Monitoring & Evaluation

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Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring can be defined as the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives. Contrary to many definitions that treat monitoring as merely reviewing progress made in implementing actions or activities, the definition used in this Handbook focuses on reviewing progress against achieving goals. In other words, monitoring in this Handbook is not only concerned with asking "Are we   taking the actions we said we would take?" but also "Are we making progress on achieving the results that we said we wanted to achieve?" The difference between these two approaches is extremely important. In the more limited approach, monitoring may focus on tracking projects and the use of the agency's resources. In the broader approach, monitoring also involves tracking strategies and actions being taken by partners and non-partners, and figuring out what new strategies and actions need to be taken to ensure progress towards the most important results.

Evaluation **is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision making. Evaluations, like monitoring, can apply to many things, including an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector or organization. The key distinction between the two is that evaluations are done independently to provide managers and staff with an objective assessment of whether or not they are on track. They are also more rigorous in their procedures, design and methodology, and generally involve more extensive analysis. However, the aims of both monitoring and evaluation are very similar: to provide information that can help inform decisions, improve performance and achieve planned results.**

Reasons for Monitoring and Evaluation

M&E should be carried out with the aim of reducing the gap between plans (projects' designs) and realities (implementation and results).

Monitoring is primarily a management tool that focuses on projects' progress and should help project staff and Armadilla managers into identifying actual or potential successes and problems in order to facilitate the adoption of corrective measures during project implementation.

Evaluations are carried out for three main reasons:

1.   Evaluation is primarily an instrument of ELearning:. Evaluations allow Aramdilla and stakeholders to learn from experience, improve future interventions and support institutional learning. For this purpose, procedures have to be set in place to ensure the that the lessons derived from completed projects contribute to shape future policy and project planning.

2.   Related to learning, evaluations serve also for Empowerment, by enhancing the capacities of local partners, project staff and project beneficiaries to use evaluations as an instrument of learning and control.

3.   Another reason for carrying out evaluations concerns a Accountability: evaluations allow Armadilla to account to funding agencies on the use of funds.

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Purposes of M&E

- **Ensuring that planned results are achieved**
- **Supporting and improving management**
- **Generating shared understanding**
- **Generating new knowledge and support learning**
- **Building the capacities of those involved**
- **Motivating stakeholders**
- **Ensuring accountability**
- **Fostering public and political support**

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M&E and capacity building

In this framework, the challenges that Armadilla will face in the future can be summarised as follows:

Reduction of the existing (considerable) gap between the theoretical interest in M&E and the practical use of M&E tools, through the systematic promotion and utilisation of participatory techniques and the promotion of a genuine 'evaluation culture'.

Incorporation of evaluation work into a broader framework, looking at evaluation within a wider continuum that embraces appraisal and monitoring and eventually the overall strategic planning, and using lessons learnt for future planning.

Strengthening of planning capacities, in particular the identification of appropriate indicators forto assessing the different dimensions of impact and the analysis of qualitative data.

Research on new methods and experimentation with developing tools of M&E, as well as strengthening of own internal capacities to carry out M&E activities.

The transfer of know-how on M&E to local partners.
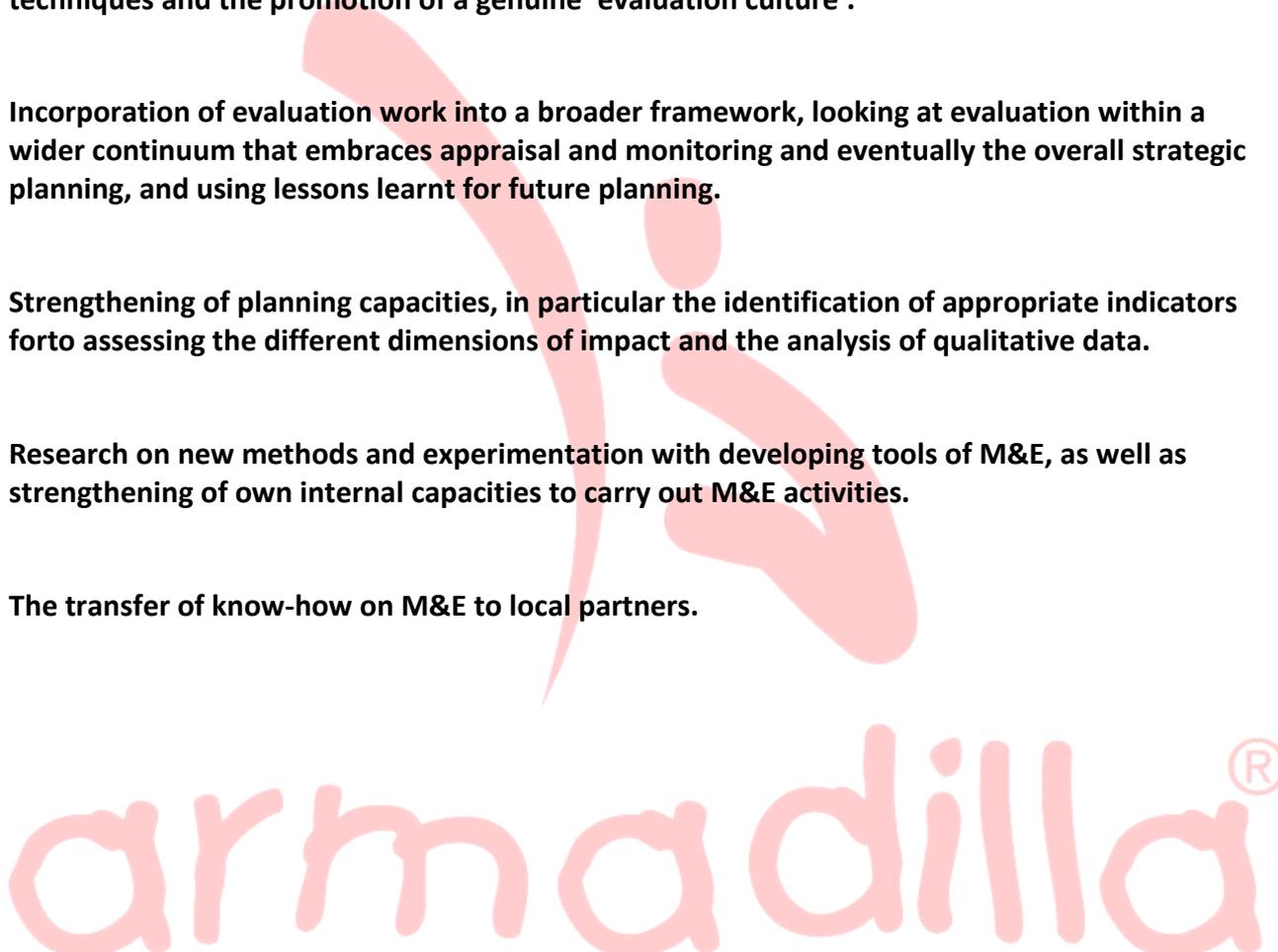
Planning,monitoring and evaluation in crisis settings (*)

Crisis settings (both relating to conflicts and disasters) are 'not normal'.This has ramifications on all aspects of programming including planning,monitoring and evaluation. In general,'normal' planning,monitoring and evaluation methods and mechanisms presented in this Handbook are transferable to crisis settings,with several important caveats:

Crisis situations are dynamic and Armadilla programming should quickly respond to radical changes that often take place in such circumstances.Therefore, the situation should continually be analysed and monitored to ensure that programming remains relevant. Changes should be documented so that monitoring and evaluating of the relevance and appropriateness of development initiatives takes into consideration the fluid situations in which they were conceived and implemented.This will involve continuous situational and conflict analysis.

At the same time, crisis situations are characteristically ones of raised (or potentially raised) tension between different parties.Thus crisis and conflict-sensitivity should be exercised in all aspects of programming—including planning,monitoring and evaluation—to ensure that both the substance and process of programming is conducted in a way to reduce, or at the least not heighten, tensions between different parties. Security of programme staff, beneficiaries, and M&E staff can be a constant concern, and risk analysis for all thoseinvolved should be constantly monitored and factored into M&E activities.

It is important to keep a 'big picture' perspective: The connectivity of projects andprogrammes to the wider peace process is critical, particularly for conflict prevention and peace-building programming. Planning,monitoring and evaluation should always include this aspect to avoid a situation where a project is 'successful' in terms of meeting the desired results, but either doesn't have an impact on the wider peace or negatively impacts it.

Additional guidance on how to apply methods and mechanism in crisis settings is presented throughout the Handbook,when relevant.

(*) by UNDP, 'Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures

Logical Framework Approach (LFA)

The LFA aims at presenting the programmes/projects' objectives in a logic and systematic way. It reflects the casual relationships between the different levels of objectives (in practice a hierarchy of objectives), indicating how to check whether these objectives have been achieved and establishing the assumptions, which are beyondoutside the control of the project that may influence its success.

This approach is normally developed through the following steps:

a) Systematic analysis of the situation in which the intervention is planned.

b) Clear identification of the problem(s) to be addressed and their cause and effects relationship (usually done through the instrument of the problem tree).

c) Consideration of intervention alternatives and development of a logical hierarchy of activities and objectives that will allow to overcome enable the problem(s) to be overcome.

d) Identification of the assumptions that underlie the logic of the objectives hierarchy and the external risks that may lead to these assumptions not being realised.

e) Establishment of the indicators that will be used to verify if the objectives have been achieved.

f) Indication of the means by which the information for the indicators will be collected and analysed.

The result of this process is summarised in a matrix, the "LogFrame", which shows the overall logic of the programme/project and its main aspects. Thus, the LF has the ad-vantage of to presenting communicate the essential elements of complex projects clearly and succinctly. The M&E practices of specific interventions are included in the LF where it defines the levels, people, processes, documents and information used to monitor and evaluate the project are defined.

LOGICALFRAMEWORK

	Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Overall objectives	*What is the overall broader objective, to which the project will contribute ?*	*What are the key indicators related to the overall objective?*	*What are the sources of information for these indicators?*	
Project purpose	*What are the specific objectives, which the project shall achieve?*	*What are the quantitative or qualitative indicators showing whether and to what extent the project's specific objectives are achieved?*	*What are the sources of information that exist or can be collected? What are the methods required to get this information?*	*What are the factors and conditions not under the direct control of the project which are necessary to achieve these objectives? What risks have to be considered?*
Expected results	*What are the concrete outputs envisaged to achieve the specific objectives? What are the envisaged effects and benefits of the project? What improvements and changes will be produced by the project?*	*What are the indicators to measure whether and to what extent the project achieves the envisaged results and effects?*	*What are the sources of information for these indicators?*	*What external factors and conditions must be realised to obtain the expected outputs and results on schedule?*
Activities	*What are the key activities to be carried out and in what sequence in order to produce the expected results?*	*Means:* *What are the means required to implement these activities, e. g. personnel, equipment, training, studies, supplies, operational facilities, etc.*	*What are the sources of information about project progress?*	*What pre- conditions are required before the project(s) start(s)? What conditions outside the project's direct control have to be present for the implementation of the planned activities?*

Evaluation criteria

Most of the basic evaluations criteria and concepts are universally accepted and used by all the organisations within the donors' community. They are based on the OECD/DAC criteria for evaluation, and address five major sets of issues:

1. Relevance - 2. Efficiency - 3. Effectiveness - 4. Impact - 5. Sustainability

Each of these criteria is linked to key elements of the Logical Framework, as explained in the following chart and paragraphs.

1. Relevance

The relevance of a project relates to its design and concerns the extent to which the original design:

• Continues to reflect the beneficiaries' needs and addresses the identified problems.

• Reflects development priorities and policies of local partners.

• Contributes to the NGOs' development priorities.

Relevance needs to be assessed throughout the life of the project, and focuses on the appropriateness of the project design to the problems to be solved at two points in time: a) when the project was designed and at the moment of the evaluation.

The analysis of relevance refers to the continuing rationale of a project and focuses on:

1.The consistency of the design with the local situation and coherence with other interventions:

- **Identification and selection of target groups/beneficiaries**

- **Identification of target groups/beneficiaries' needs and priorities**

- **Participation of local stakeholders in the design phase**

- **Assessment of local absorption and local implementation capacities**

- **Coherence with other development initiatives in the same country/region and/or sector**

2. The overall logic of the project design:

- **Quality of the LF, including the assumptions and risks identified**

- **Realism in the selection of objectives and services to be provided**

- **Overall degree of flexibility**

2. Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the extent to which:

- **Services were provided and managed;**

- **Foreseen activities were carried out in the most appropriate manner giving the available resources and time;**

- **The above was done at the least costs to produce the expected results.**

Thus, the efficiency addresses the question related to whether similar results could have been achieved in a better way by other means at lower costs and in the same time, or at the same costs but in less time.

The analysis of efficiency focuses on:

a) **The quality of the project management:**

- **Management of the budget**

- **Timely provision of services**

- **Relationship with stakeholders, beneficiaries and other local institu-tions/authorities**

- **Quality of monitoring procedures and practices, including the use of indicators of efficiency;**

b) **The use of the most cost-effective alternatives for to achievinge the results in comparison with to similar projects or approaches;**

c) **The unplanned results eventually arisingen from project's activities.**

3. Effectiveness

The Effectiveness refers to the extent to which:

- **The project produced the expected results;**

- **The results achieved lead to the project purpose.**

The effectiveness measures whether the planned purposes/outcomes have been achieved and whether the planned benefits received have been reaped by the intended beneficiaries. In particular, it focuses on:

1) **The factors influencing the achievement of the purpose, including unforeseen external factors;**

2) **The management capacity to ensure that the results would achieved allow the reach the purpose;**

3) **The reaction of beneficiaries and the use of project results and benefits;**

4) **The unplanned results that are likely to affect benefits;**

5) **The potential effects of results obtained on crosscutting issues such as gender, environment and poverty reduction.**

4. Impact

Impact refers to the effects of the project on target beneficiaries as well as to its wider overall effect on larger numbers of people, within the sector or in a geographic area, in terms of technical, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors. It relates to the relationship between the project's purpose and overall objectives, taking into account the fact that at this level the project is normally one of the variables contributing to the wider outcome.

The focus of impact is normally on:

1) The extent to which the overall objectives were achieved and the contribution of the project to thiseir achievement;

2) The external factors that influenced the overall impact and the capacity of the project of to respond to these factors;

3) The eventual possible unplanned impacts of the project and their effects on the overall impact;

4) The possible longer-term effects of the project;

5) The impacts of the project on gender-related, environment and poverty issues.

5. Sustainability

Sustainability is often the most important criteria of evaluation and refers to the extent to which:

- The positive impacts of the project at the purpose level are likely to continue after the project assistance is over;

- The target groups/beneficiaries want - and can - take over the project activities and thus charge themselves to continue to accomplish the ing project objectives.

Analysis of sustainability can focus on:

1) Stakeholders' ownership of objectives (participation in their definition during the design phase) and achievements (participation throughout the duration of the project);

2) Institutional sustainability: the extent to which the project is embedded in and respects the local organisations/institutionsal structures, the capacity of these structures for to takinge over after the project end and the adequacy of the project's budget for this purpose;

3) Financial sustainability: whether the services afforded provided to the beneficiaries are likely to continue after the funding ends; whether enough funds were available to cover all costs and whether the costs are likely to continue after the funding ends;

4) Socio-cultural sustainability: whether the project takes into account the local perception of needs and respects the local status' systems and beliefs; whether the changes produced by the project have been accepted by the beneficiaries and other stakeholders and how;

5) Technical sustainability: whether the technology and knowledge provided fit in with existing traditions, skills and knowledge; whether the beneficiaries are likely to be able to maintain the technology acquired without further assistance;

6) Possibility of replicating successful impacts for a possible extension of the project or of other similar interventions.

Summary points

a) Monitoring is primarily a management function and aims at supporting project implementation; evaluation, on the other hand, focuses primarily on learning and accountability.

b) An accurate evaluation significantly depends on the regular collection and reporting of information through monitoring activities

c) A common understanding on terminology is essential for a correct application of the Logical Framework for M&E purposes

d) The evaluation criteria commonly used address five sets of issues: (a) relevance; (b) efficiency; (c) effectiveness; (d) impact; (e) sustainability.

e) There are several types of evaluation, distinctions can be found according to agent, timing, scope, specific issues and processes

Types of evaluation

There are several ways of categorising evaluations.

A first distinction can be made between summative and formative evaluations. Summative evaluations are carried out when the project is over, and aim to assess effectiveness and, impact . Formative evaluations, on the other hand, are usually undertaken earlier to gain an understanding of what is being achieved in order to introduce improvements.

A second distinction can be made between quantitative and qualitative evaluations. Quantitative evaluations focus on measurable inputs provided and changes that resultonsequence from of the direct implementation of project's' activities. Qualitative evaluations are more process oriented and focused on the assessment of change of uncountable factors such as attitudes, behaviour, skills, level of knowledge.

Other distinctions between types of evaluation include the following:

By agent:

    a. Self-evaluation: an evaluation conducted by people that are directly involved in the implementation of the project in the field;

    b. Internal evaluation: an evaluation conducted by people who form part of the staff of the organisation that provided the aid but are external to the project;

    c. External evaluation: an evaluation conducted by those who are external to the aid organisation and the project.

By timing/stage in the project cycle:

    a. Mid-term evaluation (sometimes referred to as "on-going"): an evaluation carried out during the project implementation with the purpose of assessing performance to date, and provide recommendations for adjustments during the continuing implementation;

b. **End-of-project evaluation:** an evaluation carried out at project completion. If the project is part of a multi-phase initiative, the evaluation provides information for consideration in the implementation of the subsequent phases;

c. **Ex-post evaluation:** an evaluation carried out after (usually two/three years) project completion with the purpose of assessing the longer-term impacts and draw conclusions for similar interventions in the future.

By scope:

a. **Project evaluation:** evaluation of a single project.

b. **Programme evaluation:** evaluation of a programme composed by a number of pro-jects;

c. **Country evaluation:** evaluation of development aid strategies and interventions in a particular country;

d. **Sectoral evaluation:** cluster evaluation of projects or programmes in a sector or sub-sector as well as of general support of aid organisations to a sector;

e. **Thematic evaluation:** cluster evaluation of projects or programmes addressing a particular theme that may cut across sectors or geographical boundaries.

Evaluations focusing on specific issues and processes:

a. **Policy evaluation:** evaluation of programmes and projects dealing with particular issues at sectoral or thematic level;

b. **Institutional evaluation**: evaluation of multilateral aid organisations or international, national and local NGOs;

c. **Process evaluation**: evaluation of programmes and projects to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of a particular process or modality adopted.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	LINKS	LOGFRAME LEVELS
Impact : contribution to the long-term change & **Sustainability**: durability of the change		**OVERALL OBJECTIVES** (overall lasting change) **PURPOSE** (benefits actually received)
Effectiveness: from results to purpose: to what extent service and products were used to eliminate the problem(s)		**RESULTS** (confirmed planned deliverables)
Efficiency: from inputs through activities to results		**ACTIVITIES** (process of converting inputs into results) **INPUTS** (material, personnel and financial resources)
Relevance: to the identified problems or real needs to be addressed		**DESIGN PROCESS**

Adapted from EC, AidCo Evaluation Unit H6; *Evaluation in the EC*, Brussels, 21 march, 2001