M&E

Monitoring and Evaluation
HANDBOOK

Acknowledgements

This **handbook** was developed by BCI, a Maltese based international development and political consultancy. Its authors have been actively involved in international development working with nascent civil society organizations for more than twenty years.

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The views and perspectives presented in this **handbook** are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of IWPR or the Government of the United States of America.

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Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)

IWPR is a non-governmental organisation that gives voice to people at the frontlines of conflict and transition to help them drive change. Founded in 1992, IWPR now works in more than two dozen countries and territories in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. IWPR supports activists, human and women's rights defenders, reporters, and citizen journalists in many countries in conflict, crisis, and transition around the world. We contribute to peace and good governance by strengthening the ability of media and civil society to speak out. This is accomplished by training, mentoring, and providing platforms, building up the institutional capacity of media and civic groups, and working with independent, and official partners to remove barriers to free expression, robust public debate, and citizen engagement.

IWPR Champions Women's Rights: IWPR works to champion issues of women's rights around the globe while supporting female civic activists and reporters in challenging environments. IWPR's work around the world supports and strengthens emerging women's organisations and promotes women's active participation. Our civil society and media partners not only highlight inequalities and abuses, but also celebrate the achievements of women driving change in their own societies. Much of IWPR's work focuses on giving voice to those who might not otherwise be heard. Targeted programming promotes the voices of women in conflict zones by training female journalists and providing them with effective media platforms and fora for women in conflict-divided regions providing a vital space for women participation in peace-building, political, and economic processes. Furthermore, women human rights defenders stay safe in often hostile environments thanks to IWPR programming on physical and digital safety awareness.

IWPR in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): IWPR has been working in the MENA region for over a decade. IWPR's work helps build a vibrant and independent media, active civic and community groups, and democratic institutions across the MENA region. Initiatives in the region have strengthened journalist and civil society institutions in a variety of ways, from supporting legal and structural reform around policies, including freedom of information and women's rights, and political participation to real time management and programme implementation support to build sustainable organisations. IWPR has offices and maintains a presence in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey in addition to running regional programmes across the entire Middle East and North Africa region.

Alumni of IWPR's programming have assumed leading roles in government, civil society, academia, the media, and (in some cases) in the non-violent opposition. Others, forced to flee their countries, are advocating and working in other ways in support of their principles and objectives, helping to plan transitions, and organising support for refugees.

Binda Consulting International (BCI)

Binda Consulting International (BCI) is a European-based political and international development consultancy providing analysis, training, and research with expertise in programme design, public opinion research, women's political participation, political strategy, crisis communication, and organisational training.

Established in 2014, its senior consultants have deep experience in the field of international democracy and development. Combining decades of work in challenging political environments, BCI has the right mix of talent and understanding to deliver expert advice and action. BCI is a company that is nimble enough to respond quickly to the needs of clients. Its global network of consultants provides bespoke talent and expertise to projects and programmes.

BCI's senior consultants have worked to develop the capacity of political actors in emerging democracies and traditional societies to better respond to the challenges inherent in dramatic change. Having lived and worked in conflict and post-conflict environments, BCI consultants understand the obstacles to reconciliation within and among communities.

About this Handbook

This **handbook** is designed for and targeted to new and growing civil society organizations. It attempts to introduce monitoring and evaluation (M&E) concepts in an easily digestible manner. The authors are development practitioners with more than twenty years' experience working in and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based activists.

More often than not, community-based activists have an acute understanding of what their communities need, but struggle in communicating that need effectively to potential and actual donors. However, it is not only essential to be able to describe program needs, and ultimately demonstrate impact for donors, but it is also good practice for organizations.

Often, when highly experienced monitoring and evaluation experts begin talking about M&E, they use terms and describe systems that intimidate less experienced program implementers. This handbook tries to take it step-by-step, defining concepts, and using examples to aid in making M&E a less intimidating subject.

At its core, M&E planning is merely a well thought out description of what you intend to do, describing the actions you will take and the impact you expect. It is also about how to communicate to both your team and others effectively.

In this handbook, we examine key M&E terms and concepts, try to understand some of the jargon, and how and where those ideas fit into our monitoring and evaluation of programs. Using a fictitious NGO called the Global Peace Organization we illustrate the use of some of the tools of M&E.

Introduction

Have you ever had someone tell you something only to think, «So what?» or «What's the point?»

M&E processes allow you to communicate the 'what' or 'why' of your work or program. They allow you to design a plan that demonstrates programmatic need and logic, enabling you to systematically evaluate results and communicate them coherently.

We repeat several times, because it is a critical point, that while monitoring and evaluation plans are something donors might require, they are also invaluable for your organization. M&E plans allow you to achieve results and learn from the experience to improve the impact of your organization.

Let's begin with saying that we will use the abbreviation M&E to mean monitoring and evaluation and, to illustrate the process throughout the handbook, we have established a fictitious organization.

EXAMPLE

Global Peace Organization (GPO)

VISION

All communities shall be free of armed conflict

This is GPO's vision for the future. This vision guides the long-term work of the organization.

MISSION

The GPO aims to reduce armed conflict through community-based dialogue and conflict resolution.

This is the mission of our fictitious organization.

GPO is applying for six months of funding, with a maximum of $100,000 available, and has been asked to include an M&E plan with their proposal.

Question

What if GPO claimed that it would eradicate armed conflict within six months and with a maximum of $100,000?

That would be a huge claim to make, and if it were able to do this, the organization would be a certain Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Unfortunately, many inexperienced organizations believe they need to make grand claims about what they can achieve. Without being able to demonstrate and quantify how they do that, they risk losing all credibility and support of potential donors.

It is entirely understandable—and expected—that an organization's vision guides its actions, projects, and global objectives. It is, however, unrealistic for a vision to be the objective of a single and specific project.

This is not measured in the proposal

GPO's vision is a global community without armed conflict. Its mission is to engage in dialogue at the community level, supporting conflict resolution skills of citizens.

This is measured and evaluated in the proposal

This project aims to develop the human capacity for conflict resolution in conflict prone regions over a six months period.

Don't overestimate your impact!

Achieving our vision is much like building a house; you need to plan, measure, adjust, take it step-by-step, measure some more, evaluate progress, add, build, and so on.

So, before we begin, let us agree that we need to be realistic in setting goals, and the amount of impact any one program can have.

There is a difference between vision and the objectives of a given program. **For example:**

GPO wants a world without armed conflict. However, given the amount of time and money committed to this program, it will realistically design a program that is achievable and has impact to contribute to their vision of a better world: training community-based conflict resolution mediators.

Understanding Terminology

Before we examine how the Global Peace Organization designs its program, let us take some time to understand some key M&E terms and concepts. The terminology used in monitoring and evaluation can be intimidating. People are often confused by the many—and different—terms used in project planning and monitoring and evaluation.

Different donors use different words to describe the same things, which makes it all the more confusing.

Remember you should demonstrate there is a need for a program, identify a particular problem, or set of problems, describe your interventions (or activities) and what you believe the impact will be. You need to map out how a sequence of your activities leads to specific outcomes that contribute to achieving your objective. To be effective at doing this, we can use a Logical Framework, which is essentially a chart showing a logical progression and providing descriptions of how you plan to measure your progress.

Monitoring

Monitoring is an ongoing and systematic process that gathers information to track the progress of a project.

Information is collected at every step of the project so you can make adjustments while work is going on. You should find a way to monitor what happens around the project, not just the activities of the project.

For instance, for a training project that provides participants with conflict resolution skills, you should monitor not only how many participants attend your training, but what exact skills participants gained from your training and how and when they use the new skills after the training. You can also monitor how participants' confidence levels or lives have improved because of these new skills.

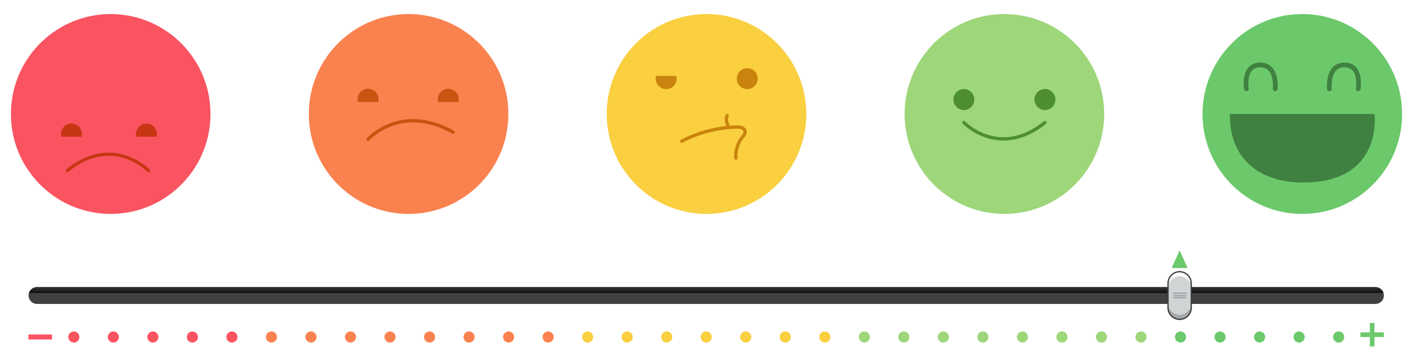
Monitoring also helps you systematically track conditions or trends that influence your program. For instance, external factors such as global or regional conflicts may influence community-based armed conflicts. Monitoring these factors helps you understand the effectiveness of your project.

Evaluation

Evaluation assesses changes resulting from project interventions to determine if a project has reached its goals and delivered what was expected according to the plan.

There are several different methods and systems to evaluate projects, that we examine later in this handbook. However, all evaluations answer three universal questions:

1. Are we doing what we said we would do? This is the internal validation of your project and helps you and donors see that you were realistic in your planning and can implement your project.
2. Are we making a difference? This is the assessment of your organisation's and your project's impact.
3. Are these the right things to do? Often we design activities without asking if they are the right activities to reach our goal. By examining if your activities are the right ones to achieve the change you want, you maximise the strategic relevance of your project.



Logical Framework

Logical Framework (also known as LogFrame) is the most common method for designing, monitoring and evaluating projects. This framework is also known as «goal-oriented project planning» or «objectives-oriented planning.»

While it may seem confusing at first, the framework provides a logical, step-by-step approach to the elements of a project as they are implemented.

Activity

Activity is the most basic element of a project. Projects may include more than one activity to contribute to one or more outcomes or results.

Activities are also called interventions or Inputs. They are what you **do**, such as conducting a training or providing a service.

Indicator

Indicator is proof that an activity happened, or a result is achieved. If you hold a training for 24 conflict mediators, you can verify that the training was held by asking participants to sign in when they attend the training. The sign-up sheet is how you measure the indicator that the activity happened.

For each element of the project, it is useful to note risks and assumptions that may affect the achievements of what is being monitored or evaluated. In this example, the risk is that participants do not attend your training. The assumption is that 24 participants will attend the training.

Outputs

Outputs are the immediate results of an activity or intervention. Determine what output or outputs you expect as a result of your activity. Outputs are also known as expected results or intermediate results. Outputs are tangible things the project will deliver.

If you have held a training to transfer skills or knowledge to 24 participants, you expect the output will be that some or most of them have gained new skills or knowledge. Since you do not usually have 100% success, you may decide that 20 participants acquiring new skills or knowledge is an achievable output. The fact that these 20 participants have new skills is your indicator that the output has been achieved.

How do you measure—or verify—that participants have new skills or knowledge? The easiest way to measure this indicator is to ask participants. You can distribute a questionnaire to participants, or interview them, to ask them what new information and knowledge they gained as a result of the training.

What are the risks and assumptions that may affect participants gaining new skills or knowledge? One risk is that your trainer is not clear enough to transfer the knowledge. Another risk may be that the training environment was not conducive to learning—was it too hot and all participants fell asleep during the training? An assumption is that the participants are clever enough—or interested enough—to absorb the information of the training. If you hold a training on conflict resolution skills and your participants are uncomfortable engaging in mediation efforts, you have—incorrectly—assumed that participants are interested in the topic of the training.

Outcome

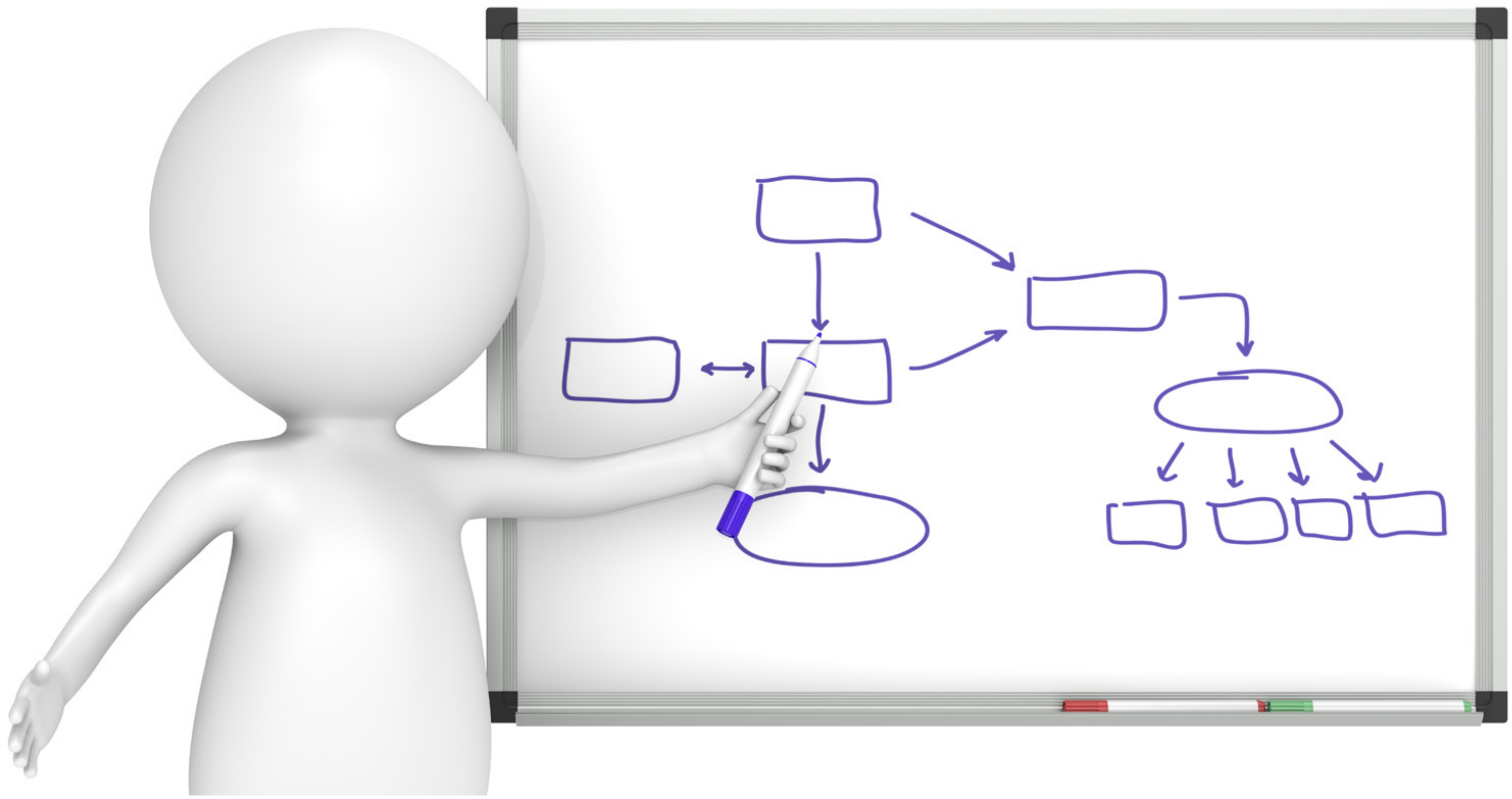
Outcome Once your participants have new skills and knowledge, what do you expect them to do with that knowledge? What they do and how they use that knowledge is the outcome of the project. If the participants all go home and do not use the knowledge, then there is no outcome for the project. But if at least 12 of them engage in conflict resolution or mediation, then those are indicators of your outcome. In other words, it is the benefit your project has delivered.

You can measure—or verify—the outcome in several ways. You can follow up with each participant by contacting them to see how they used their new skills. You survey community leaders or security forces to see if participants are using their skills in the community.

To achieve this outcome, you assume that your participants will be in a position to use their new skills and knowledge in their communities to identify potential conflict and engage in mediation. A risk may be that regional conflicts influence local conflict, or mediators miss the signs of emerging conflict.

Objective

Objective is what you are trying to achieve, it must be **S.M.A.R.T.** **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime bound (an objective is achieved within a specific period.



Impact

Impact is the measurable long-term objective or goal.

Theory of Change

Theory of Change this is essentially a description of how your interventions lead to impact. It is a concise description of cause and effect which informs you and potential donors of how you plan to have an impact. Most simply, a theory of change is a logical series of «if/then» statements. For example; **If** we do this, **then** this will happen. **If** we do this other thing building on the previous thing, **then** this will happen. And so on.

How does it all fit together?

In the first instance of program design, adopt a systematic approach to explaining how your interventions will address a condition or problem. We continue to use the example of our fictitious peace focused organization, GPO.

1. Establish what problem or condition exists as a first step in detailing your logic for a program or project; this is your **Problem Statement**. Collect data to demonstrate that the condition needs to change.

GPO EXAMPLE

Problem Statement: According to the National Medical Research Institute, 10 members of our community are killed on average every year as a result of armed conflict. Also, armed conflict is responsible for significant injury, psycho-social trauma, and economic disruption. The causes of armed conflict, according to a 2010 study includes; a proliferation of small arms, lack of local security structures, unemployment and lack of economic opportunity, and drug abuse.

How does it all fit together?

2. Since one project will not eliminate all conflict, you must identify what **specific condition** your program intends to address.

GPO EXAMPLE

Disarmament and expanded economic opportunities are long term solutions requiring coordination between social and governmental institutions. In the immediate term, equipping local actors with the skills and tools to identify and intervene in conflict resolution is necessary to diffuse and reduce potential conflict and to mitigate communal violence.

How does it all fit together?

3. Given the change your program intends to bring about, use a Theory of Change model to demonstrate how that will happen. This is the beginning of a logical framework.

GPO EXAMPLE

- If we provide people with the knowledge of the drivers of conflict, then they will be better able to identify where conflict is possible.
- If community actors, with influence among potential combatants, have the skills and tools to resolve drivers of conflict, then there will be fewer armed conflicts.
- If there are fewer armed conflicts, then there will be a reduction of associated deaths and injury.
- If the community is able to reduce drivers of conflict, then security structures and local institutions can begin to address small arms disarmament.

Discussion

At this point our fictitious group has identified the problem, isolated a specific condition that needs to be changed, and provided a theory of change demonstrating the potential for IMPACT. It is beyond the organization's capacity and ability, in a single project, to achieve complete disarmament and remove all factors that contribute to conflict. However, it is within its ability to take logical steps to improve the situation and have IMPACT.

Sometimes, organizations overestimate their ability to have an impact. They might do this because they genuinely believe they have the ability, or they want to impress potential donors. Donors are, however, in the business of supporting change makers and recognize what is realistic, possible, and achievable. While your efforts might indeed contribute—over time—to more significant impact, be smart about what you can realistically do within the time and financial constraints of a project—that way what impact you are able to effect will be an achievement for which you can take honest credit.

In our example of a fictitious organization called the Global Peace Organization (GPO), the team is now ready to develop its monitoring and evaluation framework for a proposal or program to address conflict. At this stage, GPO needs to gather baseline data that help to establish realistic indicators. You cannot measure change or impact unless you articulate the key (baseline) conditions that exist before a project begins. Recall that an indicator is a measurement of something. If it is an objective indicator you are quantifying the achievement of that objective. If it is an activity indicator, you are measuring elements of that activity.

GPO Example

Objective: Trained mediators resolve emerging conflicts in six target communities.

So, what is measurable in this example objective?

- The number of trained mediators.
- The number of conflicts they mediate.
- The number of communities targeted.

To begin, we would need to gather data related to the average number of conflicts. A first step would be to conduct what is called desktop review, or desk research. That means collecting existing data which are relevant to our understanding of meeting our objectives. For example, national or international health authorities or research institutes might publish regular reports on intercommunal conflict, deaths, or injuries. Other non-governmental organizations may track conflict or the proliferation of small arms.

We could conduct primary research through interviews or questionnaires. For example, we could speak with crucial actors using a systematic set of questions; these are also known as ‘Key Informant Interviews’. The data collected are analysed and used as part of our baseline knowledge, or to demonstrate the need for a program. We can distribute questionnaires among vital audiences; security institutions, community-based organizations, health and welfare officials, tribal leadership, and even youth at risk of being combatants.

Discussion

Data collected will make the task of setting indicators easier. Let's look at the measurable element of the objective above.

'The number of conflicts mediated by trained participants.'

If we do not know the current or historic number of conflicts, our target would be guesswork, well informed perhaps, but still guesswork. It is important to note that sometimes, in some conditions, there are no baseline data available. But where they exist, it is important to use data to improve both your and others' understanding of the context. Existing data help establish realistic targets that can be compared against a baseline.

Because GPO conducted a desktop review and conducted several key informant interviews, it has determined that over the past five years there is an average of two conflicts in each of the six target communities. In communities A and B, the conflicts are most often the cause of tensions between two tribes, in the remaining four, instigators of conflict are criminal gangs vying for territory or economic dominance.

GPO may have good relationships with the tribal leadership in communities A and B and feel that its interventions will be more successful in those communities than in the remaining communities. Therefore, the organization may believe that it can reduce tribal conflict altogether. In the remaining four communities (C, D, E, and F), GPO may feel that the criminal nature of conflict will be more difficult to address and estimate that, of the remaining eight conflicts on average per year in those communities, they may realistically prevent four. Their indicator for this objective would therefore be:

'Eliminate tribal conflict in communities A & B, and reduce criminally motivated conflict in C, D, E, and F by four'.

There are risks and assumptions that go into establishing any indicator. For this example indicator, we assume the yearly average will be maintained, and a risk is that tribal conflict becomes regional and not contained to those two communities. If this is GPO's objective indicator, it will need to describe how it plans to measure the indicator. It will verify meeting this objective by interviewing participants to determine how many conflicts they have mediated to a peaceful resolution. GPO may also plan to conduct interviews with security officials, tribal leaders, or other community based non-governmental organizations to measure its indicator.

Designing a program in this systematic way allows an organization to know well in advance what needs to be measured, and when. It allows an organization to determine what resources (human and financial) will be needed to gather the data. Aside from the organizational value, it also demonstrate the effectiveness of your organization to potential donors. Besides, many donors will ask for your organization to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for projects that they fund.

In the next section we will explore in more detail M&E tools and data collection.

Data Collection

In project management, you are always collecting information. In fact, you should collect data before you even have funding for a project. A needs assessment is conducted to demonstrate that your proposal meets actual needs, baseline data support your project design as well as your monitoring and evaluation plan.

What makes good data? How information is collected is important, and how it is processed determines credibility. For example, if someone makes claims about an entire population based on a small sample of interviews, the claims may not be credible. This is not to say that small sample data collection is not valuable, but when presenting information you must be honest about its validity.

Primary versus Secondary

Primary sources are those that actually collect data and interpret it. Secondary sources are second hand accounts. Primary sources are better in that you can determine the credibility of the data and understand the context for analyses and conclusions you make.

For example, if a journalist reports on research into health outcomes based on a newly released study, they may be thoroughly competent in their reportage and credibly convey findings. However, if you want to design a program based on that information, it is better that you go to the original source (the people who conducted the study) and review the information and understand the data as was collected.

Baseline

Collecting data before implementing a program allows you to demonstrate the need for a program and establish a benchmark from which you measure progress. There are numerous ways in which you can establish baseline data; some of which are:

1. Desktop review—examining relevant existing data. These could include academic studies, reports from intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank Group, the World Health Organization, as well as other reputable non-governmental organizations.

2. Conducting unique research—your organization can interview and survey people and other organizations. You must establish systematic data collection in these cases and be clear about your limitations and your methodology. For example, you may conduct an online survey to obtain baseline data. In this example, you need to describe your sample of respondents as best you can because, obviously, you will not get data from those who do not have access to the internet. However, using an online survey may not invalidate the data, unless your program targets a population without access to the internet.

Most small NGOs do not have the resources to develop elaborate data collection efforts, but can, at a minimum, conduct simple surveys and interviews with key people. This data collection can occur at events or during activities related the program, or within the community.

3. Collaborative baseline setting—These processes involve gathering people to work on establishing baseline indicators. Participants are usually beneficiaries of programs, experts in the subject matter, and or program staff that have experience in the proposed activities. Collaborative approaches rely on the experiences and differing perspectives of the individuals involved, as well as discussions and exercises intended to establish context and good practice.

Surveys

Surveys are important research instruments and can be as simple as basic questionnaires distributed to relevant respondents. A survey represents the opinions of a sample of the entire population with whom you are concerned. If you want to understand the perceptions of an entire population of say 10 Million people you couldn't possibly survey all of them, nor do you need to. You identify a sample that is representative of the whole population and survey that sample of individuals. The respondents will reflect opinions that are representative of the whole.

Population health, politics, and market research surveys or opinion polls for public or academic consumption, as an example, should be rigorously designed and keen attention paid to the sampling methodology. Surveys for programs should to be well thought out, designed, and distributed, but may not need to meet the same rigor as academic or population studies.

There are some crucial elements to surveys to keep in mind:

1. Be clear what information you need before designing a questionnaire. Think about how you will use that information and how it contributes to your programming.

2. Be deliberate in designing the flow of questions. Understand the use of language and consider how the order of questions might influence answers. For example, if you ask a question such as «What are your opinions of corruption?» followed by a question related to government actors, it is likely answers about actors will include perceptions of corruption.

Generally, questionnaires should begin with general demographic questions and then transition to very broad questions about general views. General views solicit ‘frame of mind’ conditions; so, for example, ‘on a scale of 1—10 how satisfied are you with the current conditions’. It avoids leading respondents to specific issues affecting their mood but allows them to establish their general mood.

3. Take time to develop your sampling—the group of people from whom you want to obtain information. If your organization is conducting a large-scale poll, work with a statistician to identify a valid sample. Universities and state population research institutions are approachable and often willing to help draw a sample. Sample size is important in terms of confidence of data. Small samples can be valid, but you must understand the confidence level of sample size.

4. Always test your opinion research tools—questionnaires or focus group discussion guides. This allows you to test for the timing of interviews and to adjust questions that might be misplaced in the order of questions, or do not elicit the data that you need.

5. Be sure that the data collection process is usable by those who will be analysing the information. Many on-line surveying tools have databases that present the data in ways that allow for various forms of analyses. Google Forms, for example, uses a simple spreadsheet that allows users to filter simple data sets.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are valuable data gathering tools. While not being statistically representative, you can sample opinions of people representing others in the community. They are deliberate discussions intended to dig deep into why people perceive things in the way they do. Focus groups involve fewer people than large polls and are much more manageable for non-governmental organizations.

Here are some important things to keep in mind about focus groups.

1. Keep the number of participants to a manageable number—12 people would be the maximum because you want everyone to speak and share their perspective.

2. Consider the demographic mix in the room. For example, if you have a mixed group of young and older males, in many cultures young men will defer to their seniors, so it may be challenging to get the opinions of younger participants. Similarly, mixed gender groups might not work in some settings.

3. Choose a neutral safe space to host the discussion and create an environment that allows for informal discussion. Holding a focus group on education in the head of a school's office might, for example, prevent people from being open in their answers.

4. Develop a facilitator's guide that helps you maintain the flow of a discussion, be clear

to the facilitator which specific information is critical and provide them with prompts to obtain that information. A prompt is a follow-up question that allows you to dig deeper into answers.

Example: The question might be, «How do you feel about the current state of the environment?»

A shy respondent may simply answer, «I worry about the environment.» It is an answer that does not provide much information, so you will need probing questions that prompt more fulsome answers: «What specifically worries you about the environment?», alternatively «Why do you worry…?»

5. If using recording equipment be honest with participants how you will use those recordings. Quite often researchers will say that the recording will only be used by the researcher to ensure accuracy of the collected data and will be destroyed or erased once the report is written.

6. Be clear about how you will or will not attribute information to participants in the reporting of findings. Most often researchers will clearly state that quotations will not be directly attributed to any participant. Rather, the report will identify the quotation on broader demographic elements. For example, the following quotation might appear in a report «I worry about the environment.» (Young Male, South Region). People will self-censor if quotes are

directly attributable to them and they believe they will be identified in reports.

7. Ensure the length of time for discussion is not too long—once people get tired, they become anxious to leave and their answers become briefer or are flavoured with frustration.

8. A good facilitator will quickly understand which participants dominate discussions. Be sure to have strategies to shut down dominant speakers and encourage others to join the discussion and provide their opinion.

   Example: «Thank you for your opinion, but now we would like to hear from someone else (at which point the facilitator can invite someone else to weigh into the discussion).»

9. Set the ground rules for discussion at the beginning.

   For example:
   a. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group discussion which will last for no more than 90 minutes.
   b. We ask that everyone turn off their mobile phones so that our discussion is uninterrupted.
   c. We will be recording the discussion to allow our researchers to verify the accuracy of the information you provide. The recordings will be erased as soon as the researcher has finished the report. No quotes will be directly attributed to anyone, we will only indicate the gender and region of participants quoted.

d. We want the discussion to open and respectful of one another—everyone's opinion is valid—there are no right or wrong answers, this is about getting your opinion on specific issues as you reflect the thinking of the broader community.
e. Please allow for one speaker at a time so that our notetakers can capture what is being said.
f. Give participants the opportunity to leave if they are not comfortable with either the ground rules or the subject matter.

10. In addition to the facilitator, you may need one or two notetakers in the room. Keep the number of people in the room small and place them outside of the immediate discussion area so they do not interrupt or influence the discussion. Sometimes there will be a camera recording and broadcasting to another room or location where additional analysts or key personnel monitor discussion.

11. Always thank the participants for sharing their opinions and explain that their perspectives are important to you and your research.

Interviews

Interviewing relevant people is more time consuming than a focus group but allows you to obtain more information directly from the participant. An in-depth interview is especially important if the person is an expert in a particular subject matter, or someone who will benefit directly from your program. Quite often these are called **key informant interviews**—key informant because they potentially have critical perspectives on a particular subject or are experts in that field.

Here are some important things to keep in mind about focus groups.

1. Develop a standardized interview guide to efficiently use your and your participant's time.

2. Be clear about the objectives of the interview and how you will use the information from the interview.

3. Quite often researchers will seek written consent from the interviewee to attribute information.

4. Key informant interviews should be conducted in a comfortable and quiet environment

Interviews

and, if using recording devices, the researcher should obtain consent before recording.

5. Establish a data collection and use protocol that clearly details how you will collect, store and analyze the data you collect. Quite often this protocol is shared with interviewees prior to the interview.

Unlike focus groups or opinion polls, the data obtained from key informant interviews are not necessarily representative, but expert testimony. They are data obtained from people with specialized knowledge in a particular subject.

Desktop / Public Domain

Gathering data that already exist saves time and provides you with critical and essential information. However, it is crucial that you examine and use public domain data with a critical eye. Ensure that the information you are using comes from credible sources and that it is relevant to your data collection needs. Media reports or data that do not include information on collection methodology are not credible sources of information.

If your desk review brings you to a media report on an academic study, try to track down the source or academic publication of that information. Going to the source is better than relying on second or third-hand interpretations.

Conducting desk reviews can be as simple as using a computer and search engine to identify relevant information or obtaining documents from previous programs or experts in the field. A desktop review is most often used in establishing baseline knowledge and in developing indicators for projects or programs.

There are numerous think tanks, academic institutions and intergovernmental organizations that present research on an array of subjects. For example, the World Bank Group has a large database of research and statistical information on countries around the world. Its researchers are credible and adhere to rigorous methodologies for collecting and reporting data. Similarly, the World Health Organization and the United Nation's family of agencies collect and publish global information and statistical data.

Desktop / public domain

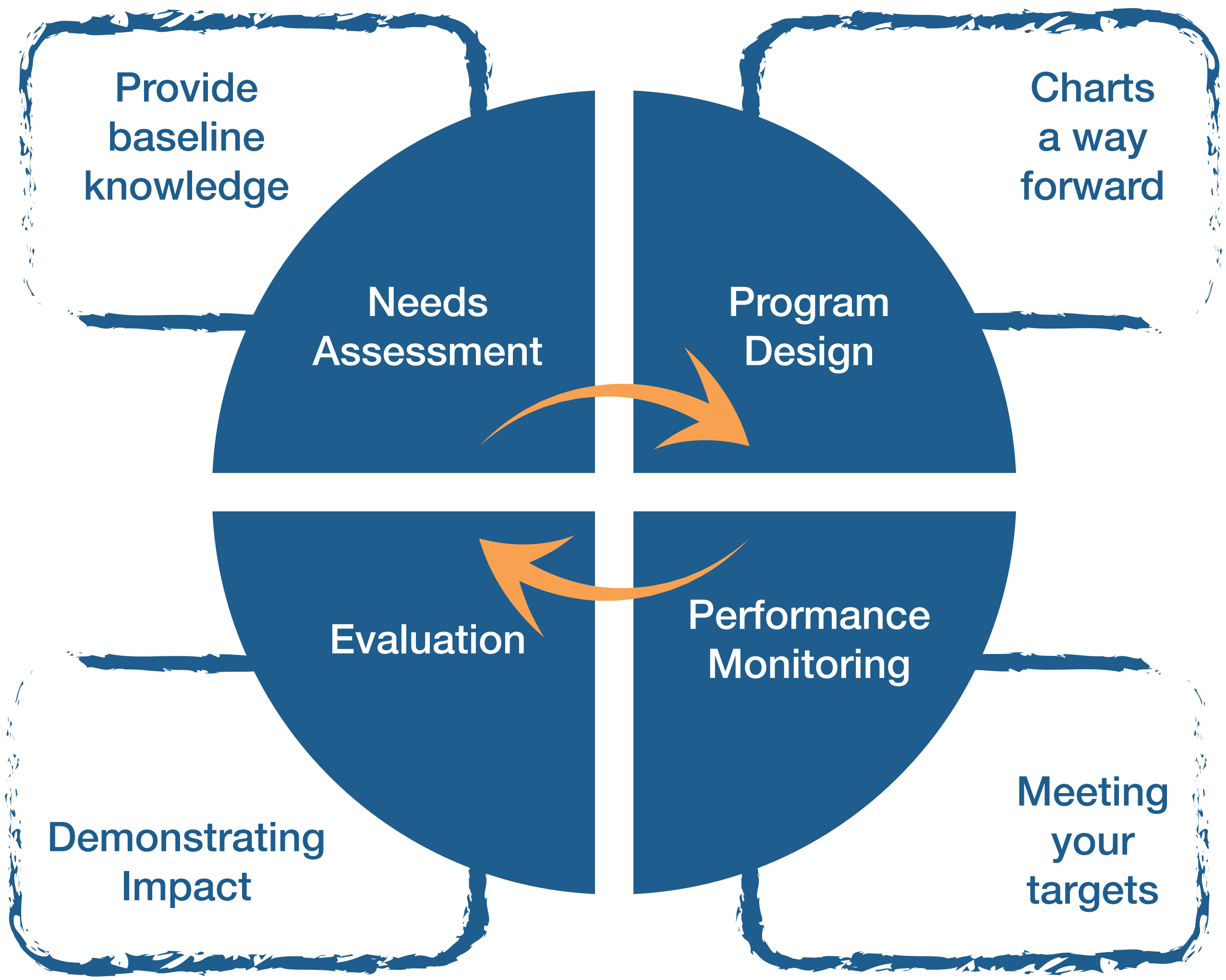
Most countries contribute researchers to these international organization's efforts. Typically, these indigenous researchers will be attached to academic or governmental institutions. These institutions will similarly publish research or provide statistical data that are credible and valued resources to those conducting desktop review.

Rather than relying on anecdotal information or second or third-hand interpretations, always try to go to the source of information. When using data, be aware of any biases in the analysis of the information. Even credible researchers have particular biases.

Data Analysis

Analyzing data requires examination and questioning. One has to understand the data collected and be able to identify patterns and draw justifiable conclusions. You need to be clear for what the data will be used. For example; if you collect statistical information from participants in an event, what is it you are trying to communicate? Is it that you had a number of participants? Are you trying to demonstrate a level of acquired knowledge?

M&E Tools


Provide baseline knowledge
Needs Assessment
Program Design
Charts a way forward
Evaluation
Performance Monitoring
Demonstrating Impact
Meeting your targets

M&E Tools Rationale

Monitoring and Evaluation plans are essential in many ways. They are not merely components of a proposal or agreement with donor to satisfy the donor's need for accountability.

M&E plans provide the opportunity for rational planning, allow for measuring progress, enable organizations to allocate scarce resources, and give leadership teams vital management tools.

A systematic approach to developing, monitoring and evaluating your program is not only something a donor would expect; it is good practice for implementing programs with impact.

Impact is what you are trying to demonstrate, not your activities. Trainings, for example are necessary activities, but you need to demonstrate why they are important, what is it they will accomplish beyond equipping people with new knowledge or skills? Once people have new knowledge or skills what will they do with them? How does that impact your fundamental objective?

M&E Tools Planning

A logical framework, or Log Frame, is a planning and implementation tool that allows you to define how you plan to achieve your objectives or goals. It also allows you to monitor the progress of your program as you implement it and gives you an essential tool at the end of the program to evaluate your work.

A Log Frame can be as simple as the one below. It is essentially a chart in which you identify a program's objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities. It allows you to describe how you will measure all of those elements, and what may impact your ability to reach your targets. Some frameworks become more complicated with the addition of «definition of indicators», or «intermediate indicators», «targets», «means of data collection», for example, as well as other additional elements. Each donor may have their preferred format and specific elements for inclusion in a Log Frame.

However, to begin with, let's keep it simple so we are comfortable with the basics. Remember, to some extent a Log Frame is a living tool. It means that you will use the document throughout the life time of the program, imputing data collected, and sometimes amending or adding indicators as circumstances often change.

In the design phase, M&E teams will often identify a program's objectives based on needs assessments or subject matter knowledge. Then the team will work backwards detailing the sequence of events needed to achieve that objective.

Logical Framework

A log Frame is essentially a chart that allows you to describe your impact in a logical way.

	Indicators	Verification	Risks and Assumptions
	What is measured	How indicators are measured	External events that may affect achievements
Impact/Goal/Objective			
Outcome/Specific Objective			
Outputs/Expected Results			
Activities/Interventions/Inputs			

Logical Framework Example

As an example, we use our fictitious organization the Global Peace Organization, working on reducing armed conflict and the proliferation of small arms. In a simple Log Frame, we begin by entering the objective of the program—and there may be more than one objective for every program. We number each objective, and the indicator is similarly numbered.

	Indicators	Verification	Risks and Assumptions
	What is measured	**How indicators are measured**	**External events that may affect achievements**
Objective 1 Trained mediators resolve emerging conflicts in six target communities. This is our S.M.A.R.T. Objective This is what we measure	**Indicator 1.1** Eliminate tribal conflict in communities A & B, and reduce criminally motivated conflict in C, D, E, and F by four' How we prove the measure	Key Informant interviews will be conducted with security and tribal leaders two months and six months after workshop Assumptions we make to achieve our objectives	1. Tribal conflict does not erupt regionally and involve actors outside our target communities 2. Tribal leaders continue to work collaboratively with GPO
This is what we measure	**Indicator 1.2** 24 participants complete a three-day conflict mediation and resolution training How we prove the measure	1. Sign in sheets 2. Certificates of completion 3. Pledge forms indicating participant intention to mediate conflict	1. All identified participants attend workshopand receive certification to conduct conflict mediation
Outcome/Specific Objective			
Outputs/Expected Results			
Activities/Interventions/Inputs			

Logical Framework Example

Once we are clear on our objectives and indicators, we can work on the interventions or activities needed to accomplish our goal. We can always go back and adjust our objectives if in our planning we discover we need to.

In this example, there are at least two activities required to meet our objective. In fact, there would be a number of other activities, not indicated below that could be included such as; field monitoring visits, attendance at mediation tables and so on. But to keep it simple for illustration we only include two example activities.

	Indicators	Verification	Risks and Assumptions
Objective 1 Trained mediators resolve emerging conflicts in six target communities.	**Indicator 1.1** Eliminate tribal conflict in communities A & B, and reduce criminally motivated conflict in C, D, E, and F by four’	Key Informant interviews will be conducted with security and tribal leaders two months and six months after workshop	1. Tribal conflict does not erupt regionally and involve actors outside our target communities 2. Tribal leaders continue to work collaboratively with GPO
	Indicator 1.2 24 participants complete a three-day conflict mediation and resolution training	1. Sign in sheets 2. Certificates of completion 3. Pledge forms indicating participant intention to mediate conflict	1. All identified participants attend workshopand receive certification to conduct conflict mediation
Outcome/Specific Objectives			
Outputs/Expected Results			
Activity 1.1 Issue a recruitment call for 4 conflict mediators in 6 communities	**Indicator 1.1** 24 or more qualified candidates respond to the call for	1. 24 or more cvs are collected by project team. 2. 24 Candidates sign participation forms	1. Candidates see recruitment call and send cvs 2. At least 24 sign participation forms
Activity 2.1 Conduct three days conflict mediation training for 24 candidates from 6 communities	**Indicator 2.1** 24 candidates attend three-day workshop and receive conflict mediation training	1. Sign in sheets 2. Event photographs 3. Certificates 4. Pledges	1. All participants are able to travel to workshop

To achieve the objective, we need to do the following things

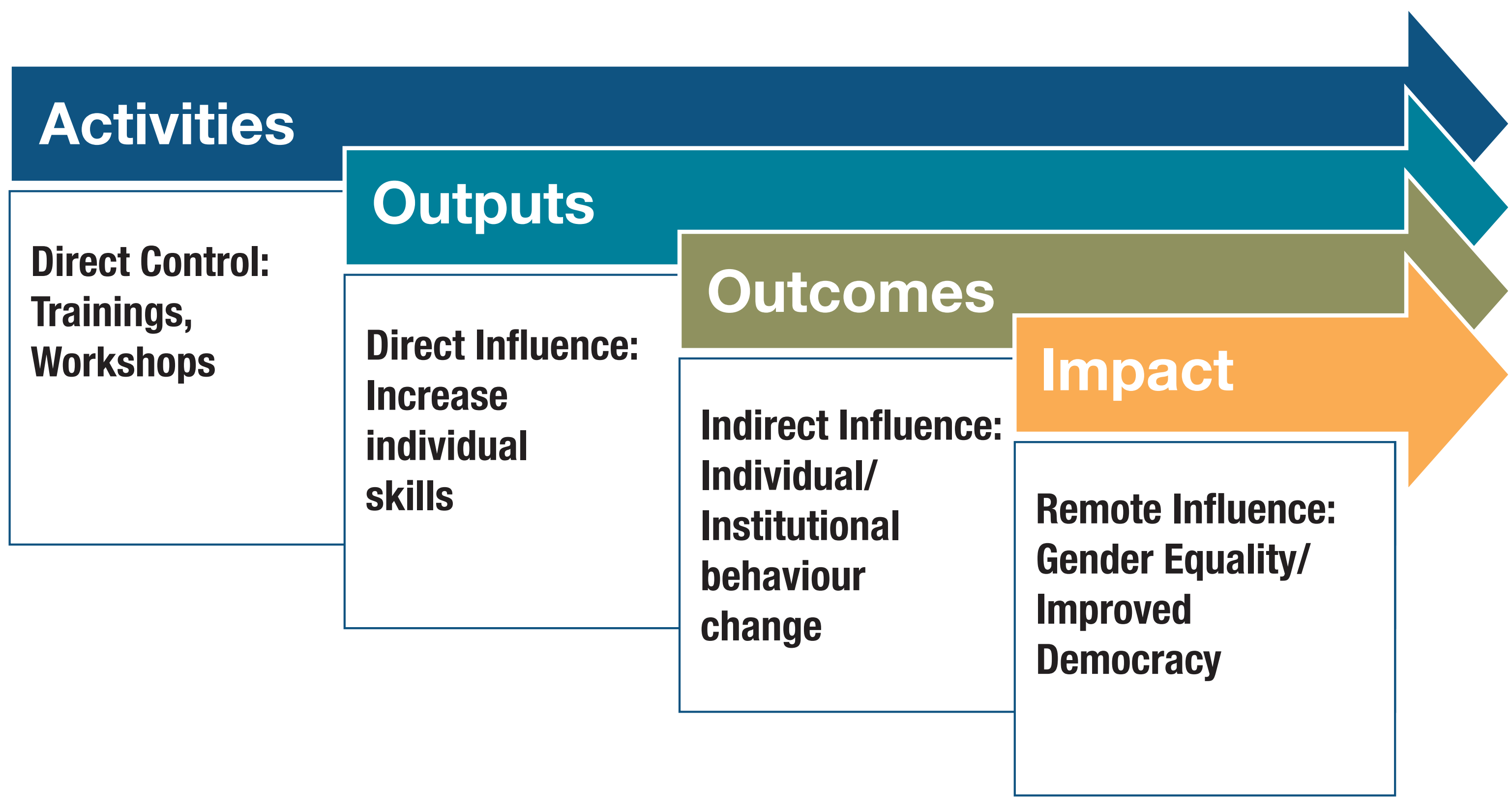
Activities are measurable

Having described our activities, we are ready to describe outputs from those activities as well as expected outcomes resulting from our activities.

	Indicators	Verification	Risks and Assumptions
Objective 1 Trained mediators resolve emerging conflicts in six target communities.	**Indicator 1.1** Eliminate tribal conflict in communities A & B, and reduce criminally motivated conflict in C, D, E, and F by four'	Key Informant interviews will be conducted with security and tribal leaders two months and six months after workshop	1. Tribal conflict does not erupt regionally and involve actors outside our target communities 2. Tribal leaders continue to work collaboratively with GPO
	Indicator 1.2 24 participants complete a three-day conflict mediation and resolution training	1. Sign in sheets 2. Certificates of completion 3. Pledge forms indicating participant intention to mediate conflict	1. All identified participants attend workshopand receive certification to conduct conflict mediation
Outcome 1.1 Conflict Resolution Mediators engage in peacebuilding actions that avert conflict in their communities.	**Indicator 1.1** Small arms conflict reduced to nil in communities A&B	1. Desk review of media and security force reporting. 2. Key informant interviews two months, and six months and end of program.	Assumes mediators are able to identify and engage in early stages of conflict.
	Indicator 1.2 Small arms conflict is cut in half in communities C, D, E, and F	1. Desk review of media and security force reporting. 2. Key informant interviews two months, and six months and end of program.	Assumes mediators are able to identify and engage in early stages of conflict.
Outputs 24 1.1 Conflict Mediators are provided the skills to identify and mediate potential conflict in 6 communities	**Indicator 1.1** Number of participants that earn certification and sign pledges as conflict resolution mediators.	Number of certifications issued, and pledges received from participants.	Assumes all 24 complete course and commit to be conflict mediators in their communities.
Activity 1.1 Issue a recruitment call for 4 conflict mediators in 6 communities	**Indicator 1.1** 24 or more qualified candidates respond to the call for	1. 24 or more cvs are collected by project team. 2. 24 Candidates sign participation forms	1. Candidates see recruitment call and send cvs 2. At least 24 sign participation forms
Activity 2.1 Conduct three days conflict mediation training for 24 candidates from 6 communities	**Indicator 2.1** 24 candidates attend three-day workshop and receive conflict mediation training	1. Sign in sheets 2. Event photographs 3. Certificates 4. Pledges	1. All participants are able to travel to workshop

Logical Framework

This is a simple representation of a Log Frame designed at the beginning of a program for a fictitious organization. The purpose is to demonstrate how a Log Frame, albeit simple, is developed.



Logical Framework

During the design phase, a Logical Framework allows us to plan and identify what is possible and what resources we need to accomplish our objectives. Developing a budget with a completed Log Frame is made easy because we have clearly described all the activities.

During the implementation phase, the Log Frame serves as a road map of sorts, guiding and focusing the organization in reaching its programmatic objectives.

As an evaluative tool the Log Frame gives you a starting point to ask the important evaluation questions such as, «Did we achieve what we set out to accomplish?», «Were our program and interventions relevant?», and «What was our impact?»

While it has been mentioned several times in this handbook, donors will ask for a Logical Framework because they want to know that you understand how to demonstrate impact. More importantly, it is a critically important tool for your organization for all stages of the program cycle.

Conclusion

There is a large body of work dedicated to monitoring, evaluation, and learning related to development programming; much of it is available online. Become familiar with the basics contained in this hand book and, when you are comfortable with developing Log Frames, explore more complex frames and M&E tools.

If a donor provides you with a template for designing a Log Frame and you do not understand the terminology or intent, do not feel embarrassed to ask them to clarify. While most donors will have deep experience designing and working with log frames, they will know that many different standards and templates are used by a variety of donors. They will gladly provide clarification.

Finally, it is worth stressing that proposals or programs are designed with reasonable statement of impact. While a longer-term objectives or vision may be the ultimate goal, a short-term project must have specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound objectives.

Notes

NOTES