

Monitoring and evaluation

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How To guide
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Why do monitoring and evaluation?

Monitoring and evaluation are fundamental aspects of good programme management.

Monitoring and evaluation are used for:

Quality

- To provide data on programme progress and effectiveness
- To improve programme management and decision-making
- To provide data to plan future resource needs
- To provide data useful for policy-making and advocacy

Accountability

- To allow accountability to stakeholders, including donors, partners, and project users or beneficiaries

Learning

- To provide opportunities to learn from experience of the current project
- To provide evidence about what works to inform future programmes and scaling up

What are monitoring and evaluation?

Monitoring

Systematic and continuous assessment of the progress of a piece of work over time, which checks that things are “going to plan” and enables adjustments to be made in a methodical way.

Monitoring is the routine tracking of the key elements of programme/project performance, usually inputs and outputs and some of the outcomes, through record-keeping, regular reporting and surveillance systems as well as observation and studies.

Evaluation

The episodic assessment of the change in targeted results that can be attributed to the programme or project. Evaluation attempts to link a particular output or outcome directly to an intervention after a period of time has passed.

An evaluation is usually carried out at some significant stage in the project’s development, eg at the end of a planning period, as the project moves to a new phase, or in response to a particular critical issue.

Impact assessment

The assessment of the long-term and wide-ranging changes that a project or programme brings about, including unintended and negative changes.

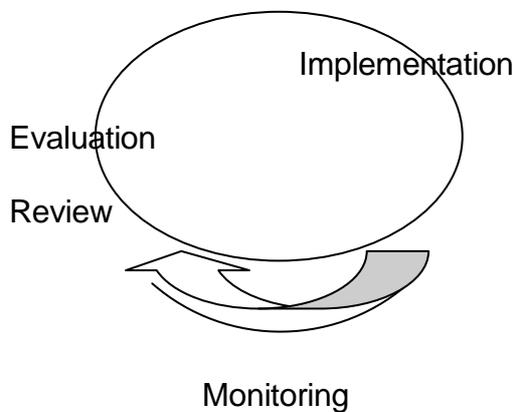
Impact assessment focuses on changes beyond those visible or achieved during the lifetime of most projects or programmes, and is therefore usually undertaken some time after the project or programme implementation period.

When: the project cycle

Monitoring and evaluation are essential components of the project cycle.

Processes in the project cycle

Assessment and planning



Assessment and planning

- Identify and understand a problem
- Plan a series of actions to deal with it
- Develop clear aims and objectives

Situation analysis

Carry out a systematic and analytic situation analysis with the participation of stakeholders to ensure a firm basis for project design.

- Include gender and power analysis
- Rights-based analysis can be used for holistic analysis of different aspects of a situation that affect people's rights.

Goal or aims

Define your goal or aims to provide vision and direction to programme design. Aims describe the longer term impact the project is expected to contribute to. They relate to

- Your principles, mission statement, values

- Broader issues of local plans and national development strategies

Objectives

Define your objectives - what change the work is trying to bring about - so you can design strategy and activities accordingly.

Activities

Plan your activities - what the project actually does to achieve the aims and objectives - based on the situation analysis, the capacity of your organisation and the available resources.

Outputs and outcomes

Clarify the expected outputs of each activity, and the desired outcomes to meet your objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation

Consider how a project will be monitored and evaluated at the design and planning stage:

- If changes are to be observed – record the situation before the project starts
- Identify different purposes of monitoring and evaluation for different stakeholders
- Identify indicators to provide evidence that you have achieved your planned outputs and outcomes
- Identify the most appropriate methods for collecting and analysing information



Point of Measurement	What is Measured	Indicators
Outputs	Effort	Implementation of activities
Outcomes	Effectiveness	Use of outputs and sustained production of benefits
Impact	Change	Difference from the original problem situation

Fowler, 1997 (quoted in Bakewell, Adams and Pratt 2003, see references on page 6)

Who: donors, partners and beneficiaries

Different stakeholders will have different requirements from the project cycle. The design of a planning, monitoring, or evaluation process will depend on who needs to know what, and why.

Each group will have specific use for monitoring and evaluation information:

- Donors and the wider public need to know how the money was spent and what was achieved in order to be accountable.
- Programme managers, implementers and partners need to know what is going well and what is going badly so they can take measures to improve it. They also need to be able to learn from the experience in order to develop their own capacity and the quality of future projects.
- Project users and beneficiaries need information from monitoring and evaluation in order to hold the providers to account and to have more control over decisions that affect them. Has the work actually resulted in improvements in their lives, and how can they ensure it is really relevant to their needs?

How: different approaches

In monitoring and evaluation you need to understand the issues people face, their causes, effects, and relationships. You need to understand a complex, dynamic and constantly changing situation, and how your programme fits into and affects it.

Monitoring and evaluation is about clarifying what you are trying to do, and collecting and analysing information which shows whether or not you are doing it and how you might do it better.

In project management, the process of collecting, analysing and using information goes on informally all the time. Monitoring and evaluation also requires the "formal" and systematic collection and analysis of information. The information needs to be reliable and trustworthy. It is the evidence on which decisions are made about the work.

Which approach to use?

The type of approach to use depends on what information is required, by whom, and what it will be used for. Monitoring and evaluation systems usually use a combination of methods.

Choose the most appropriate combination of methods to suit the purpose of the exercise, the resources available and the nature of the activities and outcomes the project aims to achieve. For example, assessing changes in people's awareness of their rights will be very different from assessing changes in agricultural productivity.

Approaches can be quantitative or qualitative, top down or bottom up, with or without indicators. It is always important to triangulate, ie cross-check the information using different methods and different people.

Examples of approaches

Quantitative – the change in indicators can be shown through numbers

For example:

- Surveys with set questionnaires
- Predefined data collection formats

Useful for recording and comparing predetermined variables (for example, the number of children suffering from defined diseases in relation to access to clean water, the number of people attending clinics)

Qualitative – the change is shown through description

For example:

- Rapid assessment techniques,
- Focus group discussions
- Semi-structured interviews

Allow a more open-ended and in-depth investigation, but often over a smaller area (for example, why children become ill, how this is treated, how it affects their families)

Participatory approaches

For example:

- Visual methods that do not rely on high levels of literacy: photos, diagrams, maps, timelines
- Stories, drama and song
- Mapping, ranking and scoring

Participatory approaches allow the differences in people’s interests, needs and priorities to be recognised by insiders and outsiders, and form the

basis for negotiation between stakeholders.

They also allow people to benefit from analysing and asserting their own interests, and make a meaningful contribution to the way the programme is designed, managed and implemented.

It is a way of ensuring relevance of the programme, and promoting ownership of local people, which is essential for any chance of sustainability and success in the long term.

Logical frameworks

1	2	3	4

The logical framework is a commonly used tool for setting out the logical theory of change underlying a project, the indicators that will be used to monitor progress, and the means by which information about those indicators will be verified. It is the most commonly used results and indicator based monitoring and evaluation framework.

1. The first column describes the logical hierarchy of the project, clarifying the links between
 - Goal (the higher purpose of the work)
 - Purpose (the specific purpose of the project)
 - Outputs (the immediate results of the different components of the project)
 - Activities (the different activities that will be carried out)
2. The second column describes indicators that will be used to demonstrate achievement of the levels

3. The third column gives details of the means that will be used to verify the indicators
4. The fourth column sets out the risks and assumptions underlying the project design that could affect the successful achievement of the aims and objectives

Most significant change

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is one of the most popular approaches that have been developed for monitoring and evaluation without indicators.

It is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation, based on telling stories about events people think were important and why they think they were significant.

There is no need to explain what an indicator is or learn special professional skills, so everyone can participate and the technique can be used in different cultural contexts.

MSC is particularly suited to monitoring a programme where the focus is on learning rather than just accountability.

Outcome mapping

Outcome mapping focuses on changes in the behaviour of people, groups, and organisations with whom a programme works directly. These changes are called “outcomes”.

Through Outcome Mapping development programmes can claim contributions to the achievement of outcomes rather than claiming direct cause and effect in the achievement of development impacts.

Instead of attempting to measure the impact of the programme’s partners on development, Outcome Mapping concentrates on monitoring and evaluating its results in terms of the influence of the programme on the roles these partners play in development.

References

Oliver Bakewell, Jerry Adams, Brian Pratt, *Sharpening the Development Process: A practical guide to monitoring and evaluation*, 2004, INTRAC

<http://www.intrac.org/resources.php?action=resource&id=345>

A very useful and straightforward guide

Gosling, L, Edwards M, *Toolkits: A practical guide to planning, monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment* (second edition) 2003, Save the Children UK

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/toolkits-practical-guide-planning-monitoring-evaluation-and-impact>

An all round introduction to the principles and practice of the project cycle, and an introduction to many of the common tools used

A handbook of data collection tools for monitoring and evaluating advocacy, 2007, Organizational Research Services

http://www.organizationalresearch.com/publicationsandresources/a_handbook_of_data_collection_tools.pdf

MandE News

www.mande.co.uk

An Internet based news service oriented towards NGOs. Focuses on developments in monitoring and evaluation methods relevant to development projects with social development objectives. Links to other sites related to monitoring and evaluation.

Bond effectiveness programme

<http://www.bond.org.uk/effectiveness>

Bond’s online Health Check enables international development organisations to understand their organisational strengths and weaknesses and to prioritise areas for improvement. The Impact Builder is an online sector-wide framework of tried and tested outcomes, indicators and tools for measuring programme performance across thematic areas and intervention approaches.

Dos and don'ts

A monitoring and evaluation framework

A monitoring and evaluation framework will set out what information should be collected, by whom, when and how and how often. It should clarify what information should be collected regularly for monitoring, and what should be looked at in an evaluation. The framework should also clearly state how the information will be used.

Do

- Be clear about your priorities for monitoring and evaluation, and who really needs what information
- Keep it simple – choose a few indicators that can be monitored to a high standard
- Make sure the people who are responsible for monitoring and evaluation benefit from it and learn from it
- Choose the methods that best suit the nature of information and purpose of monitoring and evaluation
- Be creative about how you report and share the findings to reach more stakeholders

Don't

- Try to answer too many questions that seem interesting but do not contribute to ensuring programme effectiveness
- Create a system that looks perfect in theory but is too complex in practice
- Turn monitoring and evaluation into a process of reporting to “others”
- Use methods that look authoritative but are not suitable for the nature or scale of your work
- Forget the importance of downward accountability and learning when the push for donor reporting seems overwhelming

Find out more from Bond

Training courses

This guide will put you on the right path, but to really get to grips with the subject you need to attend:

- **Monitoring and evaluation essentials** with Antonella Mancini and Pauline Wilson

This course is part of Bond's regular open programme of short training courses, which also includes:

- **Beyond the basics: MEL planning and practice** with Antonella Mancini and Pauline Wilson
- **Project planning using a logical framework approach** with Jane Davies
- **Theory of change essentials** with Maureen O'Flynn
- **Impact assessment: what difference did we make?** with Maureen O'Flynn
- **Outcome mapping** with Simon Batchelor

bond.org.uk/learn

More How To guides

- **Advocacy and campaigning** by Ian Chandler
- **Fundraising from institutions** by Angela James
- **Fundraising from trusts, foundations and companies** by Bill Bruty
- **The logical framework approach** by Greta Jensen
- **Project budgeting** by John Cammack

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