Podcast: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
Episode 2 Transcript

Dr. Elizabeth Fox

Welcome to the second episode of the MEL podcast. Today, we're going to be continuing our journey to better understand the role of monitoring, evaluation, and learning at PADF. We'll be exploring the MEL team's annual work plan and discussing the important role of MEL staff in making PADF's MEL work successful. For the second episode, Hector, Mia, and Maya will be doing most of the talking. Hector will be speaking with Program Coordinator Mia Kazman and Program Associate Maya Sterling, members of the PADF MEL team.

Hector Pacheco

Welcome, Mia and Maya, to the podcast. Today we're going to be discussing the MEL annual work plan, which both of you have key roles in carrying out this year. Before we dive into that, can you both share briefly what got you both involved in the MEL team and why you enjoy it?

Mia Kazman

Thanks, Hector. You know, I really love being on the MEL team because it gives me the opportunity to think about PADF's work outside of the confines of a specific project or initiative. With our work I get to help build tools, collect data, and develop new approaches for all of PADF and learn from the MEL staff across the hemisphere.

Maya Sterling

Thank you so much for having us, Hector. I'm really excited to be on the podcast. So before I worked at PADF, I was originally drawn to indicators because I think they're really helpful in enabling organizations to confidently say "this is our impact." And because I have that interest, I studied development, evaluation, and the SDGs in college. And while I was doing that, I became increasingly concerned that we've sort of failed a little bit to advance fast enough on the important goals embodied in the SDGs. Personally, what was most concerning to me is our global response to climate change. So I get to combine all of these interests working on the MEL team, and I get to help measure the progress that PADF is making to expand our climate change adaptation and mitigation programming which are in line with the SDGs.

Hector Pacheco

These are the reasons I enjoy working with you both. Now, the annual work plan. What are the elements of the year's work plan you are excited to roll out?

Maya Sterling

Great question, I think. Personally, I'm really excited about what we are doing right now, which is hosting his podcast. Luckily, this podcast is only part of this larger communications plan that we've developed. The purpose of it really is just to help colleagues better understand what the MEL team is and what the MEL team does. We will continue to publish these awesome episodes of the podcast, some reports, we will host some trainings and events and really be sharing all of the resources internally so everyone can get a baseline understanding of what we do.

Mia Kazman

Definitely, I completely agree, Maya. I think for me what I'm most excited about is some of our work on knowledge management that we're going to be undertaking this year. As you already know, Hector, we've

been working the past few weeks on a learnings library for PADF, and I'm really excited to see all of the research products, tools, methodologies, and other knowledge pieces that PADF has produced and work with Guillermo and his team to create this learnings library online that everyone will have access to. I think that's going to make it a lot easier to leverage expertise and build off of our colleagues' hard work across the hemisphere.

Hector Pacheco

I will also add that another important element this year will be working with the IT team to develop a module on Salesforce, which we are calling MyGrowth, that will allow the project indicators to automatically generate our collective indicator data. By the end of the year, all the teams will be able to say goodbye to the quarterly data calls done by a spreadsheet.

Mia Kazman

Very good point, Hector. This is going to make life so much easier for all of our MEL staff that work so hard to get us their indicator data on time. Getting this data on to Salesforce, or MyGrowth, will make the process much more efficient for them and for us.

Hector Pacheco

I'm glad you mentioned the project and country MEL staff, because my final question today is about the important role of the MEL staff. Based on your experience, how can we use the capabilities of the PADF MEL staff so that our organization is able to become a knowledge leader on MEL?

Mia Kazman

That's a good point, Hector. I think there's such a depth of expertise among PADF MEL staff that we definitely have to leverage. And that's why the MEL collaborative that we lead is so important. By coming together to share best practices, lend expertise, and work together on tough projects, we are building our capacity as an organization. As a MEL team we facilitate these exchanges and with the launch of the learnings library, I think this process is just going to become even more efficient in the future.

Maya Sterling

I really agree with Mia. I think that sharing internally is super important, but I think that also, to be a knowledge leader, we need to focus on sharing externally our expertise. So that's you know, going back to the communication strategy that I mentioned earlier, I think that's going to be a really big part of what we do – sharing our successes in these quarterly communications newsletters and writing a blog on the website. Throughout all of that communications work, the work of the MEL staff is going to be highlighted.

Hector Pacheco

Ok, thank you so much. That's all the time we have for today. Thank you again, Mia and Maya, for chatting with me. I look forward to implementing this work plan with you both over the next six months.

Mia Kazman

Thanks, Hector.

Maya Sterling

Thank you so much for having us on.

Dr. Elizabeth Fox

Whoever knew that the MEL team could be so exciting and so dedicated to their work as is the whole MEL collaborative! That's all for today. You can read more about the MEL team in the latest PADF quarterly newsletter emailed to you on March 2nd. See you next time for episode three of the MEL podcast.