



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 #4: DEVELOPING A MONITORING FRAMEWORK PART 2

In the last newsletter you learnt how to develop your organisation's programme logic using the logic model. The logic model is the first step in developing a monitoring system. To recap what we learnt in the previous newsletters concerning the logic model and indicator development, you can access it at www.insideoutresearch.co.za.

In this issue we will be dealing with the subsequent steps in the process of developing your monitoring system:

Step 2: Determining critical areas to be monitored

Step 3: Deciding how to collect the data

Step 4: Assigning responsibilities

Step 5: Monitoring framework

STEP 2: Determining critical areas to be monitored

What needs to be monitored? Information needs of users

You cannot monitor for every output, outcome or impact as this would be time-consuming and expensive. You need to strategically decide which areas you will monitor, based on the information needs of the various stakeholders of the programme.

Stakeholders may include:

- **Project management** who may use information to discover the reasons for problems, make planning and implementation decisions, use the lessons for planning other projects or policy making.
- **Project staff** who may use the results to deepen their understanding of the context of their work, discover how well they are implementing their work, understand the reasons for management decisions, learn what problems need to be solved.
- **Donors** who may use information for accountability and reporting requirements, decide whether to continue to fund the project, learn about the effectiveness of different projects.
- **Beneficiaries** who may use information to understand changes they are experiencing, reasons behind decisions, contribute to their ownership of the project which could improve the chances of sustaining the projects effectiveness.

For every indicator you need to ask the following questions:

- What information is needed for decision-making?

- When is each item of information needed?
- In what format should the information be presented to the end-user?
- How will they use the information?

Conducting a stakeholder analysis will help you to answer the above questions and determine which stakeholders to include in the design of the monitoring plan.

For an introduction to what a stakeholder analysis entails please refer to:

http://portals.wdi.wur.nl/ppme/index.php?Stakeholder_Analysis
[www.care.ca/libraries/dme/CARE%20Documents%20PDF/Project%20Design%20Handbook%20\(Published%20Version\).pdf](http://www.care.ca/libraries/dme/CARE%20Documents%20PDF/Project%20Design%20Handbook%20(Published%20Version).pdf)

What needs to be monitored? *Levels of monitoring: inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact*

It is important to monitor the **inputs** of the programme and **activities** to ensure that the programme is functioning as it is intended. In this way you are monitoring the process of implementing the programme and can easily identify problems in delivery and make the necessary changes.

You also need to monitor the **outputs**, i.e. the expected short-term results or immediate results of the programme such as services and products, as well as the **outcomes** of the project, i.e. the expected changes as a result of the programme's outputs. It is important to monitor the outputs as these directly effect whether the desired outcomes are reached.

However, it is difficult to measure the **impact** of the programme, i.e. the ultimate result of the programme's outcomes, as the final impact is influenced by many factors external to the programme that could have an influence. You could logically assume that should the outcomes of the project be met, the programme should have the desired impact. The impact of the programme is best measured during an impact assessment, which controls for external influences. Measuring the impact of the programme would only be conducted after the project has been running for a long period of time and would usually be conducted by an external evaluator.

Monitoring the programme's assumptions

Remember it is also important to monitor your assumptions as these determine whether your programme is going to have the desired impact. Indicators would have to be developed for the assumptions so that you can keep track of whether these are met or not.

Programme assumptions are:

External factors (i.e. events, conditions or decisions) that could affect the progress or success of a project or programme. They are necessary to achieve the project objectives, but are largely or completely beyond the control of the project management. They are worded as positive conditions. Initial assumptions are those conditions perceived to be essential for the success of a project or programme. Critical (or "killer") assumptions are those conditions perceived to threaten the implementation of a project or programme.*

Note:

* <http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/annexa/a.htm>

STEP 3: Deciding how to collect data

Once you have determined which activities will be the most important to track you need to decide how the necessary information will be collected and who will need to be involved in the process of data collection.

3 Key considerations for data collection

1. Primary vs. secondary information

You can use either primary or secondary information to monitor your inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. **Primary** information is information that you will be the first to collect, while **secondary** information is information that already exists, which was collected by other people or organisations.

You may have secondary information available in the form of reports and other material which you could look through to find the necessary information you need to assess your progress. In most cases you would not have access to the raw data, i.e. the actual interview responses and survey data and you might only be able to access the reports on which the data was based. This may limit the use of the data, in which case you would have to collect your own information.

2. Quantitative and Qualitative methods to collect information

Quantitative data is needed when a number, rate, or proportion related to the target population must be estimated or a variable must be measured. **Qualitative data** on the other hand is needed when the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the target population must be known in order to understand its reactions and responses to project services.

Generally you will have to collect both qualitative and quantitative data to monitor your programmes' performance. Qualitative information is particularly useful to answer *why* questions and projects need qualitative data about the nature of results (e.g., beneficial or harmful effects, intended or unintended impacts). However, projects also need quantitative data (e.g., about the distribution or intensity of the results) to ensure the accuracy and representativeness of the analysis. Barton, T. (1997). *Guidelines to Monitoring and Evaluation – How are we doing?* CARE International, Uganda.

Examples of quantitative data collection tools:

- Questionnaires and surveys
- Registers
- Log books
- Program activity forms
- Checklist

Examples of qualitative data collection tools:

- Individual interviews
- Group interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Key informant interviews
- Observations

3. Practical considerations

Some practical concerns that should be considered when selecting methods include:

- **Availability:** You may have information already available to you that can help answer some questions or guide the development of new guidelines. Review information in prior records, reports, and summaries.
- **Need for training or expert assistance:** Some information collection methods will require special skill on the part of the evaluator, or perhaps staff will need to be trained to assist with the evaluation.
- **Pilot testing:** You will need to test the information collection instrument or process you design, no matter the form or structure. You will need to plan time for this step and for any revisions that may result from this testing.
- **Protocol needs:** In many situations, you need to obtain appropriate permission or clearance to collect information from people or other resources. You will have to allow time to work through the proper channels.
- **Reactivity:** You do not want "how" you ask something to alter the response you will get. Reactivity may also be a concern if your presence during data collection may possibly alter the results. For example, if you as a supervisor are administering an opinion survey about a specific project, the responses your employees give may be influenced by their desire to please you as their supervisor, rather than based on their true feelings.
- **Bias:** Bias means to be prejudiced in opinion or judgment. Bias can enter the process in a variety of ways. For example, if you use a self-selected sample (when a person decides to participate in a study, rather than being picked randomly by the researcher), how might these respondents be different from the people that chose not to participate?
- **Reliability:** Will the monitoring process you have designed consistently measure what you want it to measure? If you use multiple interviews, settings, or observers, will they consistently measure the same thing each time? If you design an instrument, will people interpret your questions the same way each time?
- **Accuracy:** How precise should the measurement of information be? The level of error in the measurement.
- **Validity:** Will the information collection methods you have designed produce information that measures what you say you are measuring? Be sure that the information you collect is relevant.
- **Cost effectiveness:** This is the trade off between how accurate and reliable you need the information to be and how much money and other resources you have to spend on making the measurement. <http://ohioline.osu.edu/b868/pdf/b868.pdf>

Once you have decided which data collection methods and tools to use the next steps are to decide:

- When and how often the information needs to be collected?
- How to capture the information?
- How will the information be analysed?
- How will the information be presented?

Different types of data collection methods

1. This website provides an overview of common data collection methods and offers guidelines for their use, such as surveys and questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, observations, tests and assessments, and secondary sources and data reviews. This resource can be accessed in html or pdf.

www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/snapshot5.html

www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/afterschool/resources/snapshot5.pdf

2. This website provides an outline of collecting data by means of questionnaires, focus group discussions and direct observation to name a few. <http://dmc.umn.edu/evaluation/data.shtml>

3. For an in-depth discussion of different data collection considerations and methods please refer to the following website:

www.fhi.org/NR/rdonlyres/ezr5mmykqhlpic6smphumwz6zzr2vjkbj3r2phvxhyjba4dkpz7cuv22hezj4hsnlha5ixtd3m3p/Chapter7.pdf

The importance of baseline information

You could start collecting information on the indicators you developed, but in order to measure change you have to have something to measure it against. Baseline information serves as a point of comparison.

Baseline information is:

*Information, usually consisting of facts and figures collected at the initial stages of a project, that provides a basis for measuring progress in achieving project objectives and outputs**.*

For example, imagine that you are implementing a programme aimed at preventing teenage pregnancies and your expected long-term outcome is to reduce teenage pregnancies by X %. You find that 50 of teenagers in your target population have fallen pregnant in the last year. However, you cannot assess whether there has been a decrease or increase in teenage pregnancies if you do not have information about the number of teenage pregnancies before the project commenced. You would therefore need some form of baseline information against which to assess the information you have collected. The best you could do without baseline information is to present this result as a percentage of your target population and compare it to the rate of teenage pregnancies in the entire population should you have this information.

Should you not have collected baseline information you could start doing so once you implement your monitoring plan. Next year you would have information on which to measure progress.

With regard to collecting baseline information, you have the following options:

1. Compare the indicators measuring the situation "before the project started" of, for example, a community, household or organisation with the situation "after it started".
2. Track changes (your specific indicators) with and without a project presence, which means comparing changes inside the project area with those in similar locations outside the project area.
3. Compare the difference (using your indicators) between similar groups – one that has been working with the project and a so-called control group that is not within project influence***.

Sometimes there is confusion between the situational analysis or community profiling (which assesses what the problems exist in an area) and baseline "study". Remember that the baseline is not a general, broad assessment but rather the specific measurement of the indicators within your monitoring framework.

Notes:

** <http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/annexa/a.htm>

*** <http://www.fhi.org/en/HIVAIDS/pub/guide/meprogramguide.htm>

STEP 4: Assigning responsibilities

It is important that the monitoring system you designed is well managed.

The following are examples of typical problems with poorly managed monitoring system:

- *Failing to collect information on time*
This means that the information will not meet the needs of end-users, staff learning, management decision-making and accountability.
- *Poor quality monitoring work*
Monitoring analysis and recommendations may not be trusted by end-users with the result that important decisions are delayed or not made.

- *Overspending the budget*
Ability to use finances to respond to significant changes may be limited. Additional funds have to be taken from elsewhere to improve quality of monitoring due to poor design or limited capacity.
- *Limited capabilities*
Additional supervision of staff needed to improve quality of monitoring work.

Monitoring responsibilities need to be assigned to staff members. You will need to decide who will be responsible for:

- Collecting data
- Capturing data
- Analysing the information
- Turing the information into a format most useful for the users.
- Disseminating the information to the relevant users on time.

STEP 5: Monitoring framework

Putting it all together

The monitoring framework should include the following information:

- Objectives of the project
- Information needs and indicators
- Baseline information
- Data gathering methods, frequency, responsibilities
- Required forms, planning, training, data management, expertise, resources and responsibilities;
- Analysis, reporting, feedback and responsibilities.

A general rule of thumb is "if everyone knows what they need to do when, why and for whom, then you have enough detail."

Resources for developing a monitoring framework

1. A comprehensive resource, *Managing for Impact in Rural Development: A Guides for M&E*, which provides information regarding what to monitor, different options regarding the collection of baseline information, data collection, indicator development and assigning responsibilities for monitoring can be found at: www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/5/5.htm

2. Another great resource, *Guidelines to Monitoring and Evaluation: How are we doing?* provides detailed information on project monitoring, creating M&E plans for existing projects, indicator development, data collection methods, analysis and reporting can be accessed at: www.kcenter.com/phls/CARE_Uganda_Guidelines_to_Monitoring_and_Evaluation.pdf

3. The Inter-American Development Bank offers free online E-courses on monitoring and evaluation. The course is divided into four modules, of which the first two deals with monitoring. It is advisable to work through the first module before commencing to the second module. The first module deals with the logic framework and the second module monitoring and evaluation. You will need to register to the course by clicking on the registration button. www.iadb.org/int/rtc/ecourses/index.htm

4. You can download participants M&E training modules at the following website including: The course features seven additional modules designed for specific contexts, such as home-based care programs, voluntary counseling and testing programs, programs for orphans, and clinical care activities. www.fhi.org/en/HIVAIDS/pub/guide/meprogramguide.htm

Please read the last page of this newsletter for an example of a monitoring framework.

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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Below is an example of an M&E framework:

Objectives	Indicators	Baseline	Target	What data must be collected?	Data Collection method	When will it be collected?	Method of analysis and how often	How will the data be used	Responsibilities
Make sure your objectives are: SMART Specific, measurable, appropriate, reliable and timebound.	Be as specific as possible. Make you qualify any adjectives	Where you are now.	What is the target you are aiming for? Specify numbers or percentages and a time frame.	What specific data will be necessary to characterise the indicator? Depending on the indicator, one or many types of data (variables, types of evidence) may be needed.	What tools or instruments will you use to measure the indicators?	Month/Date of data collection	What forms of analysis will be used and when will it be analysed?	Be specific: What reports will be generated from the information? How and with whom will it be shared and used to improve the project?	Who is responsible for data collection and analysis?