2024 USAID/Jordan Annual Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Conference
Call for Papers | Questions and Answers

On May 14, 2024, The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Activity (MELA) held an online question and answer (Q&A) session with stakeholders who voiced interest in speaking at the 2024 Annual MEL Conference. MELA also received inquiries from the larger MEL community via email. Below is a list of the questions received:

Q: Can speakers from non-USAID-funded projects in Jordan and elsewhere participate in the MEL Conference?

A: Yes, the conference is open to all applicants, including those in Jordan not implementing USAID-funded projects as well as international entities. In past years, MELA has had session facilitators present and/or attended from Lebanon, Uganda, and the U.S. However, there are a limited number of slots available, and the strongest concept notes will be selected for participation.

Q: What is the definition of "Localization" for the conference purposes?

A: Localization encompasses various aspects, including policies around local systems strengthening and community engagement. MELA can share resources from the USAID Learning Lab on defining localization, emphasizing approaches that empower local stakeholders and foster adaptive management. Moreover, initiatives focused on soliciting feedback from communities and using it to improve programming align well with the theme. Links shared during the session included:

- *https://www.usaid.gov/localization*
- *https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/USAIDs_Localization_Vision-508.pdf*

Q: Is the theme "Pathways to Localization" exclusive to MEL tools and activities? Or can elements around interventions and implementation be referenced?

A: The MEL Conference is intended to highlight tools, methods, and approaches, related to MEL and Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA). As such, any concepts notes submitted should be grounded in how MEL or CLA approaches informed the interventions that drive localization. One way of achieving this would be to highlight how an Activity utilized learning from implementation to drive adaptive management of an intervention, resulting in greater localized approaches being used.

Q: Can speakers share experiences like using dashboards and data in decision-making for the Government of Jordan (GOJ) as part of the conference?

A: Yes, experiences like using dashboards and data for decision-making with government entities are applicable to the conference theme, especially the facilitator can demonstrate how it links to local capacity strengthening. Sharing success stories that align with the utilizing data-driven approaches to enhance locally-led programming will be considered for this conference.

Q: How should panels be organized? The concept note specifies that the panel should consist of speakers from three different entities; is it possible for a panel to include a speaker from an IP and two from different government entities?

A: Panels should ideally represent diverse perspectives and collaboration among implementing partners (IPs). Topics similarly should share best practices and lessons identified that all conference participants can learn from, irrespective of their sector. As such, concept notes are recommended to incorporate differing entities and IPs. For example, a panel of an IP and their two GOJ counterparts from the same sector will not be considered as highly as a panel of different IPs sharing their different perspectives in responding to a particular challenge. Similarly, concept notes that demonstrate how the topic of the panel benefits multiple sectors or addresses MEL and/or CLA approaches to localization will be positively considered.

Concept notes for panels that focus on one USAID-funded Activity and its GOJ counterpart(s) will not be reviewed as positively as the aforementioned examples. The goal is to bring diversity in perspectives and approaches that is applicable to the wider audience of development professionals that will be in attendance.

If an individual requires MELA's support in facilitating a panel across different stakeholders, MELA is happy to facilitate this request.

Q: Is it necessary to share CVs for all [panel] speakers?

A: If an Activity is unable to obtain CVs for all panelist in time to respond to the concept note, MELA will still consider panelist so long as their name, position, and background/brief bios are included to demonstrate their relevance to the panel's topic.

Similarly, if a breakout session is to be facilitated by more than one person, the CVs for all facilitators should be attached to the concept note.

Q: The concept note specifies that the panel should consist of speakers from three different entities; is it possible for a panel to include a speaker from an IP and two from different government entities?
A: MELA seeks to emphasize the importance of diverse perspectives in panel discussions, particularly in technical fields like IP work, so we suggest having multiple entities represented to provide different viewpoints, which can enrich discussions and help engage the audience. For one sector to have multiple implementing partners share their approaches to data collection and programming can lead to a more comprehensive understanding and stimulate audience questions. This diversity of perspectives is seen as beneficial for learning and improving methods within the larger sector.

Q: Can a session present preliminary findings of a study conducted close to the conference date?
A: Yes, sessions presenting preliminary findings are welcome. It's encouraged to share insights gained from ongoing studies, even if results are not available before the conference. Presenting preliminary findings can enrich discussions and offer valuable insights into ongoing research relevant to the conference theme.

If the data is not available at the time of concept note development, the concept note should at least include themes to be explored during the facilitation based on the study's objectives and research questions.

Q: Does this iteration of the conference have an exhibition?
A: Yes, there will be an exhibition, and IPs will have the chance to participate in it. MELA is in the process of determining the details of the exhibition and once finalized, the team will send out the specifications for the exhibition to all USAID/Jordan Implementing Partners.

Q: Can you please inform selected participants of their timing for the conference in advance this year to ensure all facilitators are available at the associated times?
A: MELA will have an agenda finalized three weeks prior to the conference and will work with the selected facilitators to ensure timeslots work well.

Q: What is the difference between the session goals and objectives versus the session description?
A: In the concept note form, the session goal and objectives should demonstrate how the session will tie into the localization theme. In the session description, it is important to explain the learning objectives and methods of facilitation. MELA will highly consider approaches that utilize adult learning approaches and are engaging with strong emphasis on knowledge sharing. A draft agenda showing how the facilitator will use the time and engage the participants should be included.

MELA will work with the selected facilitators to refine their session approaches in advance of the conference.