

TRANSFORMING MEL IN THE MENA REGION: A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DECOLONIZATION

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INTERNATIONAL
REPUBLICAN
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Housekeeping



Please mute yourself if you are not speaking. You are welcome to participate using the **Q&A** function.



We will prompt several discussion questions. Please feel free to answer these using your polling feature



We will circulate training slides and resources after the session, so do not worry about taking detailed notes!



Who We Are

IRI is the premier international democracy development organization. Our nonpartisan, nongovernmental Institute has performed high-impact work in more than 140 countries since 1983- in Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa.

IRI advances freedom and democracy worldwide by helping political parties to become more responsive, strengthening transparent and accountable governance, and working to increase the role of marginalized groups in the political process – including women and youth.



Warm-up question

In few words, what comes to mind when you hear the phrase “De-colonizing MEL”?



The Aim

Objective: Empower local entities by enhancing their skills and ownership of MEL processes.

The Challenge

Let's explore some key challenges hindering decolonization MEL efforts:

- Power Imbalances:
- Overlooking Local Knowledge
- Language Barriers
- Capacity Building
- Time and Resources.

**Bonus Challenge: Finding Common Ground*





The Approach

A multi-layer strategy that includes:

- ✓ Collaborative Team Dynamics
- ✓ Shifting Perspectives
- ✓ Enhanced Monitoring
- ✓ Knowledge Dissemination
- ✓ Evaluation Utilization

The composite image illustrates the 'RIPPLE EFFECT MAPPING' process. At the top, a workshop scene shows participants gathered around a table with sticky notes and a laptop, with a presentation screen in the background. To the right, a video call window shows a woman, identified as 'Sara del Jazmin Valladares...', participating. The central graphic features the IRI logo (International Republican Institute) and the text 'RIPPLE EFFECT MAPPING' with a red banner that says 'IMPLEMENTING REM IN GUATEMALA'. Below this is a digital dashboard with three main components: a province selection list, a 'Stories Map' of Guatemala, and a 'Stories per Domain of Changes' bar chart.

Province	Count
Anbar	9
Babil	5
Baghdad	11
Basrah	7
Erbil	2
Karbala	10
Kirkuk	10
Najaf	0
Ninewa	10
Qadisiyah	10
ThiQar	10

Domain of Changes	Count
Total	95
Service Enhancements	21
Youth and Women empowerment	20
Education	12
Other	10
Civic participation	32

*C (Most significant change), Storytelling (potential story, need additional details and verification)

Collaborative Team Dynamics

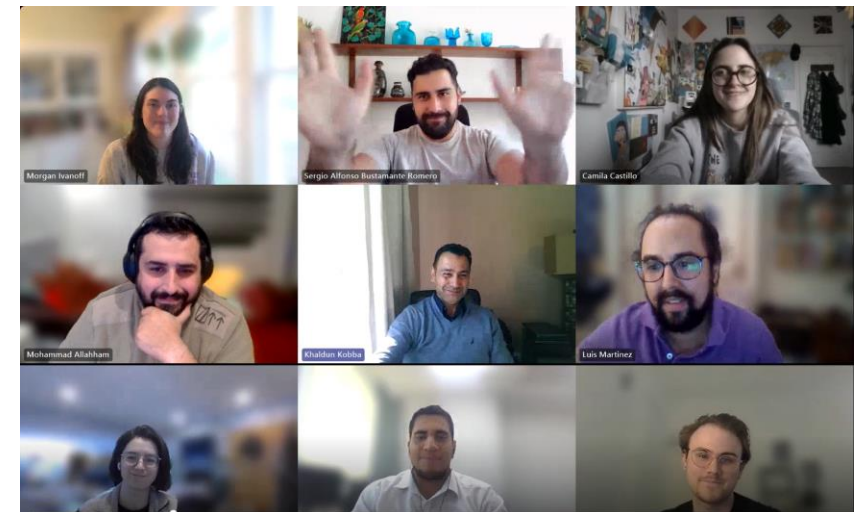
Capacity building:

Provide **technical support and training** for field-based MEL points of contact (PoCs)

- MEL Summit/Academy and the MEL Fundamental Series.
- Tailored deep dives based on needs assessments to enhance the skills of MEL specialists.

Broaden engagement:

- Open training and **capacity-building opportunities** to program teams and anyone with MEL responsibilities.
- Promote the **culture and knowledge of MEL** across the organization.



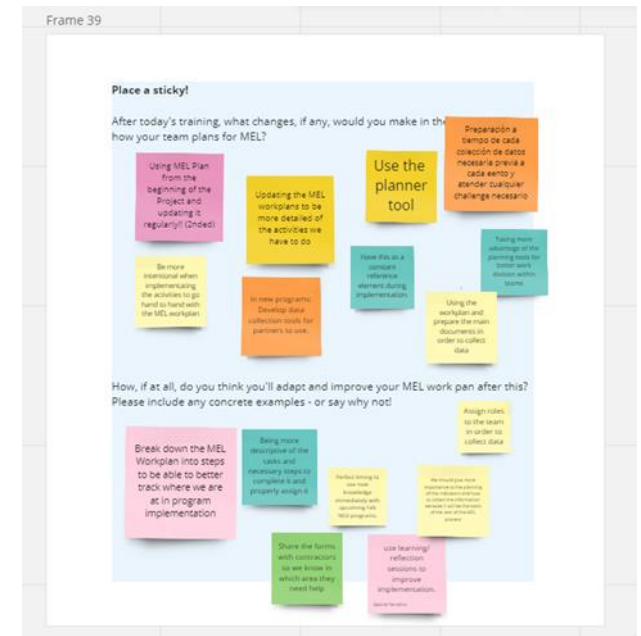
Collaborative Team Dynamics

Continuous engagement:

- Establish systematic opportunities for field-based MEL PoCs to **check in regularly**.
- Facilitate their **engagement in decision-making processes** and idea-sharing sessions.
- Encourage participation in a **community of practice**.

Open communication channels:

- Maintain open lines of communication through dedicated channels.
- Provide platforms for asking questions and sharing best practices.





Shifting Perspectives

Process-oriented vs. outcome-centric views

Understanding and Process:

- Emphasize the importance of **understanding the processes that lead to outcomes**
- Encourage teams to **focus on the journey**, not just the destination

Success and Progress Markers:

- **Define success** and its progress markers from the beginning of the project.
- Integrate these markers into the reporting structures and practices.



Shifting Perspectives

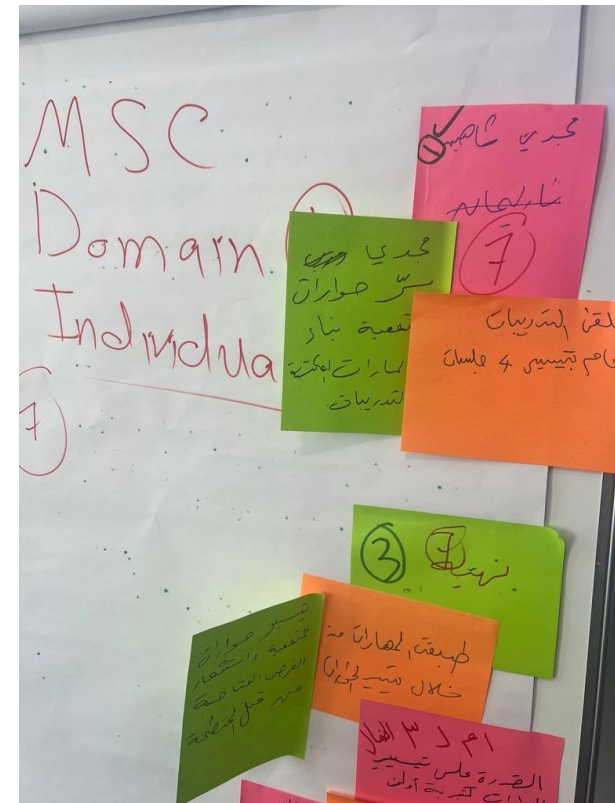
Complexity-awareness monitoring methods

Try complexity-aware monitoring tools:

- Most Significant Change (MSC)
- Outcome Mapping (OM)
- Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
- Pause and Reflect Sessions

Empowerment and Cultural Sensitivity:

- These **methods empower local entities**.
- Foster **culturally sensitive MEL approaches** that resonate with local contexts.



Enhanced Monitoring

Data-oriented adaptation

- Utilize formative assessments or self-assessments to gauge the skills and capacity of teams and sub-awardees.
- **Tailor MEL system designs to align with the capacity** and experience of the teams.

Reflection sessions and CLA practices:

- Regular reflection sessions (every 3-6 months).
- Foster a safe space for sharing thoughts and ideas.

****TIP: Local perspectives are key for success, try to include representatives as often as possible.***

Tool Highlight: *Self-Assessment*

- Developed to identify strengths and areas for improvement in MEL capabilities.
- Ensure MEL requirements are feasible and practical, avoiding overly complex approaches.
- Formative assessments can also be beneficial if resources and skills are available.

**** TIP: Consider staff turnover and reassess as needed.***

Knowledge Dissemination

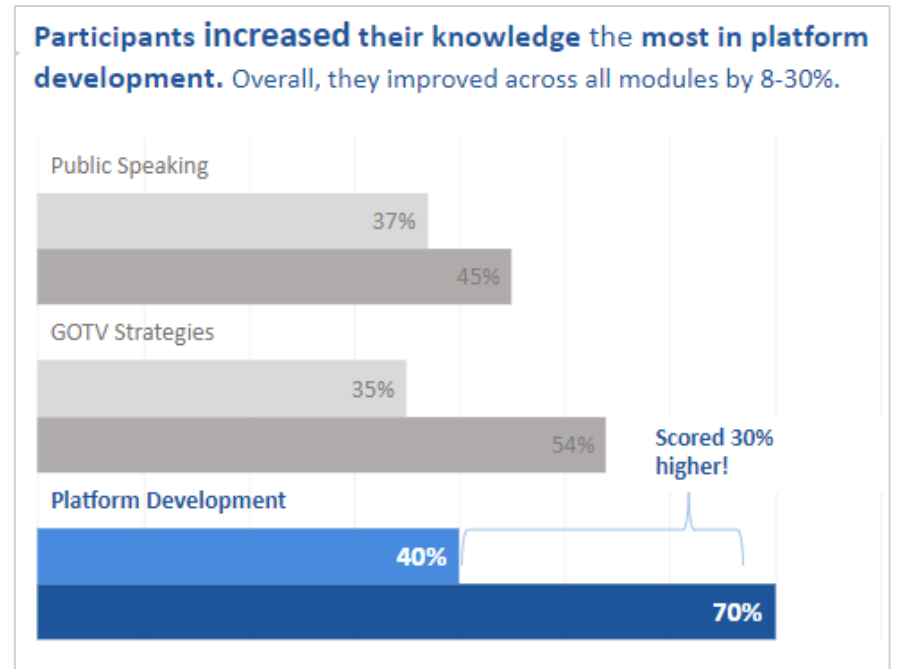
Transforming **complex data into actionable insights.**

Presentations and Meetings:

- Complex data is presented and simplified during staff meetings.
- Used **digestible infographics** and concise two-pagers about evaluations and best practices.

Participatory Methods and Data Collection Guides:

- Developed comprehensive MEL resources that teams can reference, including inclusive data collection guides and a menu of participatory methods



Knowledge Dissemination

Accessible and impactful communication strategies

Translation and Localization:

- Translate materials into local languages to engage local staff and sub-awardees.

Digestible Documents:

- Provide easily digestible documents to ensure clarity and accessibility.

**Examples include two-pagers, infographics, and evaluation summaries.*

CEPPS/IRI Iraq Provincial Election Activity Program

Evaluation Summary Report: Empowering CSOs to implement civic and voter engagement initiatives to restore citizen trust in electoral processes



PEA Project Overview

Program Approach



Between 2018 and 2023, the **International Republican Institute (IRI)** partnered with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) through the CEPPS consortium to **restore Iraqi citizens' trust in the electoral process**. At the onset of programming, Iraq was preparing for the first parliamentary elections following the liberation from the Islamic State and the Levant. Several changes in the political environment and electoral system ensued over the course of five years.

Where IFES focused its efforts on supporting formal electoral institutions, increasing their transparency and capacity for more effective operations, IRI focused its efforts on supporting civil society organizations (CSOs) implement effective civic and voter education initiatives.

CSOs play a pivotal role in connecting citizens to government officials, processes, and institutions. To engage citizen's in the election process and to restore their trust in democratic practices, IRI **equipped 40 CSOs and 14 civic activists** with the **capacity to implement civic and voter engagement advocacy and outreach**.

IRI provided support to 54 CSO representatives and civic activists from Nineveh, Kirkuk, Dohuk, Baghdad, Anbar, Najaf and Basra

CEPPS/IRI Programming Snapshot

2018/19: Provided technical and administrative assistance to build a strong cohort of election-focused CSOs

2019/21: Mentored CSOs to design interventions to educate citizens on new electoral processes and procedures to increase their engagement in the national parliamentary elections

2021/23: Trained, mentored, and funded civic activists, in addition to CSOs, to engage government officials on citizen priorities to promote accountability



Evaluation Utilization

Actionable Strategies:

- Develop **clear and actionable strategies** from the Scope of Work (SOW).
- Ensure strategies are practical and aligned with project objectives.

Resource Allocation:

- Allocate proper resources to **maintain a closed feedback loop**.
- Ensure continuous improvement by incorporating evaluation findings.

Integration into Design:

- Encourage teams to **use previous evaluations to inform new proposals**.
- Consider results and challenges from past projects during design sessions.

Local Perspective:

- Keep a local perspective in mind to ensure relevance and cultural sensitivity.
- **Engage local stakeholders in the evaluation and design process** to foster ownership and alignment with community needs.

Evaluation Utilization

Centering local perspectives in project stages:

- ✓ **Proposal Stage:** Use past evaluations to inform new proposals with local context in mind.
- ✓ **Start-Up Stage:** Include local stakeholders in planning and design.
- ✓ **Implementation Stage:** Regularly engage local partners to ensure strategies remain relevant.
- ✓ **Reporting Stage:** Reflect local perspectives and feedback in reports.
- ✓ **Adaptation Stage:** Adapt strategies based on local feedback.
- ✓ **Close-Out Stage:** Capture and integrate local lessons learned for future

Key takeaways

Centering local perspectives in project stages:

Local Ownership:

- Instead of outsiders designing the MEL system, people in the developing country take the lead. They design a system that reflects their priorities and the specific context of their democracy promotion efforts.

Focus on Empowerment:

- MEL isn't just about measuring success by external standards. It's also used to identify challenges and areas for improvement, helping local actors find solutions that work best for them.

Multiple Ways of Knowing:

- Effective MEL considers both quantitative data (numbers, like voter turnout) and qualitative data (stories, experiences of citizens) to get a richer picture of what's working and what's not.

Long-Term Impact:

- MEL looks beyond short-term results. It focuses on how programs contribute to lasting positive change in democratic institutions and practices.

Feedback!

Questions?