

Outcome and Impact Assessment in International Development

Zewo Guidelines for Projects and Programmes



Step 4: Collect data

The data necessary for the outcome and impact assessment should be collected before or during the project implementation. If this is not planned, then any reliable assertions about the effect will only be partly possible. Later data collection requires a great deal of effort and might not be possible at all. Therefore the collection of effect indicators is ideally included in the monitoring system. Depending on the planning, the requisite data is collected once or twice over the course of the project, sometimes more often, e.g. on a quarterly basis.

How it is done

Activities The implementation of activities is supervised as part of monitoring. The data required for the outcome and impact assessment is collected, checked and recorded at the same time.

Questions Coming up with answers to the following questions can form the fourth step in an impact assessment:

- Are activities that are crucial for the project's effects controlled through monitoring?
- Is data relevant for the impact assessment collected in the process?
- Are responsibilities and interfaces for the collection of data clear?
- Does the collected data deliver the desired information?
- Is there any deviation that might jeopardise the achievement of results?
- Which corrective or enforcing measures are necessary?

Results

- The necessary data is collected, checked and recorded.
- Interim analyses are carried out.
- Where necessary, corrective measures are taken.

IMPORTANT

Properly functioning monitoring requires responsibility to be taken. The person in charge must supervise the collection and analysis of the data on an ongoing basis. If the project managers do not collect the data themselves, they must ensure that the people in charge of collecting the data know for what purpose the data is being collected. Experience shows that this increases their willingness to record the necessary data accurately and reliably.

N.B.

It is not sufficient to record deliverables at the output level to judge a measure's outcome and impact. An inventory of services rendered is however a condition for being able to measure the effects at a later stage.

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Monitoring

Data about the specific indicators is collected as part of an ongoing process during the implementations of the project. This provides constant information on the project's progress, the objectives achieved and the use of the available means.

Many organisations have introduced deadline, cost and quality controls for this purpose. They compare the activity plans with the interim reports about the outputs as well as budgets with expenditure. From time to time they take a look at the on-site implementation of activities for themselves.

One of the roles of monitoring is to ensure that the data required for outcome and impact assessment is being collected and recorded reliably. Interfaces with project and risk management might need to be clarified. There is no consensus among experts about whether a monitoring system should only include the output level while outcome and impact data can be added later, or whether the monitoring system should include the outcome and impact levels as well, as proposed for example by the World Bank's Results-Based Monitoring approach.

If it is noticed that actual service provision diverges from the planned output, then the reasons for and consequences of this should be analysed. Corrective measures can then be taken so as not to jeopardise the planned results.

N.B.

In practice, there is a danger that the monitoring system can be either too superficial or too complicated. In the first case there is too little data; in the latter this leads to so-called "data cemeteries" that are never used - planning is often too ambitious and the set indicators cannot be measured. This sort of monitoring system is quickly abandoned. As early as the planning stage, adequate attention should be paid to ensuring that the monitoring system is feasible and the effort commensurate.

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Data recording

Once collected and checked, the data should be systematically recorded and saved in an appropriate form.

IMPORTANT

Reporting should be agreed with local partners in advance using, wherever possible, common report formats. This means that data can be harmonised and the workload minimised.

Example of health course project

A course is offered to mothers with small children to enlighten them on the links between clean drinking water and health.

	Objective	Indicator	Measurement
Outcome objective (O1)	Participants know about the links between clean drinking water and health	Participants can use the information they have learnt in a role-playing game.	Video, analysis by project managers
Performance objective (P1)	Provide courses	100 courses	Project report
Performance objective (P2)	The courses are well attended	At least 35 participants per course	Attendance list

Data recording: health course project for young mothers

Phase 1: 2009-2012, produced by project leader

Objectives	Indicator	30.06.09	31.12.09	30.06.10	31.12.10	30.06.11	31.12.11	30.06.12
O1	Use in role play	Good	-	genügend				
P1	Number of courses	1 (pilot)	22	18				
P1	Number of participants	45	779	702				
	Kosten	15,000	100,000	85,000				

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Completed logframe

Child health programme

	Strategy of intervention	Indicator	Source	2009	2010
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributes to improved child health: child mortality falls 	Child mortality in Regions x, y and z falls from 10% to 2%	National statistics	x: 10% y: 10% z: 10%	x: 5% y: 7% z: 12%
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mothers know about links 	Participants in the courses can use the information learned in a role-playing game.	Video, analysis by project managers	Good	Satisfactory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ill children can be successfully treated 	95% of cases of children treated for diarrhoea are successful.	Case studies	89%	80%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access to clean drinking water 	Walking time to nearest well <15 minutes for 80% of households	Observation	50%	60%
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courses 	100 courses provided	Project report	23	42
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cases treated 	1,000 cases treated per year	Treatment statistics	955	1,112
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wells 	50 new wells in the region	Project report	12	
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide courses 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce mobile health clinics 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build wells 				

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Interim analysis

Interim analysis is carried out as planned in Step 3. The reasons for any potential deviations must be explained, and there should be some analysis of which corrective or reinforcing measures are required. As soon as an analysis at the output level is available, the possible consequences on the project's effects can be anticipated. It is then possible to concentrate the corrective and reinforcing measures on the critical success factors and to start learning lessons already during the implementation of the project.

Interim analysis of health course project

Phase 1: 2009-2012, produced by project leader

Objective	Indicator	Target	Performance	Difference	Comments
O1	Use in role play	Min. good	Good	---	Analysis easy
P1	N° of courses	1 (Pilot)	1 (Pilot)	---	
P2	N° of participants	35	45	+ 30 %	High demand
	Cost	10,000	15,000	+ 5,000	Higher attendance, higher costs
	Deadline	May 09	Juni 09	1 month late	Finding speaker harder than expected

Legend for colour code

	Result	Measure
Green	Satisfactory	Plan reinforcement and ensure continuous success
Red	Critical	Take steps to correct
Yellow	Still uncertain	Keep under observation
White	As planned	None needed

