Outcome and Impact Assessment

in International Development

Short presentation of the Zewo guidelines for projects and programmes

Zewo Foundation

This brochure gives a brief presentation of the online Zewo guidelines for outcome and impact assessment of projects and programmes in international development available at **www.zewo.ch.**
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The Zewo Foundation is the Swiss certification body for non-profit organisations that are involved in fundraising. It strives to promote transparency and integrity in fundraising and verifies that non-profit organisations use the funds entrusted to them in a conscientious manner. Organisations that comply with its requirements are awarded the Zewo seal of approval.

Donations and public funding need to make a difference: that is the common aim of aid agencies and donors. It is therefore essential that organisations think, plan and act in a results-based manner when planning, implementing and assessing their projects and programmes. Assessing the effects they have achieved enables organisations to learn and improve. Aid agencies can concentrate their efforts where they are most needed and most effective. These Zewo guidelines will help aid agencies to adopt a results-based management approach.

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# The guidelines help aid agencies to record the effects of their projects and programmes. They can develop and implement an outcome and impact assessment system that is tailored to their organisation's needs.

The lessons learnt provide answers to the fundamental questions:

- Are we doing the right things?
- Are we doing things properly?
- How can we do things better?

In 6 steps

Outcome and impact assessment is built into the project cycle in 6 steps. Several steps that are decisive need to be considered as early as in the planning stage. The various stages may be repeated several times during the life of a project. The guidelines owe much to the Logical Framework Approach, a results-based management model that is widely used in international development. At the relevant points, alternative approaches are discussed, along with their corresponding methodologies.

The guidelines' modular structure makes the introduction to the subject of impact assessment easier.
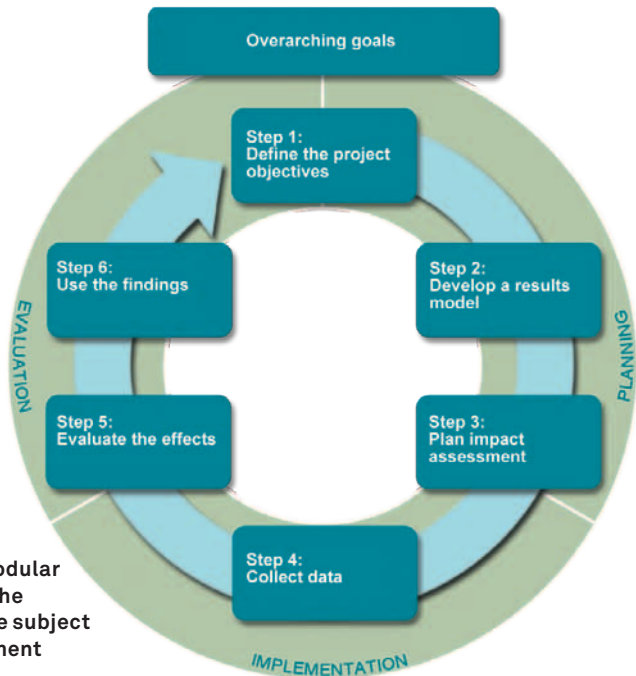
Outcome and impact assessment

aims primarily to record the direct effects that aid agencies trigger off for the beneficiaries through their outputs, but it also measures longer-term effects that extend beyond the target group.

Input	Activities	Output	Outcome	Impact
Expert knowledge, concepts, funds	Building schools and training teachers	Completed schools, trained teachers	Children receive an education	Improvement in education and prosperity

| Process evaluation | | Output assessment | Impact assessment | |

| Planned activities | | Intended results | | |
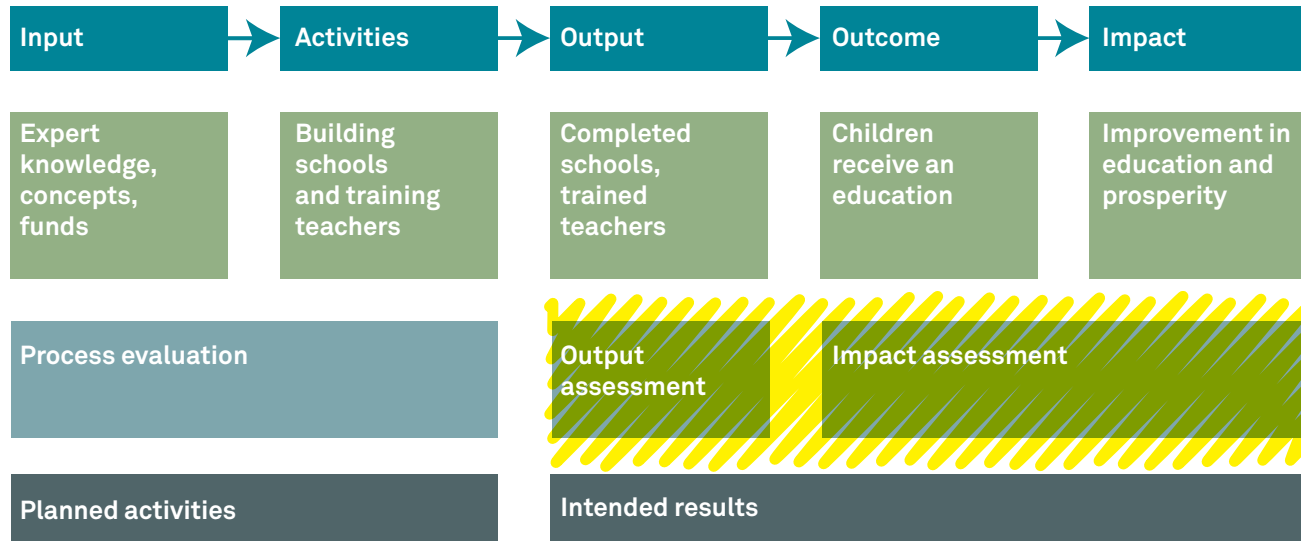
Standardised use of terminology provides clarity.

Input
The financial, human, and material resources used for the development intervention.

Activities
Actions taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilized to produce specific outputs.

Output
The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.

Outcome
The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs.
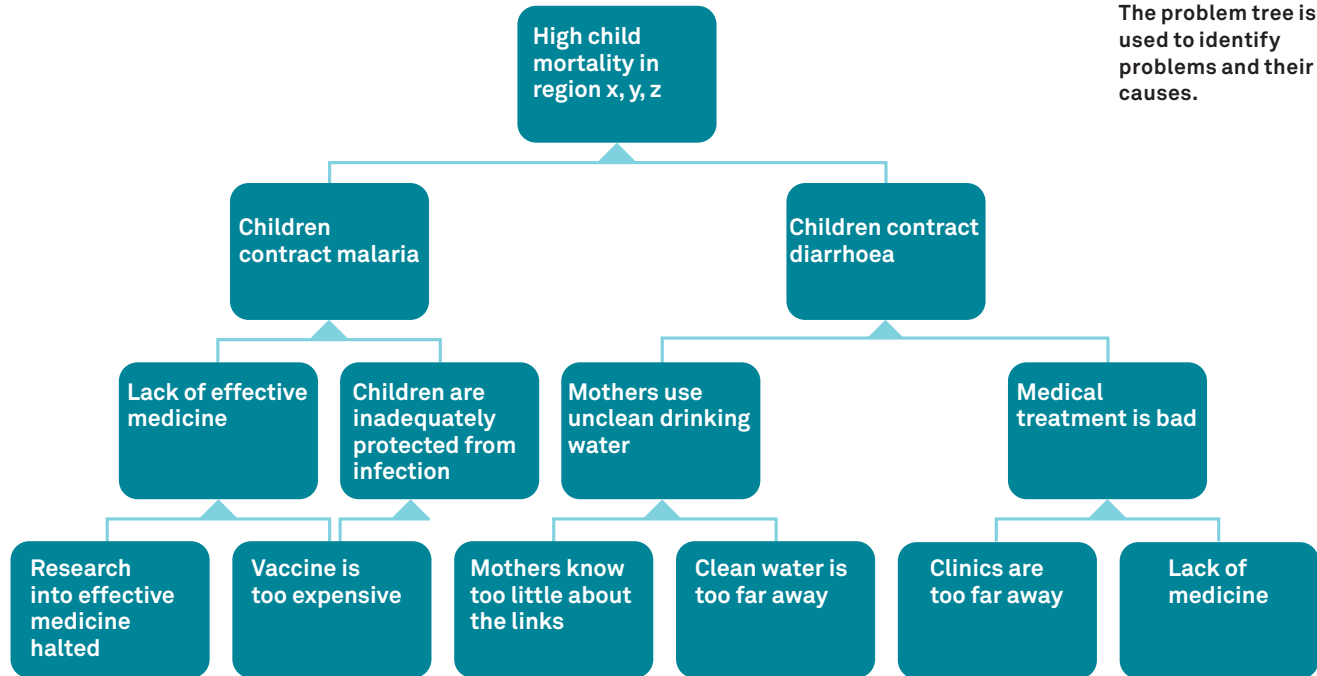
Impact
Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Source: OECD/DAC

Step 1: Define the project objectives

First of all, it must be clear what effect the project should have. There should also be analysis, together with the target group, of their problems, the causes and their needs. The guidelines show what methodologies exist, how to define outcome and impact objectives, and the areas that require particular attention.

The problem tree is used to identify problems and their causes.

Problem tree:

- **High child mortality in region x, y, z**
  - **Children contract malaria**
    - **Lack of effective medicine**
      - **Research into effective medicine halted**
      - **Vaccine is too expensive**
    - **Children are inadequately protected from infection**
  - **Children contract diarrhoea**
    - **Mothers use unclean drinking water**
      - **Mothers know too little about the links**
      - **Clean water is too far away**
    - **Medical treatment is bad**
      - **Clinics are too far away**
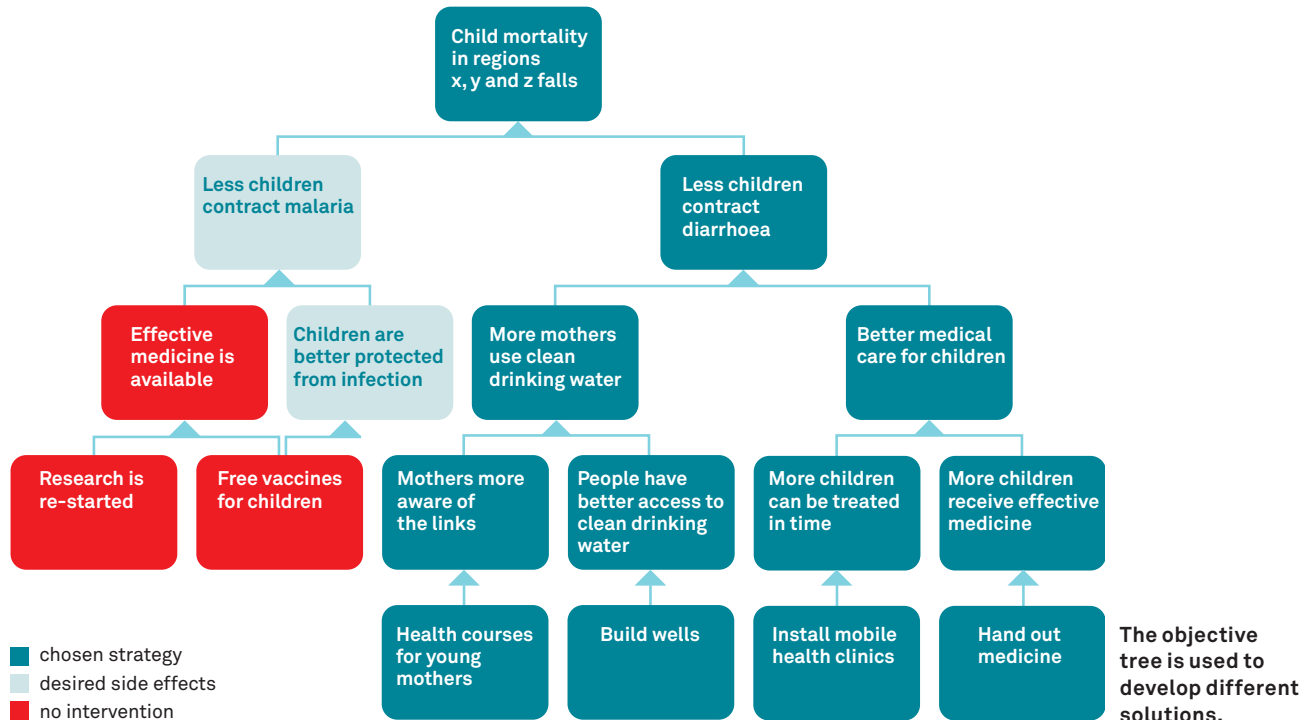   - **Lack of medicine**

The project objective describes the desired direct, short – and medium – term effects that the project should have on the target group. The project goal describes the long-term effects that the project is meant to set in motion – or help to set in motion. It establishes the link between the project and the overarching goals, both inside and outside the organisation. The guidelines show how to ensure that objectives are defined properly and aligned with each other, as this then makes it possible to translate them into measurable indicators.

Variant 1 (e.g. EU)		
	Objective	**Indicator**
Impact level	Less children in x die from diarrhoea	Child mortality in x < 5% (by 2015)
Outcome level	Improved access to drinking water	Walk to next well < 15 min for 90% of households in x (by 2015)
Output level	Build wells	100 wells operational

The variant illustrated above shows how objectives and indicators are defined and used. The guidelines contain further variants that are used in practice, but these should not be mixed up.

Step 2: Develop a results model

If one is to measure and verify the effects of a project, it must first be clear how the effects are to be achieved. The guidelines show how to find solutions, choose a strategy of intervention and develop a results model.

Child mortality in regions x, y and z falls

- Less children contract malaria
  - Effective medicine is available
    - Research is re-started
    - Free vaccines for children
  - Children are better protected from infection
- Less children contract diarrhoea
  - More mothers use clean drinking water
    - Mothers more aware of the links
      - Health courses for young mothers
    - People have better access to clean drinking water
      - Build wells
  - Better medical care for children
    - More children can be treated in time
      - Install mobile health clinics
    - More children receive effective medicine
      - Hand out medicine

Legend:
- ■ chosen strategy
- ■ desired side effects
- ■ no intervention

The objective tree is used to develop different solutions.

The Logic Model is a simple and commonly used way of displaying a linear chain of cause and effect and of illustrating how a project will work. The guidelines show what it is suitable for and what alternatives there are.

Example of a health course

Input	Activities	Output	Outcome	Impact
2 million CHF for education	Provide courses	Mothers have attended courses	More mothers understand the links	Mothers increasingly use clean drinking water

Example of a simple Logic Model.

Step 3: Plan the outcome and impact assessment

Even before the project is implemented, plans must be laid for how its effects are to be measured and assessed. The outcome and impact objectives must be converted into indicators, and the methods used to collect and analyse the necessary data must be planned. The guidelines demonstrate how to define indicators, which qualitative and quantitative methods exist, what kind of comparison is suitable for what, and what aspects require particular attention when assessing outcomes and impact.
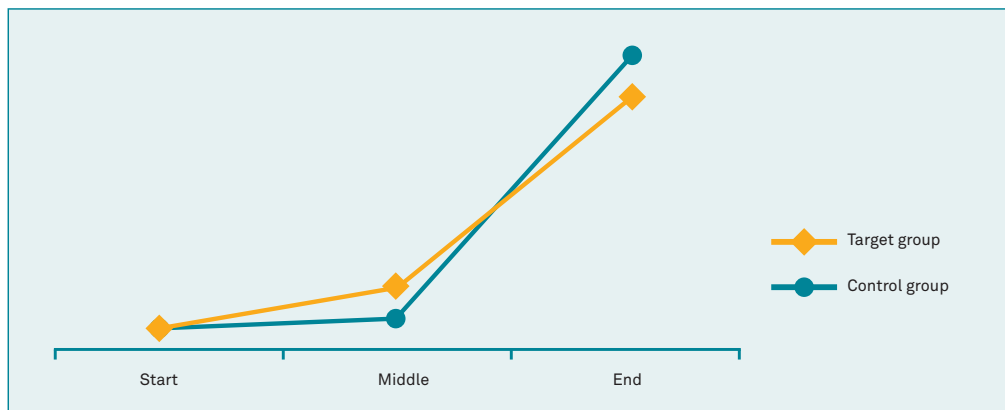
In a before-and-after comparison with a control group, the development of the target group is set against the development of a control group that has benefited from none of the project outputs. This excludes external influences and makes it possible to observe what would have taken place without the project. However, this approach involves a great deal of work and is methodologically challenging. The guidelines also give alternative approaches.

N.B.
It is frequently the case that, in practice, only the final situation of a project is described. Yet, for an impact assessment, a simple description of the target group with no link to the objectives, the initial situation or a control group is not sufficient.

There are warnings about pitfalls, stumbling blocks and known sources of error, and the essential points are highlighted.

IMPORTANT
A good indicator ought to be **SMART**:
• Specific: the indicator must be unambiguous and clear.
• Measurable: the indicator must be measurable and the costs for measurements appropriate.
• Achievable: the target value given by the indicator must be achievable.
• Relevant: the information provided by the indicator should be relevant for the project manager.
• Time-bound: the indicator must show when the objective ought to be achieved.

Source: European Commission, PCM Guidelines

Step 4: Collect data

Ideally, the data needed for the outcome and impact assessment should be collected during project implementation. The guidelines show how to integrate outcome indicators into the project monitoring system, what to pay attention to during data recording, and how to detect and correct deviations at an early stage.

Child health programme

	Strategy of intervention	Indicator	Source	2009	2010	2011	2012
Impact	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	Mothers know about links	Participants in the courses can use the information learned in a role-playing game.	Video, analysis by project managers	Good	Satis-factory		
	Ill children can be successfully treated	95% of cases of children treated for diarrhoea are successful.	Case studies	89%	80%		
	Improved access to clean drinking water	Walking time to nearest well < 15 minutes for 80% of households	Observation	50%	60%		
Output	Courses	100 courses provided	Project report	23	42		
	Cases treated	1,000 cases treated per year	Treatment statistics	955	1112		
	Wells	50 new wells in the region	Project report	12			
Activites	Provide courses						
	Introduce mobile health clinics						
	Build wells						

The logframe is a standardised table that summarises how the project is intended to work as well as its monitoring and evaluation system.

Interim analysis of health course

Objective	Indicator	Target	Perfor-mance	Difference	Comments	Operative measures	Consequences at outcome level
O1	Use in role play	Min. good	Good	–	Analysis easy	None	
P1	N° of courses	1 (Pilot)	1 (Pilot)	–		None	
P2	N° of participants	35	45	+ 30%	High demand	Larger course groups	Target group larger than assumed
	Cost	10 000	15 000	+ 5 000	Higher attendance, higher costs	Check savings per course day, apply for increased budget	Implementati-on might be less efficient
	Deadline	May 09	June 09	1 month late	Finding speaker harder than expected	Need to train additional speakers	Outcome objectives will be achieved less quickly than planned due to need to train speakers

Legend for colour code

	RESULT	MEASURE
🟩	Satisfactory	Plan reinforcement and ensure continuous success
🟨	Critical	Take steps to correct
🟥	Still uncertain	Keep under observation
⬜	As planned	None needed

This example shows what an interim analysis might look like.

Step 5: Evaluate the effects

The guidelines help project managers to consolidate and interpret the qualitative and quantitative data. It shows when effects can be attributed to a specific project as well as how to aggregate the effects of different projects.

How it is done	
Activities	Project managers or external experts make comparisons and find out the project's effect on the target group using the available data. This task should be carried out according to standard evaluation practice. The findings are generally recorded in writing.
Questions	Coming up with answers to the following question forms the fifth step in an impact assessment: • Is all the necessary data available in a suitable format? • What was the effect or change on the target group? • What would have changed for the target group without the project? • What are the reasons for any deviation from the project objectives? • Which assumptions and hypotheses have proved true, and which were false? • What foreseen and unforeseen side effects were there? • Is there a plausible case to be made that the project has contributed to the overarching goals? • Which effects can be clearly attributed to the project? • Which recommendations are needed?
Results	A report or a presentation has been made about the effects of the project or programme.

The chapter summary gives an overview for each step.

Templates make work easier for the users.

Template
for how to structure an impact assessment report

I   Summary

II   Basic principles
1. Rationale, purpose and objectives
2. Scope of the impact assessment
3. Questions for impact assessment
    3.1 Question a
    3.2 Question b
4. Context of the impact assessment
5. Team

III Approach
1. Discussion of methodology, sources of information and data quality
2. Inclusion of relevant stakeholders

IV Findings
1. Question a
    1.1 Observations
    1.2 Appraisal and conclusions
2. Question b
    2.1 Observations
    2.2 Appraisal and conclusions

V   Overall conclusions and recommendations

The outcome and impact assessment findings should always be reported in a suitable form, regardless of whether the findings are expected or unexpected, negative or positive. This is often via a written report. The guidelines show how these are generally structured and what other means of communication one might envisage.

Step 6: Use the findings

The assessment's findings can be used to build up organisational knowledge and to learn lessons for the future, to steer the organisation's activities towards results or to inform donors, partner organisations and the target groups about the projects' and programmes' effects.
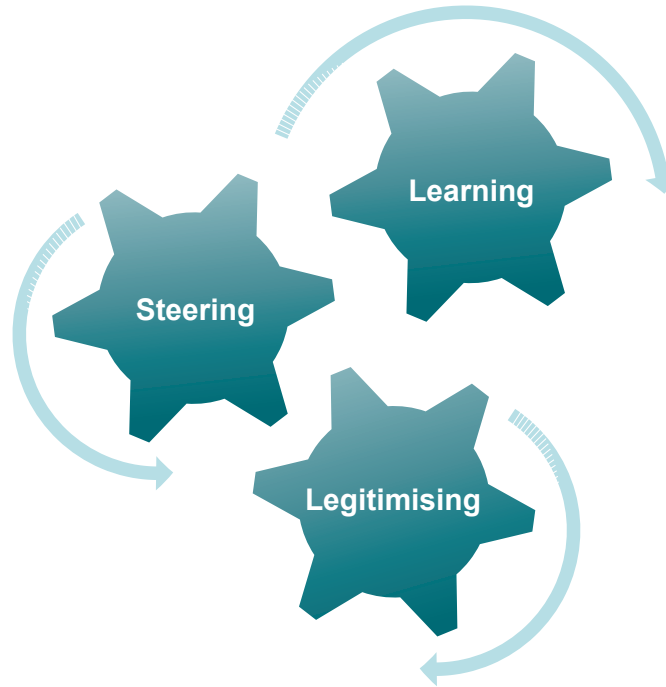
The guidelines show what is required if the learning process is to succeed, how to use the findings as a basis for decision-making, and how to include them in the organisation's yearly performance report according to Swiss GAAP FER. There is a clear summary of the principles of good outcome and impact assessment, which also shows how much impact assessment should cost.
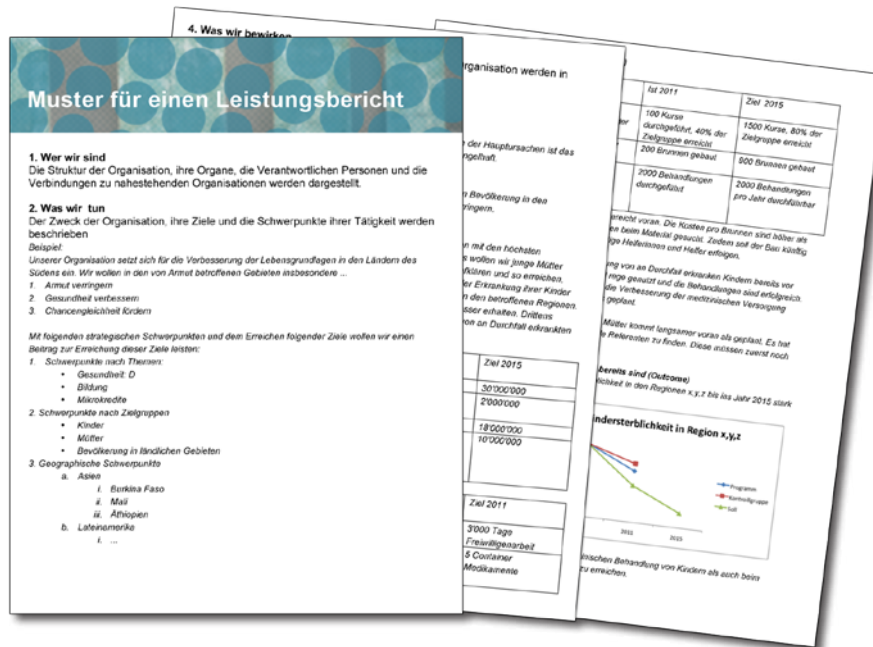
A template and practical examples give suggestions as to how to include the results of the impact assessment in the performance report. (Available in German and French)

Resources and links

The guidelines give clear summaries of the main approaches and methodologies for impact assessment. There is also a practical and well-structured list of links and downloads on the subject of outcome and impact assessment.

Approaches and methodologies

- **Logical Framework Approach** – is *the* most widespread model for results-based project planning in development circles.
- **Outcome Mapping** – is an alternative approach to developing a system to record the (qualitative) effects of projects and programmes.
- **Theory of Change** – is an approach for results-based project planning and is based on a somewhat more open results model than the Logical Framework Approach.
- **Most Significant Change** – is a very specific, qualitative and participatory technique for recording the effects of projects and programmes. It is based on the systematic analysis of individual experiences and thus dispenses entirely with indicators and figures.
- **MAPP** (Method for Impact Assessment of Programmes and Projects) – is a specific, participatory method for recording the effects of projects and programmes. It is based on group discussions during which effects and developments are analysed retrospectively following a set programme.

Links

- Overviews of different methodologies
- Handbooks on monitoring and evaluation
- Toolkits with ready-to-use tools for specific cases
- Field reports

Good Practice

There is no single impact assessment system. Every organisation must develop a plan that is adapted to its own circumstances. In order for this to succeed the guidelines set out a few basic principles for ensuring assessment quality and for publishing and communicating results.

The Zewo Foundation would like to promote widespread adoption of systematic impact assessment in practice and encourage aid agencies to develop and implement impact assessment systems that are tailored to their needs as part of this good practice.

Online guidelines

You can find the guidelines on-line at **www.zewo.ch/impact/en,** where they are also available as a PDF file.

Supporting institutions

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Direktion für Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit DEZA

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is the international development body within the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (EDA). It played an important part in developing and funding these guidelines.

seval
SCHWEIZERISCHE EVALUATIONSGESELLSCHAFT
SOCIÉTÉ SUISSE D'ÉVALUATION
SOCIETÀ SVIZZERA DI VALUTAZIONE

The Swiss Evaluation Society (SEVAL) fosters the exchange of information and experience in the field of evaluation. It actively engages in improving the quality of evaluation and its diffusion. SEVAL supports the launch of these guidelines as a communications partner.

nadel
Nachdiplomstudium für Entwicklungsländer
Centre for Development and Cooperation

The ETH Zurich's Centre for Development and Cooperation (NADEL) trains young and experienced professionals working in development cooperation. In its courses NADEL teaches, among other things, methods of results-based planning and impact analysis, as well as the Zewo guidelines for outcome and impact assessment.

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