

MONITORING & EVALUATION

pre-workshop reading material

WHAT IS MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)?

Several definitions exist for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and perspectives can differ on what is considered good practice depending on an individual's experience and the sector in which they work.

Monitoring generally refers to the collection of data to measure progress (based on indicators or other metrics). Progress is tracked based on expectations (targets) set before activities were implemented. It is a periodically recurring task already beginning in the planning stage of a project or program. Monitoring allows results, processes and experiences to be documented and used as a basis to steer decision-making and learning processes. Monitoring is checking progress against plans. The data acquired through monitoring is used for evaluation.

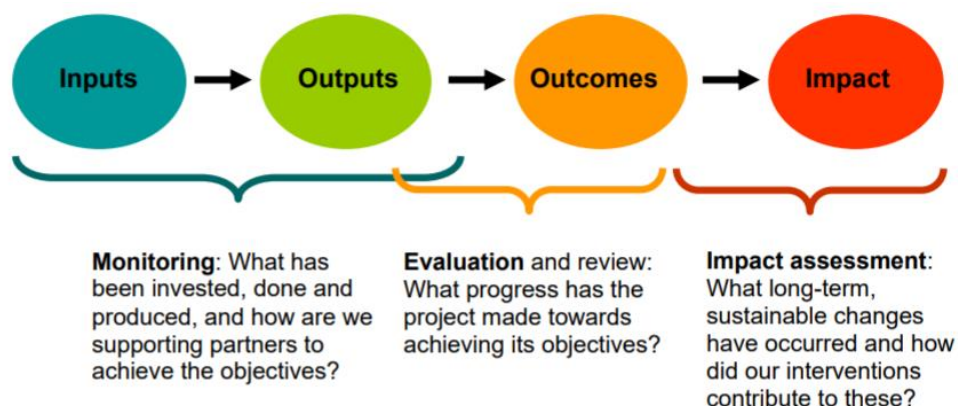
Evaluation is defined as a process that determines the merit, worth or value of things (e.g. projects, processes, service delivery, advocacy interventions). It is assessing, as systematically and objectively as possible, a completed project or program or a phase of an ongoing project or program that has been completed. Evaluations appraise data and information that inform strategic decisions, thus improving the project or program in the future.

Monitoring and evaluation should be considered as systematic and integrated processes. The data produced from **M&E should help learn whether processes can be improved during implementation**, and whether certain activities or approaches could be used for future projects.

It should also be understood that evaluation is not necessarily value-free. Since the evaluation process takes findings (i.e. survey data, observations from field research) to assess a project's significance, the conclusions from an evaluation are often value-based judgments. Since these judgments are used to evaluate the criteria or standards (e.g. targets, goals) set by an organization, the process of evaluation **should be used to LEARN ABOUT A PROJECT and FACILITATE DECISION MAKING**. Using evaluation data for decision-making can take many forms, such as re-designing project logic or theories of change, modifying activities, or understanding how future projects can be improved to better serve target populations.

PROJECT LOGIC OF INTERVENTION VS M&E

A project's M&E system should be aligned with its logic model and proposal narrative.



INDICATORS are a particular characteristic or dimension used to measure intended changes. Indicators are used to observe progress and measure actual results compared with expected results. Indicators answer “how” or “whether” a project is progressing toward objectives. Indicators can be expressed quantitatively and should be objective and measurable (e.g., numeric value, percentages, indices). Although indicators are mainly expressed in quantitative terms, the methods used to collect data can often be qualitative in nature (e.g. qualitative survey questions, observation).

The selected and clearly defined indicators should be included within an M&E PLAN

A PROJECT M&E PLAN demonstrates, with clearly defined and described indicators, how progress toward outputs, outcomes and ultimately objectives/Goal/impact will be measured. The M&E plan contains details for each indicator, including: a definition; the indicator type; data source(s); how data will be disaggregated; the frequency of measurement; those responsible for data collection, analysis and reporting; and baselines (if available) and targets for indicators. The **M&E plan** is a key component because it **provides an understanding of how the project implementing organization intends to measure progress toward the project’s stated objectives and results**, as well as the details of each indicator.

KEY MONITORING & EVALUATION TERMS – GLOSSARY

Activity: An action or process undertaken over a specific period of time by an organization. Activities convert inputs (resources) to products or services, in order to achieve outputs and outcomes.

Assumptions: Hypotheses about factors or risks, such as underlying beliefs about the program, and the stakeholders or beneficiaries that should be involved. If these underlying beliefs do not occur, they can affect the progress or success of a program.

Baseline: Information collected before or at the start of a project or program. Baselines provide a basis for planning and/or assessing progress.

Benchmark: A standard against which results are measured. Related terms: Milestone, Target.

Beneficiaries: The individuals, groups, or organizations that benefit from an activity or project, or program.

Data: Information collected by a researcher or program implementer. Data gathered during an evaluation are analyzed to yield findings that serve as the basis for conclusions and recommendations.

Data Collection Methods: Techniques used to identify information sources, collect information, and minimize bias during an evaluation. Examples include surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Evaluation: A systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project or program. Evaluations are undertaken to (a) improve the performance of existing programs, (b) assess their effects and impacts, and (c) inform decisions about future programming. Evaluations involve the systematic collection and analysis of project data.

Evaluation Design: The approach and methodology selected for collecting and analyzing data in order to reach conclusions about program efficiency and effectiveness.

External Evaluation: The evaluation of a project or program conducted by entities and individuals not directly related to the implementing organization. Related term: Independent Evaluation.

External Factors: Factors which are not explicitly in the control of program staff or an implementing partner, but which can have a significant effect on intended outcomes and impact. Common external factors include changes in government policies or the political situation in a country (e.g. law restricting NGO activities).

Goal: The higher-order objective to which a project or program is intended to contribute. A goal should be lofty in nature and not resource-dependent. Many projects can contribute to the same goal.

Impact: A result or effect that is caused by or attributable to a project or program. It can also be a significant and measurable change affecting project beneficiaries. Impact is often used to refer to the higher-level effects of a program that occur in the medium or long term, and can be intended or unintended, positive or negative.

Independent Evaluation: An evaluation carried out by entities and persons not directly involved in the implementation of a project or program. It is characterized by full access to information and by full autonomy to carry out research and report findings, without undue influence from program managers and staff. Related term: External Evaluation.

Indicator: A particular characteristic or dimension used to measure intended changes. Indicators are used to observe progress and measure actual results compared to expected results (targets). Indicators answer “how” or “whether” a project is progressing toward associated objectives. Indicators can be expressed quantitatively and should be objective and measurable (e.g. numeric value, percentages, indices). Indicators that are qualitative are less common, though acceptable. Examples of indicators include: number of gender-based violence survivors provided social support services; percent change in knowledge about investigative journalism.

Input: Resources used to produce an output. Inputs generally include technical assistance, supplies, funds, or training. Resources provided for program implementation. Examples: money, staff, time, facilities, equipment, curriculum.

Internal Evaluation: Evaluation conducted by the organization implementing and/or managing the intervention or program. Evaluation specialists, within the evaluation unit of a grantee organization, generally conduct internal evaluation.

Logic Model: A visual representation that provides a “road map” showing the sequence of related events. The logic model should connect beneficiaries’ needs (the need for a planned program) with the programs’ desired outcomes. It should identify project elements (e.g., inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact) and their relationships to one another (i.e. how outputs lead to outcomes), as well as the assumptions or risks that may influence success and failure.

Milestone: Specific interim events, products, or steps in a process that convey progress or completion of a deliverable or result. Milestones tend to be output-oriented. Examples include: product developed, working group established, recommendations drafted by working group. Indicators can also be measured by milestone, rather than a specific quantity. Related terms: Benchmark, Target.

Monitoring: The systematic collection of data to measure progress (based on performance indicators or other metrics). Progress is tracked based on expectations (targets) set before activities are implemented. Monitoring should be used to inform managers about the progress of an ongoing intervention or program, and to detect problems that can be addressed through corrective action.

Objective: A statement of the condition or state one expects to achieve. Objectives should be concrete, time-bound, and measurable and viewed as targets within the general goal.

Outcome: Specific changes in events, occurrences, or conditions, such as attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, skills, or status. Outcomes are caused by a project (i.e. attributable to outputs or program activities), and are often expressed at an individual level among program participants. For example, if a program trains human rights defenders (HRDs) on

improving tactics and strategies to more effectively advocate for the rights of a vulnerable group, the number of HRDs trained is the output; skills acquired by HRDs, a demonstrated improvement of advocacy campaigns, and effectively reaching target audiences (general public, government) are outcomes. Outcome is often used to refer to more immediate and intended effects. Related term: Result.

Output: A tangible, immediate, and intended product or result of an activity that is within an organization's control. Program deliverables are generally considered outputs. Examples include: number of journalist trained, number of media articles written, number of manuals distributed.

Program: A set of activities implemented by a defined set of implementers and designed to achieve specific objectives over a specified period of time. A program may cut across sectors, themes or geographic areas. Related terms: Portfolio, Project.

Program Evaluation: Evaluation of a set of activities designed to understand whether specific (global, regional, country, sector) development objectives were achieved. A program is a time-bound intervention involving multiple activities that may cut across sectors, themes and/or geographic areas.

Project: An individually planned undertaking designed to achieve specific objectives within a given budget and time frame. Several projects may make up a program. Related terms: Activity, Program.

Result: A significant, intended, or unintended, and measurable change in the condition of a beneficiary. Results can also refer to a change at the host country or institution level that affects beneficiaries directly or indirectly. Related term: Outcome.

Scope of Work (SoW): A written description of the objectives, tasks, approaches or methods, deliverables and schedule for a project or evaluation.

Target: An expected value or level for an indicator, at a specified point in time in the future. The target shows the level of achievement that is expected in order for results to occur. Targets are compared against actual results. A target is defined for each indicator as part of the M&E plan. Related terms: Benchmark, Milestone.

Efficiency: A measure of how economically inputs (resources such as funds, expertise, time) are converted into results.

Effectiveness: The extent to which a program/intervention has achieved its objectives under normal conditions in a real-life setting.

Efficacy: The extent to which an intervention produces the expected results under ideal conditions in a controlled environment.

Sustainability: Sustainability describes the process of continued existence of benefits from an intervention after the concrete implementation has been completed. A project is sustainable if the changes purposely set in motion and supported (effects, processes, etc.) during the duration of the project/programme can be continuously developed and maintained over time.

Validity: The extent to which a measurement or test accurately measures what is intended to be measured

Main material source: *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Guide to Program Monitoring and Evaluation*