

KM Triversary Forum - 15 October 2025

# FROM DATA COLLECTION TO SHARED LEARNING: MEL SYSTEMS THAT BRIDGE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Pier Andrea Pirani - Associate, Dgroups Foundation Simon Hearn - Associate, Dgroups Foundation

#### About the Dgroups Foundation

- Supporting inclusive, effective, and sustainable collaboration for over 20 years
- Facilitating dialogue and exchange, both online and in person
- Contributing to the social/public good by documenting experiences, facilitating exchanges, and sharing insights
- Helping partners build and strengthen online communities, knowledgesharing platforms, and MEL systems

#### Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning requirements



Support collective learning, not just accountability



Work with flexible indicators that capture emergence and adaptation



Suited for complex change processes and trans-disciplinary research

....Needs a MEL system which combines custom data standards with social learning processes

#### Tech options for MEL systems



**Spreadsheets** - familiar and flexible, but limited for large-scale collaboration and data management



**Shared drives / SharePoint / Databases** - centralised, but often hard to use across different partners/context



**All-in-one MEL platforms** - powerful, but can be costly and complex, not flexible enough



What's needed: systems that balance structure, flexibility, and participation

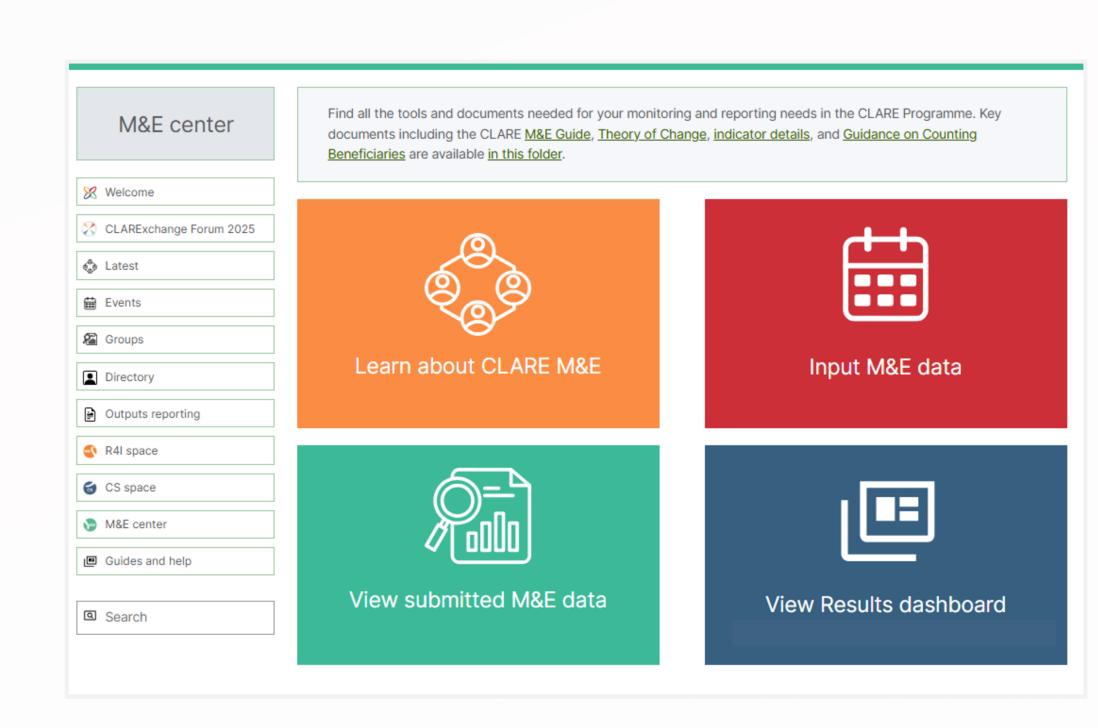
# USEFUL MEL SYSTEMS 3 EXAMPLES

## Example: CLARE M&E system Climate Adaptation and Resiliance

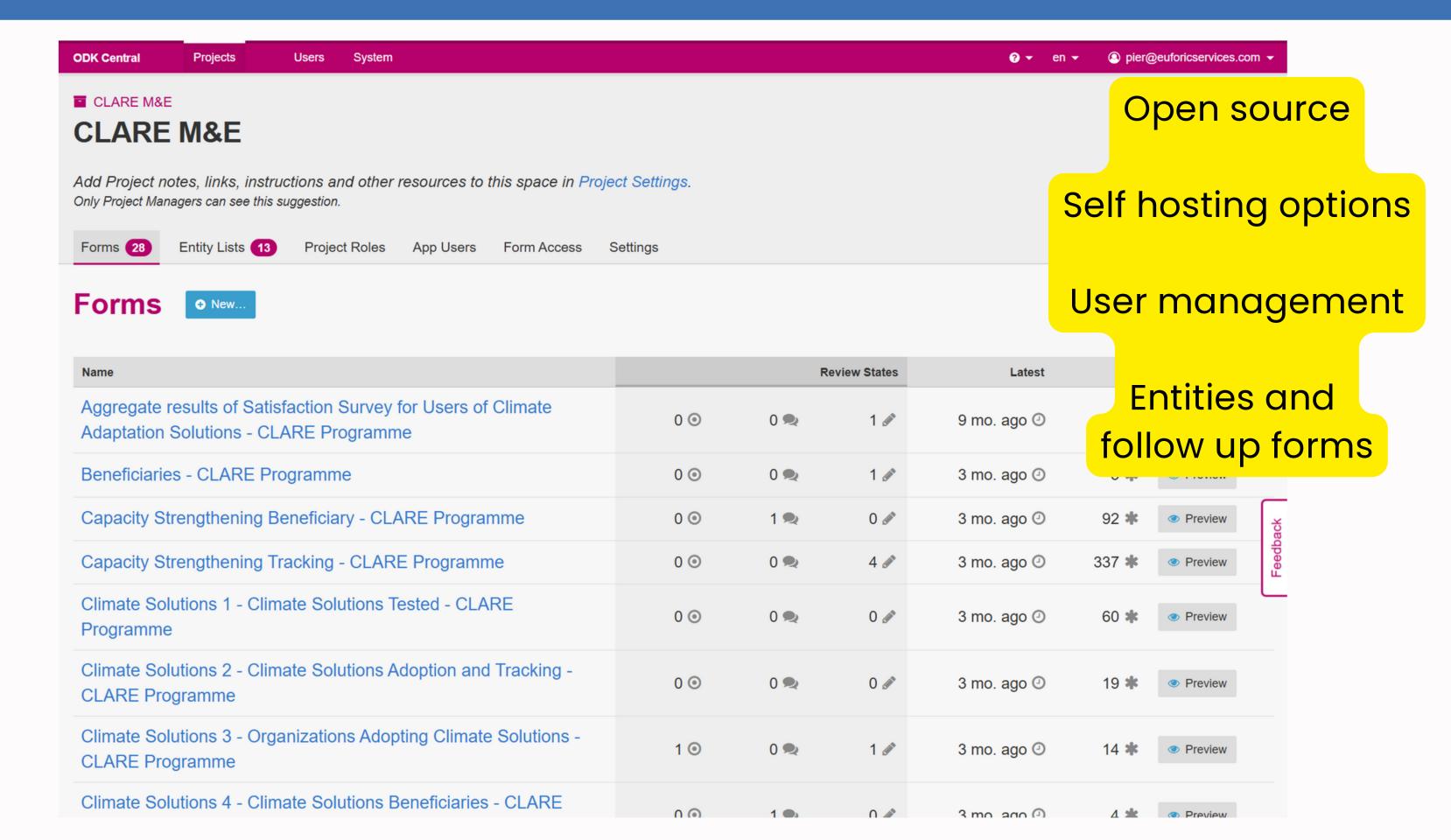
**Aim**: Enable socially inclusive and sustainable action to build resilience to climate change and natural hazards in Africa and Asia-Pacific

**Size**: 33 projects, 2 hubs, 170+ organizations, 33 countries

Funders: FCDO, IDRC



#### CLARE M&E system: ODK



#### CLARE M&E system: Enketo web forms



0



Capacity Strengthening Tracking - CLARE Programme

To be filled out once per capacity strengthening activity coordinated through the CLARE project (either at project or program level). Either following the standalone activity or during the first year the researcher or long-term activity is engaged with.

Modalities of capacity strengthening may include: Standalone activities such as training, workshops etc.; activities embedded within the wider initiative such as experiential learning, embedded researchers in research projects, etc.; and more process-based activities such as communities of practice etc.

Please enter your login email address to begin.

*User Email:		
User Name:		
Organization:		

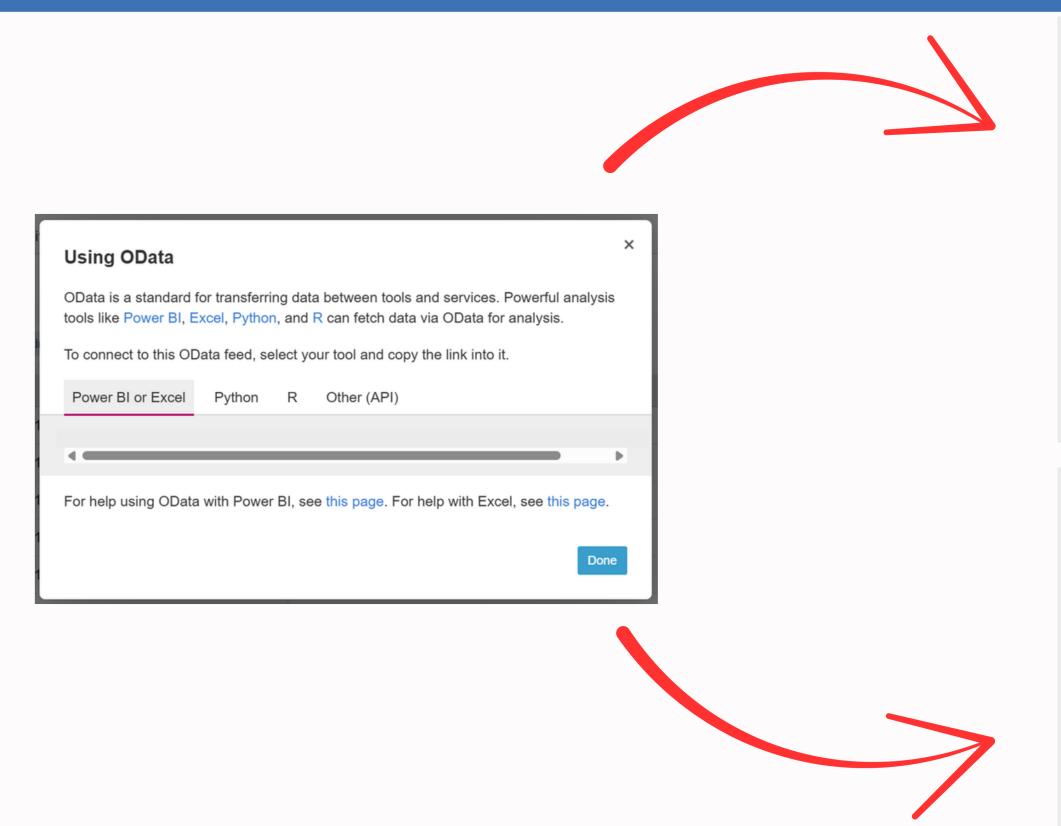
Advanced question types and logic

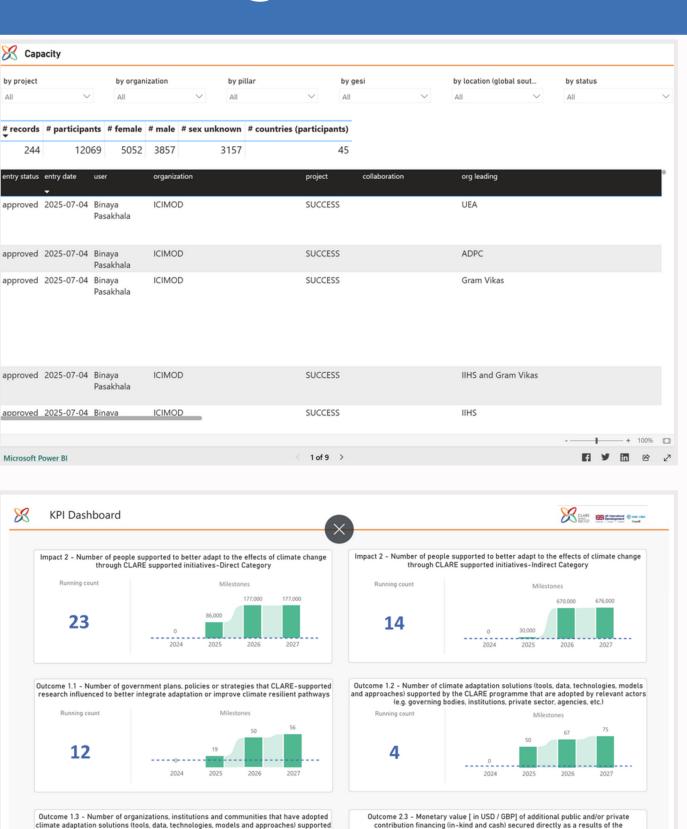
Save and submit later

Pull data from dataset

Calculations & quality checks

#### CLARE M&E system: OData & integrations





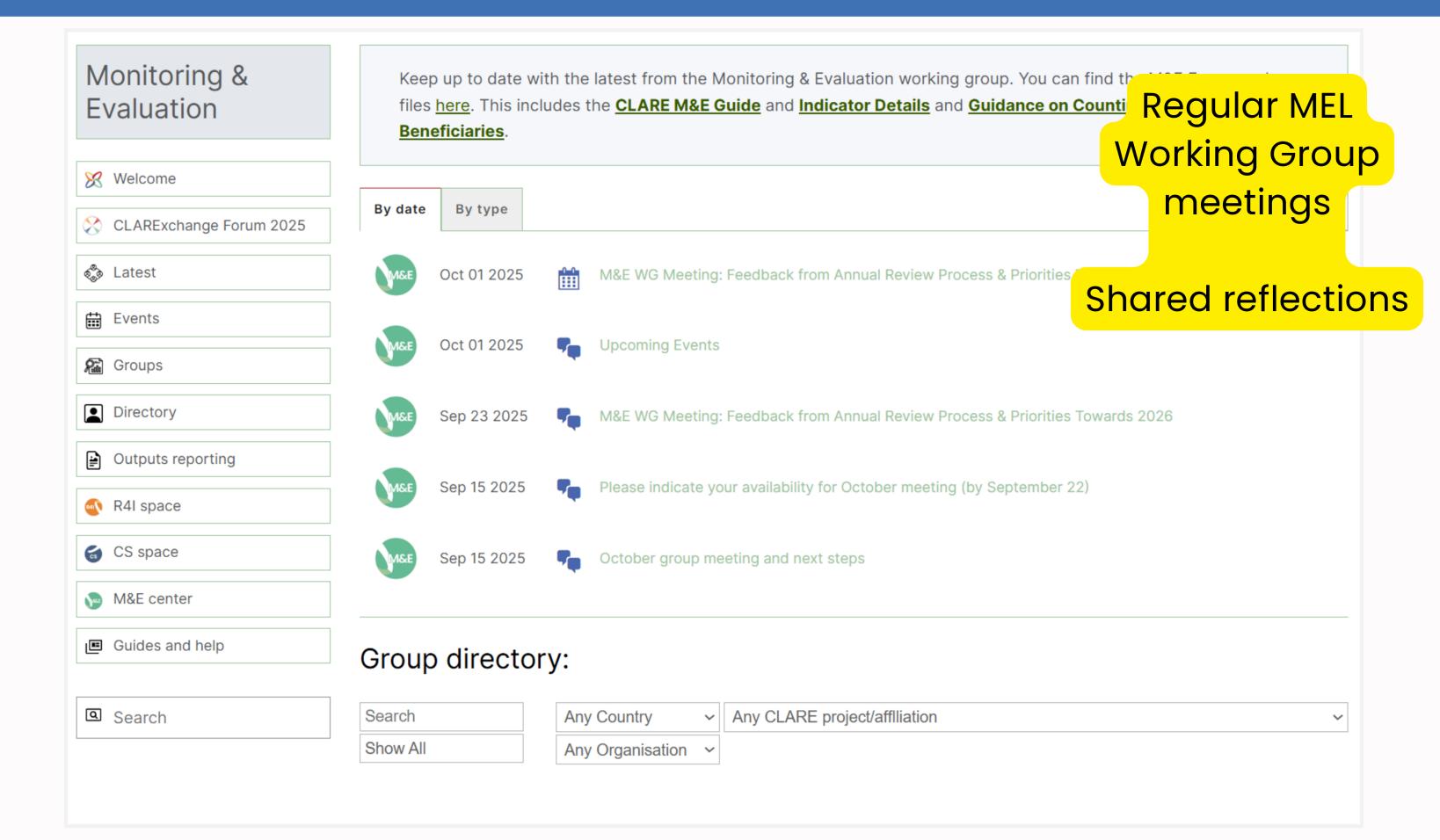
CLARE-supported initiatives or actions

210,943

by the CLARE program.

3

#### CLARE M&E system: Working group



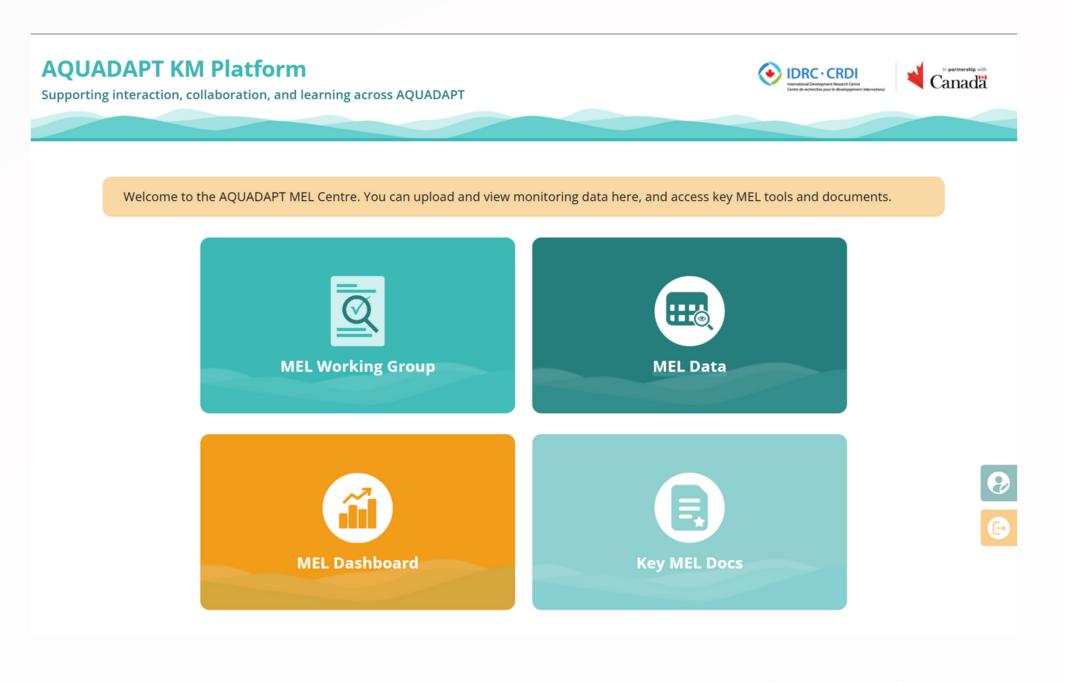
#### Example: AQUADAPT MEL system

### Nature-based Climate Solutions in Aquaculture Food Systems in Asia-Pacific

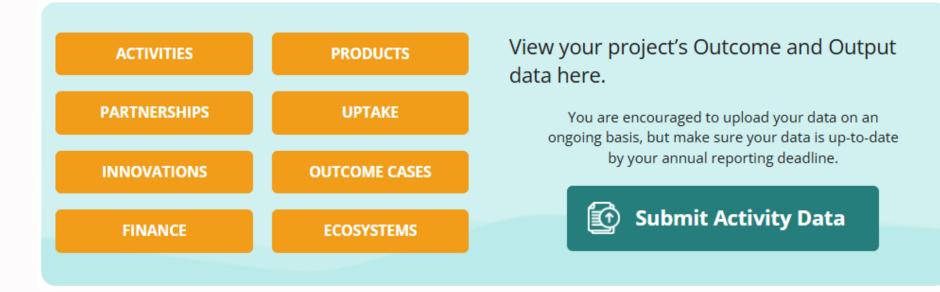
**Aim**: Enable more resilient and sustainable aquaculture food systems by harnessing the potential of nature-based solutions for climate-vulnerable communities

**Size**: 11 projects, 40+ organizations, 10 countries

Funders: GAC, IDRC



### AQUADAPT MEL system: Google Forms



WordPress roles for access and user management

#### AQUADAPT MEL | Activity log

Use this form to document Knowledge Sharing or Training Activities. Data gathering activities like focus group discussions do not need to be tracked using this form.

**Training activities** seek to enhance or mobilize the capacities of people and institutions to change their *practices*. To be considered a training activity rather than a knowledge-sharing activity, the event must go beyond informing towards improving their skills or ability to *use* new knowledge or ideas. Training activities are typically participatory and often involve hands-on application.

**Knowledge sharing events** *inform* key actors of knowledge, tools, and approaches; e.g., knowledge dissemination workshops, webinars, presentations, panels, or side events at conferences. Record all events convened by AQUADAPT and/or where AQUADAPT research is presented.

Sign in to Google to save your progress. Learn more

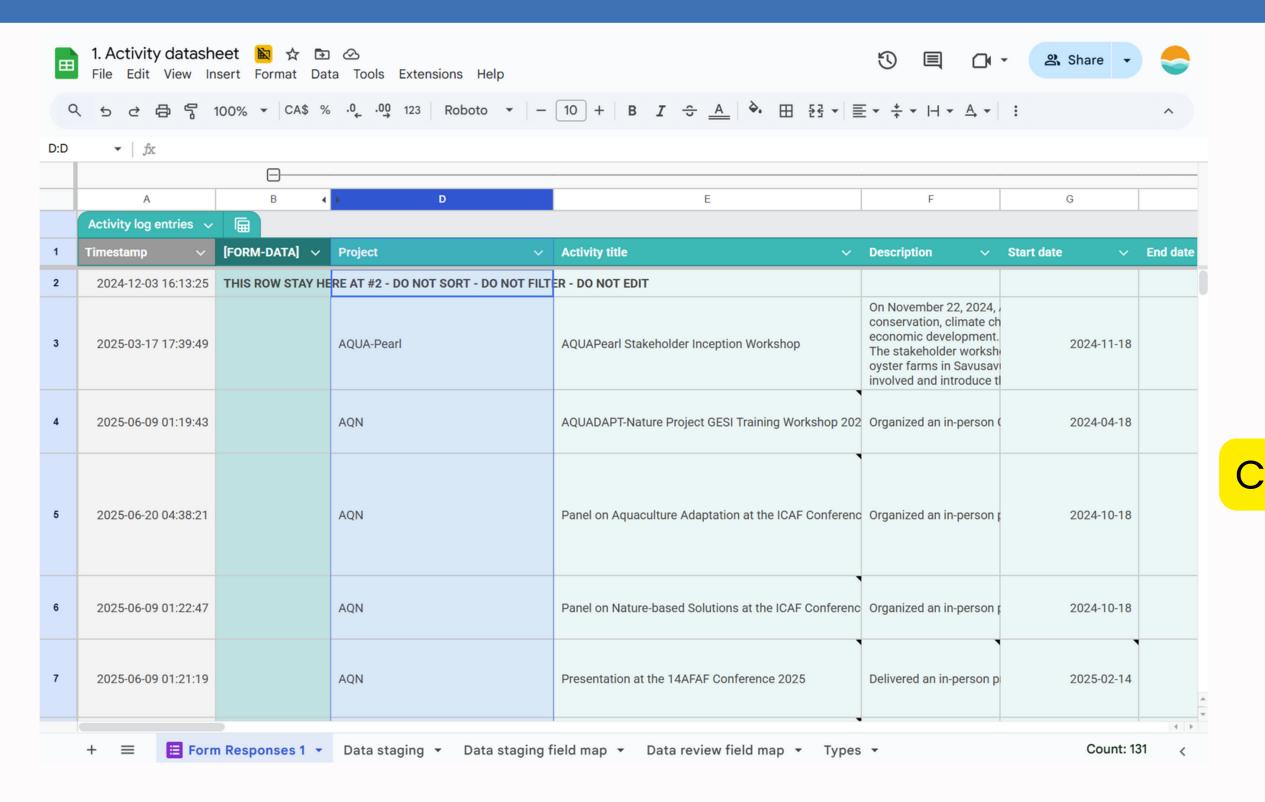
\* Indicates required question

#### Name \*

Your name should appear here from your KM Platform log in. This is needed to track the entry back to you.

If it is blank then please enter your name.

#### AQUADAPT MEL system: Google sheets ++

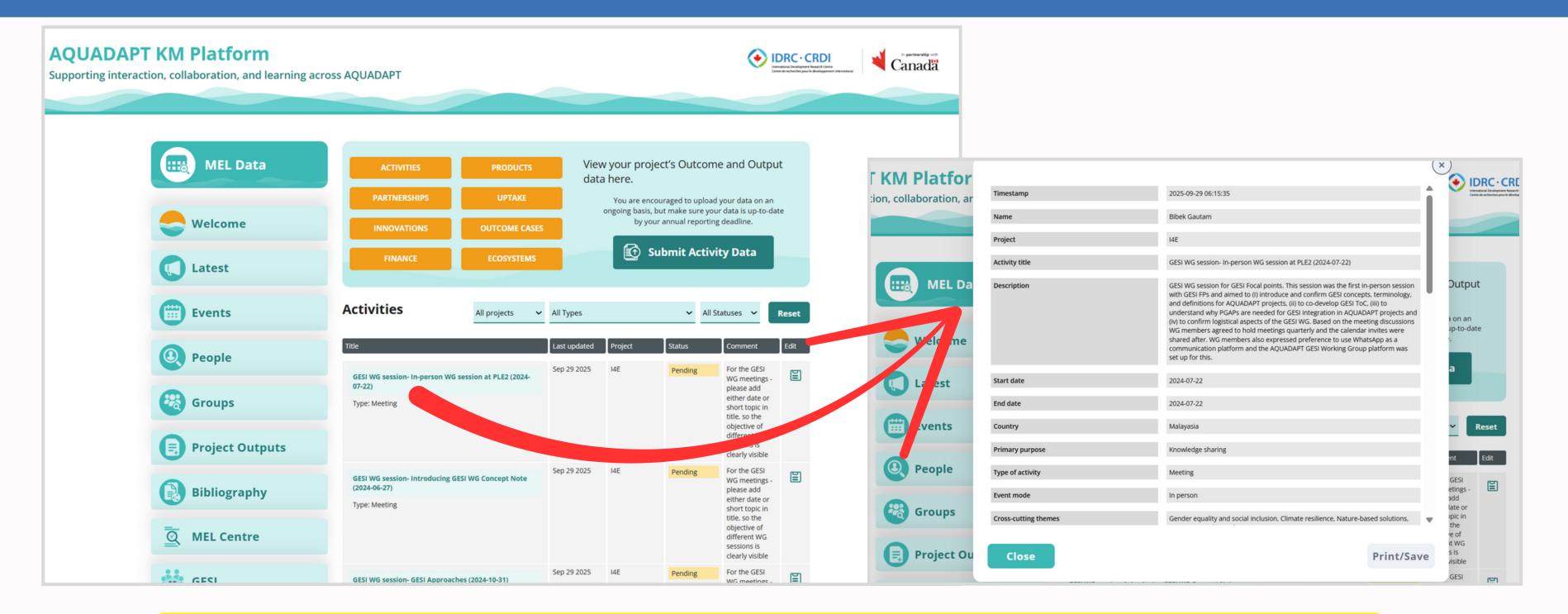


Formulas, add-ons,
AppsScripts

>>
Automated IDs
Edit entry links

Custom email notifications
Additional metadata
Data processing and
preparation

#### AQUADAPT MEL system: Data tables & records

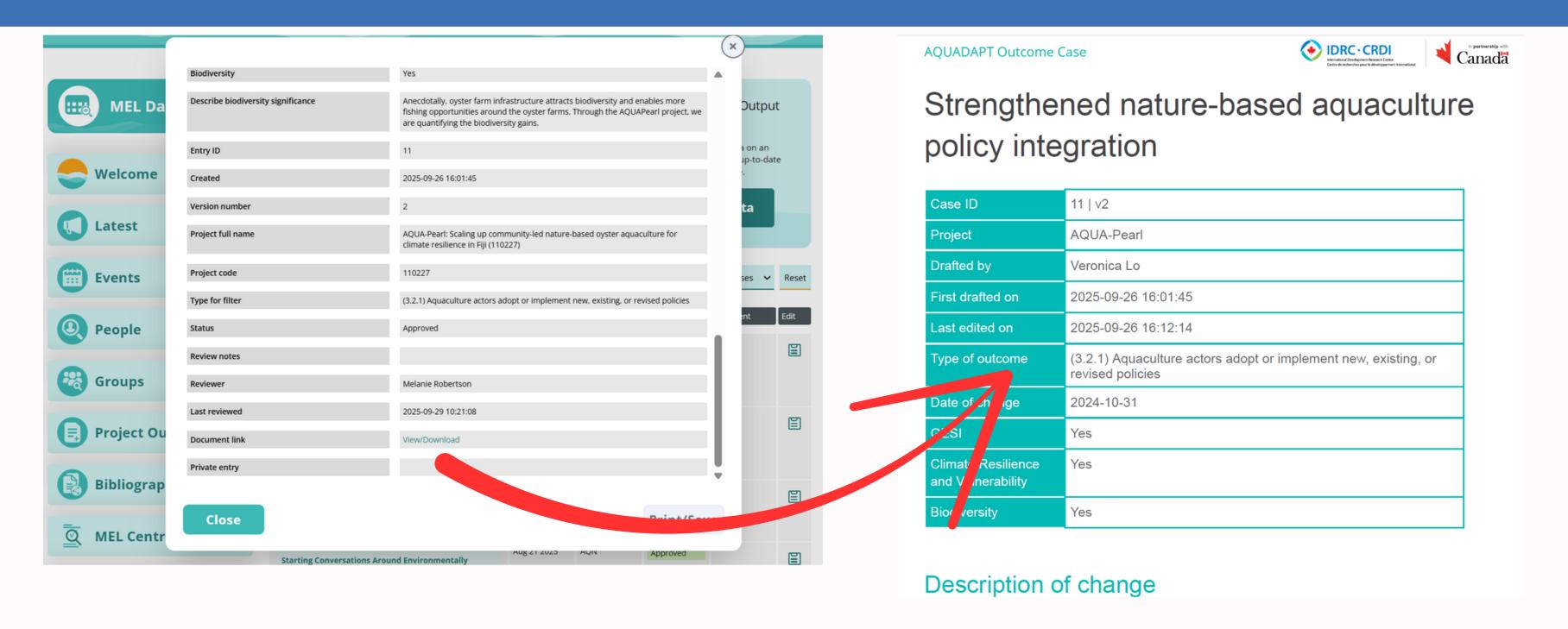


Using the Google API - data is displayed on web in tables and full record

POs to review

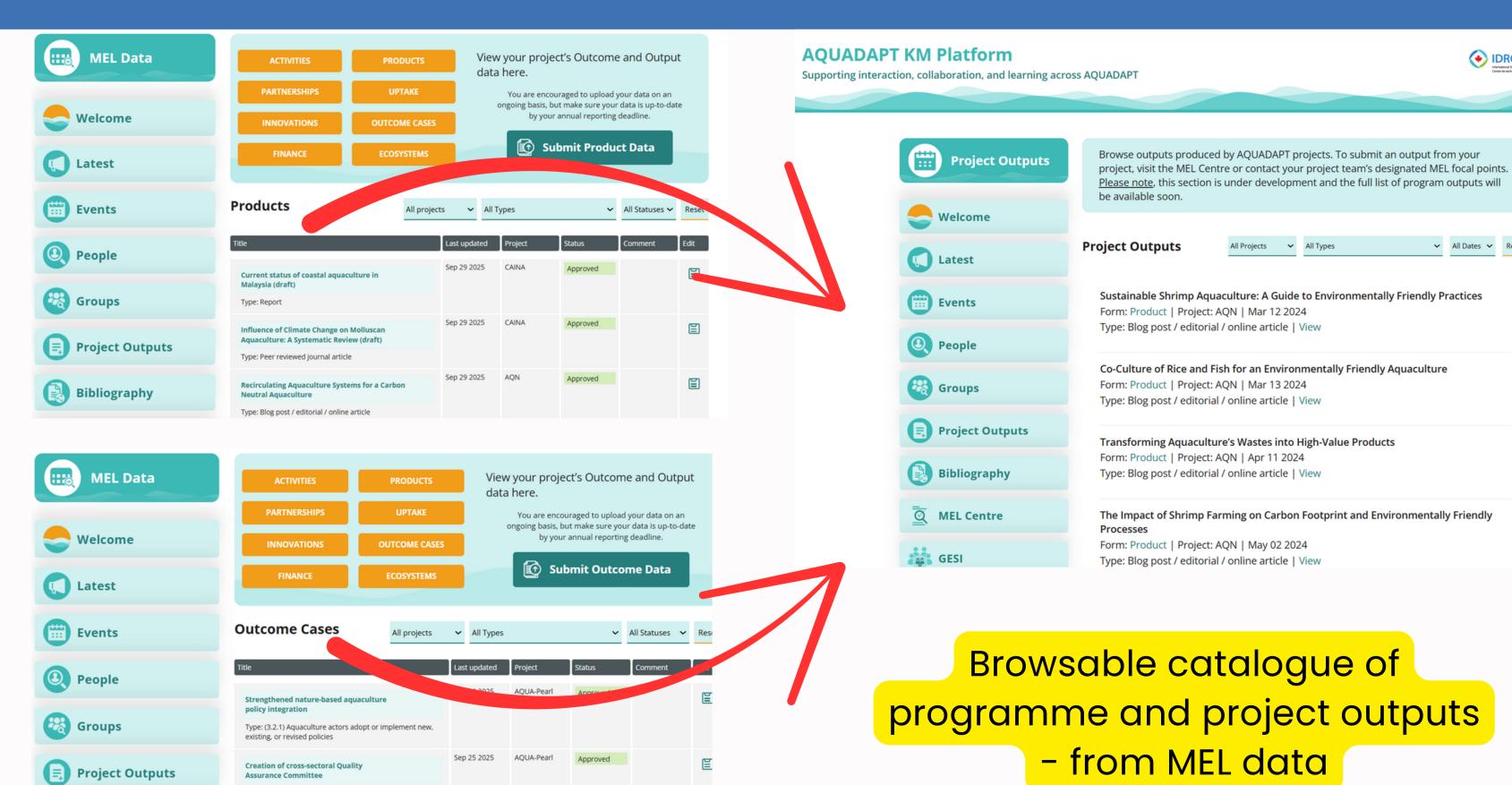
Projetcs to see only own data

#### AQUADAPT MEL system: Outcome cases



Submission details is sent to Doc and added in a template, then saved as PDF and linked back to the entry

#### AQUADAPT MEL system: Aggregating outputs



Type: (2.6.2) Aquaculture actors create new policy development processes or strengthen existing ones

High-level endorsement of AOUAPearl

Sep 25 2025

AQUA-Pearl

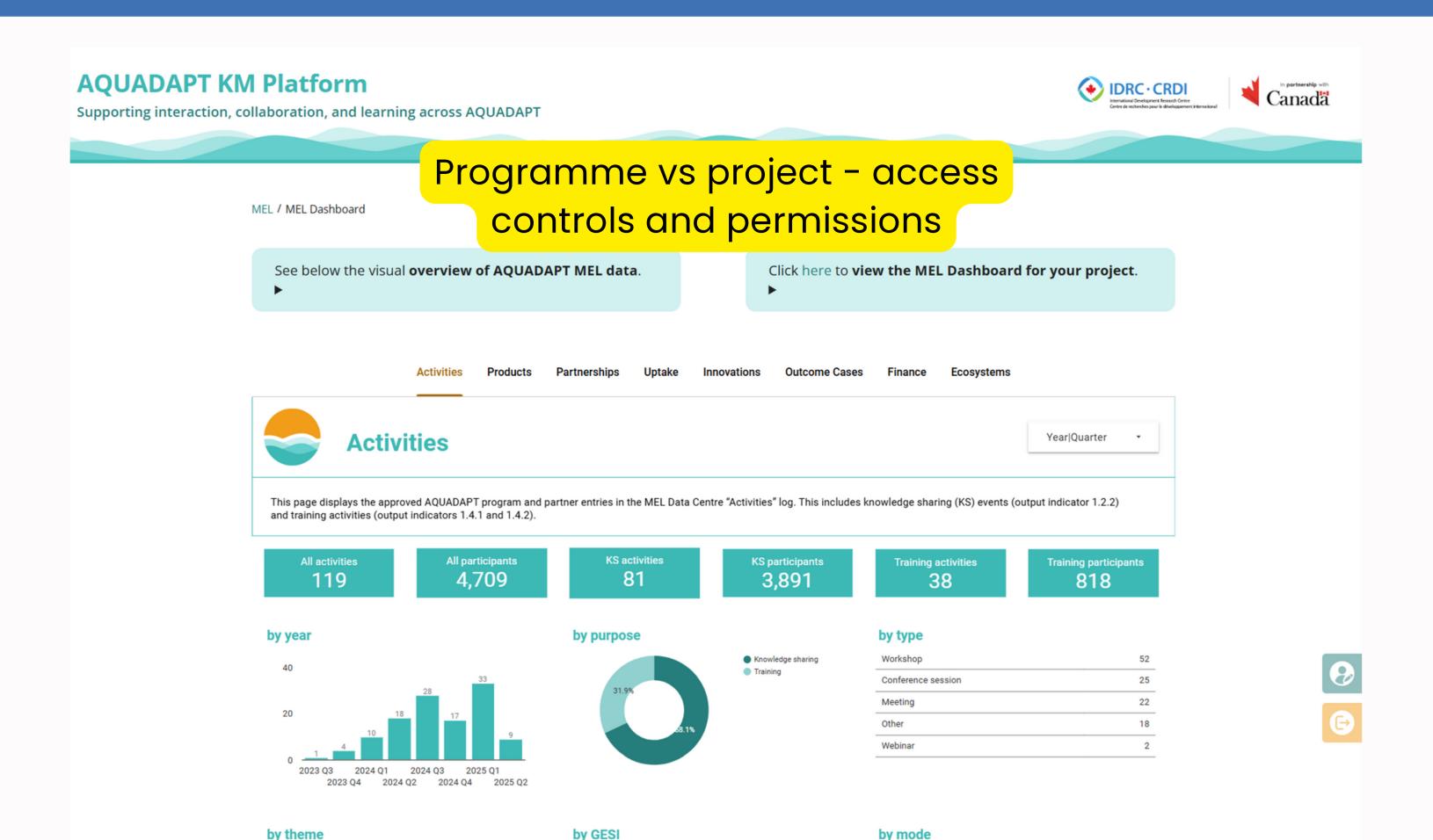
Bibliography

programme and project outputs

( IDRC · CRDI

✓ All Dates ✓

#### AQUADAPT MEL system: Dashboards



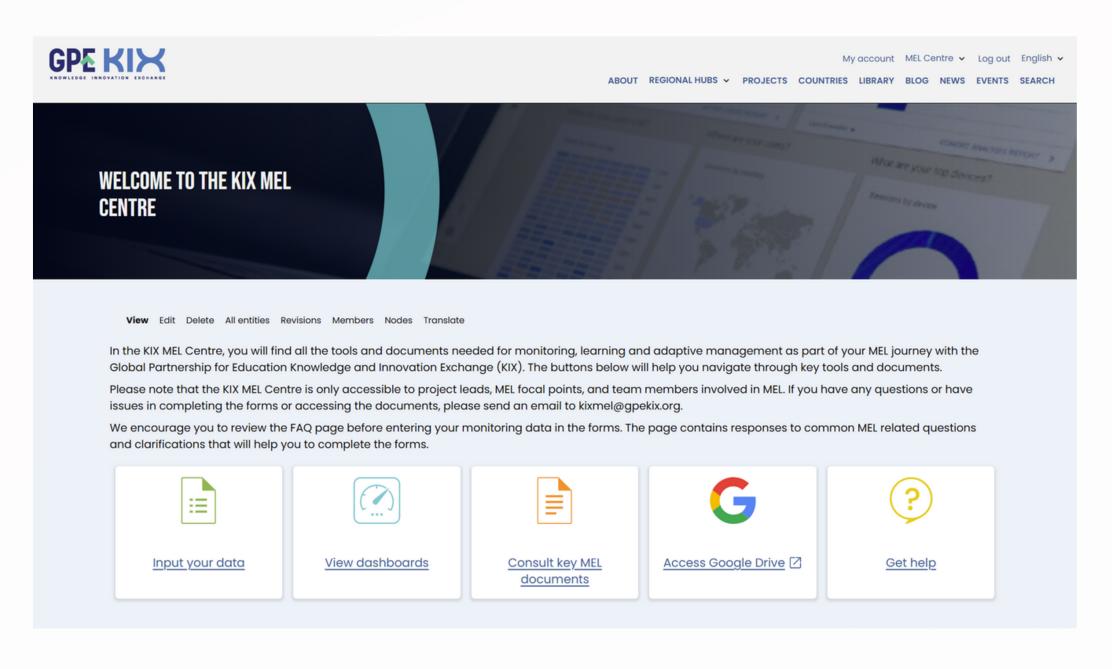
#### Example: KIX MEL system

#### Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange

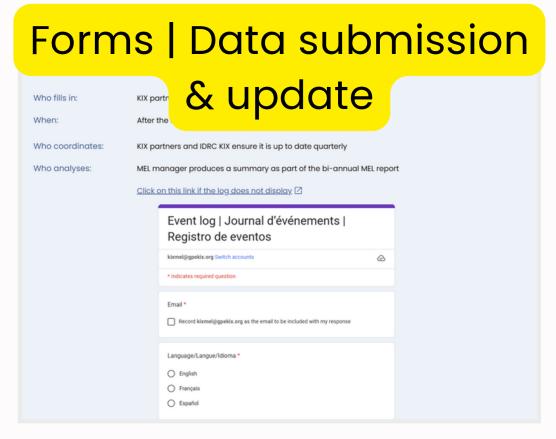
**Aim**: Connect expertise, innovation & knowledge to support low/middle-income countries to build stronger education systems, and progress toward SDG 4

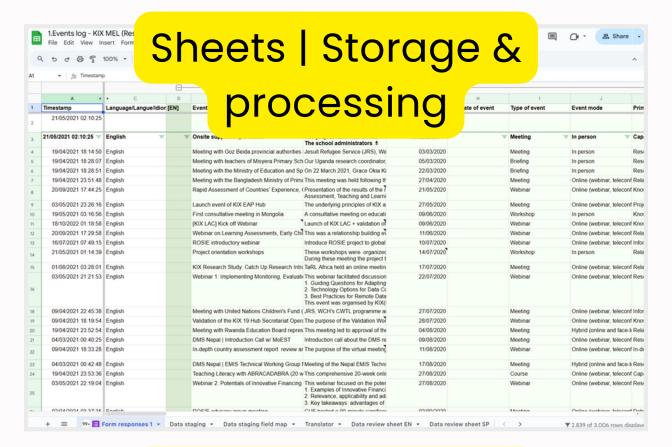
Size: 90 projects, 88 countries

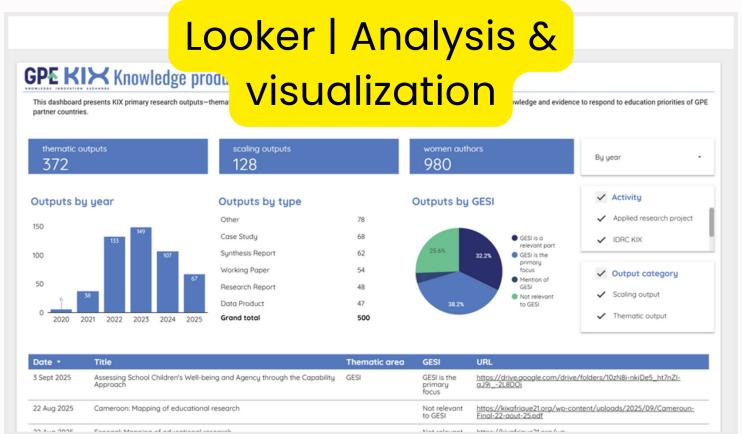
Funders: GPE, IDRC



#### KIX MEL system: Google-based



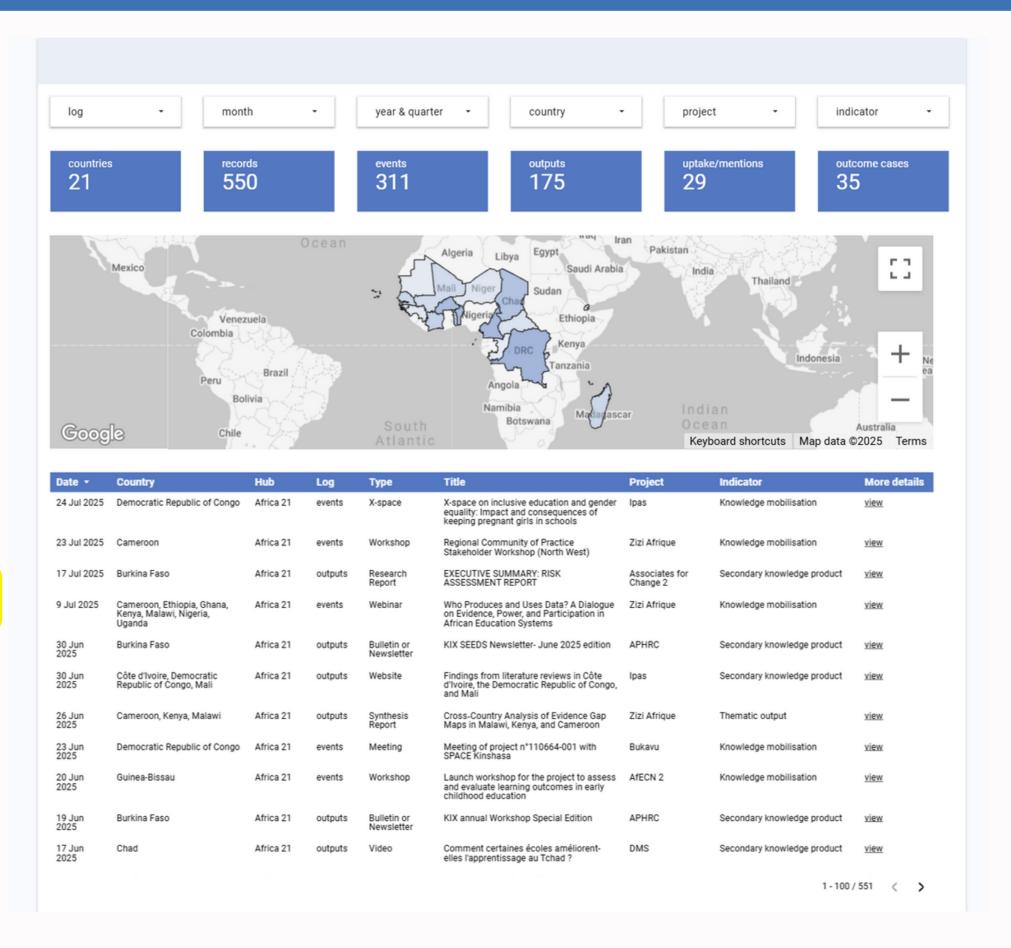






#### KIX MEL system: 'Country-view' dashboards

For Hubs to see/access MEL data submitted by projects for countries in their hubs



#### KIX MEL system: Sense-making processes

Data collection is insufficient for learning

Sense-making is a **human process** for collective learning

Project members and stakeholders come together to reflect on systems change

Annual cycle at **project and programme levels** 



How does it align with our original expectations of change?

What do we need to do differently?

### MEL systems bridging research & practice: Key considerations



Every programme is unique - systems must fit their context



Start from MEL user (donors & grantees) needs



Set up integrated, bespoke systems; automate; adapt



Encourage openness, shared ownership & responsibilities



Use outcome-focused and actor-centred approaches → needs support!



Facilitate learning loops and collective sense-making

#### Al statement

ChatGPT was used as a support tool in preparing the abstract and this presentation.

Specifically, it was used to assist with:

- drafting and polishing text
- helping refine structure and language
- suggest options for visual elements

All substantive ideas were developed, reviewed, and approved by the authors.

The authors take full responsibility for the content of the presentation.



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