



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!

This issue deals with data management and provides important tips for data collection both of which are critical for your monitoring!

ISSUE #5: DATA MANAGEMENT

1. What is data management?

Data management is the process of managing data collection and its use for example advocacy, management decisions, and accountability. Data management entails:

- Continually assessing whether the information needs are met
- Managing data collection and ensuring data is captured on time
- Analysing and using the data on time
- Disseminating information to ensure its use

1.1 Assessing information needs

The information needs of stakeholders and decision makers should drive the process of data collection. Do not want to waste time and money collecting data that will not be used. Assessing information needs is a process that should be refined as the data is collected, analysed and used. For data management you need to decide:

Who needs what information and by when!

Tips for deciding what data should be collected:

- Too much data leads to bad data and information overload.
- Consider the needs of stakeholders and decision-makers
- Measure only necessary and sufficient project data for management decision-making by decide on what information is crucial for decision making and narrow the focus to the most important indicators of outcomes and impact.
- Consider the available time, resources and staff competency*.

Tips for data collection: Data Quality

The quality of your data is very important. This relates to the **Validity** and **reliability** of the data collected. **Validity** is how close the findings are to reality and **reliability** is the consistency of the findings. One way of ensuring good quality data is to use triangulation, i.e. use three different sources of information for a given event. You can use external or internal triangulation to improve the quality of your data. External triangulation is when you compare the information generated in monitoring with external sources such as censuses, official statistics and other secondary research studies. Internal triangulation is the use of multiple methods and techniques for exploring the same topic, e.g. collecting the same information from different sources or in different ways such as focus groups, interviews and observations*.

Notes:

* Adapted from :Barton, T. (1997). Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation – How are we doing? CARE International, Uganda: http://www.kcenter.com/phls/CARE_Uganda_Guidelines_to_Monitoring_and_Evaluation.pdf

1.2 Managing data collection, data capturing and storage

An important way of ensuring quality data is collected is to train those who will be collecting the information and ideally involve them in the design of data collection tools. It is also important to train those who will be capturing the information. Those who will capture information should also be included in the design of the tools as they could provide assistance in the design process to ensure easy capturing of data once it is collected. It is also best to use both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

You do not necessarily need sophisticated statistical or database software to capture and analyse information. Excel is a good software programme to use to capture quantitative data and do basic quantitative data analysis. For qualitative data as well, you do not need sophisticated qualitative analysis programmes to analyse qualitative data. Using Microsoft Word to capture information and cut and paste to arrange information according to codes, themes and patterns would be sufficient.

However, if you would like to use qualitative data analysis software, you can download free Nudist Nvivo software for a thirty day trial period at the following website under software downloads:
www.qsrinternational.com/index.htm.

When capturing information always ensure that you backup the information!

Remember when deciding on what data collection tools and methods to use be specific and assign responsibilities.

The following table should be part of your monitoring framework providing details on exactly who is responsible for the different task and by when tasks should be completed.

How will information be collected?	Who will collect the information?	When will information be collected?	How and by whom will information be captured?	Who will analyse the information?	When will analysis take place?	Who will produce the report/ feedback?	When will the report be completed?	How and to whom will information be disseminated?	Who will disseminate the information?
Information collection tools and methods	Specify person(s)	Specify information	Protocol for information capturing Specify person(s)	Specify person(s)	Specify date	Specify person(s)	Specify date	Specify reporting format for each stakeholder	Specify person(s)

1.3 Managing data analysis

Before analysing the data make sure the data is complete, i.e. that nothing is missing. Make sure you have made arrangements for data analysis and the interpretation of data collected **timeously** for management decision making and reporting deadlines. If the data is not analysed in time for decision-making to rectify problems then the data itself is useless.

Tips for analysing quantitative data

A good way to begin is to generate general descriptions of the information such as percentages or frequency counts. You do not need fancy statistical methods to assess whether you have reached your target. A simple frequency count should be fine. You may also want to monitor for age, gender or race for example. You can do this with simple cross tabulations.

For example, your indicator is **Percentage of people who have access to basic health services within XX**. You realise that the race of those accessing services is important because you are targeting black people and they tend not to have equal access to basic health services. You therefore decide to **disaggregate your indicator** for the variable of race of those accessing health services at the local clinic and in the local community. By doing a simple cross tabulation you can see that of those accessing services - the majority (70%) - are white. This would raise the question why black people are not using the local clinic services as you intended.

Example: Indicator: Percentage of people who have access to basic health services

Access to health services by race	Yes	No
Black	30%	70%
White	70%	30%
Total	100%	100%

However, you would not stop there and might need to further explore the issue by conducting a few interviews with those not accessing health services to understand *why* this is happening. Remember, you need to interpret your findings, which will involve asking more questions. You are not simply giving figures but identifying *why* there are problems in order to rectify them or achievements in order to ensure continued success of your programme.

Remember: Monitoring only tells you “What” is happening. You then need to ask, “Why it is happening “So what does this mean?” When you begin this process you are shifting into **evaluative thinking**.

Tips for analysing qualitative data

The analysis of qualitative data is different. A good way to begin is to first read through the information captured to become familiar with the data. You will look for recurrent themes or patterns in the data and information on why you have made/not made the progress you desired. In all likelihood you will need to go back into the field and do some additional interviews to be able to answer the question: “Why/So what?” You can then count how many times a theme that matches your indicator occurs. But qualitative data provide you with more detailed information which you can use in your programme even though it may not fit into your monitoring framework.

To report on whether you met the target or not or track your progress, you need to be able to say why you did or did not meet the target and ‘dig a bit deeper’ to come up with useful recommendations to improve the programme*.

1.4 Disseminating data to ensure use

Once you have analysed the information you need to generate a report to disseminate the information to the relevant stakeholders and decision makers. Reporting enables the gathered information to be used in making decisions for improving project performance. Rather than producing only one report, it may be necessary to produce different reporting formats with different content depending on what information stakeholders need and which format is suitable for their needs (e.g. several short reports, emails, presentations). Reporting could be written and/or oral depending on what would ensure the use most effectively.

Therefore for each stakeholder ask yourself:

- “What is the most important message you want to convey?”
- “What exactly do they want to know?”
- “What reporting format or tool is best to convey your message to this stakeholder?”

Examples of reporting include:

- Oral briefing session with charts or visual data
- Written evaluation or performance report
- Short summary presentation followed by questions
- Discussion groups based on prepared handouts that focus on issues for interpretation and judgement based on data
- Brochures and pamphlets
- Email, websites**

A **good report** whether oral or written should include:

- A focus on the results and accomplishments of the programme
- Assesses the performance over the past reporting period using established indicators, baselines, targets
- Explicitly states whether and how much progress was made, results met, surpassed and not met and why
- Specifies the actions/recommendations to overcome problems and improve performance and future results

After disseminating information you need to assess whether the information was in fact of use to the stakeholders and reflect on how information could be improved.

Notes:

* For more information on analysing qualitative and Quantitative data see: Barton, T. (1997). Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation – How are we doing? CARE International, Uganda http://www.kcenter.com/phIs/CARE_Uganda_Guidelines_to_Monitoring_and_Evaluation.pdf

**Adapted from, McKoy, Ngari & Krumpke, 2005, Building Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Systems for HIV/AIDS Programmes, Pact: Washington DC: http://www.pactworld.org/resources/documents/MER_Manual.pdf

Resources for data management:

1. The following resources: Managing for impact in rural development. A guide for Project M&E has a good section devoted to gathering, managing and communicating information, in Section 6 of the guide. This can be access at: www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/6/index.htm. A good resource, Guidelines to Monitoring and Evaluation: How are we doing? Provides detailed information on data collection methods, analysis, data management and reporting and can be accessed at: www.kcenter.com/phls/CARE_Uganda_Guidelines_to_Monitoring_and_Evaluation.pdf
2. For more information on how to use monitoring and evaluation information and feedback please access the following website: http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/eo/evalnet/docstore3/yellowbook/documents/part_4.pdf
3. For information on reporting see Chapter 6: Reporting in McKoy, Ngari & Krumpke, 2005, Building Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Systems for HIV/AIDS Programmes, Pact: Washington DC, which can be accessed at: www.pactworld.org/resources/documents/MER_Manual.pdf

Additional resources for data collection and analysis:

1. For an overview of some of the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods commonly used during evaluations please see access the user-friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation (NSF 93-152) at: www.passia.org/seminars/2002/ME/Chapter4.htm#42
2. This website is a great resource that provides tips for a range different data collection methods, analysis and reporting. www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/assessment/iar/resources/quicktips/index.php#data_gathering

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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