



This newsletter is sent to you by **Insideout**, as part of our commitment to building greater understanding of monitoring and evaluation practice. We hope that the information will be helpful to you in the work that you do.

### GREETINGS FROM INSIDEOUT!

Have you ever asked yourself: What are useful indicators? How do I develop indicators? Where can I find examples of good indicators? This issue highlights useful online resources, which will help you to answer these and other questions relating to indicators.

## ISSUE #1: INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT

### WHAT ARE INDICATORS?

"An indicator is the measure that is used to assess if an objective has been achieved or what progress has been made." (Randel, M. (2002) *Panning for Monitoring & Evaluation*, Olive Publications, Durban)

"Indicators help you understand where you are, which way you are going and how far you are from where you want to be." (Hart, 1995 in Abbot, J. & Guijt, I. *Changing views on change: participatory approaches to monitoring the environment*, SARL discussion paper 2, DIFID).

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF INDICATORS

Here are some of the types of indicators you might have heard mentioned:

- Performance indicators
- Process indicators
- Outcome indicators
- Impact indicators
- Proxy indicators
- Qualitative/Quantitative indicators

More about definitions of performance monitoring, evaluation, and performance indicators can be found in USAID's handbook [www.usaid.gov/pubs/isp/handbook/isp2\\_ii.html](http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/isp/handbook/isp2_ii.html)

For more general evaluation definitions visit the OECD/DAC's Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation & Results based Management [www.oecd.org/findDocument/0,2350,en\\_2649\\_34435\\_1\\_119678\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/findDocument/0,2350,en_2649_34435_1_119678_1_1_1,00.html)

### HOW DO I DEVELOP INDICATORS?

- \* **Step one**\_Ensure stakeholder buy in [www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/sdd-dn1.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/sdd-dn1.pdf)
- \* **Step two**\_Spell out your programme's theory/logic [www.charityvillage.com/cv/research/rstrat3.html](http://www.charityvillage.com/cv/research/rstrat3.html) & [www.wfkkf.org/Programming/ResourceOverview](http://www.wfkkf.org/Programming/ResourceOverview)
- \* **Step three**\_Develop indicators to measure your programme's expected results [www.careinternational.org.uk/resource\\_centre/civilsociety/guidelines\\_to\\_monitoring\\_and\\_evaluation.pdf](http://www.careinternational.org.uk/resource_centre/civilsociety/guidelines_to_monitoring_and_evaluation.pdf)

## HOW DO I SELECT THE MOST USEFUL INDICATORS?

The final choice of indicators is determined by your project's needs. When developing and selecting indicators it is important to keep the following questions in mind:

- What information is needed to manage the project?
- Who will use the information?
- What are the limits of each indicator imposed by cost and technique of collecting and analysing the data?
- Does the indicator test killer/key assumptions?
- How much can the indicator be expected to change over time?

## "GOOD" AND "BAD" INDICATORS

When assessing indicators, it is essential to consider if the indicator gets to the heart of the issue reflected in the project's intermediate goal. Is the indicator valid? Does it measure (or assess) what it is supposed to? (Extract from Tom Barton's and CARE International's 2002 *Monitoring and Evaluation Guideline: How are we doing?*)

This can be illustrated with an example.

### If a project's intermediate goal is:

*"By December, 2005, a functioning and sustainable benefit-sharing programme between the Bwindi National Park and surrounding communities, and between the state farms and surrounding communities will exist."*

### An indicator could be:

*"20% of sampled households will participate in income-generating activities."*

However, the problem with this is that the indicator is not clearly linked to the goal above, and it is expressed as a target.

### A more helpful indicator is:

*"% of communities within a X km border zone around Bwindi Park with self-funded natural resource programmes in place for at least XX (time)."*

This indicator is very specific, making it easily measurable. It is also more directly linked to the work of the project.

For more examples, please refer to page 62 of the *Monitoring and Evaluation Guideline* manual:

[www.careinternational.org.uk/resource\\_centre/civilsociety/guideines\\_to\\_monitoring\\_and\\_evaluation.pdf](http://www.careinternational.org.uk/resource_centre/civilsociety/guideines_to_monitoring_and_evaluation.pdf)

## ONLINE EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS

Visit these sites for some other online examples of indicators:

- Indicators for monitoring progress and evaluating impact of interventions to improve **infant feeding** in emergencies: [www.enonline.net/ife/report/Monitoring.html](http://www.enonline.net/ife/report/Monitoring.html)
- Indicators for measuring **HIV/AIDS-related stigma**: [www.insideoutresearch.co.za/docs/SA\\_stigma.pdf](http://www.insideoutresearch.co.za/docs/SA_stigma.pdf)

## WHAT IS A USEFUL INDICATOR?

Different donor organisations have their own criteria for what constitutes a good indicator. Different approaches to M&E also emphasise different characteristics for useful indicators. It is important that your organisation first agrees on which criteria you will use to select your indicators. The most commonly used criteria include:

- Relevant
- Practical
- Objective
- Adequate
- Participative
- Usable

Below, page 3, is a **summary table** comparing the **criteria for indicators** suggested by the United Nations Population Fund, a participatory monitoring approach, USAID, and CARE International. As you will notice, there are some common criteria for useful indicators, as well as some noticeable variations.

*United Nations Population Fund	USAID	**CARE International
		<b>Comprehensive:</b> Indicators should be worded simply and clearly so that people involved in the project will be able to understand them.
<b>Relevant</b> to programme and to national standards		<b>Relevant</b>
<b>Direct:</b> Closely measure the intended change	<b>Direct</b> Indirect or proxy indicators can be used when other considerations, such as cost or timeliness, make that necessary	
<b>Practical:</b> Reasonable in terms of data collection cost, frequency, timeliness for decision-making purposes	<b>Practical:</b> should 1) provide data to managers at a cost that is reasonable and appropriate, as compared with the management utility of the data; 2) have data available on a frequent enough basis to inform regular program management decisions; and, 3) have data available that are current enough to be useful in decision-making	<b>_Technically feasible:</b> Should be capable of being assessed or measured if quantitative <b>_Usable:</b> People within the project should be able to understand and to use the information provided by the indicators to make decisions or improve their work and the performance of the project <b>_Cost effective</b> <b>_Timely</b>
	Disaggregated	
	<b>Quantitative</b>	
<b>Objective:</b> Unambiguous about what is being measured and which data to be collected and clear operational definition that is independent of the person conducting the measurement	<b>Objective</b>	<b>_Reliable:</b> Should be verifiable and (relatively) objective <b>_Valid:</b> Indicators should actually measure what they are supposed to measure, e.g., measuring effects due to project interventions rather than outside influences <b>_Sensitive:</b> They should be capable of demonstrating changes in the situation being observed, e.g., measuring the GNP of Uganda doesn't tell us much about the individual households in one district.
<b>Adequate:</b> Minimum number of indicators necessary to ensure that progress towards the output is sufficiently captured	<b>Adequate</b>	
<b>Easy to interpret</b> Should enable <b>tracking</b> over time		
	<b>Widely accepted</b> for use by specialists in a relevant subject area, exhibit readily understandable face validity, and/or be supported by a specific body of technical research	<b>_Participatory:</b> The steps for working with the indicator should be capable of being carried out with the target community and other stakeholders in a participatory manner: i.e., data collection, analysis and use <b>_Ethical:</b> the collection and use of the indicators should be acceptable to the communities (target populations) providing the information.

**Notes:**

\* United Nations Population Fund: [www.unfpa.org/monitoring/toolkit.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/monitoring/toolkit.htm)

\*\* CARE International: [www.careinternational.org.uk/resource\\_centre/civilsociety/guidelines\\_to\\_monitoring\\_and\\_evaluation.pdf](http://www.careinternational.org.uk/resource_centre/civilsociety/guidelines_to_monitoring_and_evaluation.pdf) page 60

**WHO IS INSIDEOUT?**

**Insideout** is a consultancy, specialising in services including:

- Conducting programme evaluations
- Developing monitoring frameworks
- Running M&E training courses

**CONTACT US**

t: +27 21 448 4577 | f: +27 21 447 1040 | e: [natasha@insideoutresearch.co.za](mailto:natasha@insideoutresearch.co.za) | [www.insideoutresearch.co.za](http://www.insideoutresearch.co.za)  
a: 225 Lower Main Road, Observatory, 7925, Cape Town, South Africa.

You are receiving this newsletter because you signed up telephonically or at [www.insideoutresearch.co.za](http://www.insideoutresearch.co.za). If you want to unsubscribe to this newsletter, please send an email with UNSUBSCRIBE as the subject to [chantel@insideoutresearch.co.za](mailto:chantel@insideoutresearch.co.za). Feedback and comments are very welcome.