Monitoring and Evaluation

Guidance Notes No. 4.3

WHAT IS MONITORING AND EVALUATION?

Monitoring and Evaluating offers an exciting opportunity to prove the impact of your work. It can be a crucial signpost that keeps you on track, a chance to re-assess priorities, and an activity that helps compile an evidence base for future funding proposals. Monitoring and Evaluation is a regular, systematic collection and analysis of information to track the progress of project implementation. Evaluation analyses the judgement of information in order to assess value, worth or impact of a project. Additionally it looks at the dynamics of development interventions and identifies the reasons for both success and failure and how one can learn from both.

WHY MONITOR?

Monitoring produces timely, accurate and adequate information about the impact of a project. It provides data so that plans can be adjusted and resources managed in answer to project needs and opportunities. Its aim is to record information in sufficient detail to illustrate accountability and to provide for future evaluations. Appropriate monitoring generates the minimum data necessary for analysis and uses the simplest effective data collection methods.

Monitoring, evaluation… what's the difference? While monitoring seeks to explain **what** is happening, evaluation attempts to explain **why**, and to learn and share important lessons.

WHO MONITORS?

Monitoring is mainly an internal process carried out by those implementing the project. Preferably, monitoring should involve all stakeholders. The results need to be shared with relevant stakeholders and fed back into implementation.

WHY EVALUATE?

Evaluation takes an objective look at what you've been doing and identifies the reasons for both success and failure, and how your future work can learn from both. It is normally carried out at the end of the project. However, an evaluation can be carried out either at a specified time, or as is the case with a multi-phased project, at the end of a phase. Equally, evaluation is a means by which those administering the project are held accountable to both beneficiaries and funders.

WHO EVALUATES?

Common practice dictates that people external to the project with specialist skills carry out the evaluation. However, the current trend is towards a more participatory approach involving a broad cross-section of those involved in the project with or without external consultants taking part.

COMMON MONITORING & EVALUATION THEMES

Impact Assessment
This differentiates those changes that are attributable to the projects interventions from other external factors contributing to change.

• It focuses on long term and sustainable changes introduced by an identified intervention within the lifetime of the beneficiaries.

• It can be related to an intended goal, the objectives of the project or to unintended impact caused by the project.

• It encompasses unintended changes that may occur in the lives of people not belonging to the beneficiary group.

• It's impact can be either positive or negative, the latter being equally important.

Performance Assessment
This assesses an individuals or teams performance within the organisation or in relation to the projects impact on the external environment.

• Measuring performance often emphasises quantitive rather than qualitative data.

• The current trend is to look at performance assessment as a reflective integration of qualitative and quantitive data.

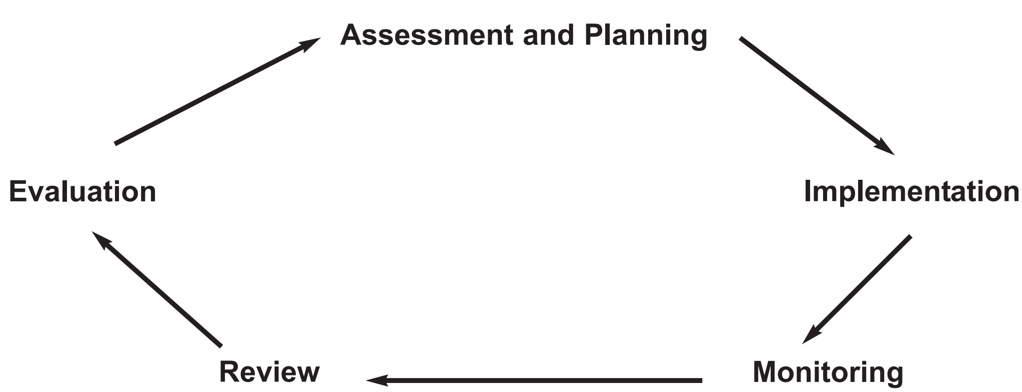
EMPHASISING PARTICIPATION

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) has grown out of the desire for monitoring and evaluation approaches that are simple and participatory. Negotiation between stakeholders is a key tool to decide what is to be measured and for what specific purpose(s). Stakeholders impacted by the programme, both directly and indirectly, are involved in the selection of indicators, the collection of data and the evaluation of findings.

An underlying principle of participatory evaluation is to keep things as simple as possible. An evaluation process that becomes complex or technical will be difficult to conduct participatively. Similarly, a process that is only understood by those with specialist knowledge or skills will encourage limited participation.

The important feature of **PME** is that it asks: **who measures change** and **who benefits** from learning about these changes?

The Project Cycle



PREPARING AND PLANNING FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Planning is Crucial
Conscientious planning needs to come before conscientious action. Through the planning process:

• Problems and opportunities are identified.

• Potential possibilities considered.

• Priorities determined.

• Objectives and goals set.

However, changes in the external operating environment can quickly undo the best made plans. Thus, **contingencies are necessary** to deal with 'unknowns' during the life cycle of the programme.

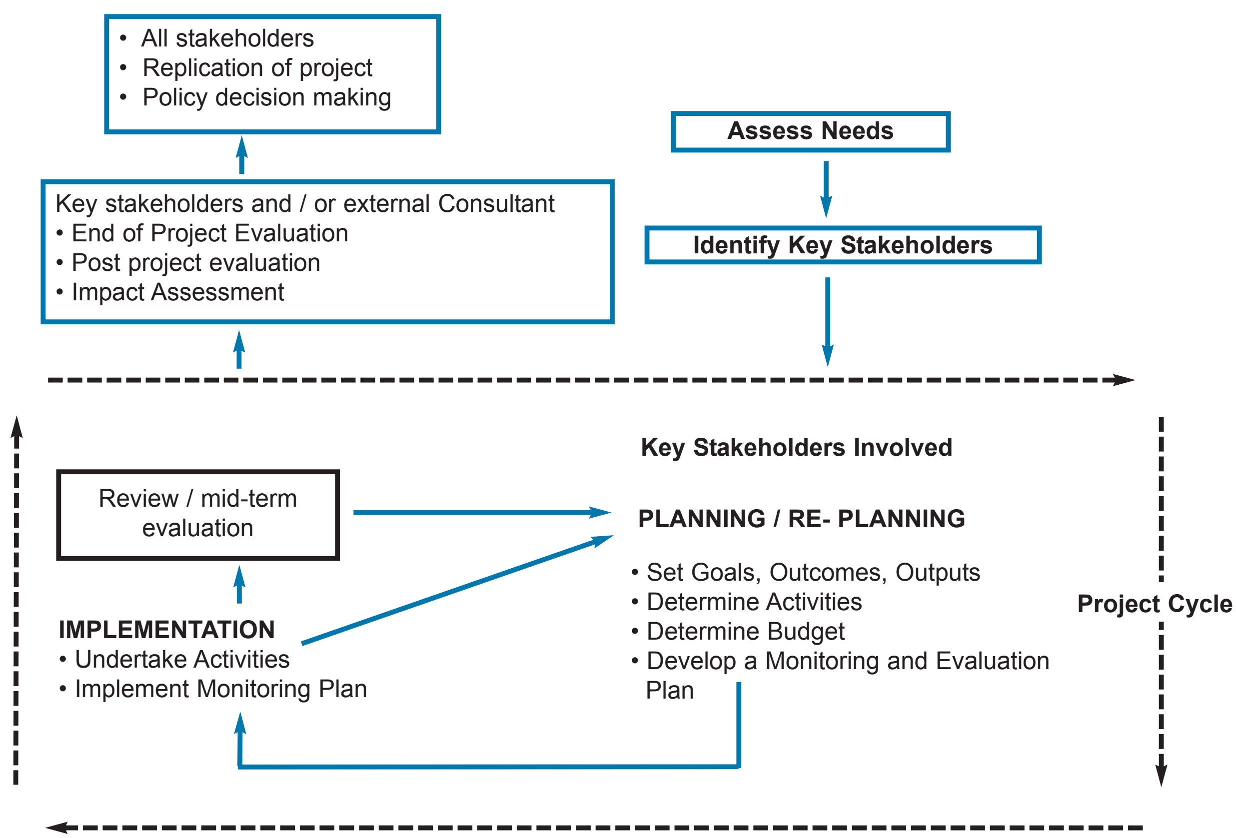
Building the monitoring and evaluation processes into planning from the beginning can ensure these issues are considered. Monitoring and evaluation should not be seen as an add-on, but rather an integral part of a project. By doing so it will ensure that plans are not simply concerned with inputs, outputs and goals but also concentrate on managing resources and changes in the external environment.

Evaluation requires **baselines**, regular data collection and evaluation frameworks built into the project at the time of implementation.

Using a tool such as a logical framework during preparation gives an excellent base for project administrators to monitor the project as it unfolds. It will also enable planners to appreciate the full extent of resources that would be required for a full monitoring and evaluation process to be implemented.

Planning ensures all the **resources** (human, and material) required to meet the objectives are identified, along with the time frame and methodologies to be used.

Integration of Monitoring and Evaluation During the Planning Process



TYPES OF INDICATORS

Indicators come in all shapes and sizes and they can be divided using the acronyms **SMART** and **SPICED**.

SMART indicators used for gathering information on verification and planning.

Properties	Definition
Specific	Reflect what the project intends to change.
Measurable	Must be precisely defined; measurement and interpretation is unambiguous. Provide objective data, independent of who is collecting data. Comparable across projects allowing changes to be compared.
Attainable	Achievable by the project and sensitive to change.
Relevant	Feasible time and money to collect data using chosen indicators. Relevant to the project in question.
Timebound	Describes when a certain change is expected.

Example: *How many orange trees have been planted in Village A over a three month period?*

SPICED indicators used when collecting subjective information related to change.

Properties	Definition
Subjective	Contributors have a special position or experience that gives them unique insights which may yield a high return on the evaluators time. What may be seen by others as 'anecdotal' becomes critical data because of the source's value.
Participatory	Indicators should be developed together with those best placed to assess them. This means involving a project's ultimate beneficiaries, but it can also mean involving local staff and other stakeholders.
Interpretable	Locally defined indicators may be meaningless to other stakeholders, so they often need to be explained.
Cross-checked	The validity of assessment needs to be cross-checked, by comparing different indicators and progress, and by using different informants, methods, and researchers.
Empowering	The process of setting and assessing indicators should be empowering in itself and allow groups and individuals to reflect critically on their changing situation.
Disaggregated	There should be a deliberate effort to seek out different indicators from a range of groups, especially men and women. This information needs to be recorded in such a way that these differences can be assessed over time.

Example: *Elderly villagers are asked to identify indicators of change over a given time period in the history of the village. This could include the number of children in school, the number of fruit trees, primary income generating crops etc. Special consideration should be taken to collect data so that it can be analysed by gender, age, occupation etc.*

KEY ELEMENTS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Step 1: Getting Your Indicators Set

Indicators
An indicator is used to measure progress and therefore needs to be something that is visible, experienced or can be recorded (eg. numbers of men and women participating, acres of rice planted, numbers of a specific species in a given area, etc.)

Purpose
Monitoring and evaluation requires a set of indicators. For example, if your project involves planting fruit trees, one simple indicator may be the number of trees planted in a given period. Other indicators might include:

• Who planted the trees.

• What types of trees were planted.

• How much fruit have the trees produced.

Ideally, all indicators should be **objective**, **verifiable**, and **clearly understandable** to all stakeholders.

How do you measure what you can't measure?
There are projects where the indicators relate to the process of change and as such are subjective. In these types of projects it may be difficult to identify visible indicators. If this is the case, then proxy indicators can be used.

Using the example of tree planting, a proxy indicator could be the number of children who are enrolled in school, as increased income from the fruit trees will allow parents to send more children to class. This assumes that a clear correlation between income, education and the project can be justified.

The more, the merrier and the more accurate
A variety of indicators covering the physical, economic, social, attitudes, etc., should be identified. It is essential that indicators are sought from all stakeholders, including those who are indirectly affected by the project. In doing this, differences should be noted. Involving the stakeholders will ensure that crucial timing issues are covered. If your indicator is the total amount of fruit harvested from the trees, you'll have to make sure the yield is counted before it goes to market.

Roll with the changes
Projects take place in a constantly changing environment and therefore flexibility in the setting of indicators is important. Indicators should be regularly reviewed and if necessary, updated and reformulated. Make space to introduce new indicators or drop ones that are obsolete.

It's important to record indicators that give you **negative feedback**, as well as positive. Recording them requires a conscious effort to determine and locate those who can report them. These may include minority groups, disadvantged groups or individuals, or those who have dropped out of the project.

Step 2: Data Collection

What tools and which technique?
Monitoring and evaluation and data gathering go hand in hand. Choosing the tools and method is dependent on the focus of the evaluation, its context the capacity and skills of those involved and the resources available. For each goal and outcome, a specific data collection technique should be identified that can best provide the necessary information. The choice of technique is important as the technique used in collecting the data will have an influence on what is learned. Make sure the technique are appropriate, are understood by all (beneficiaries included) and statistically reliable. Even if they are not quantitative, data must be objective enough to convince others of their credibility.

Take into account the following elements:

1. **Observation**

2. **Record Analysis**

3. **Interviews and Focus Groups**

4. **Questionnaires and Surveys**

Step 3: Processing the Data… And Then Using It.

Processing data

How you process the data will be dictated by the needs of your stakeholders, the environment in which the data was collected and the project itself. Important questions include:

• What is the purpose of the data?

• How does it relate to the outcomes of the project?

• What aspect of the project does this data represent?

• Make sure a clear line exists from goal to indicator to final outcome.

• How can the data be best presented to be understood and useful to all?

• What are the shortcomings of the data and the data collection method?

• What biases should be noted?

Use it, and pass it on

Office bookshelves are sagging with impressive reports few people have ever read. Usually, the last people to access these reports are the ones the project is meant to impact. Planning how the information is to be disseminated from the beginning, ensures that time and resources have been set aside for translation, printing etc. Internally the information can be used for **organisational learning**, and externally to help other organisations in their work. Any information transfer should be a two-way process from grassroots to funders and vice versa as well as between organisations.

Make your report impressive

• Keep it simple.

• Make sure that the right information reaches the right people.

• Use a form of communication that catches the attention of the intended audience.

• Communicate in a way that makes the information as understandable as possible to each particular audience.

• Present the information on time, otherwise the exercise could be a waste of time.

• Involve the target group in deciding what and how to communicate.

• Use a standardised format to allow comparison.

• Indicate the reliability of the data.

Step 4: Writing Terms of Reference (TORs) For an Evaluation.

Now that you have identified what you are monitoring and evaluating, and how you are going to go about doing it, the next step is to reflect all of that in a clear TOR (Terms of Reference)

Why Write TORs?

TORs give an overview of what is required and the expectations of the evaluation. This is especially important if using an external evaluator, although TORs can help guide any evaluation process. The roles, resources, and responsibilities of the evaluators and the agency commissioning the evaluation are clearly set out. TORs define clear limitations for:

• Why the evaluation is being done.

• For whom the evaluation is being done.

• What the evaluation intends to accomplish.

• How it will be accomplished.

• Who will be involved in the evaluation.

• Key target dates including when the evaluation will be completed.

• A framework within which to discuss finer details.

What To Include In Your TORs

The TORs of any evaluation process must be customised in relation to the particulars of that project/programme. However, some generic elements should be included:

• Project / Programme Profile
Clear and concise descriptions focusing on the issues to be covered.

• Reasons for Evaluation
Why this evaluation is being done. What added value there is in carrying out the evaluation.

• Scope and Focus
Not everything can be evaluated. Strategic choices must be made about what to include / exclude. Prioritisation should be based on the main intended uses of the completed evaluation report.

• Stakeholder Involvement
Include a requirement for stakeholder participation.

• Accountabilities and Responsibilities
Roles and responsibilities of the donor agencies, implementing agencies, other stakeholders and the evaluator must be identified and clearly set out.

• Evaluation Process
This covers areas such as partnership, openness and transparency. Clearly state the methods of investigation and link them with the ethos and methodologies used in the project. A statement on the need for the evaluator to follow appropriate research ethics and procedures should also be included.

• Deliverables
Specify the intended user(s) and use(s) of the evaluation. The reporting requirements should spell out the format, content, length, intended audience(s), decisions on whether the evaluation report should/should not include recommendations, and method of delivery. The TORs should point out to the evaluator(s) that the quality of the evaluation report they produce will be judged by the organisation commissioning the report.

• Costs and timing
Outline an evaluation budget. Include personnel per day or lump sum fees, travel, supplies, equipment and materials, direct communication costs, translation, copying and printing, and workshops to be used by the intended user. In addition there should be details about timing. A detailed timeline and key target dates should be established.
Potential phases are:
i) Planning.
ii) Data collection.
iii) Data analysis.
iv) Reporting.
v) Facilitation of use.

• How to Perform Evaluations – Model TOR
An example of a good TOR can be found at:
www.acdi.gc.ca
It has been prepared by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

RESOURCES

Publications

A Basic Guide To Evaluation For Development Workers, Oxfam GB
Rubin, Frances (1995)

Learning From Change: Issues and Experiences In Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation. Intermediate Technology Publications.
Estrella, Mariol (2000)

Impact Assessment For Development Agencies. Oxfam GB
Roche, Chris (1999)

Methods for Community Participation. A complete Guide for Practitioners. Kumar, Somesh.
ITDG Publishing (2002)

Evaluating Social Development Projects.
Marsden, David and Peter Oakley.
Oxfam (1990)

Measuring the Process: Guidelines for Evaluating Social Development. Marsden, David, Peter Oakley and Brian Pratt.
INTRAC (1994)

Evaluating Change in Social Development.
Oakley, Peter, Brian Pratt and Andrew Clayton.
Outcomes and Impact:
INTRAC (1998)

Evaluation training

A Trainer's Guide for Participatory Learning and Action. International Institute for Environment and Development.
Pretty, Jules, Irene Guijt, John Thompson and Ian Scoones (1995)

Internet links

Monitoring and Evaluation News (MandE)
www.mande.co.uk

The World Bank Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
www.worldbank.org

Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
www.ids.ac.uk

The Performance Assessment Resource Centre (PARC)
www.parcinfo.org

Evaluation

This site is a gateway to numerous links relating to monitoring and evaluation. They include links to resource guides, educational materials, etc.
www.policy-evaluation.org

Acknowledgements

This Guidance Note has been prepared by Ian Mowatt from SIL UK, the facilitator for the BOND workshop **Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation.**

Ian works in the International Programmes Department and is a facilitator on SIL's training programme, focusing on development issues and cross-cultural communication. He is experienced in developing monitoring and evaluation systems. He has an MA in Rural Social Development and has presented papers at academic fora.

Contact Ian Mowatt via SIL UK
Email: Ian_Mowatt@sil.org
Tel: + 44 (0)1494 682206

Top Tips

• Keep it simple.

• Record information in sufficient detail to illustrate accountability and provide for future evaluations.

• Negotiate between stakeholders to decide what to monitor and evaluate.

• Monitoring and evaluation is not an add-on.

• Start early and build monitoring and evaluation into your project from the beginning.

• Indicators should be objective, verifiable and clearly understood by all stakeholders.

• For each goal and outcome on a log frame, a specific data collection method should be identified.

• Make sure a clear line exists from goal, to indicator to final outcome on your log frame.

• The process is only complete once the lessons have been put to use.

• Don't keep it a secret! All stakeholders need to be kept aware of the results of your monitoring and evaluation.

The Guidance Notes Series *are constantly being updated and your comments are welcome. This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the* ***Big Lottery Fund****.*

BIG LOTTERY FUND

ABOUT BOND

BOND is the network of over 290 UK-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in international development and development education.
BOND aims to improve the extent and quality of the UK and Europe's contribution to international development, the eradication of global poverty and the upholding of human rights.

The Guidance Notes Series aims to provide 'how-to' information on a variety of topics for the development sector. This edition also provides signposts to resources for those keen to pursue the topic further.

Disclaimer: *BOND's Guidance Notes aim to encourage good practice through practical advice, however, BOND cannot be held responsible for the outcome of any actions taken as a result of the information contained in the Guidance Notes series.*