*M*onitoring and *E*valuation Toolkit
for Programme Managers

Glossary of
*M*onitoring and *E*valuation Terms

1. Introduction

The toolkit is a supplement to the UNFPA programming guidelines. It provides guidance and options for UNFPA Country Office staff to improve monitoring and evaluation activities in the context of results-based programme management. It is also useful for other programme managers at headquarters and national levels. Many of the approaches described in this toolkit can be used as well for programme[1] strategy development.

This tool provides a glossary of terms related to monitoring and evaluation in the context of results-based management. The glossary attempts to define monitoring and evaluation concepts, responding to a growing awareness of the need for common usage of terms and understanding of their nature and meaning within UNFPA and with partners.

It is recognized that monitoring and evaluation terminology has been adapted to varying organizational needs and that uniform definitions of terms do not exist. The glossary, therefore, intends to provide representative definitions of terms that have achieved some degree of consensus, especially within the UN system.

The main purpose of the glossary is, therefore, to: a) increase understanding of basic characteristics of monitoring and evaluation terms in order to reduce confusion and b) facilitate communication on basic monitoring and evaluation concepts and approaches with partners.

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1 For the sake of brevity "programme" will be used throughout the tool kit to refer to a country programme as well as its sub-programme and project components.

2. The Glossary

A

Accountability: Responsibility and answerability for the use of resources, decisions and/or the results of the discharge of authority and official duties, including duties delegated to a subordinate unit or individual. In regard to programme managers, the responsibility to provide evidence to stakeholders that a programme is effective and in conformity with planned results, legal and fiscal requirements. In organizations that promote learning, accountability may also be measured by the extent to which managers use monitoring and evaluation findings.

Achievement: A manifested performance determined by some type of assessment.

Activities: Actions taken through which inputs (financial, human, technical and material resources) are mobilized to produce specific outputs.

Aims: A generic term used in the logical framework, as applied in UNFPA, referring collectively to goals, purposes, outputs and activities as ordered in a hierarchy. Goals, purposes and outputs are also referred to (expected) results.

Analysis: The process of systematically applying statistical techniques and logic to interpret, compare, categorize, and summarize data collected in order to draw conclusions.

Appraisal: An assessment, prior to commitment of support, of the relevance, value, acceptability, feasibility, and potential acceptability of a programme or project in accordance with established criteria.

Assumptions: Hypotheses about conditions that are necessary to ensure that: (1) planned activities will produce expected results; (2) the logical, cause effect relationship between the different levels of programme results will occur as expected. Achieving results depends on whether or not the assumptions made prove to be true. Incorrect assumptions at any stage of the results chain can become an obstacle to achieving the expected results.

Attribution: Causal link of one event with another. The extent to which observed effects can be ascribed to a specific intervention.

Audit: An examination of records or financial accounts to check their accuracy and conformity with norms and criteria set out in advance. Internal audit is an assessment of internal controls undertaken by a unit reporting to management while an external audit is conducted by an independent organization.

Authority: The power to decide, certify or approve.

B

Baseline: Facts about the condition or performance of subjects prior to treatment or intervention.

Baseline data: Data describing the situation prior to intervention by a programme or project that serve as the starting point for measuring or demonstrating changes in that situation and the performance of the programme or project.

Benchmark: 1) An intermediate target to measure progress in a given period using a certain indicator. 2) A reference point or standard against which to compare performance or achievements.

Beneficiaries: individuals, groups or entities whose situation is supposed to improve (the target group), and others whose situation may improve as a result of the development intervention.

Best practices: Planning and/or operational practices that have proven successful in particular circumstances. Best practices are used to demonstrate what works and what does not and to accumulate and apply knowledge about how and why they work in different situations and contexts.

Bias: Refers to statistical bias. Inaccurate representation that produces systematic error in a research finding. Bias may result in overestimating or underestimating certain characteristics of the population. It may result from incomplete information or invalid data collection methods and may be intentional or unintentional.

C

Capacity: The knowledge, organization and resources needed to perform a function.

Capacity development: The process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and countries develop, enhance and organize their systems, resources and knowledge, as reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve results. Capacity development is also referred to as capacity building or strengthening.

Component project: A time-bound intervention that consists of a set of planned, interrelated activities aimed at achieving defined programme outputs, which together with other interventions contributes towards achieving programme purposes and goals.

Conclusion: A reasoned judgement based on a synthesis of empirical findings or factual statements corresponding to a specific circumstance.

Cost-benefit analysis: A type of analysis that involves comparing the relative costs of operating a programme (programme expenses, staff salaries, etc.) to the benefits (gains to individuals or society) it generates. For example, a program to reduce cigarette smoking would focus on the difference between the dollars expended for converting smokers into non-smokers with the dollar savings from reduced medical care for smoking related disease, days lost from work, and the like. It determines the economic efficiency of a programme or project expressed as the relationship between costs and outcomes, usually measured in monetary terms.

Cost-effectiveness analysis: A type of analysis that involves comparing the relative costs of operating a programme with the extent to which the program met its aims. For example, a

program to reduce cigarette smoking would estimate the dollars that had to be expended in order to convert each smoker into a non-smoker. It assesses the economic efficiency by comparing the costs of other programmes that could provide similar benefits.

Coverage: the extent to which a programme or project reaches its intended target population, institution or geographic area.

D

Data: Specific quantitative and qualitative information or facts.

Database: An accumulation of information that has been systematically organized for easy access and analysis. Databases typically are computerized.

E

Effectiveness: A measure of the extent to which a programme achieves its planned results (goals, purposes and outputs).

Efficiency: A measure of how economically or optimally inputs (financial, human, technical and material resources) are used to produce outputs.

Evaluability: The extent to which an activity or a programme can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion.

Evaluation: A time-bound exercise that attempts to assess systematically and objectively the relevance, performance and success, or the lack thereof, of ongoing and completed programmes and projects. Evaluation is undertaken selectively to answer specific questions to guide decision-makers and/or programme managers, and to provide information on whether underlying theories and assumptions used in programme development were valid, what worked and what did not work and why. Evaluation commonly aims to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a programme or project.

Evaluation questions: A set of questions developed by the evaluator, sponsor, and/or other stakeholders, which define the issues the evaluation will investigate and are stated in such terms that they can be answered in a way useful to stakeholders.

Evaluation standards: A set of criteria against which completeness and quality of evaluation work can be assessed. The standards measure the utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy of the evaluation.

Execution: the management of a specific programme or project, which includes accountability for the effective use of resources.

Ex-post evaluation: A type of summative evaluation of an intervention usually conducted after it has been completed. Its purpose is to understand the factors of success or failure, to assess outcome, impact and the sustainability of results, and to draw conclusions that may inform similar interventions in the future.

External evaluation: An evaluation conducted by individuals or entities free of control by those responsible for the design and implementation of the development intervention to be evaluated (synonym: independent evaluation).

F

Feasibility: The coherence and quality of a programme or project strategy that makes successful implementation likely.

Feedback: The transmission of information that is generated through monitoring and evaluation to parties for whom it is relevant and useful. It may include findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from experience. Feedback consists of the organization and packaging in an appropriate form of relevant information from monitoring and evaluation activities, the dissemination of that information to target users, and most importantly, the use of the information as a basis for decision-making and the promotion of learning in an organization. (Feedback can also be received informally but such information is generally harder to organize/package for analysis.)

Finding: A factual statement on a programme or project based on empirical evidence gathered through monitoring and evaluation activities.

Focus group: A group of usually 7-10 people selected to engage in discussions designed for the purpose of sharing insights and observations, obtaining perceptions or opinions, suggesting ideas, or recommending actions on a topic of concern. A focus group is a method of collecting data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Formative evaluation: A type of process evaluation undertaken during programme implementation to furnish information that will guide programme or project improvement. A formative evaluation focuses on collecting data on programme or project operations so that needed changes or modifications can be made to the programme or project in its early stages. Formative evaluations are used to provide feedback to programme managers and other personnel about the programme components that are working and those that need to be changed.

G

Goal: A basic condition of well-being of individuals, families and communities. It reflects the long-term result expected from a programme (the ultimate aim in the hierarchy of aims in the logframe matrix). It is the highest level of results to which UNFPA contributes, together with the efforts of other partners.

I

Impact: The long-term results of a programme or project. They are the changes in a situation, whether planned or unplanned, positive or negative, directly or indirectly, that a programme or project helps to bring about.

Impact evaluation: A type of outcome evaluation that focuses on the broad, longer-term impact or results of a programme. For example, an impact evaluation could show that a decrease in a community's overall infant mortality rate was the direct result of a programme designed to provide high quality pre and post-natal care and deliveries assisted by trained health care professionals.

Indicator: A quantitative or qualitative measure of programme performance that is used to demonstrate change and which details the extent to which programme results are being or have been achieved. It is referred to as an Objectively Verifiable Indicator (OVI) in the logframe.

Inputs: Resources which may be financial, human, technical, material and time, required to undertake activities and provided by stakeholders who may be donors, programme participants, communities or other groups.

Inspection: A special on-the-spot investigation of an activity that seeks to resolve particular problems.

Internal evaluation: An evaluation conducted by individuals and/or a unit reporting to the management of the donor, partner/counterpart, executing or implementing organization, which is associated with the programme or project to be evaluated.

L

Lessons learned: Generalizations that can be derived from the evaluation of development interventions based on an experience or group of experiences from one or more projects, programmes or policies.

Logical framework (logframe) approach: A results-oriented programme planning and management methodology. The approach helps to identify strategic elements (inputs, outputs, purposes, goal) of a programme, their causal relationships, and the external factors that may influence success or failure of the programme. The approach includes the establishment of indicators to be used for monitoring and evaluating achievement of programme results.

Logical framework (logframe) matrix: A schematic presentation of the results of the application of a logical framework approach to programme development.

M

Management information system: A data system, usually computerized, that routinely collects and reports information about the delivery of services, costs, demographic and health information and results status.

Means of Verification (MOV): The specific sources from which the status of each of the indicators for results in the logframe matrix can be ascertained.

Meta-evaluation: The term used for evaluations designed to aggregate findings from a series of evaluations. It can also be used to denote the evaluation of an evaluation to judge its quality and/or assess the performance of the evaluators.

Methodology: A methodology describes how something will be done. A set of analytical methods, procedures and techniques used to collect and analyse information appropriate for evaluation of the particular programme, project or activity.

Mid-term Review (MTR): An analytical exercise undertaken by stakeholders to examine a programme at the mid-point of its cycle. The purposes of the MTR are to assess the continued relevance of the programme in the context of a changing environment, to ascertain the status of progress in achieving intended results, to address constraints and to agree on strategic issues to be addressed during the remainder of the programme cycle.

Mid-term evaluation: A type of formative evaluation carried out during programme implementation. Its principal goal is to assess progress made, to draw initial conclusions for managing the programme or project and to make recommendations for the remaining period. Sometimes referred to as "on-going" evaluation.

Monitoring: Monitoring is a continuous management function that aims primarily to provide managers and main stakeholders with regular feedback and early indications of progress and lack thereof in the achievement of intended results. Monitoring tracks the actual performance or situation against what was planned or expected according to pre-determined standards. Monitoring generally involves collecting and analysing data on programme processes and results and recommending corrective measures.

Multi-Year Planning, Management and Funding Framework (MYFF): A four-year framework that is composed of two interlinking elements: (1) a results framework, which identifies the major results that UNFPA aims to achieve, its key programme strategies, and the indicators that will be used to measure progress; and (2) an integrated resources framework that indicates the level of resources required to achieve the stated results.

O

Objective: A generic term usually used to express a purpose or goal representing the desired result that a programme or project seeks to achieve. The term was replaced by "purpose" and "goal" in the logical framework approach.

Objectively Verifiable Indicator (OVI) (in logframe): See **Indicator.**

On-going evaluation: See **Mid-term and formative evaluation**.

Operations research: the application of disciplined investigation to problem-solving. Operations research analyses a problem, identifies and then tests solutions.

Outcome: Results of a programme or project. In UNFPA, outcomes correspond to the results at the purpose level which are typically expressed in terms of changes in usage of information and services, values and attitudes, organizational systems, policies and plans.

Outputs: Time-bound measurable or describable changes produced by a programme. The term "deliverables" is also used for outputs. Concrete results to be produced through sound management of inputs and activities, which are necessary to achieve the programme's purposes.

P

Participatory approach: A broad term for the involvement of primary and other stakeholders in an undertaking (e.g. programme planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).

Performance: The extent to which a programme or project is implemented in an effective, efficient and timely manner to achieve results. Performance can also be defined in a broader sense to include the relevance and impact of a programme or project.

Performance measurement: The collection, interpretation of, and reporting on data for performance indicators which measure how well programmes or projects deliver outputs and contribute to achievement of higher level aims (purposes and goals).

Process evaluation: An evaluation that examines the extent to which a programme or project is operating as intended by assessing ongoing programme/project operations. A process evaluation helps programme managers identify what changes are needed in design, strategies and operations to improve performance. It is also called formative or mid-term evaluation.

Programme: A time-bound intervention similar to a project but which cuts across sectors, themes or geographic areas, uses a multi-disciplinary approach, involves multiple institutions, and may be supported by several different funding sources.

Programme approach: A process which allows governments, donors and other stakeholders to articulate priorities for development assistance through a coherent framework within which components are interlinked and aimed towards achieving the same goals. It permits all donors, under government leadership, to effectively contribute to the realization of national development objectives.

Project: See **Component project**.

Proxy measure or indicator: A variable used to stand in for one that is difficult to measure directly.

Purpose: A result between Output and Goal in the hierarchy of aims in the logframe matrix. It reflects the short - to medium-term results which can reasonably be expected from the country programme provided planned outputs are delivered, the assumptions remain valid and the risks have not materialized.

Q

Qualitative evaluation: A type of evaluation that is primarily descriptive and interpretative, and may or may not lend itself to quantification.

Quantitative evaluation: A type of evaluation involving the use of numerical measurement and data analysis based on statistical methods.

R

Reach: the coverage (e.g., the range or number of individuals, groups, institutions, geographic areas; etc.) that will be affected by a programme or project.

Recommendation: Proposal for action to be taken in a specific circumstance, including the parties responsible for that action.

Relevance: the degree to which the outputs, purposes or goals of a programme or project remain valid and pertinent as originally planned or as subsequently modified owing to changing circumstances within the immediate context and external environment of that programme or project.

Reliability: Consistency and dependability of data collected through repeated use of a scientific instrument or data collection procedure under the same conditions. Absolute reliability of evaluation data is hard to obtain. However, checklists and training of evaluators can improve both data reliability and validity.

Research: The general field of disciplined investigation.

Result: A measurable or describable change in state that is derived from a cause and effect relationship. A broad term used to refer to the effects of a programme or project. The terms goals, purposes and outputs describe the different types of results at different levels of the logframe hierarchy of aims.

Results Chain: The causal sequence for an intervention that begins with inputs/activities, moving through outputs, purposes and goals, that may be expected to occur over a period of time. It is based on a theory of change, including underlying assumptions. The hierarchy of aims in the logframe is a result chain.

Results-Based Management (RBM): A participatory and team-based approach to management designed to improve programme and management effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, that focuses on achieving defined results.

Risks: Factors that may adversely affect delivery of inputs, completion of activities, production of outputs and achievement of higher level aims. Many of them are outside the control of the parties responsible for managing and implementing a programme or project

Risk Analysis: Method to identify how likely it is that the conditions necessary to achieve the expected results will not be present. Risk analysis enables consideration of strategies to manage identified risks. Some external factors may be beyond the control of programme managers and implementers, but other factors can be addressed with slight adjustment in the programme approach or strategy. It is recommended that stakeholders take part in the risk analysis as they offer different perspectives and may have key information about the programme context.

S

Stakeholders: People, groups or entities that have a role and interest in the aims and implementation of a programme or project. They include the community whose situation the programme seeks to change; project field staff who implement activities; project and programme managers who oversee implementation; donors and other decision-makers who influence or decide the course of action related to the programme; and supporters, critics and other persons who influence the programme environment (see target groups and beneficiaries).

Strategies: Approaches and ways to deploy resources and implement activities to achieve results.

Success: A favourable programme or project result that is assessed in terms of effectiveness, impact, sustainability and contribution to capacity development.

Summative evaluation: A type of outcome and impact evaluation that assesses the results of a programme or project. This type of evaluation is concerned with a programme/project's overall effectiveness. Also see **Ex-post evaluation**.

Survey: Systematic collection of information from a defined population, usually by means of interviews or questionnaires administered to a sample of units in the population (e.g. person, youth, adults etc.)

Sustainability: Durability of project results after the termination of the technical cooperation channelled through that project. Static sustainability – the continuous flow of the same benefits, set in motion by the completed project, to the same target groups; dynamic sustainability – the use or adaptation of project results to a different context or changing environment by the original target groups and/or other groups.

T

Target group: The main stakeholders of a programme or project that are expected to gain from the results of that programme/project; sectors of the population that a programme or project aims to reach in order to address their needs.

Time-series analysis: Quasi-experimental designs that rely on relatively long series of repeated measurements of the outcome/output variable taken before, during and after intervention in order to reach conclusions about the effect of the intervention.

Thematic evaluation: Evaluation of selected aspects or cross-cutting issues in different types of interventions.

Transparency: Sharing information, assumptions, and the basis for judgments and decisions.

U

Utility: The value of something to someone or to some institution. The extent to which evaluation are useful to relevant audiences and have beneficial impact on their work.

V

Validity: The extent to which a measurement or test accurately measures what it is supposed to measure. Valid evaluations are ones that take into account all relevant factors, given the whole context of the evaluation, and weigh them appropriately in the process of formulating conclusions and recommendations.

W

Work plans: Annual or multiyear schedules of expected outputs, tasks, timeframes and responsibilities.

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