

Memorandum of information European tender 'Learning Oriented Monitoring Combi-tracks'.

Date: 13 January 2025

In this memorandum of information, the contracting authority provides answers to the questions asked and remarks posted in the context of the above-mentioned European tender. This memorandum of information forms an integral part of the tender document with reference 202310083.

	Chapt er/ Parag raph	Question	Answer
1.		Given our decision to participate in this tender is highly contingent on the response to the question above, and given the time between the question round and the final deadline, would it be possible to extend the deadline for submission?	The deadline for this tender will not be extended. Be aware that we are asking for an action plan in the tender procedure that can be refined during the inception period.
2.		Thank you for adjusting the rate matrix. However, there is one major point of clarification pending from our questions from the previous round. We believe that the complexity, breadth and scope across methodologies, geographies and sectors, of the assignments requires the involvement of several highly senior core team members across a few partner organisations, not just one single team leader. This senior team will together share different leadership roles (e.g. methodological, thematic, project management). Can we assume that the team leader rate category can also be used by such other senior core team members? If this is not the case, it will be very difficult to collaborate on this tender with multiple organisations, which we think will be required to cover the aforementioned scope and deliver quality, and the normal international consultant rate is not sufficient to cover the costs of such senior experts.	The team lead rate can only be used for the team lead. The rate for team members is based on an average of all the team members. You can differentiate between junior/medior/senior team members within this rate, as long as it does not exceed the maximum average rate.
3.	5.2.1	A word limit of 7,500 words is indicated for the Plan of Action. Question: What words will be counted? Are words included in headings, tables, figures or boxes counted within the 7,500 word limit?	The word limit includes all words in the Plan of Action, including headings, tables, figures and boxes.
4.	4.3.2	"The subject of the reference assignment must be comparable to the core competence in question". Question: What do we understand by "the subject of the reference"? (ie. Sector? Topic? If same methodology applied in a different sector does it count? Etc.)	The references should show that the Tenderer has experience for each of the key competences as formulated in paragraph 4.3.2. and mentioned below: • Key competence 1: Tenderer has proven knowledge of and experience with facilitating learning and adaptive management using tailor-made, participatory approaches

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			using Learning Oriented Monitoring (see Definition of Terms), Reflexive monitoring or comparable methods. • Key competence 2: Tenderer has proven knowledge of and experience with similar assignments related to systems change and sector transformation.
5.	2.1.3	"Each track has an appointed RVO PMEL advisor who supports the combi-track team." And 2.2.3.1 "RVO PMEL advisors facilitate learning at Combi-track level." Question: Could you elaborate on the role and responsibilities of the RVO PMEL advisor, at programme level and Combi-track-project level? Is there a focus for the RVO PMEL advisor on one of the two purposes, i.e. accountability or learning & adaptation?	Each Combi-track has their own RVO PMEL advisor. This advisor is part of the Combi-track team and advises the track as a whole and the projects within this track on their PMEL. Which has a primary focus on facilitating learning for adaptive management, but also includes advise on collecting monitoring data based on indicators. The contractor can support and advise if necessary. The different RVO PMEL advisors exchange lessons from the different combi tracks amongst each other and try to facilitate overarching learning where possible. There will be a big role for the contractor to improve and intensify this overarching learning and creating insight in the contribution of the Combi Approach towards the Combi objectives.
6.	2.2.3.2	The Tender Document indicates that the combi-track teams consist of the assigned RVO coaches, RVO PMEL advisor and Embassy staff. Question: Could you elaborate on the role of the Embassy staff, and the extent to which this may differ per country/ combi-track?	In the process of developing the Combi-tracks, the Embassies are instrumental in co-writing the intervention strategy and intervention logic with the RVO coaches and RVO PMEL advisor. They also played an active role in selecting the Combi-track learning questions and indicators, and also are involved in the learning sessions facilitated by the RVO PMEL advisor. The Embassies are in the lead in implementing the Combi-track together with implementing partners and the RVO coaches. There can obviously be slight differences per Combi-track, but, in general, all combi-tracks work in this way.

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7.	4.3.2	The Tender Document specifies: "The reference assignments must be signed by the referee (the client in question)". Some clients/donors do not sign references in general (including USAID and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself). Question: Considering a case like this, where our organisation is sub-contracted by the lead partner (which holds the contract with the tendering authority and thus is our client) to perform key activities and services specifically focused and related on areas proving the Key Competences required, could the signature of the lead partner (our client) be accepted as referee?	Yes, we can accept this.
8.	5.2.2	The Tender document subsection 5.2.2, Q3 "What opportunities do you see to contribute to the assignment objectives?" Question: Does this refer to: the objectives/goals of the Combi-track programme (2.1.2, overarching 3 Combi track objectives) the objectives of this tender assignment (ToR, subsection 2.2.2), or the goals of the case-study Combi-track project in Nigeria? (Annex 8 first page, first para, 4 goals).	This refers to the objectives of the tender assignment (2.2.2). So, how would the concept Plan of Action of this case study contribute to the assignment objectives of the tender? And how would you plan this to ensure that the case study contributes to these objectives?
9.	2.3.1	Regarding the statement: "The Contractor is expected to conduct at least one research visit to each combi-track," does this imply that a member of the core consortium must travel to each of the combi-track countries, or can this requirement be fulfilled by local research teams or consultants?	Research visits can be done by local research teams and consultants. In some cases it might be of added value that a member of the consortium participates in a research visit. The research team composition or consultant can vary per research visit, depending on the goal of the visit and the needs of the specific track.
10.	5.2.1	For combi-track countries/regions where the tenderer does not yet have an established network of consultants, how should the plan to develop such a network be described?	It is up to the Tenderer to describe how they are aiming to recruit consultants, this can be included in your proposal (see topic 6 paragraph 5.2.1).
11.	7.3.1 7	Do all subcontractors need to be specified at the time of application, or is it permissible to add subcontractors after submission?	It is possible to add subcontractors after submission. The Contractor is responsible for the team and quality of the work.
12.	5.2.2	Should the case description fit within the 7 500 words allocated to the concept plan of action, or is there a separate word limit?	The 7500 word limit is for the plan of action only, excluding the case description.
13.	2.3.1	Is it correct to assume that the study visits are not intended for data collection purposes related to monitoring and evaluation, as these activities are designated to the combi-track country team?	No, study visits are also intended for data collection, additional to the data collected by the combi-track country team.

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14.	2.1.3	The ToR states that combi-track learning sessions occur 3-4 times per year. Do all the combi-tracks have their learning sessions at the same? Is there a learning calendar for all combi-tracks?	No, the combi-track team plans in the learning sessions for their own track.
15.	Anne x 6	In case of a consortium consisting of two organisations, do both partners have to fill in Annex 6, and provide all the necessary information? Or only the contracting party?	The consortium (the parties covered by this), should be required to meet the stated requirements of the consortium.
16.		How should direct costs for organizing workshops in the countries (venue rent, DSA for local participants, lunch and accommodation of participants) be budgeted?	Your budget should be inclusive of third party costs so all costs as stated in the tender document.
17.	Anne x 2	Can you confirm that the fees for proposed team members and the team leader, as mentioned in Appendix 2 and eventually agreed upon by the service provider and RVO and copied into the service contract, are guiding for the auditor, and not the fees actually paid to (local) consultants?	The hourly rates offered by the Contractor for award criterion "Price" (section 5.3) will become the agreed hourly rates to execute this assignment. These agreed hourly rates are fixed up until 31 December 2027 and are excluding Dutch VAT and including all local taxes and costs.
18.	3.4.4.1	Section 3.4.4.1. of the Tender Document: The Phrase: "This maximum rate is based on a mixed team of local consultants/ experts (from the Combi Approach countries) and international consultants/ experts". Does this mean that the hourly rate for one consultant can be higher than 95 euro if this higher hourly rate is offset by a lower rate for another consultant (average being 95 euro)?	see question 17
19.		Is co-leadership of the assignment possible or is one lead preferred?	We are looking for one team lead. The team lead has final responsibility for coordinating and managing this assignment. It is possible to share underlying tasks with other team members.
20.		Does the Combi-track programme make use of an online reporting and information-sharing facility?	Within the Combi-tracks we have different ways of sharing information. We do not have one online reporting tool.
21.		No MEL capacity development is mentioned. If any, what expectations are there around the training of project staff, RVO MEL officers, EKN staff?	If the Tenderer sees reason to do so (during proposal writing or during the Inception Phase), this can be included in the Plan of Action.
22.		We understand that the contractor will make research visits and may be collecting data related to the overall learning questions, such as through key informant interviews, observations, and review of project	The answer is both. Data is collected by the Combi-track teams (RVO and Embassy), but also by the implementing partners of the Combi-track. The

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		data. On pages 12 and 14 however, local data collection is mentioned: "...amongst others by (advising on) collecting data, measuring indicators and documenting learnings." Upon our first reading, we understood that local partners with support from RVO MEL staff will be responsible for data collection on the project. However, a second read drew our attention to the brackets around 'advising on' and raised the question if the contractor expected to collect data. Will the combi-track projects collect data, or the contractor, or both? If the latter what kind of data is the contractor expected to collect?	Contractor may be able to help improve this existing data collection. The Contractor can use the information that is collected by the Combi-track teams, but is also expected to collect additional data to be able to reach the objectives of the assignment (2.2.2). It is up to the Tenderer to decide on the type of data that will be collected, this can differ between different tracks, and research visits.
23.		How many RVO MEL officers will be working on the programme?	Each Combi-track has one designated PMEL advisor. At the moment a total of 6 RVO PMEL advisors are working for the Combi approach, each supporting 2-6 tracks.
24.		What % of the Combi-track project budget has on average been allocated to MEL (M&E staff, data collection and analysis, reporting)?	Within the Combi Approach we are trying to implement an integrated PMEL approach. Therefore, it is not possible to give an exact percentage of the allocated MEL budget per Combi-track. On average PMEL advisors work 4 hours per week on each Combi-track.
25.		Could you please share an overview of which companies you partner with within each of the different combi-tracks? This would help us highlight any overlap within our network and how we can build on these links.	We are not able to share this information at this time. After awarding the contract we can share a list of participating companies.
26.		Could you provide us with more information on the 20 or 21 Combi-track projects: - How large are the tracks or projects in terms of duration and funding (or range)? - What is the average intended reach of the projects (# people or households targeted)?	For the Combi Approach, approximately 51 million euros is available in policy funds (excluding implementation costs/capacity) for the implementation of 22 combi tracks spread over 5 years from the old policy (2022). - Almost all the tracks started their implementing phase in 2024. The duration of the tracks will be until the 31st of December 2027. Unless there will be an extension of the Combi Approach. - We have not set output targets for the Combi-tracks.

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27.	ARVO DI	Arvodi 2018: Article 31 Proposal: Article 31 also applies to the Contracting Authority	We agree to mutual application of this article.
28.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 26.2 Proposal: Article 26.2, first sentence to be: "Upon request by the Contracting Authority, the Contractor will present insurance certificates for the insurances referred to in paragraph 1".	If you propose to drop the word immediately, we cannot agree to this. You must be able to present either the original or certified copies of the policies and proof of the payment of premium for the insurances immediately.
29.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 24.7 First sentence also applies to the Contracting Authority and in last sentence: "Parties are obliged to take reasonable actions"	The first sentence doesn't apply to the Contracting Authority. The Contracting Authority will do anything within its power to prevent stagnation and to limit the additional costs and/or damage incurred as a result of such breaches.
30.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 24.3 Proposal: Article 24.3 will be: "The Contractor will remain the owner of all knowledge and intellectual property that he owned before the start of the Services, as well as the knowledge and intellectual property developed outside the framework of the Services. Methods and techniques, as well as improvements thereof, will remain the property of the Contractor".	The text you propose will not replace the text in Article 24.3, because the legal scope of your proposal is different from the legal scope of Article 24.3.
31.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Articles 24.1 and 24.6 Proposal: Articles 24.1 and 24.6 are not applicable.	Article 24.1 remains applicable. Article 24.6 is not applicable.
32.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Articles 21.3 and 24 Proposal: Article 21.3 will also be applicable to Article 24.	We do not agree with your proposal.
33.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Articles 22.2 en 22.3 Article 22.2 and 22.3 will not be applicable. Instead, the statutory provisions regarding force majeure will apply.	We do not agree with your proposal.
34.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 21.3 Proposal: article 21.3 sub c is not applicable.	We do not agree with your proposal.
35.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 13.3 Proposal: to introduce a time limit of maximum 6 months after the presentation of an interim report or final report.	We do not agree with your proposal.
36.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Articles 13.1 en 13.2 Proposal: Articles 13.1 and 13.2 are also applicable to the Contracting Authority.	We agree to mutual application of this article.
37.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 6.2 Proposal: article 6.2 last sentence is not applicable if this person is replaced by someone with more expertise or experience or by a more senior researcher.	The fee will not be adjusted.

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38.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 5 Proposal: addition of the following text: "provided that the Contractor will make every reasonable effort to meet the deadlines and delivery dates stated."	We do not understand your proposal. Article 5 states that the Services will be performed at the time and place stated in the Contract. How does this relate to your proposal?
39.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 4.2 Proposal: after the word "Services": introduce "due to professional misconduct"	We do not agree with your proposal.
40.	ARVO DI	Arvodi Article 3.1 Proposal: replace the word "guarantees" with the words "has a best effort obligation"	We do not agree with your proposal.
41.	1.3	First of all, thank you for sharing the tender documents for the CombiTracks monitoring assignment, reflecting the adjusted rates for experts and team leaders. We greatly appreciate the flexibility in revising the tender conditions. Following the re-publication of the tender, we've noticed that the timeline between the release of the Memorandum of Information (13th January) and the tender submission deadline (24th January) has become quite constrained. With the reduction in question rounds from two to one, we find ourselves needing to address both practical and substantive questions within a single round. However, some substantive questions may depend on the team's setup and are ideally addressed in sequence. Would it be possible to consider extending the submission deadline and perhaps adding an extra round of questions to allow for a more thorough and thoughtful preparation?	No - The deadline for this tender will not be extended. Be aware that we are asking for an action plan in the tender procedure that can be refined during the inception period.
42.	5.2.1	This question concerns the sentence "Please use for award criterion 5.2.1 a separate document and start every item of this quality award criterion on a new page". Are the topics to be described on a separate page the following: o View and understanding of the scope of work and vision and understanding on Learning Oriented Monitoring o Proposed approach and proposed methodology for the assignment o Conceptual approach for the management of the assignment and quality control o Description of the inception phase o Proposed team of experts including CVs o Local and international network of consultants Tenderer/Contractor has access to for the execution of the assignment in the combi-track countries If the list above is not correct, can you	The topics to be described on a separate page are the 7 topics as described in paragraph 5.2.1. Please note, the CVs, criterion 5.2.2 and the prices and rates format, should be provided in separate documents. Also, see the description in chapter 5. 1) Your view and understanding of the scope of work and your vision and understanding on Learning Oriented Monitoring. 2) The proposed approach and proposed methodology for this assignment to reach the goals and objectives as

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		please provide a corrected overview of all the topics that need to be listed on a separate page?	formulated in chapter 2 of the Tender Document including outlines for research modules including a strategy to plan the research visits as described in paragraph 2.3.1. 3) A general clear conceptual approach for the management of this assignment and quality control. 4) Description of the inception phase: planning and description of activities and deliverables (from 14 March 2025 up to including 31 August 2025). 5) The proposed team of experts, including the team leader, to implement the assignment consisting of: a. A list of names and positions of the proposed team, including the team leader. Of every team member, including the team leader, provide a CV with a maximum of 1500 words addressing the following items: name, education, skills, work experience, competencies, language(s). In each separate CV, clearly designate if the person complies with the criteria mentioned in section 3.1. To do so, in the CVs, clearly link each item asked for to the requirements of section 3.1 (for instance by adding an extra column at the right side of the page in which the requirement number out of section 3.1 is mentioned). The proposed team as a whole has to meet all the criteria mentioned in 3.1. Each CV has a maximum of 1500 words. If this number of words is exceeded, the assessment team will not assess the words 1501 and up. b. Also describe and specify the intended distribution of the experts in this assignment (i.e. which team member will potentially be

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			tasked with specific elements of the assignments). 6) The local and international network of consultants Tenderer/Contractor has access to for the execution of this assignment in the Combi-track countries, based on previous assignments, partnerships, membership of networking organizations, previous collaborations etc. Tenderer is able to mobilize this network of consultants if necessary and to limit international travel to a minimum. The network is active and willing to respond to requests which matches the expertise and/or experience. For regions the Tenderer does not have a network yet, Tenderer describes how to acquire this network. 7) A substantiated high level budget plan for the inception phase and the implementation phase which remains within the maximum budgets for the inception and implementation phase mentioned in section 2 of this Tender Document. You provide the high level budget excluding Dutch VAT and if applicable including local foreign VAT and costs and including indexation. Your budget has to be based on the information provided in this Tender Document.
43.		This question concerns the sentence "Also describe and specify the intended distribution of the experts in this assignment (i.e. which team member will potentially be tasked with specific elements of the assignments)" o Should this be described in each of the CVs or as part of the 7500 words?	The Tenderer is asked to give a clear description of how the team will be composed in the Plan of Action. The Tenderer can refer to more specific information in the CVs.
44.		The CVs each have a word count of 1500 words. Are these words also included in the overall word-count of 7500 or are they counted separately?	They are counted separately.

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45.		The local and international network of consultants Tenderer/Contractor has access to for the execution of this assignment in the Combi-track countries, based on previous assignments, partnerships, membership of networking organizations, o Is this a topic that should be described separately as one of the items, or is it going to be assessed from the CVs or the other topics?	The Tenderer is asked to give a description of this item in the Plan of Action. The Tenderer can refer to more specific information in the CVs.
46.		This question concerns the following section "Component 1 of the assignment is to conduct research visits to each Combi track. The purpose of these research visits is twofold. Firstly, it is an opportunity to support individual tracks with learning questions they have. Secondly, each study visit helps to gather information for the overarching analysis described under 2.3.2. Preferably the research visits are done as much as possible together with local consultants to limit unnecessary travel and to ensure a thorough understanding of the local context." Does this section indicate that travel should as much as possible be done through local consultants? Should there ideally be only one non-local consultant be present during the research visits, or is your expectation that multiple non-local consultants are required to effectively conduct the research visits?	Research visits can be done by local research teams and consultants. In some cases it might be of added value that a member of the consortium participates in a research visit. The team composition or consultant can vary per research visit, depending on the goal of the visit and the needs of the specific track.
47.		Can you provide examples of creative methods for sharing lessons learned? Are there specific formats or approaches that RVO prefers for dissemination and if so, which ones?	The Tenderer is asked to propose methods for this assignment that they seem fit. This can be a combination of creative and more traditional methods. In the Inception Phase these methods can be refined and adjusted if needed.
48.		What system does RVO currently use for monitoring and evaluating the combi-tracks? How does the current evaluation framework relate to this system? Are we expected to build on the existing framework, and if so, which components should we continue or adapt?	The PMEL approach (planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning) is described in paragraph 2.1.3. The Results Framework is added in Annex 7. The Results Framework is the starting point of the PMEL approach. It is however an adaptive programme, so adjustments and improvements of the Results Framework are possible.
49.		How many PMEL RVO officers are working on the combi track and where are they located?	Each Combi-track has one designated PMEL advisor. At the moment a total of 6 RVO PMEL advisors are working for the Combi approach, each supporting 2-6 tracks.

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			They are located in The Netherlands (RVO, The Hague).
50.		Although the scope of the program is 'sustainability and digitalisation', the tracks seem to focus mainly on the agri/horti sectors. Is this purposely so or are any other different tracks expected (e.g. plastics, clean energy, water management, etc.)	Many of the tracks are focussing on the agri/horti sector at the moment. Although the majority of track focusses on (sustainability and/or digitalisation in) agri/horti there are also active tracks that focus on waste management (incl. plastics), clean energy and water. Themes like clean energy, organic waste and water are also relevant within the agro/horti tracks. It is not clear yet if and how many new tracks will be developed. The focus of potential tracks will amongst others be defined both by opportunities and demand in the Combi-track country and the interest of relevant Dutch (business) partners.
51.		Is expertise on the 'track topics' expected, or rather not (in order to avoid expert bias in learning)?	The team is expected to have expertise as described in paragraph 3.1. Expertise of track topics is not required, but is also not a reason for exclusion.
52.		Given that the number of Combi-tracks may increase or decrease, what mechanisms are in place to manage scope changes effectively during the contract period?	Scope changes will always be discussed between Contractor and Contracting Authority as described in paragraph 2.7. Paragraph 2.4.3 describes the mechanisms through which the assignment will be managed.
53.		Could you elaborate on the specific expectations for integrating reflexive monitoring with the existing PMEL framework?	Reflexive monitoring is already part of the PMEL approach. We expect the Contractor to strengthen and further improve the approach we have as part of the assignment.
54.		The current group of PMEL staff that is engaged with the program/tracks is a professional team. What kind of expertise or capacity does the team lack or is in need of as complimentary to its own expertise?	The specific objectives for this assignment are formulated in paragraph 2.2.2. The RVO PMEL advisors mostly focus on PMEL at track level. The Contractor will focus more at PMEL at Combi Approach (programme) level. Reflexive monitoring and the shift towards learning is a relatively new approach for the PMEL team. The Contractor can be complimentary and support the PMEL

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			team in strengthening and further improving the approach we have.
55.		What are the known challenges or risks associated with implementing the Combi-tracks approach that the Contractor should prepare to address?	We invite the Tenderer to identify risks and challenges that should be taken into account in their Plan of Action.
56.		How critical is the involvement of local consultants in achieving the goals of the Combi-tracks, and are there specific preferences for their selection and roles? Do they need to be included in the presented team?	We strongly urge the Tenderer to include local consultants. We have not specified specific preferences for their selection and roles. The assessment of the proposed team will partly be based on the following: • Extent to which there is a network of suitable local consultants available and/or the extent to which the approach to acquire new local consultants is satisfactory (paragraph 5.2.1).
57.		Could you clarify the expectations for the format and frequency of reports, including the sharing of lessons learned and annual accounting?	We have no formats for reporting. We ask for an annual accounting report as described in paragraph 2.4.3.3. It is up to the Tenderer to propose ways of reporting and sharing lessons learned. This can be refined in the Inception Phase and adjusted in the annual plans (paragraph 2.4.3.1).
58.		How should the Contractor balance cost-effectiveness with quality, especially concerning research visits and local engagements within the set budget?	It is up to the Tenderer to propose how to balance cost-effectiveness with quality.
59.		Is there a ground of exclusion of consultants that are already engaged with the implementation of tracks and/or other RVO programmes (e.g. PADEO or CBI).	There is no exclusion of consultants that are engaged in other RVO programmes. Consultants that are actively involved in the implementation of 1 or more Combi-tracks are excluded from this assignment.
60.		How and with whom were the current learning questions formulated? Would you be open to revisiting and potentially adapting these learning questions or are they a given?	The current overarching learning questions as formulated in annex 7 were formulated by RVO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while setting up and designing the Combi Approach. We are open to revisiting and adapting these learning questions.
61.		Beyond embassy staff, to what extent are country-level stakeholders involved and represented within the Combi-track teams?	Besides Dutch implementing partners, each Combi-track also has country-level implementing partners. The level

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			of involvement of country-level stakeholders differs per Combi-track.
62.		Is the consultant team responsible for measuring the indicators and budget for the respective research or is that within the budget of the Combi-track budget and does the consultant team focus on the learning questions and adaptive programming?	The responsibility of measuring indicators is with the PMEL team.
63.		Are costs for stakeholder meetings - travel, accommodation, hire of venue, materials, per diem of participants, and so on - to be included in the budget?	All costs are to be included in the budget.