



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!

In the next two issues, we will be focusing on monitoring systems and how to set up a monitoring system for your programme. This current issue attempts to answer the following questions:

- What is monitoring?
- What is the difference between monitoring and evaluation?
- How can monitoring help you?
- How do you develop a monitoring system?

ISSUE #3: DEVELOPING A MONITORING FRAMEWORK

What is monitoring?

“Monitoring is a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds.*”

“Monitoring can be defined as a continuing function that aims primarily to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results.”

Notes:

* <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf>

** http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/eo/evalnet/docstore3/yellowbook/documents/part_1.pdf

Simply put, monitoring is a **routine, ongoing, and internal** activity of **collecting information** on the programme's **outputs, outcomes and indicators** to measure the **performance** of the programme.

Monitoring may sound complicated and time consuming, but in fact we monitor our activities everyday.

Everyday example 1: Baking a cake. You want to bake a cake (address a need/problem). You have the ingredients and equipment, including eggs, flour, baking powder, sugar and stove (your inputs) and your recipe (programme theory). Even though you could rely solely on the recipe's guidance for how long the cake will take to bake, you also use your own indicators because you know that some stoves are different and not every cake turns out the same. Your indicators include:

- Golden brown colour of the cake
- Cake has risen to a certain height
- Piercing the cake with a metal stick to see if any dough sticks to it

You also know when it's too late – the cake is black and smells burnt. These too are indicators.

Everyday example 2: Taking a long walk: You have a map (programme theory) to guide you, packed a bag with water and other food supplies. You also packed a compass (tool). Together with your map and your compass you can measure where you are on the route and can see whether you are on the right track. Monitoring your whereabouts will allow you to see, not only if you're lost or not, but also whether you have enough supplies and if you should consider a different route so that you don't run out of water.

Therefore, in our own way we monitor everyday. What is important to consider, is that it is based on our own logic and actually comes quite naturally. Programme monitoring can be equally logical and simple.

What is the difference between monitoring and evaluation?

*“Evaluation is an important monitoring tool and monitoring is an important input to evaluation. ***”*

Both monitoring and evaluation measures and assesses performance, but in different ways and at different times. Therefore, while monitoring takes place throughout the project implementation, evaluation is the periodic assessment of the performance of the project. Monitoring is an internal activity carried out by project staff and it is generally the project management’s responsibility to see that it happens and the results are used. On the other hand, evaluation can be carried out internally or externally and it is the responsibility of the evaluator together with programme staff members.

Monitoring	Evaluation
Ongoing, continuous	Periodic and time bound
Internal activity	Can be internal, often external
Responsibility of project staff and management	Responsibility of evaluator together with staff and management
Continuous feedback to improve programme	Periodic feedback

In other words, monitoring provides useful information, which can be used in an evaluation. To better understand the relationship between monitoring and evaluation it is important to understand that there are different kinds of evaluations depending on the project cycle. **Summative evaluations** are conducted periodically to inform reporting and decision making such as whether to continue to provide funding. **Formative evaluations** on the other hand are ongoing and provide feedback to inform ongoing changes and improvements. Monitoring is a form of formative evaluation, as it provides ongoing information, which can be used to improve the programme.

How can monitoring help you?

- It brings to attention changes in project implementation and staff can then decide on the best response to the changes.
- It allows you to continuously improve your programme and project staff’s approach to work.
- It assists in identifying problems so that the project staff has sufficient time to decide how to respond.
- It ensures accountability. It can provide donors and others with regular updates to maintain their support and interest****.

Without monitoring, whether formal or informal, it would be impossible to know whether you are on the right track, whether you have made any progress or if changes need to be made to improve your programme. Monitoring establishes a clear link between the past, present and future and the programme’s results.

How do you develop a monitoring system?

We have divided the process of designing a monitoring system into five steps. Other articles may discuss any number of steps or stages, which may be different from these five steps, but the process is similar. The steps are:

- Step 1: Designing a programme logic model**
- Step 2: Determining critical areas to be monitored**
- Step 3: Deciding what data to collect**
- Step 4: Assigning responsibilities**
- Step 5: Monitoring system**

STEP 1: Developing your programme’s logic model

What are programme logic models?

*“A logical framework or programme logic model (logframe) is a management tool used to improve the design of interventions, most often at the project level. It involves identifying strategic elements (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact) and their causal relationships, indicators, and the assumptions or risks that may influence success and failure. It thus facilitates planning, execution and evaluation of a development intervention *****”*

Notes:

- ***http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/eo/evalnet/docstore3/yellowbook/documents/part_1.pdf
- **** http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/eo/evalnet/docstore3/yellowbook/documents/part_1.pdf
- *****<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf>

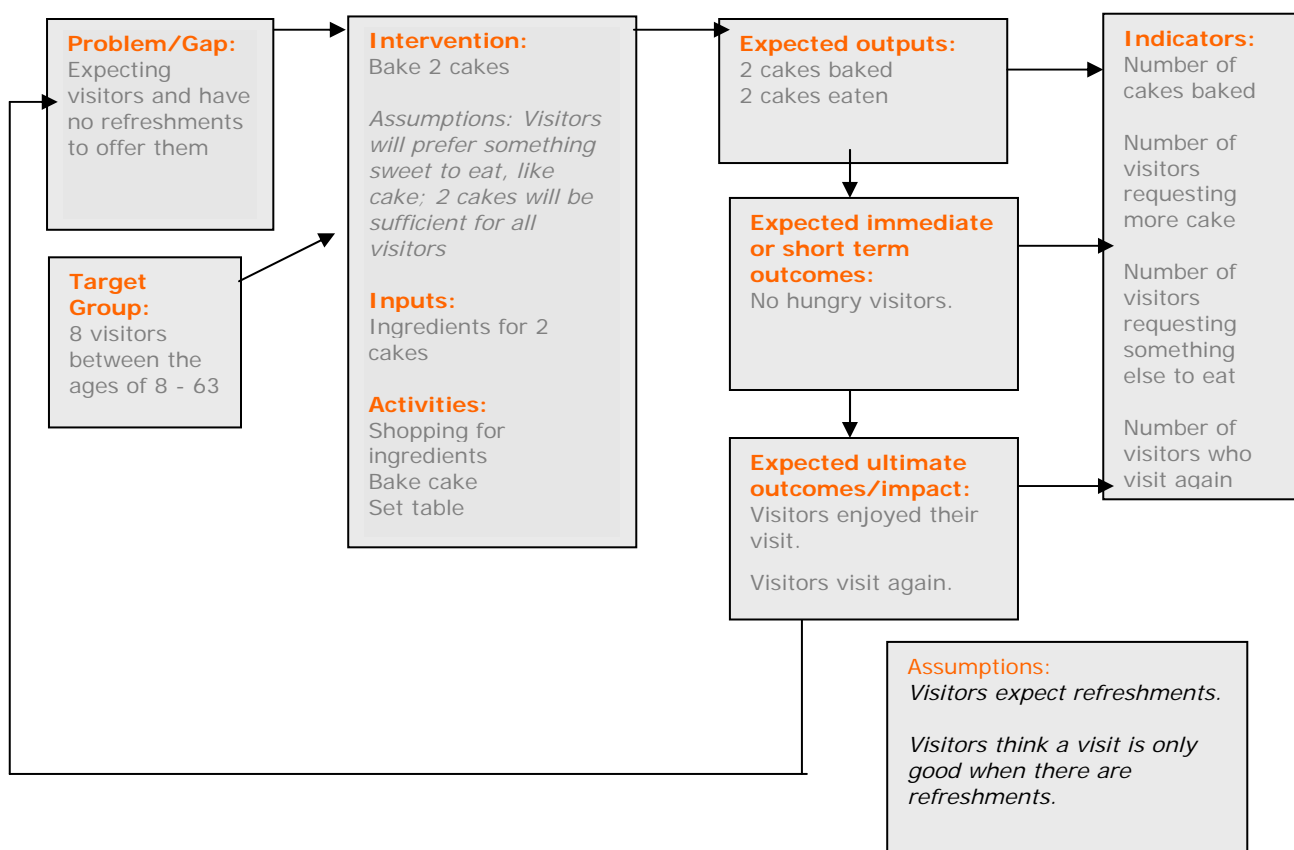
The following section presents the 'jargon' of the logic model as well as their definitions. The **programme logic model** will typically include:

Problem	The overall problem the programme attempts to solve or alleviate.
Target group	The specific individuals or intended beneficiaries of the intervention. You can have direct and indirect target groups.
Inputs	Resources going into conducting and carrying out the project or programme, e.g. staff, finance, materials, time.
Activities	What we do with the inputs for specific results to address the problem.
Expected outputs	Expected short-term results or immediate results of the programme, such as services and products.
Expected outcomes	Expected changes as a result of the programme's outputs.
Expected impact	Expected ultimate result of the programme's outcomes.
Indicators	The measure that is used to assess if a result has been achieved or what progress has been made. These should measure output, outcome and impact level results/changes.
Assumptions	The beliefs we have about how and why the intervention will address the problem we set out to address.

Notes:

Also see Randel, M. (2002) Panning for Monitoring & Evaluation, Olive Publications, Durban); McLaughlin and Jordan, Logic Models: A tool for telling you programmes performance, http://www.communitylivingta.info/files/77/3820/logic_models_paper.pdf)

The diagram below illustrates one possible way of how to map out your programme theory and shows how the various monitoring aspects are linked. Other examples can be found in the resources listed below.



Why is it important to develop the programme logic of your programme?

While building a logic model to map out your programme's theory can be time consuming, it is essential in developing a monitoring system. It is the solid foundation for your monitoring framework. As a map or a recipe, it reflects what you and your team think about how and why your intervention should work and what it will result in.

Some of the benefits of setting out your programme theory include:

- The process **builds consensus** between staff members of key elements of the programme, which is critical to the programmes success.
- It helps **clarify the programme** for staff to ensure all have the **same understanding**. As a result it can **enhance team building** and **stakeholder buy-in**.
- It makes the **programmes assumptions explicit** and enables you to test your assumptions.

Resources for developing programme theory or logic models

1. A good resource that explains how to conduct a problem tree analysis which can assist you in clearly defining the problem your programme is designed to address can be found at: <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/164047/howdo/working4.htm#1>
2. A great introduction to programme logic model can be found at: <http://www.insites.org/documents/logmod.htm> The site provides a useful introduction to logic models and can answer questions relating to logic models such as: What is a logic model? Why develop logic models? What is the difference between logic models and action plans?
3. Another general introductory article is Logic Models: A tool for telling your programmes performance, by McLaughlin and Jordan. It discusses the different stages in building a logic model and can be found at: http://www.communitylivingta.info/files/77/3820/logic_models_paper.pdf
4. A great site which provides an online step by step self study course on how to develop your programme logic model and includes some useful resources which you can download such as a biography of resources for programme logic development and a worksheet can be found at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/lmcourse/#>. Simply click on Module 1: Logic Model Basics and a new window will appear. Start at section 1 and navigate through the course content using the arrows at the bottom right of the page.
5. Another comprehensive resource "A Logic Development Guide" which provides useful exercises, checklists and templates for developing your programme logic can be found at www.wkkf.org/pubs/tools/evaluation/pub3669.pdf

WHO IS INSIDEOUT?

Insideout is a consultancy, specialising in services including:

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

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