative Learning (CL)** across countries and regions as a **mechanism to strengthen health, nutrition and education systems**. A CLN organizes and convenes a set of system change agents (e.g., government officials, sector experts, civil society actors, technical partners) from different countries or regions around a common or shared purpose in a way that allows them to collaboratively learn and co-create knowledge and tools to address shared challenges of common interest. Specifically, it facilitates cross-context learning amongst decision makers and practitioners, supports them in co-creating, adapting and translating knowledge and tools to specific contexts, and helps them devise and apply strategies to promote the use of the knowledge and tools in governance and decision-making in their home countries.

CL is considered as a pathway to system reform that helps enhance coordination between (otherwise silo-ed) sectors and actors to jointly address the bottlenecks and implementation challenges in their countries' health or education systems. It complements commonly used knowledge sharing modalities (such as expert-driven Technical Assistance models or one-off participatory learning events) in that it deliberately takes a **collaborative approach to knowledge creation and learning** that creates the environment for peers to help each other on an ongoing basis. It involves collaborative action- or implementation-oriented research across countries and sectors during a longer period of time (min. two years), **applying peer-to-peer learning and working directly with relevant in-country institutions** that can help develop the supportive ecosystems needed to bring about long-term system reform.

The demand for CL often starts when there is a recognized common challenge and a common understanding of what needs to be done to address the challenge, but when there

is uncertainty about how to implement the required action. A CLN is formed around the shared purpose of learning and knowledge creation to address the common challenge. It has generally a broad agenda (such as increasing transparency in the use of public funds or promoting health equity) and does not prescribe any solutions but develops menus of options from which decision makers and practitioners can choose those that are most appropriate for their specific contexts and situations. Funders and country governments and institutions work together to identify shared priorities, agree upon an approach (that might not be the funder's first choice but has a technically acceptable probability of success), develop and implement a work plan to pursue the chosen approach, define the intended results and outcomes, monitor progress, and adjust the course as necessary.

Since 2009, R4D's portfolio of CLNs has grown and diversified in response to **strong demand for CL** among country change agents and partners. This demand grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when country leaders sought to connect (virtually) with their peers in other countries to navigate the rapidly evolving pandemic landscape while maintaining their routine services. A brief overview of R4D's current CLN portfolio is provided in **Annex I**.

1.2 - About this document

In September 2022 R4D contracted Collaborative Impact to help develop and pilot a Measurement & Learning (M&L) framework for its portfolio of CLNs. This work is supported by the Hewlett Foundation.

The M&L framework was developed through consultations with R4D staff and other key stakeholders at the organizational, CLN portfolio and individual CLN levels, and was subsequently piloted and then revised based on the feedback and learning generated.

This document is intended to support managers and practitioners working on collaborative

learning to understand the measurement and learning needs of the CLNs.

- **Chapter 1** briefly introduces the CLN context, the M&L framework, and the current exercise for designing and piloting of the M&L framework.
- **Chapter 2** details the conceptual underpinnings of the M&L framework, including its vision of success, its objectives and levels, and its users and uses.
- **Chapter 3** presents the framework elements, including a CLN typology, a portfolio-level Theory of Change, prioritized M&L questions, the minimal 'must-do' M&L activities, and the cycles of M&L.
- **Chapter 4** provides working definitions of

key terms (Terms of Art) used throughout this document.

- **Annex I** provides an overview of R4D's CLN portfolio.
- **Annex II** explains the structure and functioning of CLNs (including details on processes, strategies, tools and existing measurement practices).
- **Annex III** comments on challenges of impact measurement and provides an overview of suitable methods for measuring or assessing CLN contribution to system change and impact.
- **Annex IV** presents a full list of measurement and learning activities and questions, including items that were not prioritized but may nonetheless be relevant.

2. FRAMEWORK CONCEPT

This chapter sets out the key conceptual underpinnings of the M&L framework and serves as touchstone for the framing of the different framework elements. It includes the vision of success, framework objectives and levels, and a framework user map.

2.1 - Vision of success

The overall vision of success for the measurement and learning framework can be summarized as follows:

An integrated, inclusive and utilization-focused measurement & learning framework that is feasible and resourced

More specifically the envisioned M&L framework should have the following characteristics:

- **Utilization-focused**, offering a flexible set of guiding questions, methods and tools that can generate credible evidence and enable CLN managers and partners to learn from each other to adapt and improve their strategies and communicate the added value of CL to the outside world;

- **Inclusive**, enabling decision makers to make balanced value judgments based on credible evidence that takes into account members' views on whether the CLN is achieving its objectives (i.e., telling their story of success) and worth their time investment (i.e., their opportunity cost);
- **Integrated**, moving from anecdotal towards strategic measurement & learning integrated with CLN programming and front and center of CLN managers' and partners' minds;
- **Feasible**, focused on the 'must haves' and adapted to the CLNs' level of maturity;
- **Resourced**, requiring no 'magic' time (un-resourced or under-resourced staff time) investment from R4D staff and partners and limited member engagement;
- **Institutionalized**, anchored in organizational culture, leadership, strategy and policies, with clear roles, responsibilities, and resources that match the ambition.

Achievement of the vision rests on broad community-wide buy-in for the CLN

measurement and learning framework. We suggest using the following indicators of success to track buy-in:

- CLN managers and partners use the framework and its Theory of Change (ToC) approach for learning, communication and improvement, and retroactively draw lessons from past work.
- Organizational staff and leadership understand how it will generate credible and communicable contribution-to-impact stories that will help attract more and new funders;
- Senior organizational leadership is committed to institutionalize and properly resource organization-wide CLN measurement & learning.

2.2 - Objectives and levels of the M&L framework

As indicated in Section 2.1, the M&L framework will need to be utilization-focused, inclusive of different stakeholder perspectives, and integrated with programming. While the demand for accountability is felt most strongly from the donor side, the primary purposes of this framework are (a) learning and adaptation for improved outcomes and (b) demonstrating the added value of the CL approach. Based on this, we can formulate the following objectives for the M&L framework:

- **Create a learning environment.** Provide a flexible utilization-focused and strategic approach for M&L that is integrated with CLN programming and facilitates open reflection

about what works well / less well across the CLN portfolio, focused on improvement.

- **Generate evidence for adaptive decision-making.** Generate robust and credible evidence on CLN performance and contribution-to-impact that supports adaptive CLN management and enables inclusive value judgment and decision-making, taking into account members' voice and ownership;
- **Demonstrate added value of CLNs.** Generate persuasive and communicable contribution-to-impact stories and summaries based on evidence that demonstrates the added value of the CL approach to global policy makers and funders and contributes to a global body of knowledge that promotes the CL approach.

These objectives imply M&L at three levels:

- **At the portfolio level** for learning and value demonstration across all CLNs;
- **At the CLN network level** for adaptively managing and improving individual CLN performance and contribution-to-impact; and
- **At the CLN country level** for improving ecosystem performance and assessing progress towards achieving in-country system reform outcomes.

2.3 - Framework user map

The table on the next two pages uses of the M&L framework at the portfolio level, the CLN network level and the CLN country level.

Level	User	Uses
Portfolio level	CLN portfolio managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate robust and credible evidence of the contribution-to-impact across all CLNs to address questions for value demonstration and global knowledge building around the CL approach. • Systematically distill and synthesize learnings from the individual CLN measurements to address the learning-for-accountability questions and enable balanced and inclusive decision making. • Facilitate open reflection and learning across the portfolio and around the portfolio-level ToC to proactively, intentionally and systematically (thus less reactive and ad hoc) strengthen the CLN portfolio. • Mobilize resources for funding and supporting evidence-based strengthening of the CLN portfolio.
CLN network level	CLN managers and technical facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide the design and set-up of CLNs and the learning and reflection on network performance and contribution-to-impact with various stakeholders around a shared CLN ToC. • Generate robust and credible evidence and document best practices of network functioning, outputs and outcomes (i.e., network performance) to address the learning-for-accountability and learning-for-improvement questions and adaptively manage and improve CLN performance. • Contribute to building robust and credible evidence of CLN contribution-to-impact and producing persuasive evidence-based impact stories and summaries. • Advocate and educate donors and partners on the added value of the CLN drawing on evidence-based contribution-to-impact stories and summaries. • Mobilize resources for funding and supporting CLN development.
	Technical facilitation partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate credible and contextualized evidence of network outputs. • Collect structured member feedback and document lessons on the effectiveness of the strategies for knowledge creation, sharing & uptake to adaptively improve them. • Conduct self assessments to identify critical capacity gaps and design CLN capacity building initiatives around these gaps.
	Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make inclusive value judgment and funding decisions, drawing on the evidence of network contribution-to-impact and members' views and feedback. • Learn about the added value of the CL approach from the evidence of cross-portfolio contribution-to-impact. • Communicate their insights globally regarding the added value of the CL approach drawing on the evidence of network-specific and cross-portfolio contribution-to-impact.

Level	User	Uses
CLN country level	In-country network members (gov't and ecosystem actors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in collaborative and evidence-based learning and reflection on progress towards achieving system reform goals, using a country-level ToC for system reform. Provide structured feedback on in-country network support to achieving system reform goals, mapped onto the country-level ToC. Engage in the planning and improvement of in-country network support based on the evidence that technical assistance/facilitation generates.
	In-country lead groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilize in-country network members to engage in collaborative and evidence-based learning and reflection around a country-level ToC for system reform. Mobilize in-country network members to engage in the planning and improvement of in-country network support to system reforms. Conduct self assessments to identify critical capacity gaps and design CLN capacity building initiatives around these gaps.
CLN country level	Technical assistance and research partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate credible and contextualized evidence on the uptake and implementation of the knowledge and tools produced by network members (incl. the country action plans and the in-country resource mobilization for implementation). Generate credible and contextualized evidence on the coordination and collaboration among and between in-country institutions and partners to identify and plan ecosystem strengthening interventions. Provide structured feedback on the CLN strategies (for member engagement; knowledge creation, sharing & uptake; and resource mobilization).
	Technical facilitation partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect structured member feedback on in-country network support to achieve system reform goals, mapped onto the country-level ToC. Facilitate collaborative and evidence-based learning and reflection with in-country network members around a country-level ToC for system reform. Conduct self assessments to identify critical capacity gaps and design CLN capacity building initiatives around these gaps.

3. FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS

This chapter details the key framework elements that form the building blocks of the M&L framework.

- **Section 3.1 – Theory of Change for M&L Across CLNs:** This section presents the portfolio-level Theory of Change, which helps track CLN performance and contribution to system change and aggregate findings and draw lessons across the CLN portfolio. This section further presents the levels of change in the TOC, which are used to track 1) network performance and 2) network contributions to impact. Finally, the section describes how the concept of network maturity as a critical and evolving component of the TOC.
- **Section 3.2 – Prioritized M&L questions:** This section presents the M&L questions, which serve as a guide for the evaluation activities an organization might undertake to better understand their CLN's performance and contributions to impact. In short, the evaluation methodologies discussed later in the framework will help teams answer these M&L questions.
- **Section 3.3 – CLN Typology and Stages of Maturity:** This section presents the CLN typology and stages of maturity, which help determine the appropriate M&L priorities and activities depending on the type and maturity of a CLN.
- **Section 3.4 – Prioritized M&L activities:** This section describes the 'must-do' M&L activities, which are the main measurement and learning activities required to enable an organization to improve its CLN performance and demonstrate the added value of the CL approach.
- **Section 3.5 – M&L Cycles:** This section presents the M&L cycles, which situate

the M&L activities within the shorter (e.g., annual) and longer (e.g., three yearly) cyclical timelines for strategy, planning and implementation, both at the CLN portfolio and individual CLN levels.

3.1 - Theory of Change for M&L across CLNs

The Theory of Change (ToC) for M&L across CLNs provides an overarching and generalized framework that articulates the various levels of change that CLNs are expected to contribute to. It provides a shared language and conceptual map that can anchor measurement and learning across the CLN portfolio.

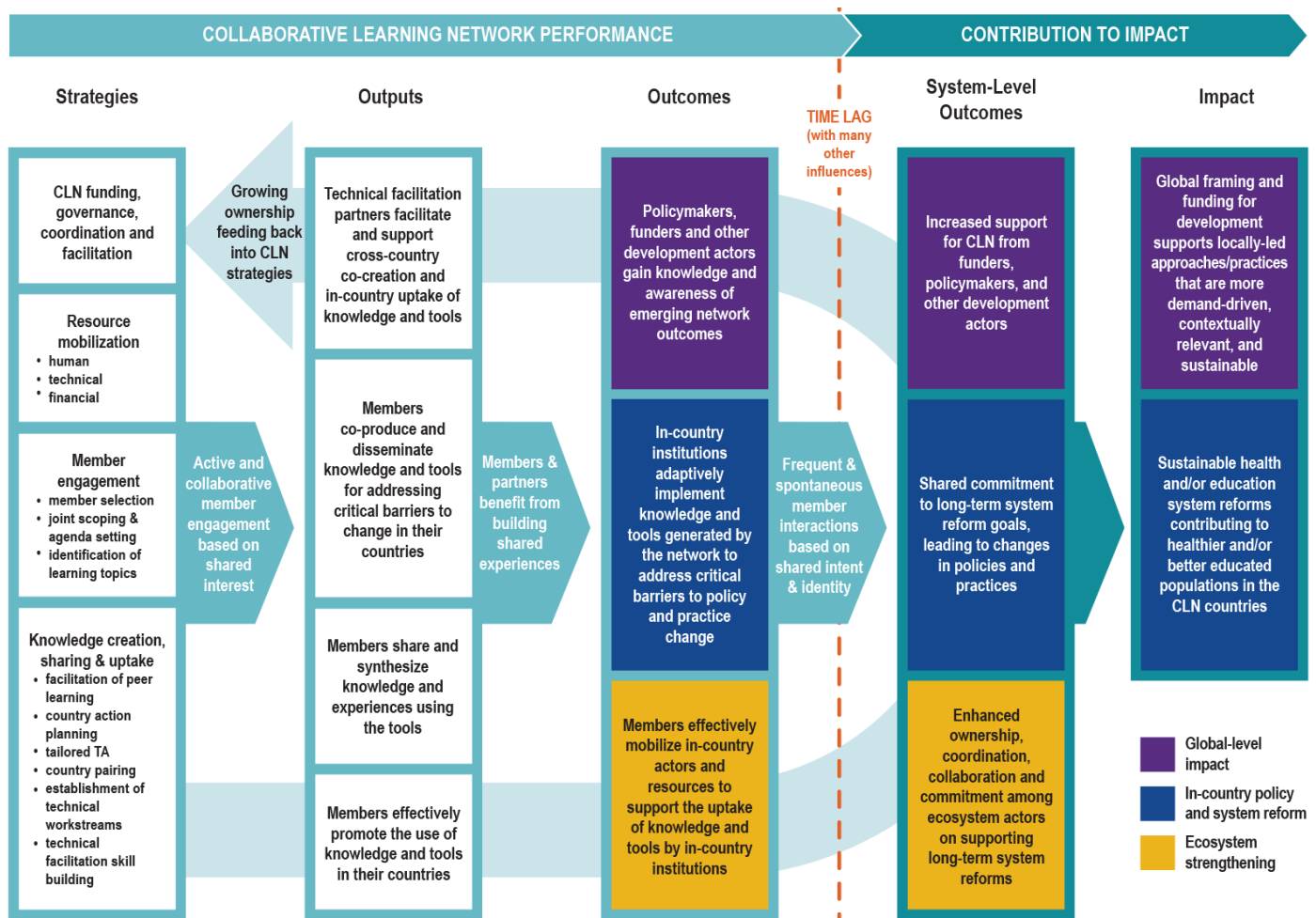
While each CLN typically has its own individual ToC with its own terminology, varying levels of detail and CLN-specific result statements, the portfolio-level ToC aims to be general enough that each individual CLN is largely able to find their individual ToC reflected in it. This is essential for building a shared set of methodological options for measurement and learning that can be used across CLNs to support cross-network and portfolio-wide analysis, evidence-building, reporting and learning.

The diagram on the next page presents the portfolio-level ToC model which was developed on the basis of an extensive desk review of CLN-specific ToCs and M&E frameworks and the descriptions harvested from the stakeholder interviews, and was subsequently improved based on the feedback and learning generated through the piloting process and validation and sensemaking workshops.¹ It has **five results levels** (or levels of change), with at each level a set of **measurement & learning themes** around which a priority set of M&L questions and activities have been agreed. These results levels are as follows:

1. An overview of CLN specific ToCs and M&L frameworks can be found in Annex II of the Memo on Phase 1 inquiries for developing the institutional CLN M&L framework.

2. For more detail on 'locally-led development', see Terms of Art (Chapter 5).

Portfolio-level Theory of Change



- **Strategies.** The various strategies that are essential to make the network functional and able to deliver the expected network outputs and outcomes. The single most important M&L theme at this level is: **effective strategies**.
- **Outputs.** The precursors to network outcomes: the immediate changes we expect to see in the behaviors and capacities of the network members and technical facilitation partners as a result of the implementation of the various network strategies. The M&L themes at this level are: **member engagement** and **technical facilitation and support**.
- **Outcomes.** The precursors to system outcomes: the changes in the behaviors and capacities of critical system actors in CLN countries and the growing global and regional awareness among policy makers and funders of these network outcomes. The M&L themes at this level are: **knowledge uptake** and **network maturity**.
- **System-level outcomes.** The precursors to impact: the changes related to the system reforms in the countries that the CLNs are aiming for, and the increasing global support for CL. The M&L themes at this level are: **ecosystem coordination, political commitment** to system reform, **changes in policies and practices**, and **network maturity**.
- **Impact.** The envisioned impacts: (a) healthier and/or more educated populations as a result of sustainable system reforms in the CLN countries; and (b) global framing and funding for development supports locally-led approaches/practices that are more demand-

driven, contextually relevant and sustainable.² There are no M&L themes prioritized at this level, as it is too far removed from CLNs' sphere of influence.

The ToC diagram above shows two parts, which are further detailed in the sections below:

- **CLN performance** consisting of network strategies, outputs and outcomes, for which the key M&L themes are: knowledge uptake, network maturity and sustainability, member engagement, facilitation capacity, and effective strategies.
- **CLN contribution-to-impact** consisting of system outcomes and impact beyond the 'time lag' line, indicating longer-term progress toward system reform and impact on the lives of target populations. A variety of factors beyond the control - and possibly even influence - of CLNs come into force when network outcomes are translated into system outcomes, and again when system outcomes translate into impact.

The key M&L themes of CLN performance are: ecosystem coordination, political commitment to system reform, network maturity and sustainability, and changes in policies and practices.

3.1.1 - CLN performance

CLN performance is measured by the three results levels on the left side of the TOC: Strategies, Outputs, and Outcomes. This section will describe the components of each of these three results levels in greater detail.

The **Strategy** level of the ToC includes the following:³

- **CLN funding, governance, coordination, and facilitation structure** are concerned with the ways in which the overall sponsorship of the network is structured, and how the different roles and responsibilities for

network funding, governance, coordination and facilitation are organized (e.g., backbone organization, steering group, coordination team, technical and facilitation teams) and divided among the CLN partners (incl. CLN funders, tech facilitation partners, TA and research partners, and network partners).

- **Resource mobilization:** the ways in which CLNs are sufficiently and appropriately resourced. Key strategies include: obtaining donor funding for the development and management of the CLNs; creation of a dedicated fund to support collaborative learning; obtaining flexible donor funding for in-country engagements that members select; mobilization of resources for in-country TA to ensure knowledge uptake as reforms are launched and implemented; mobilization of resources among the CLN partners for measurement & learning focused on improving CLN performance and building robust and credible evidence of CLN contribution-to-impact; mobilization of resources for CLN portfolio strengthening.
- **Member engagement strategies** are concerned with the variety of mechanisms for iteratively building 'shared interest', 'shared experience', and 'shared intent and identity' among CLN members which form the drivers of member engagement and ownership and are critical to develop a vibrant member-driven network. Various strategies are employed to achieve this, including: careful member and in-country lead selection (e.g., through demand assessments and consultations, competitive applications, and in-country stakeholder system mappings and capacity (gap) assessments); member-led agenda setting for learning and knowledge creation (centered on a shared vision but with built-in flexibility and responsiveness to real-time challenges and needs in the member countries); technical workstreams or initiatives focused on prioritized cross-country learning and in-country technical assistance needs; and

3. More detailed descriptions and explanations can be found in Section 2.1 of the Memo on Phase 1 inquiries for developing the institutional CLN M&L framework.

technical collaboratives or peer learning subgroups focused on addressing critical barriers in the member countries.

- **Knowledge creation, sharing & uptake strategies** must enable the co-creation, sharing and uptake of practical knowledge by the network members. The main type of strategies implemented in the CLNs are: facilitation of peer learning through a series of highly interactive and dynamic (formal and informal, face-to-face and virtual) events and exchanges; country action planning for implementation of the practical knowledge obtained through peer learning; technical assistance to implementation tailored to in-country policy priorities, contexts and needs (by working through country leads or focal points); country twinning and exchange visits between two or three countries with similar challenges, characteristics and contexts but different experiences to share. Most CLNs implement these strategies through technical facilitation partners. Building their capacity to play this role is often critical.
- **M&L strategies or plans** are concerned with tracking CLN performance and impact contribution for improvement, advocacy and fundraising. This implies that appropriate, relevant and sufficiently robust methodologies for M&L are in place, that accessible guidance and technical capacity is available to support CLNs to adapt and implement their M&L strategy, that portfolio-wide processes are in place to support M&L within and across the CLNs, and adequate resources (human, financial) are allocated to M&L.

The **output level** of the ToC is the result of the network strategies implemented for a given network. There are four main results at this level:

- The technical facilitation partners play their evolving roles related to network coordination, member engagement, technical facilitation, knowledge management, and M&E. They enable cross-country peer

learning and in-country knowledge uptake and are expected to support CLN members in achieving their output- and outcome-level results. Their capacity to play this role effectively is strengthened by the backbone organization with gradual handover of additional responsibilities, as part of a strategy on knowledge creation, sharing and uptake. The main M&L theme here is **technical facilitation and support**.

- Knowledge and tools for addressing critical barriers to policy and practice change in the countries are co-produced and disseminated by the members through the collaborative learning process that is facilitated by the technical facilitation partners. Members' technical capacity is built through this process and as part of the strategy on knowledge creation, sharing and uptake. The main M&L theme here is **member engagement**.
- The experiences with using the knowledge and tools are systematically shared and synthesized by the members to generate new knowledge and insights, again through the collaborative learning process, facilitated by the technical facilitation partners. The main M&L theme here is **network maturity**.
- With support from the technical facilitation partners, the new or adapted/translated knowledge and tools are promoted by the members for uptake and use by policy and decision makers in their countries. Their leadership capacity is strengthened through the accompaniment by the technical facilitation partners as part of the strategy on knowledge creation, sharing and uptake. The main M&L theme here is **network maturity**.

The **outcomes level** of the ToC describes changes in the behaviors, capacities and relationships of critical system actors that are expected to result from the network outputs. They mark the beginning of **three interdependent impact pathways**:

- In the **in-country ecosystem strengthening pathway**, the network-level outcome is that the network members and technical support partners effectively mobilize critical ecosystem actors and resources to advocate for and support the uptake of the knowledge and tools by the policy and decision makers in relevant (national or subnational) institutions. The main M&L theme here is **network maturity**.
- In the **in-country policy and system reform pathway**, the network-level outcome is that the in-country institutions apply the knowledge and tools generated and shared and promoted by the network members, and by doing so and with support from the technical facilitation partners, overcome the critical barriers to policy and practice change. The main M&L theme here is **knowledge uptake**.
- In the **global CL support pathway**, the network-level outcome is that global and regional policy makers and funders are becoming increasingly aware of the successes of the network in mobilizing ecosystem resources and actors and helping institutions address the barriers to policy and system reform, as these successes are documented and communicated with the outside world and makes create visibility and recognition of the value of CLNs. The main M&L theme here is **network maturity**.

3.1.2 - Contribution-to-impact

CLN contribution-to-impact is measured by the two results levels on the right side of the TOC: System-Level Outcomes and Impact. This section will describe the components of each of these two results levels in greater detail.

The **System-Level Outcomes** level of the ToC includes the following:

- In the **in-country ecosystem strengthening pathway**, the system-level outcome is that the efforts at mobilizing and networking with in-country ecosystem actors drives enhanced

ownership, coordination, collaboration and commitment among ecosystem actors on supporting long-term system reforms. The main M&L theme here is **ecosystem coordination**.

- This serves to catalyze the system-level outcome in the **in-country policy and system reform pathway**, namely: enhanced political commitment to long-term system reform goals among key institutions that leads to significant changes in policies and practices. The main M&L themes are **political commitment and changes in policies and practices**.
- In the **global CL support pathway**, the system-level outcome is that further evidence of progress and the achievement of network and system outcomes feeds into increasing global acknowledgment, understanding and support for CL among global and regional policy makers, funders, academia, and development professionals. This is expected to result in increased interest and support (financial, political, etc.) for the CL approach and thus also for the CLNs, contributing to their sustainability, growth and global expansion. The main M&L theme here is **network maturity**.

The **impact** in the ToC features results that are beyond the scope of CLN-related M&L activities. Nonetheless, they frame the overall goal and direction of CLNs and thus provide an important point of reference that may be worth exploring in the future. At the global level, the growing recognition, value of and support for CL - and its consequent expansion - is expected to contribute to a localization of global development framing and funding which is presumed to lead to a more sustainable development practice over time when many of these contributions are made in many different areas by many different development actors and funders. At the country level, the envisioned impact is concerned with healthier and/or more educated populations as a result of sustainable system reforms in the CLN countries.

3.1.3 - Network maturity

The ToC includes a gray arrow, circling out from the network strategies, through the various result levels, and feeding back into the network strategies. This arrow represents the evolving relationship between member engagement strategies, network maturity and the kinds of results that a given CLN may be expected to contribute to.

Network maturity is an important theme for M&L of CLN performance and of CLN contribution-to-impact. The stages of network maturity are described in **Section 3.3** and are related to the development of 'shared interest', 'shared experience', and 'shared intent and identity'. Member engagement strategies and activities are designed to iteratively develop and strengthen these characteristics. As they progress, the network matures and becomes more effective and sustainable, thus capable of achieving more

ambitious results. As the network matures, network strategies need to be adapted to the emerging network needs, building on the growth that has taken place and ensuring momentum.

3.2 - Prioritized M&L questions

While the TOC helps organizations working with CLNs identify and track their pathways to change, it does not pinpoint the learning questions one would want to answer to better understand a network's progress and contributions to impact. That is the purpose of the M&L questions. What follows is a prioritized list of learning questions that teams can use to guide their process of generating evidence and knowledge.⁴ The M&L questions are organized according to the M&L levels (country level, network level, and portfolio level), mapped to the components of the TOC, and include an indication of their primary purposes.

M&L level	M&L Questions	M&L Theme	Purposes
CLN PERFORMANCE			
CLN country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What determines the uptake and adaptation of knowledge in the countries? • What types of interim outcomes can be early indicators of CL success towards achieving desired network outcomes? • What are the most important indicators of network health and sustainability? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge uptake • Network maturity 	Learning for accountability and improvement
CLN CONTRIBUTION-TO-IMPACT			
Portfolio level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does CL contribute to system change and ecosystem strengthening? • Under what conditions does CL effectively enable the translation of knowledge into action? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem coordination • Political commitment 	Global knowledge building
CLN country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the CLN contributing to system reform and ecosystem strengthening in the target countries? What are the most effective impact pathways and strategies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network maturity • Changes in policies and practices 	Learning for accountability and improvement

4. An expanded version of this table with a more comprehensive set of M&L questions is available in Annex IV.

M&L level	M&L Questions	M&L Theme	Purposes
CLN network level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which models or strategies for member engagement are most effective in the different stages of network maturity? • What types of learning topics are best addressed through CL? • How do we best identify these learning topics? • How can we keep in-country lead groups or core teams engaged and committed? • Which models or strategies for knowledge creation, sharing & uptake are most effective? • Which peer learning facilitation formats are most effective and useful? • What are the capacity requirements for the technical facilitation partners to make strategies for knowledge creation, sharing & uptake effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member engagement • Technical facilitation and support • Effective strategies 	Learning for improvement

3.3 - CLN typology and stages of maturity

A utilization-focused M&L approach implies that its elements are adaptive to the characteristics and level of maturity of a CLN and can generate different types of evidence for different users/ uses. In this section, we propose a simple typology that can serve as a tool to determine the adaptations needed for different types of CLNs in different stages of maturity.

There are 4 dimensions to the rubrics - **network sponsorship, shared interest/motivation, shared experience, and shared intent/identity** - each with their own set of variables.

3.3.1 - The dimension of 'network sponsorship'

- The extent to which the structure of governance, coordination and facilitation is decentralized and the network backbone organization is supporting the network from the outside (versus leading from the center);
- The extent to which the network funders trust the network's ability to generate tangible outcomes and deliver value-for-money

and consequently are more flexible and less directive (versus more restricted and directive in their funding).

3.3.2 - The dimension of 'shared interest / motivation'

- The extent to which member engagement is driven by 'shared interest' that draws on collective member interests and needs (versus individual member interests and needs);
- The extent to which members interact frequently, collaboratively and freely/ spontaneously (versus ad-hoc, consultatively and formally);
- The extent to which knowledge creation and innovation is member driven (versus sponsor-driven).

3.3.3 - The dimension of 'shared experience'

- The extent to which members' 'shared experience' draws on collectively (versus individually) built knowledge and insights;
- The extent to which members' experience involves mutual and collective benefits as a result from participation in the network;

- The extent to which members share their experiences and benefits with professionals and peers outside their network and countries.

3.3.4 - The dimension of 'shared intent and identity'

- The extent to which members have developed a shared sense of common purpose and take ownership of the network functioning and outcomes;

- The extent to which members identify with the network and communicate its common purpose and identity.

To determine a CLN's stage of maturity, it can be coded and scored alongside these dimensions. The following table presents a draft of the rubrics, which has been improved through the design and stress testing of the M&L framework with the pilot CLNs.

Dimensions & Variables	Immature stage	Early maturing stage	Advanced maturing stage	Highly mature stage
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Network Sponsorship</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which the funding, governance, coordination and facilitation structure⁵ is decentralized and the network sponsor or backbone organization is supporting the network from the outside (versus leading from the center).</p>	<p>The structure is highly centralized with network funding, governance, coordination and facilitation centrally managed and/ or depending on the initiative taken by the backbone organization. The backbone organization is the center hub of the network and drives the network functioning.</p>	<p>The structure is still centrally managed, but with various degrees of responsibility for some of the network funding, governance, coordination and facilitation functions taken up by the technical facilitation partners.</p>	<p>The structure has become more decentralized, with the technical facilitation partners and the members taking on responsibility for at least half of the network functions in decentralized hubs. The backbone organization still functions as the central hub that drives the network, but delegates responsibility to the decentralized hubs.</p>	<p>The network has become a vibrant community with decentralized funding and governance hubs that are member-led, and decentralized knowledge and facilitation hubs that are led by technical facilitation partners. The backbone organization has moved from the center to the outskirts of the network, with its role now being focused on supporting network coordination and M&E, and on feeding the network with additional energy/ initiative where strategically relevant.</p>

5. This includes functions such as: demand identification, membership and member engagement, strategic direction and agenda setting, implementation, relationship and partnership development, communication & KM, M&E, resource mobilization.

Dimensions & Variables	Immature stage	Early maturing stage	Advanced maturing stage	Highly mature stage
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Network Sponsorship</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which the network funders trust the network's ability to generate tangible outcomes and deliver value-for-money and consequently are more flexible and less directive (versus more restricted and directive in their funding).</p>	<p>Funders have not yet seen any tangible outcomes or value-for-money, so their attitude is rather cautious. They want to have a say in governance and strategic direction setting for the network, and their funding support is restricted and directive.</p>	<p>Funders' attitude towards the network has not significantly changed, as network outcomes have not yet been evidenced. Their funding support remains restricted and directive. But they are more open to the members' perspectives and priorities in governance and strategic direction setting for the network as they recognize the importance of this for the success of the network.</p>	<p>Funders have gained trust in the network's ability to generate tangible outcomes and deliver value-for-money, as they have seen credible evidence. Consequently more than half of their funding has become unrestricted or more flexible and responsive to the members' perspectives and priorities.</p>	<p>Funders acknowledge the network's ability to demonstrate tangible outcomes and deliver value-for-money, and behave as real partners willing to contribute flexible funding and support, trusting it will produce satisfying results.</p>
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Shared interest/ motivation</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which member engagement is driven by 'shared interest' that draws on collective member interests and needs (versus individual member interests and needs).</p>	<p>Members join the network in hopes it may serve their individual interests and needs. The interest in the network they share with other members is driven entirely by their individual interests and needs. They have not yet identified or experienced any added value of pursuing members' collective interests and needs.</p>	<p>Members still engage largely on the basis of their individual interests and needs, but they have discovered the potential of collective knowledge building and learning in common areas for achieving their individual goals.</p>	<p>Through engagements in a variety of collective knowledge building and learning modalities, members' motivation to engage in the network have become more collectively defined. They start to see it as a valuable resource for achieving both their collective and their individual goals.</p>	<p>Members' motivation to engage in the network is entirely driven by collectively defined and owned interests and needs which are clearly articulated. They see the network as a collectively built common resource for meeting these as a critical pathway to achieving long-term system reform in their countries.</p>
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Shared interest/ motivation</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which members interact frequently, collaboratively and freely/spontaneously (versus ad-hoc, consultatively and formally).</p>	<p>Members engage in formal events when they have time and can gain personal benefit. Their interactions are consultative and ad hoc.</p>	<p>Members feel the need to engage in events more frequently, but still struggle with competing priorities and lack of time and resources. Consequently, their interactions remain largely consultative and transactional, e.g., they ask for what they need and respond to requests, but do not proactively seek out or pursue collaboration and sharing with peers.</p>	<p>Members actively seek ways to better manage their competing priorities and scarce resources so that they can engage more frequently, on an ongoing basis. They have started to interact with each other more spontaneously in- and outside the network events, and their interactions have become more collaborative, e.g., seeking to address collective interests and needs.</p>	<p>Members engage consistently in the network activities. They resolve emerging conflicts in priorities, staff turnovers, and time and resource constraints in their institutions that might jeopardize the continuity of their engagement. They interact frequently, both in and outside the formal events, and their interactions have become fully collaborative.</p>

Dimensions & Variables	Immature stage	Early maturing stage	Advanced maturing stage	Highly mature stage
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Shared interest/ motivation</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which knowledge creation and innovation is member-driven (versus sponsor-driven).</p>	<p>The energy for knowledge sharing and innovation emanates from the network's backbone organization.</p>	<p>Knowledge sharing and innovation still depends on the initiatives taken by the network's backbone organization, with technical facilitation partners actively contributing to the knowledge creation and innovation agenda and processes.</p>	<p>Knowledge sharing and innovation depends to a large extent on the facilitation partners' initiatives (supported by the backbone organization), but now also emanates from network member champions' initiatives.</p>	<p>Knowledge sharing and innovation emanates from the nodes of member interactions. Technical facilitation partners play an active role in the coordination and implementation of the member-led knowledge creation and innovation processes. The backbone organization fuels and supports these processes where strategically relevant.</p>
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Shared experience</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which members' 'shared experience' draws on collectively (versus individually) built knowledge and insights.</p>	<p>Members so far have built limited 'shared experience' that is entirely based on the lessons and insights from their own individual successes and failures which they shared with the broader group. They do not yet see the value of systematically synthesizing and sharing these back home and mobilizing their institutions to apply the knowledge.</p>	<p>Members have developed quite some 'shared experience' through their engagements in the network events, but most is still based on members' individual lessons and insights. Their engagement in network events remains limited and insufficient to see the value of systematically synthesizing and sharing these lessons and insights back home and mobilizing their institutions to apply the knowledge.</p>	<p>Through their frequent engagements, members start to build more 'shared experience' that draws on collective lessons and insights, sufficient to see the value of bringing these back home. Some member champions start to mobilize their institutions to apply the synthesized knowledge and share their experiences back into the network.</p>	<p>Members have gained and built a substantial body of 'shared experience' that draws on collective knowledge and insights and is systematically synthesized and shared in the countries. They consistently mobilize their institutions to apply the knowledge and share their experiences back into the network, feeding back into the collective knowledge creation process.</p>
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Shared experience</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which members' experience involves mutual and collective benefits as a result from participation in the network.</p>	<p>Members do not see/experience any mutual or collective benefit yet that help enhance their influence on policy and practice in their countries and regions</p>	<p>Members start to see some potential benefit for addressing their individual needs and interests and improving policy and practice. But for most of them, the cost of participation is still higher than the benefit.</p>	<p>Members experience concrete mutual/collective benefit from building collective knowledge and insights, addressing both individual and collective needs and interests. In the countries of the member champions, they start to see concrete improvements in policy and/or practice as a result of the knowledge uptake and use.</p>	<p>Members gain substantial mutual/collective benefit from building collective knowledge and insights, which enable them to collectively develop innovative solutions (e.g., to address critical barriers to policy and system reform) that can be adapted to different contexts. There is evidence of concrete improvement in policy and/or practice in the member countries as a result of the knowledge uptake and use.</p>

Dimensions & Variables	Immature stage	Early maturing stage	Advanced maturing stage	Highly mature stage
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Shared experience</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which members share their experiences and benefits with professionals and peers outside their network and countries.</p>	Members (almost) never share their experiences and benefits with professionals and peers outside their network and countries.	Members rarely share their experiences and benefits with professionals and peers outside their networks and countries.	Members share their experiences and benefits with professionals and peers outside their networks and countries whenever there is an opportunity. Member champions start sharing observed improvements in policy and practice in their countries and attract the attention from funders and other relevant actors.	Members frequently and proactively reach out to professionals and peers outside their networks and countries to share their experiences and benefits with the aim of building global knowledge and network visibility. Consequently, there is an increasing global acknowledgment of the added value of the collaborative learning approach.
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Shared intent & identity</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which members have developed a shared sense of common purpose and take ownership of the network functioning and outcomes.</p>	Members have not yet developed a shared sense of common intentionality or purpose. They may recognize they have a challenge in common and may have participated in defining the network's vision and learning agenda. But they do not yet have a collective intentionality to make the network work well and succeed.	Members start to develop a shared sense of common intentionality or purpose, but it's still fairly weak. They do not yet feel a responsibility to make the network work well and realize the potential of collective knowledge building and learning.	Members have developed a shared sense of common intentionality or purpose that is fairly strong. They care about their network and feel a responsibility for its functioning and outcomes. ⁶	Members have a strong shared sense of common purpose and collectively take on full responsibility for the functioning, outcomes and sustainability of their network. They individually and collectively invest in supporting their peers and seeking ways to maximize the network's in-country contributions to impact.
<p><i>Dimension:</i> Shared intent & identity</p> <p><i>Variables:</i> The extent to which members identify with the network and communicate its common purpose and identity.</p>	Members do not identify with the network. They see their membership merely as a potential source to meet their individual interests and needs, and don't yet feel any particular pride in their membership. They are neither motivated to nor able to convey its common purpose and identity to the outside world.	Members start to identify with the network, but it's still fairly weak. They start to see their membership as a potential source to meet both individual and collective interests and needs, but are not able to convey its common purpose and identity to the outside world.	Members identify with the network and consider their membership as an relevant source for their own and others' professional life. They tell others about their membership and communicate its common purpose and identity to the outside world whenever there is an opportunity. Member champions start taking on a more active ambassador role.	Members strongly identify with the network and consider their membership as an indispensable source for achieving system reform in their own and other countries. They actively communicate its common purpose and identity to the outside world in convincing ways, and are successful ambassadors of their network. Consequently, the network increasingly attracts global attention and is well respected in all relevant policy circles for its contributions to impact.

6. See also under Dimension 1: Members are taking on responsibility for at least half of the network functions in decentralized hubs.

3.4 - Prioritized M&L activities

M&L activities are a set of activities and methods used to generate and process the evidence needed to assess a CLN’s progress and contributions to impact. They are essential for understanding how individual CLNs and the CLN portfolio as a whole are performing, for informing ongoing adaptive management, reporting and communications, and for generating evidence and knowledge in response to the M&L questions.

activities at the portfolio level and the individual CLN level, indicating at which stage of maturity the activity applies, the proposed time-frame and frequency of the activity, and the corresponding roles and responsibilities.⁷ A number of these M&L activities, particularly at the CLN level, are already undertaken by CLNs in some form, reflecting an opportunity to learn from and build on existing practices. Find further details on introducing these M&L activities to the CLNs in **Section 3.6**.

The table below sets out the proposed ‘must-do’ or prioritized measurement and learning

M&L level	Prioritised M&L activities and methods	M&L themes	Stage of Maturity				Frequency
			Immature	Early Maturing	Advanced Maturing	Highly Mature	
CLN PERFORMANCE							
Country level	Tracking of changes in leadership, relationships and capacity of ecosystem actors (members & partners) in advanced-maturing CLNs, possibly using SenseMaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership capacity Ecosystem coordination 			✓	✓	Quarterly
Country level	Monitoring of knowledge uptake and implementation in early-maturing CLNs , possibly using a simple monitoring tool that draws on progress markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge uptake 		✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
CLN level	Monitoring of network maturity alongside the drivers of member engagement and ownership in all CLNs beyond immaturity, possibly using a Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tool and the data from the Routine engagement and knowledge outputs monitoring in all CLNs and in advanced-maturing CLNs drawing on the evidence generated by the SenseMaker inquiries on leadership, relationships and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network maturity & sustainability 		✓	✓	✓	Annual

7. An expanded version of this table with a more comprehensive set of M&L activities and methods is available in Annex IV.

8. The approach to impact evaluation is expected to be systemic, user-centered, and collaborative/developmental (in line with the M&L vision). Generally, evaluations of ‘contribution to system change and impact’ do not take a traditional approach that involves a typical baseline, midline and endline (although baseline capacity and needs assessments may be conducted in the scoping phase of a new CLN) or a Randomized Control Trial or quasi-experimental design (although experiments might be part of the methods mix to test and assess the effect of a particular and new strategy or mechanism). The impact evaluation of CLNs will need to draw as much as possible on the available evidence from the ongoing M&L (including impact case studies) conducted by the CLN partners throughout implementation, and will focus on the gaps in collecting additional primary data to generate credible evidence of ‘contribution to system change and impact’. See Annex III for further information on addressing challenges of assessing contribution-to-impact in complex environments and Section 3.6.3 on budgeting for impact evaluations.

M&L level	Prioritised M&L activities and methods	M&L themes	Stage of Maturity				Frequency
			Immature	Early Maturing	Advanced Maturing	Highly Mature	
CLN PERFORMANCE							
CLN level	Partnership assessment at critical moments of network maturity to ascertain the effectiveness of the partnerships at critical moments of network maturing in CLNs beyond the immature stage , possibly using Mixed-Surveys and Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships and strategies 		✓	✓	✓	Light touch annual; in-depth at maturity transition
CLN level	Periodic CLN learning and reflection moment around CLN performance in all CLNs , through annual participatory sensemaking workshops and pause and reflect sessions in management and governance body meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships and strategies Member engagement Facilitation capacity 	✓	✓	✓	✓	Annual
CLN level	Routine engagement and knowledge outputs monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member engagement Facilitation capacity 	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing (e.g., quarterly, after events)
CLN level	Performance monitoring of/by in-country lead groups in all CLNs beyond the immature stage , possibly using Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network maturity Effective member engagement strategies 		✓	✓	✓	Annual
CLN level	Performance monitoring of/by technical facilitation partners in all CLNs beyond the immature stage , possibly using Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical facilitation 		✓	✓	✓	Annual
CLN CONTRIBUTION-TO-IMPACT							
Portfolio level	Independent impact evaluations⁸ of advanced-maturing CLNs , drawing on the available evidence from CLN-level performance and impact inquiries, and possibly combining Participatory Statistics, Social Network Analysis and Constituent Voice with Contribution Tracing to fill the gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in policies and practices Network maturity Political commitment Ecosystem coordination 			✓	✓	Up to one per year (or approx 3 over the course of the cycle)

M&L level	Prioritised M&L activities and methods	M&L themes	Stage of Maturity				Frequency
			Immature	Early Maturing	Advanced Maturing	Highly Mature	
Portfolio level	Periodic cross-portfolio learning and reflection events around the portfolio-level ToC and learning agenda drawing on the available evidence from CLN-level performance and impact inquiries, possibly using Participatory Sensemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystem coordination Political commitment Network maturity Effective strategies 	✓	✓	✓	✓	Once in three years (toward end of the cycle)
CLN level	Structured country impact case studies in early maturing CLNs onwards, possibly using Outcome Harvesting or Most Significant Change (long M&L cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to reform Ecosystem coordination Knowledge uptake Leadership capacity 		✓	✓	✓	Time-sensitive (e.g., mid- & end-term, one per year)

3.5 - Right-sizing and stress-testing

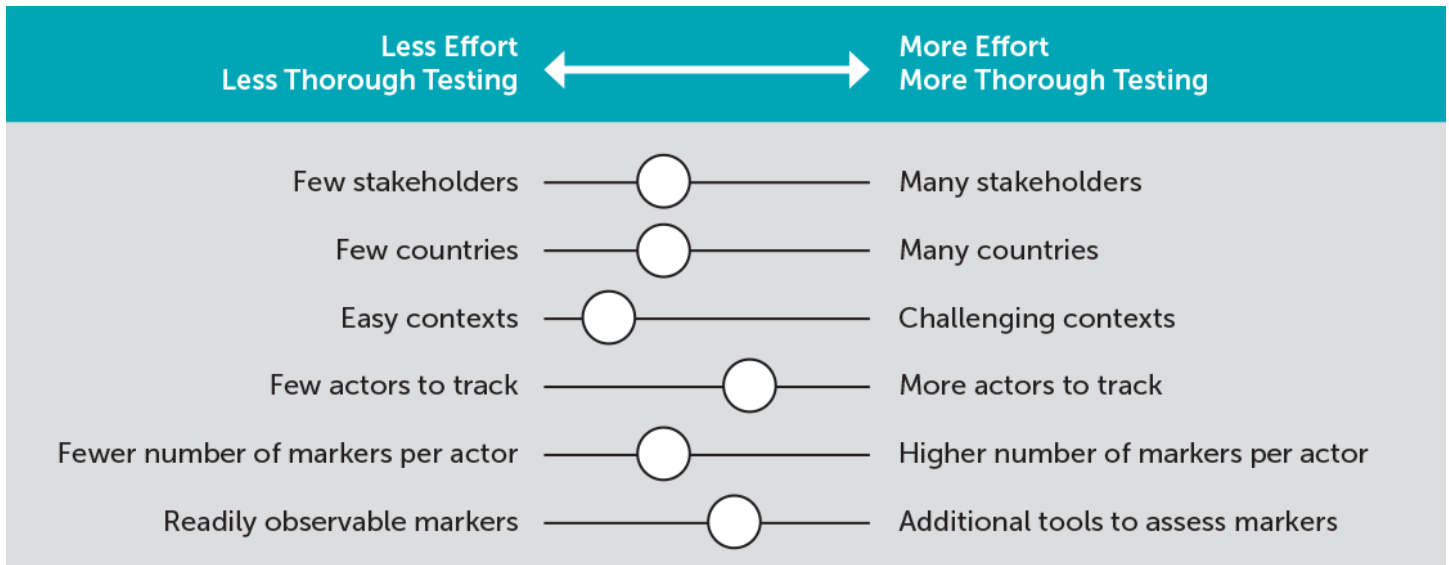
After the selection of M&L activities, it's essential to subject them to a process of refinement and testing. This ensures their feasibility, viability, and ability to generate the desired information.

Right-sizing is the process of changing the size/scope of something so that it works better for a given purpose and context. Thus, with respect to the CLN M&L Framework, right-sizing refers to adjustments that can be made to M&L activities and methodologies to ensure they are appropriate and feasible within the time and resources available. Paring back the methodologies may compromise rigor and the resultant quality of outcomes, yet striking a balance is imperative when time, budget and available team resources are constrained. The table on the next page illustrates example tradeoffs to consider when right-sizing the Progress Markers (PM) methodology. A similar process can be used across other methodologies to determine the ideal balance between level of effort vs. level of rigor (see table on the next page).

After employing right-sizing to identify the most suitable version of methodologies for their context, the team can begin to test them using **stress-testing**. Stress-testing is the process of deliberately testing functionality given various situations or scenarios. It allows teams to begin gathering information in order to make adjustments, before rolling out the chosen M&L activities on a larger scale. Stress-testing can range from probing of initial concepts, prototyping working models, or piloting through a larger-scale test. For the CLN M&L Framework, we focused on lighter touch prototyping of our M&L activities and methods.

Stress-testing M&L activities and methods helps to determine whether they:

- Are well designed, coherent, relevant and can work across different contexts
- Are feasible to implement in terms of capacity, cost and time requirements
- Enable the team to generate the required data/evidence that is credible, accepted by and useful to relevant stakeholders
- Can yield insights responding to the Learning



Questions and support learning among key stakeholders

- Can help teams to test and deepen their understanding of aspects of the ToC that they correspond to

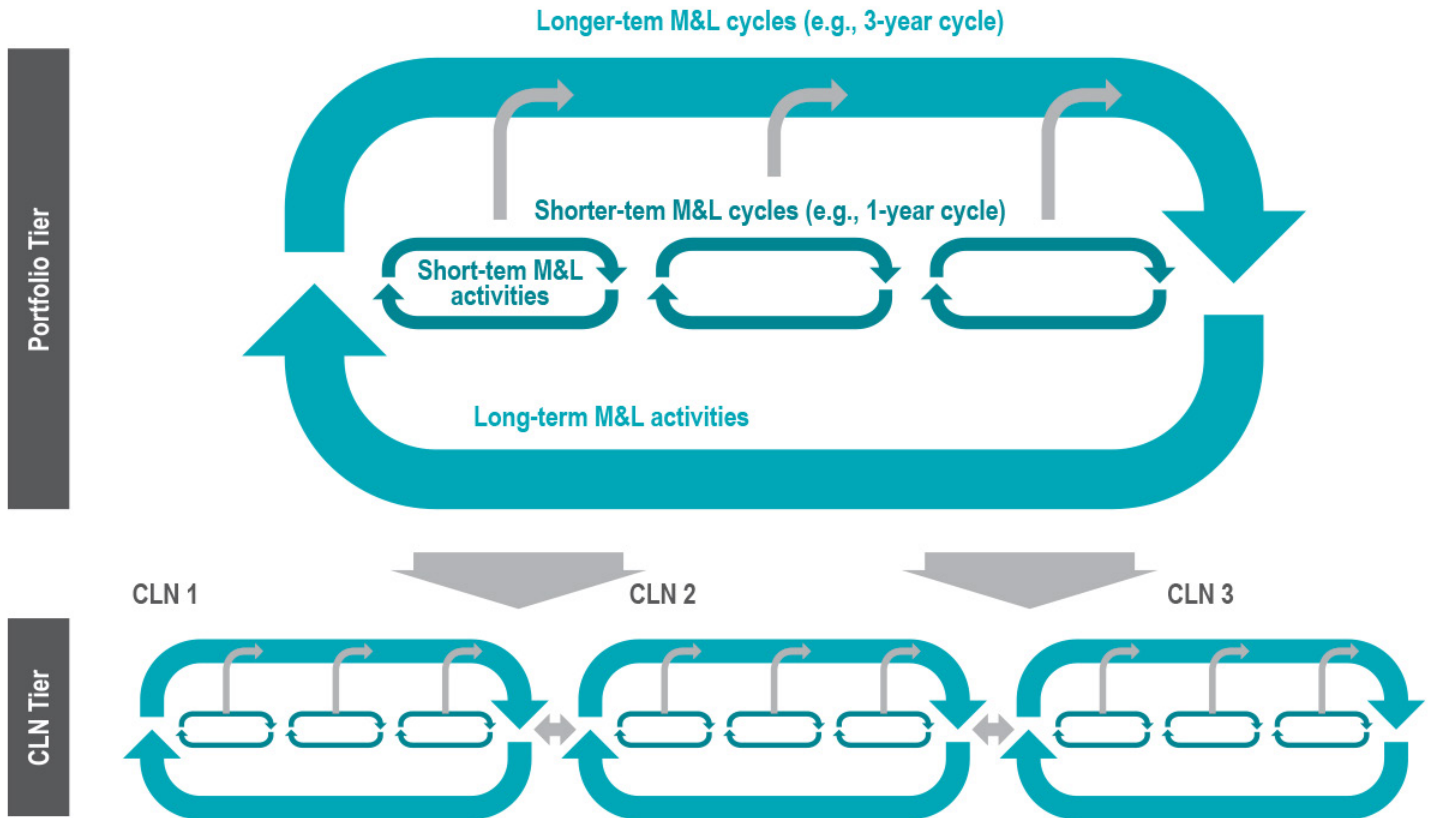
The more situations and pressures the methods are subjected to, the more confident teams can be about using them.

3.6 - M&L cycles

M&L activities take place in relation to the cyclical timelines for strategy, planning and implementation. In complex and difficult-to-measure initiatives such as CLNs, these cyclical timelines are most effective when they incorporate embedded M&L loops that support evidence-based decision-making. M&L loops should thus be embedded at both the portfolio and CLN tiers of the framework. Irrespective

of the tier or level of measurement & learning, these loops are generally **longer term** (e.g., three years) for strategic cycles and **shorter term** for implementation and experimentation/adaptation (e.g., one year or even less) cycles. The shorter-term cycles are embedded within the longer-term cycle, and cycles at the CLN tier feed into cycles at the portfolio tier.

Different M&L activities need to be carried out in a cyclical manner at different frequencies within the longer- and shorter-term loops. These may be continuous, periodic or time-sensitive (i.e., triggered by specific events, needs or developments) and may be conducted internally by CLN managers and partners or commissioned externally. Measurement activities generate evidence that feeds into learning activities driving ongoing adaptive management and decision-making. This is visualized in the diagram on the next page.



Prioritization is necessary given the capacity, resource and time constraints (cf. Section 1.1). There are some things that ideally must be done, and other things that are desirable but optional.

3.7 - Planning for M&L activities and methods

This section summarizes the roles and responsibilities of key actors in implementing the different M&L activities presented in Section 3.4 and provides some examples of the steps to be followed for implementing these activities.

3.7.1 - M&L Roles and responsibilities

M&L level	Prioritised M&L activities and methods	Roles and responsibilities (communication products highlighted in bold)
SYSTEM OUTCOMES CONTRIBUTING TO IMPACT		
Portfolio level	Independent impact evaluations of advanced-maturing CLNs , drawing on the available evidence from CLN-level performance and impact inquiries, and possibly combining Participatory Statistics, Social Network Analysis and Constituent Voice with Contribution Tracing to fill the gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent consultant conducts the evaluations and portfolio review, and produces the summary reports • Portfolio managers commission, manage the evaluations, organize and facilitate the events, produce the learning briefs and blogs, and leads on KM of learnings
Portfolio level	Periodic cross-portfolio learning and reflection events around the portfolio-level ToC and learning agenda drawing on the available evidence from CLN-level performance and impact inquiries, possibly using Participatory Sensemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio managers commission and manage the evaluations • Portfolio managers organize and facilitate the events, produce the learning briefs and blogs, and lead on KM of learnings • Comms team edits the reports and learning briefs for publication, produces infographic booklets, and supports the blogs
CLN level	Structured country impact case studies in early maturing CLNs onwards, possibly using Outcome Harvesting or Most Significant Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLN managers and technical facilitators conduct the country case studies • Comms team edits the reports and produces evidence-based impact stories
CLN PERFORMANCE		
Country level	Tracking of changes in leadership, relationships and capacity of ecosystem actors (members & partners) in advanced-maturing CLNs, possibly using SenseMaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-country TA & research partners collect the data • Technical facilitation partners organize and facilitate the learning sessions • Independent consultant trains the TA & research partners in using the SenseMaker and the political economy and trend analysis tools, and supports the tech facilitation partners in designing the learning sessions drawing on the evidence generated and create summary reports

M&L level	Prioritised M&L activities and methods	Roles and responsibilities (communication products highlighted in bold)
Country level	Monitoring of knowledge uptake and implementation in early-maturing CLNs, possibly using a simple monitoring tool that draws on progress markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-country lead groups and TA & research partners collect and analyze the data, and produce the monitoring reports
CLN level	Monitoring of network maturity alongside the drivers of member engagement and ownership in all CLNs beyond immaturity, possibly using a Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tool and the data from the routine engagement and knowledge outputs monitoring in all CLNs and in advanced-maturing CLNs drawing on the evidence generated by the SenseMaker inquiries on leadership, relationships and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLN managers conduct the surveys, assessments and outputs monitoring CLN managers produce the maturity and outputs data sheets and partnership reports CLN managers organize and facilitate the events, produce learning briefs, and lead on KM of learnings
CLN level	Partnership assessment at critical moments of network maturing, possibly using Mixed-Surveys and Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	
CLN level	Periodic CLN learning and reflection moment around CLN performance in all CLNs, through annual participatory sensemaking workshops and pause and reflect sessions in management and governance body meetings	
CLN level	Routine engagement and knowledge outputs monitoring	
CLN level	Performance monitoring of/by in-country lead groups in all CLNs beyond the immature stage, possibly using Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-country lead groups and TA & research partners collect and analyze the data, and produce the monitoring reports
CLN level	Performance monitoring of/by technical facilitation partners in all CLNs beyond the immature stage, possibly using Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	

3.7.2 - Sample planning for M&L

As it is beyond the scope of this document to present detailed plans for the design and implementation of the M&L framework across all CLNs, this section illustrates, by way of examples, the kinds of activities and considerations required in planning M&L activities.

CLN-level planning

At the CLN level there are two different situations in which the planning may be carried out: (1) as part of a comprehensive M&L planning exercise based on a CLN-specific M&L framework (e.g., when a new CLN is formed or a CLN is entering a

new phase or going through a strategy/planning process); (2) ad hoc planning to introduce a new M&L activity (e.g., when an existing CLN decides to introduce a new methodological option into their work).

As part of a comprehensive M&L planning exercise:

CLN Portfolio lead with CLN manager -

Conduct a **M&L readiness assessment** (see Key Questions, below) and determine the need for and type (e.g., internal vs external) of technical support required.

- **CLN manager** - Develop ToR and contract external consultant if required.
- **CLN manager (with appropriate technical support if required)** - Development of a CLN-specific M&L framework, drawing on the portfolio M&L framework
 - Development of a CLN ToC and CLN Learning Questions
 - Prioritization of relevant methodological options for the CLN in question
 - Planning and resource allocation for the M&L framework
- **CLN manager (with appropriate technical support if required)** - Implementation of the CLN M&L plan, using an iterative approach to roll out key M&L activities:
 - Piloting, adapting and stress-testing selected M&L activities (refer to piloting and stress-testing guidance documentation)
 - Preparing documentation, capacity development and roll-out plan
 - Integration, improvement and within-CLN scaling of useful M&L activities

Key questions to cover in a CLN M&L readiness assessment

- Is there a demand for M&L/evidence from the donor?
- What resources are available for M&L and what would they permit?
- Is the network at an appropriate stage in its cycle (e.g., entering a new stage, going through a review)?
- Are there clear gaps / value propositions to be addressed?
- Does the team have capacity (time, resources, skills)?
- Can M&L be integrated with other, already planned activities?

Ad hoc planning to introduce a new M&L activity:

Given that each CLN may be at a very different

stage in their journey and may or may not have or be in a position to develop a comprehensive M&L framework for their CLN, there can also be situations in which a CLN nonetheless decides to introduce a new M&L activity.

- **CLN manager** - Communication of interest by the CLN (e.g., to the CLN manager, through the CLN CoP) in utilizing a particular M&L activity or methodological option.
- **CLN manager with CLN portfolio lead** - determine the need and type of technical support required (i.e., internal vs external).
- **CLN manager** - Develop ToR and contract external consultant if required.
- **CLN manager (with appropriate technical support if required)** - Light-touch M&L readiness assessment relevant to the methodological option in question.
- **CLN portfolio lead & CoP** - Sharing of guidance materials, tools and templates as background reading for the interested CLN.
- **CLN CoP** - Pairing with one or more other CLNs who have already employed the methodology for peer technical support.
- **CLN manager (with appropriate technical support if required)**- Design workshop for stress-testing and right-sizing the methodology; development of a pilot plan
 - Piloting, adapting and stress-testing the selected M&L activity (refer to piloting and stress-testing guidance documentation)
 - Preparing CLN-specific documentation, capacity development and roll-out plan
 - Integration, improvement and within-CLN scaling of the M&L activity

Portfolio-level planning

At the portfolio level, M&L activities are focused primarily on periodic cross-portfolio learning and reflection events and the independent impact evaluations of advanced-maturing CLNs. Although these activities will be carried out by a commissioned third-party (i.e., independent evaluator), they depend to a significant extent on evidence generated at the CLN level. For

this reason, it is important that records are maintained at the portfolio level of the different M&L activities carried out by each CLN, as well as an easily accessible database of the outputs (reports, learning briefs, blogs, etc.) produced by each CLN, so that they can be effectively collated.

Planning for a portfolio review

The cross-portfolio review is a flexible learning activity that aims to facilitate strategic learning and adaptive management across the CLN portfolio, with the objective of advancing the overall CLN practice/portfolio strategy. Though it may be best conducted by an external consultant, it is a primarily internal exercise.

- **CLN Portfolio lead** - Conduct an initial desk review of the current CLN portfolio to understand the status, challenges faced and priorities of the individual CLNs across the portfolio
- **CLN Portfolio lead** - Identify the issues of strategic significance for the CLN portfolio at an organization-wide level.
- **CLN Portfolio lead with CLN managers** - Define the scope and select the priority M&L themes and questions and communicate the intent and expected timeframe for conducting the review to all CLNs.
- **CLN Portfolio lead** - Develop a ToR for the third-party specialist and assign responsibility for managing the engagement.
- **CLN Portfolio lead** - Engage a specialist consultant (with relevant facilitation, learning and evaluation expertise), on-board them and narrow down the scope and priorities.
- **Consultant** - Design the portfolio review process and methodology using a collaborative/participatory approach.
- **Consultant** - Prepare analysis as relevant to the selected scope and priorities for the event. This should draw on available data and materials produced from CLNs (e.g., country

impact case studies, data on progress markers, network maturity, resource mobilization, etc.) and collect additional information/inputs from CLNs if required.

- **Consultant** - Conduct a 2-3 day learning workshop (or series of shorter learning workshops spread out over a defined period of time) to allow for experience sharing, engagement with key analytical outputs, joint reflection and analysis related to the key themes of the review, ensuring full documentation.
- **Consultant, CLN portfolio lead and/or comms teams** - Generate briefs summarizing key insights and action-items relevant at the CLN, portfolio and organizational levels.
- **CLN portfolio lead with CLN managers** - Integrate action-items into plans and periodically track follow-up with implementation.

3.7.3 - Budgeting for M&L

Budgeting for M&L will need to happen **both at the individual CLN level and at the portfolio level**, based on the planned M&L activities (see previous section). Accordingly, a Level of Effort (LoE) matrix can be put together as the basis for estimating the **required resources** needed to carry out the M&L activities effectively, taking into account time, money (including for personnel, events, knowledge products, etc.) **and expertise**.

Usually, an M&L budget that covers for all the required resources constitutes **3 to 10%** of the overall portfolio or program budget.⁹ USAID requires 1 to 3% to be devoted to external evaluation.

When determining the resources, be sure to:

- Calculate **personnel cost** by multiplying their required Level of Effort (LoE) by their salary (per day);

9. See for instance: '[Financing M&E](#)' of the Ontario Council for International Cooperation; '[M&E fundamentals](#)' of the MEASURE Evaluation.

- Estimate resources for bringing in **additional expertise and coaching support** (both from within and outside the backbone organization - e.g., evaluation consultants);
- Estimate resources needed to facilitate **stakeholder participation** (e.g., managers, CLN members, partners, funders and external experts) in M&L processes (e.g., consultations, focus groups, surveys, sensemaking, learning events, contributions to reports and communication products, uptake or application of M&L insights/results);
- Allow for contingencies and complexity/unpredictability, acknowledging that CLN environments are dynamic and that flexibility and responsiveness are of equal or even greater importance than good planning in such environments, e.g., by estimating the high and low scenario costs and set aside the difference in **funds for unexpected changes** in design or execution.

The cost of an **impact evaluation** of an advanced-maturing CLN will vary depending on: the number of countries to be included; the

quality of the available evidence from ongoing M&L (including impact case studies) conducted by the CLN partners; and the additional evidence requirements (e.g., amount and type of primary data to be collected in the sample of countries). Taking into account potential 'Use' and 'Value-for-Money' considerations, an average **budget of \$200-300k** should be sufficient for an outcome and impact evaluation using the approach and methods proposed in Section 3.4 (see also Footnote 5).

The M&L activities and methods proposed in Section 3.4 should generate sufficient real-time evaluative information for ongoing or 'developmental' adaptation and learning, while also providing sufficient evidence for an external impact evaluation to draw on. To be effective, the budgeting process should support this 'developmental' approach, meaning that the funding is **front-end loaded**, requiring **adequate funding from the start**. More detail about ensuring sufficient funding and resourcing is discussed in an accompanying note on institutionalizing the M&L Framework.

4. TERMS OF ART

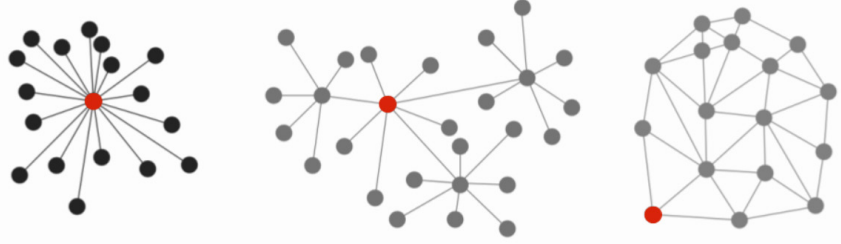
The terms listed in the table below appear to connote different meanings depending on the CLN, user and context. If we want to build and institutionalize a portfolio-level measurement & learning framework centered on a shared ToC model to support collaborative learning across the CLN portfolio, then we need to build a shared language. We have sought to build this shared language together with the participants in the design and piloting of the framework.

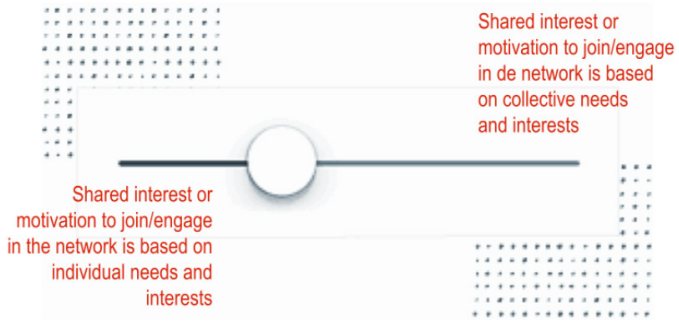

Terms	Connotations & Suggestions
CLN contribution-to-impact	<p>The term 'impact' can mean different things depending on whether 'impact' is determined more upstream or more downstream. It can also vary whether discussing the impact of an individual CLN or a portfolio of multiple CLNs.</p> <p>In the case of an individual CLN, downstream impact refers to the ultimate SDG-related health, education and nutrition goals that CLNs are aiming for, affecting the wider populations in the countries (e.g., healthier educated populations) for the individual CLNs. Slightly more upstream, impact refers to the reforms and the supporting ecosystems to achieve these goals. For example, these system reforms could include changes in policies and practice, or change in changes in capacity, leadership, and relationships.</p> <p>In the case of an entire CLN portfolio, downstream impact refers to the localization of global development framing and funding that should lead to a more effective and sustainable development practice positively impacting populations worldwide. System-level outcomes of the CLN portfolio contributing to these impacts are concerned with the global acknowledgement of the added value of the CL approach, leading to the wider adoption of its methodology across the global development field.</p> <p>We suggest using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The term 'CLN contribution-to-impact' to refer to the upstream system-level outcomes of the individual CLNs; and • The term 'Portfolio contribution-to-impact' to refer to the upstream system-level outcomes of the entire CLN portfolio.
CLN members	<p>Different terms are used to refer to the active members of the CLNs: participants, system change agents, country members, or partners. The major distinction, however, seems to exist between those that are 'members' and other types of 'partners'.</p> <p>We suggest using the term 'CLN members' for the portfolio-level measurement & learning framework to refer to its participating members, which can be country-level or subnational participants and their institutions (depending on the CLN's scale and level of intervention).</p>
CLN partners	<p>We suggest using the term 'CLN partners' (as opposed to the term 'CLN members') to refer to the various types of partners that are not participating members, incl.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding partners, providing the financial resources for the CLN activities • Facilitation partners, coordinating and facilitating the CLN engagements and learning events • Technical partners supporting the in-country institutions with implementing the knowledge and tools they obtain from the CLN • Network partners, referring to other existing networks that expand CLNs' outreach and capacity to convene and align in-country and global stakeholders, share technical expertise, streamline knowledge exchanges, and disseminate knowledge products through their network channels

Terms	Connotations & Suggestions
CLN performance	<p>CLN performance can mean different things. It can refer to the results a CLN is achieving at output-, outcome- and impact-levels. It can also refer to how a CLN's set-up (structure and governance) affects how it functions.</p> <p>We suggest using the term 'CLN performance' to refer to both the functioning of a CLN and the immediate outcomes directly related to its functioning.</p> <p>To connote higher-level outcomes at the level of systems changes and the impacts thereof on the wider populations in the countries, we suggest to use the term 'CLN contribution-to-impact'.</p>
CLN sustainability	<p>Sustainability in general is a societal goal that broadly aims for humans to safely co-exist on planet earth over a long time. It generally refers to economic growth that at a minimum does not exclude or harm people and nature.</p> <p>In the case of CLNs, we suggest using the term 'CLN sustainability' to refer to the CLNs' ability to continue and grow its activity and membership over a longer period (beyond a backbone organization's support) without excluding or harming its members and their (social, economic and environmental) contexts.</p>
Collaboratives	<p>Collaboratives refer to the peer learning subgroups set up around specific technical themes identified and prioritized in the workstreams of the CLN learning agenda.</p> <p>The collaboratives have a short-term horizon focused on addressing critical barriers in the member countries (or states / localities). The workstreams in which these collaboratives are created, on the other hand, have a longer (multi-year) horizon to ensure continuity and enable the deepening of knowledge creation and exchange over time. They may evolve into long-term 'communities of practice'.</p>
Country Core Groups	<p>The term 'country core groups' can mean very different things. It can refer to formalized and dedicated country teams with a formal leader and focal points who regularly meet and plan. It can also refer to loose groups of interested individuals within a country with no formal leader or focal points, who meet and plan ad hoc.</p> <p>Furthermore, this group mechanism can be formed at the country-level or the sub-national depending on the scale of the CLN.</p> <p>We suggest using a common term for the portfolio-level measurement & learning framework to refer to this mechanism, e.g., 'in-country lead groups', and then further specifying the characteristics of these groups for each CLN so we can agree on the types of behavior to expect and measure. Furthermore we suggest then also using the terms 'focal points' or 'leads' only to refer to the members of these groups.</p>
Country ownership	<p>Ownership generally refers to the process of taking possession of something, which implies gaining the right to use and control it.</p> <p>In the context of the CLNs, the term 'country ownership' generally refers to the process by which CLN country members gain control over and take responsibility for designing and implementing the CLN's learning agenda and workstreams, and more specifically, the country programs and action plans for knowledge uptake and technical assistance in their countries.</p> <p>First, since CLN members can also be subnational (depending on the CLN's scale and intervention level), we suggest using the term 'member ownership' (instead of 'country ownership') for the portfolio-level measurement & learning framework.</p> <p>Second, the term 'member ownership' could also refer to the process by which, in a well-advanced or mature stage of network formation, CLN members gain control over CLN structure, governance and coordination and take responsibility for leading the entire CLN. This implies that 'member ownership' will need to be defined and measured differently for each individual CLN measurement & learning framework according to the stage of maturity the CLN is in.</p>

Terms	Connotations & Suggestions
Locally-led development (or 'localization')	<p>Changing how development is framed and practiced, and what is positioned as expertise, such that development programs center the voices, perspectives, and needs of those living in the local system of focus.</p> <p>CLNs are certainly not a magic bullet for this paradigm shift, but they can play a role by ensuring the power structures in the network prioritize the thoughts, preferences, and decision-making of country-based members/partners.</p> <p>Ultimately, locally-led development should ensure local actors are taking on leadership roles as they work—through global and local partnerships – to strengthen their , local systems.</p>
Ecosystems	<p>Ecosystems refer to (existing or CLN-specific newly created) networks of national, regional and/or global actors (e.g., research institutions, civil society organizations, NGOs, international institutions) that can play technical advisory and advocacy roles and/or contribute valuable resources to help government actors implement knowledge and tools for bringing about the desired changes in policies and practices in the member countries. Ecosystem building and strengthening is essential for bringing about system reforms in the member countries and implies improving the way that the concerned actors work together towards catalyzing reforms. When the actors in an ecosystem have strong relationships with each other and can collaborate based on trust, shared purpose and mutual understanding, they can leverage their collective capacities to become powerful drivers of systems change.</p>
Implementation research	<p>The term 'implementation research' generally refers to the systematic study of approaches and methods to promote the uptake of evidence-based knowledge into policy and practice. In the case of the CLNs, it takes a participatory peer learning approach to collaboratively build and share practical knowledge about how to address common challenges to achieving desired policy and practice change and overcome critical knowledge uptake and implementation barriers. Hence it is less 'systematic' and 'scientific' and more experience-based and action-oriented.</p> <p>To avoid confusion we therefore suggest using the term 'participatory action and implementation research'.</p>

Terms	Connotations & Suggestions
Systems change	<p>The term 'systems change' generally refers to shifts in the patterns of interaction and the underlying structural and philosophical elements that characterize a system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structural and philosophical elements refer to the views, rules, ways of organizing and mental models that govern the behaviors in the system. • Patterns of interaction refer to the relationships and perspectives of the actors in the system that determine how they interact and apply the structural and philosophical elements. <p>Broadly there are two complementary models for describing and assessing 'system change':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AAER or diffusion model (Adopt-Adapt-Expand-Respond) focuses on bringing 'breadth of change' (i.e., significance through scale) through the diffusion of innovations influencing actors' behaviors and ways of organizing to address system underperformance; • The iceberg model focuses on bringing 'depth of change' by supporting system actors to collectively change the ways in which they interact and collaborate by changing the underlying beliefs/views, values/rules and mental models based on a shared vision. The premise is that if the focus is on bringing purely instrumental changes in behaviors (i.e., purely focused on bringing technical fixes to improve performance), then these changes will remain superficial and unsustainable as they can easily be reversed by the still-dominant beliefs/views, values/ rules, and mental models. <p>In the context of the CLNs, the ambition is to bring about both breadth and depth of system change by (a) supporting system actors to co-generate the innovations (new knowledge and tools) for policy and practice change, and (b) collectively changing the ways in which they interact and collaborate. The CLNs seek to do so by: facilitating peer learning for sharing and co-creating knowledge and tools; strengthening system actors' capacities to develop, adopt and adapt knowledge and tools; strengthening leadership and collaboration among ecosystem actors; and influencing the interactive behaviors of system actors to move from silo-ed towards more coordinated and collaborative ways of working.</p> <p>System change concerns the impact-level ambition to which the CLNs aim to contribute, but which lies far outside the CLNs' spheres of control and influence. Backbone organizations can exert only a relatively indirect influence by helping to create the conditions for the CLNs to move along the potential pathways to impact. These pathways are long and complex, with many influences and often-rapid changes in contexts that are largely unpredictable. There are many possible routes or potential strategies to bring about the above-mentioned changes in knowledge, relationships, and capacities, each of which may have many different outcomes depending on the influences and changes in context in the member countries, over which the CLNs have no control. The CLNs therefore seek to strengthen the capacity of their members and the ecosystem actors, while trying to be as responsive as possible to both the changing context and their emerging knowledge and learning needs.</p>

Terms	Connotations & Suggestions
Decentralization	<p>Decentralization is the process by which the organizational functions and their activities (and particularly their planning and decision-making) are distributed or delegated away from a central, authoritative location or entity and given to smaller or more locally based units in the structure of an organization or network. The goal of decentralization is to increase the ownership or responsibility for the success of these functions among the members of the organization or network. In a political governance structure, this involves giving more decision-making power to citizens and their locally elected representatives, which is called 'democratization'.</p> <p>The visual below shows the difference between an entirely centralized, partially decentralized and entirely decentralized or distributed network. The red dot presents the backbone organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the entirely centralized structure, the backbone organization hosts the central, authoritative location or entity where the network functions and activities (incl. planning and decision-making) are centrally managed and coordinated. • In the partially decentralized structure, many of the network functions and activities are delegated to decentralized hubs, but the backbone organization is still at the center of the network coordinating and managing the interactions of the decentralized hubs. • In the entirely decentralized network, responsibility for the network functions is distributed among members and facilitators who collaborate and communicate in ways that make centralization unnecessary and counterproductive. The network has grown into a vibrant and independent community, in which control and guidance is replaced by self-organization that turns the network into a 'living system'. The backbone organization has moved to the outskirts of the network, with its role now being focused on supporting (rather than managing) network functions such as coordination and M&E, and on feeding the network with additional energy/initiative/ideas for innovation and adaptation. <div style="text-align: center;">  <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> Entirely centralized Partially decentralized Entirely decentralized or distributed </p> </div>

Terms	Connotations & Suggestions
Shared interest	<p>'Shared interest' refers to an interest in the network that is shared among all members. It can draw on individual interests and needs that (for whatever reason) happen to be shared among the members, which generally forms the basis for creating the network. In a more matured stage of network development, it draws more on collective interests and needs, implying that they not only happen to be shared but also are collectively owned by and beneficial to all members and the entire group of members as a whole.</p> <p>Note that all collective interests and needs are by definition shared, but not vice versa. A network generally goes through iterative cycles of maturing, with regular setbacks and highs when members leave and join for reasons where individual interests and needs take precedence over the collective ones. But as membership grows and new members take the network to the next stage, it gains vitality, resilience and sustainability.</p> 
Shared experience	<p>'Shared experience' refers to the knowledge and insights built from successes and failures that are shared among all members. Initially, it draws on knowledge and insights individually built and then shared with the wider group. In more maturing stages, it draws on knowledge and insights collectively built through a process of collaborative action-oriented research and peer learning.</p> 
Shared intent and identity	<p>'Shared intent and identity' is the combination of (a) the shared intentionality or purpose of identifying oneself as a member of the network, and (b) the shared quality that emerges from the interplay between internal and external perception of that identification process while the network is being shaped, challenged and validated.</p> <p>Shared intent that turns into collective responsibility for failure and success is the collective intentionality that occurs when people undertake a task or venture together (e.g., two individuals carrying a heavy table up a flight of stairs or dancing a tango). Shared identity is the perceptions that exist within and outside the network of its membership.</p>

ANNEXES

Annex I. Challenges of assessing contribution-to-impact

There has been a lot of talking about the need for powerful impact stories, but also for more robust evidence of attributable impact. Stories are important for communication and if based on robust evidence can be extremely powerful tools to convey impact contributions to funders policy and decision makers. Producing good evidence-based impact stories requires rich and non-anecdotal data collection and analysis. Some would argue though that it's too difficult (if not impossible) to collect non-anecdotal data on contribution-to-impact because CLN results are tied to process (not impact), which is a question of **feasibility and rigor**. Others would argue that numbers are blurring and do not explain impact, which is about **utility**. Both are valid arguments for complex programs such as the CLNs.

First, it's important to understand that there are different ways and thus **different methodological options to define impact and assess contribution-to-impact**, and that choosing the right approach highly depends on the characteristics of the programs. Complex and difficult-to-measure programs that aim for systemic change (with many, interactive and often-unpredictable influences), like CLNs, require a different approach than programs that aim for linear change (with clear and direct relations between cause and effect).¹⁰

Second, it's also important to understand that the feasibility of assessing contribution-to-impact depends not only on the characteristics of a program but also on its **level of maturity and 'evaluability'**.¹¹ In an early stage, changes may not have yet emerged, hence the focus will be rather

Where is PIALA Situated?

Overview table based on Van Hemelrijck (2013)

	SIMPLE	COMPLICATED	COMPLEX
Question	To what extent did it work?	To what extent did it work, for whom, in what contexts, and why?	What mechanisms triggered the change, for whom, in what contexts, and why?
Purpose	Measuring distributed impact to inform policy and funding decision making	Explaining distributed impact to inform programme strategy and funding	Understanding emergent system change and impact for adaptive program management, collaborative learning and empowerment
Impact Definition	Attributable effect of an intervention (e.g., of a new vaccine)	Intended and unintended direct and indirect effects of a set of interventions (e.g., farmer field schools)	Transformative systems change and impact shifting values, mental models, structures and behavioural patterns (e.g., Covid-19)
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Quasi-)Experimental approaches (Mill's method of difference) • Statistical approaches (Mill's method of agreement) 	Theory-based and case-based mixed methods approaches (logical inference in contribution and config analysis)	Realist and developmental approaches using combined methods and MRT (process tracing to assess generative causation)

10. Cf. Stern, E. (2015). [Impact Evaluation: A Guide for Commissioners and Managers](#). Bond.

11. Evaluability can be defined as the likelihood to obtain credible and useful evidence with the available resources and capabilities in the contexts and cultures of the program being evaluated.

on assessing the processes and conditions for achieving desired outcomes that presumably will lead to the envisioned impact. In highly complex programs in which the pathways to impact are largely unknown and/or unpredictable, the focus will need to be on discovering and testing the pathways en route, for which different types of methods apply than those used in traditional evaluation practice.

Third, it's also important to understand that impact assessment is not just about numbers. Purely quantitative evidence does not explain impact and therefore has limited utility for learning and improvement. Purely qualitative evidence is often anecdotal and biased, therefore lacking the rigor needed for impact assessment. But together, they can achieve both rigor and utility if their methods are thoughtfully selected and combined. Additionally, there are also methods that can produce qualitative data (including stories) that can be quantified and (if collected at a large enough scale) subjected to quantitative (and even statistical) analysis. In cases where sample populations are too small and/or heterogeneous to allow for any meaningful quantitative analysis, there are ways to collect fairly rigorous qualitative evidence that can help establish and explain contribution to impact. Building rich and non-anecdotal evidence implies systematic data collection at scale and/or systematic cross-checking of data from different methods and sources. There are various methodological options to build **robust evidence for developing persuasive stories and to also collect stories for building robust evidence.**

Last, there is the question of 'inclusive rigor', which is about the validity of judgements made about contribution-to-impact and the extent to which they are inclusive of the views and perspectives of all stakeholders, in particular of those who make the change and those who are supposed to benefit.¹² R4D staff finds it quite important that balanced and inclusive value judgments are made, in which the voices of the members are heard, telling their story of impact and benefit, as to avoid undermining their sense of ownership of the CLNs. There are a number of methodological options for collecting inclusive evidence, many of which apply group-based dialogue and analysis tools that help to create a more in-depth understanding of system change.

Challenges of Impact Evaluation in a Complex World



- **The methodological challenge**
How to ensure rigor in assessing causality in complex environments where isolated cause-effect relations hold no sway?
- **The validity challenge**
How to avoid bias or dominance of a single truth in making value judgements of 'contribution to impact' in complex environments?
- **The utilization challenge**
How to generate multiple types of evidence for multiple uses and users to help them see through complexity?

12. Cf. chapter 4 in: Chambers, R. (2017). [Can We Know Better? Reflections for Development](#). Practical Action.

Contribution to system change in complex programs can be assessed in ways that address the challenges related to feasibility, rigor, inclusiveness and utility, by:

Using an **adaptive ToC** model that shows the various interacting and combining pathways towards system change and has a complexity-sensitive logic of causality (e.g., taking into account nonlinear interactions and feedback loops);

Combining different methods and tools generating different types of evidence that are:

- **Complexity-sensitive**, inquiring about unpredictable as much as planned change, unknown as much as known influences and risks, and enabling the discovery of unknown pathways;
- **Participatory**, facilitating a dialogue between different stakeholder perspectives to enable inclusive value judgements;
- **Complementary**, inquiring the causal links and interactions between different areas of change in the ToC and building onto each other analytically;
- **Overlapping**, enabling rigorous cross-checking for every change area in the ToC to overcome bias and build a systemic view of change and impact.

The combination of these criteria makes it possible to conduct a rigorous [Contribution Tracing](#) for within-case analysis, and a [Configurational Analysis](#) for cross-case comparison.

There are broadly two categories of methods that may fit the above criteria in a combined-methods approach:

- Methods that can generate quantified qualitative data of all kinds (e.g., signified perceptions and story fragments, relationship change maps, causal flow maps, benefit scorings and rankings) that can be subjected to quantitative analysis if collected at a large-enough scale. Examples are: Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessments, Mixed-Surveys, Social Network Analysis, [Constituent Voice](#), [Participatory Statistics](#), and [SenseMaker](#).
- Methods that can generate more in-depth systemic explanations of observed outcomes and contributions through combined-methods and group-based inquiry and dialogue. Examples are: Outcome Harvesting, Multi-Case Study, Most Significant Change, [Social Return on Investment](#), and [Participatory Sensemaking](#). Also Constituent Voice and Participatory Statistics apply group-based dialogue and analysis tools that generate systemic explanations.

Annex II. Comprehensive M&L framework elements

Full list of M&L activities

The following table presents the full set of M&L activities (before prioritization). Non-prioritized M&L activities are shaded in blue in the first column for easy reference. Refer to the M&L options table in the Phase 1 Memo for details on roles and responsibilities.

M&L level	Prioritised M&L activities and methods	M&L themes	Stage of Maturity				Frequency
			Immature	Early Maturing	Advanced Maturing	Highly Mature	
CLN CONTRIBUTION-TO-IMPACT							
Portfolio level	Independent impact evaluations of advanced-maturing CLNs , drawing on the available evidence from CLN-level performance and impact inquiries, and possibly combining Participatory Statistics, Social Network Analysis and Constituent Voice with Contribution Tracing to fill the gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in policies and practices Network maturity Political commitment Ecosystem coordination 			✓	✓	Up to one per year (or approx 3 over the course of the cycle)
Portfolio level	Periodic cross-portfolio learning and reflection events around the portfolio-level ToC and learning agenda drawing on the available evidence from CLN-level performance and impact inquiries, possibly using Participatory Sensemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystem coordination Political commitment Network maturity Effective strategies 	✓	✓	✓	✓	Once in three years (toward end of the cycle)
Portfolio level	Independent cross-portfolio review conducting a long-term Cost-Benefit Analysis of the CL approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added value of CL Cross-CLN synergies 	N/A				Once in three years
Portfolio level	Online CLN portfolio dashboard showing a cross-portfolio overview of scores and findings on CLN maturity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member engagement Network maturity & sustainability 	N/A				Updated at a min annually
Portfolio level	Tracking changes in knowledge and awareness of the emerging network outcomes among global and regional funders and policy makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global knowledge and support for CL 	N/A				Once in three years (toward end of the cycle)

M&L level	Prioritised M&L activities and methods	M&L themes	Stage of Maturity				Frequency
			Immature	Early Maturing	Advanced Maturing	Highly Mature	
Portfolio level	Maintaining a landscape overview of the CL sector and tracking changes in global support for CL in the landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global knowledge and support for CL 	N/A				Ongoing (with annual review)
CLN level	Structured country impact case studies in early maturing CLNs onwards, possibly using Outcome Harvesting or Most Significant Change (long M&L cycle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to reform Ecosystem coordination Knowledge uptake Leadership capacity 		✓	✓	✓	Time-sensitive (e.g., mid- & end-term, one per year)
CLN level	Documenting of cross-portfolio challenges encountered in resource mobilization in all CLNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource mobilization 	N/A				Ongoing
CLN PERFORMANCE							
Country level	Tracking of changes in leadership, relationships and capacity of ecosystem actors (members & partners) in advanced-maturing CLNs, possibly using SenseMaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership capacity Ecosystem coordination 			✓	✓	Quarterly
Country level	Monitoring of knowledge uptake and implementation in early-maturing CLNs , possibly using a simple monitoring tool that draws on progress markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge uptake 		✓	✓	✓	Quarterly
Country level	Monitoring of contextual conditions and drivers of political commitment to system reform goals (by TA & research partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to reform 			✓	✓	Need-based (e.g., at start, mid & end)
Country level	Collection of structured member feedback on in-country network support to the reform agenda (by TA & research partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge uptake Member engagement 			✓	✓	Annual
Country level	Collaborative and evidence-based learning and reflection sessions with in-country network members around a country-level ToC for system reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network maturity & sustainability 			✓	✓	Annual or upon country demand

M&L level	Prioritised M&L activities and methods	M&L themes	Stage of Maturity				Frequency
			Immature	Early Maturing	Advanced Maturing	Highly Mature	
CLN level	Monitoring of network maturity alongside the drivers of member engagement and ownership in all CLNs beyond immaturity, possibly using a Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tool and the data from the Routine engagement and knowledge outputs monitoring in all CLNs and in advanced-maturing CLNs drawing on the evidence generated by the SenseMaker inquiries on leadership, relationships and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network maturity & sustainability 		✓	✓	✓	Annual
CLN level	Partnership assessment at critical moments of network maturing to ascertain the effectiveness of the partnerships at critical moments of network maturing in CLNs beyond the immature stage , possibly using Mixed-Surveys and Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships and strategies 		✓	✓	✓	Light touch annual; in-depth at maturity transition
CLN level	Periodic CLN learning and reflection moment around CLN performance in all CLNs , through annual participatory sensemaking workshops and pause and reflect sessions in management and governance body meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships and strategies • Member engagement • Facilitation capacity 	✓	✓	✓	✓	Annual
CLN level	Documenting of cross-portfolio challenges encountered in resource mobilization in all CLNs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource mobilization 	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing
CLN level	Routine engagement and knowledge outputs monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member engagement • Facilitation capacity 	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ongoing (e.g., quarterly, after events)
CLN level	Performance monitoring of/by in-country lead groups in all CLNs beyond the immature stage , possibly using Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network maturity • Effective member engagement strategies 		✓	✓	✓	Annual
CLN level	Performance monitoring of/by technical facilitation partners in all CLNs beyond the immature stage , possibly using Rubrics-based Structured Self-Assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical facilitation 		✓	✓	✓	Annual

Full list of M&L questions

The table below presents the full set of M&L questions (before prioritization). Non-prioritized M&L are shaded in gray in the first column for easy reference. Note that the following M&L themes have been added to correspond to the additional questions:

- Value addition of CL
- Synergies
- Localization
- Resource mobilization
- Governance

M&L level	M&L Questions	M&L Theme	Purposes
CLN CONTRIBUTION-TO-IMPACT			
Portfolio level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does CL contribute to system change and ecosystem strengthening? • Under what conditions does CL effectively enable the translation of knowledge into action? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem coordination • Political commitment • Network maturity • Changes in policies and practices 	Global knowledge building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When and in what time frame does CL become more cost-effective than the traditional TA approach? • What development challenges are best tackled through CL? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value addition of CL 	Global knowledge building
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can CL contribute to localizing global development (or strengthening locally-led development)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localization 	Global knowledge building
CLN country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the CLN contributing to system reform and ecosystem strengthening in the target countries? What are the most effective impact pathways and strategies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem coordination • Political commitment • Network maturity • Changes in policies and practices 	Learning for accountability and improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could we build synergies across CLNs working in the same countries and the same area (e.g., health)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synergies 	Learning for accountability and improvement

M&L level	M&L Questions	M&L Theme	Purposes
CLN PERFORMANCE			
CLN country level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What determines the uptake and adaptation of knowledge in the countries? • What types of interim outcomes can be early indicators of CL success towards achieving desired network outcomes? • What are the most important indicators of network health and sustainability? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge uptake • Network maturity 	Learning for accountability and improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can CL improve (organizational) capacities of critical ecosystem actors (in-country network members and TA partners) in the countries? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem coordination 	Learning for accountability and improvement
CLN network level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which models or strategies for member engagement are most effective in the different stages of network maturity? • What types of learning topics are best addressed through CL? • How do we best identify these learning topics? • How can we keep in-country lead groups or core teams engaged and committed? • Which models or strategies for knowledge creation, sharing & uptake are most effective? • Which peer learning facilitation formats are most effective and useful? • What are the capacity requirements for the technical facilitation partners to make strategies for knowledge creation, sharing & uptake effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member engagement • Technical facilitation and support • Effective strategies 	Learning for improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the most important indicators of CLN performance? • What makes partnerships for CLN governance, coordination and facilitation most effective in enabling the CLNs to grow and mature and become vibrant and sustainable communities of impact? • Which models or strategies for resource mobilization to obtain the necessary funding for the CLNs, enable collaborative learning, support in-country engagements, and provide in-country technical assistance are most effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource mobilization • Governance 	Learning for improvement

