BASIC CONCEPTS IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION

EVALUATION CAN BE CONFUSING!

Both concepts and terms in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can be confusing! One challenge is that definitions vary among different agencies and donors. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has a common framework (listed on the last page), but not everyone outside of the United Nations uses it.   In particular, the terms "goal," "impact," and "output" are used in diverse, confusing ways.

EMpower has tried to simplify terms in its M&E plan, as described below with examples.

> **M&E Jargon Confusion**
>
> Goal? Objective? Target? Indicator? Measure? Target? Benchmark? Activity? Input? Impact? Outcome? Result? Output?

What belongs in a Work Plan vs. a Monitoring & Evaluation Plan?

The short answer is that **objectives and results** are defined in the M&E Plan and should be thought through first. Then the **activities** to achieve these objectives belong in the work plan.

- **Objectives and Results** answer the following questions:
  - "What benefit or change do we expect from these activities?" (Objectives)"
    - ✓ Example: 40 youth will gain a marketable vocational skill
  - "Did this benefit or change happen, and to what extent? (Results)
  - **Indicators** describe what you will observe or measure to evaluate results.
    - ✓ Example: an *indicator* could be "Number of youth judged to be highly proficient in small appliance repair" and the *result* reported could be "30 youth with the grade of highly proficient."
- **Activities are what your program actually does in order to achieve its objectives.**
    - ✓ Example: 40 youth will receive scholarships to attend a technical institute 3-month course in appliance repair.

> *Making this distinction between activities and objectives/results is not as simple as it sounds.* Many organizations struggle to put this difference into practice. A common error is to classify training youth or adults as an objective, with the result being a number of trained youth or adults.   Actually, this is the main activity. The objective of the training is the reason why you are investing in it: the expected benefit or change for the trainees, such as "50 youth acquire the basic financial skills needed for running a micro-business."

EXAMPLES OF M&E PLAN CONCEPTS & TERMINOLOGY			
SPECIFIC PROGRAM OBJECTIVE (M&E and Work Plan)	**ACTIVITY** (Work Plan)	**INDICATORS** (M&E Plan)	**PROPOSED RESULT FOR EACH INDICATOR** (M&E Plan)
Improve the employment prospects of 500 youth ages 18-24 through training in computer skills for the local labor market.	Train 500 youth in job-relevant computer skills in a 6-month program of 10 hours a week.	1) Number of youth who pass competency tests in Word and Excel (short-term) 2) Number of trainees with employment using these skills within one year after graduation. (longer-term)	1) 80% of participants (200 male, 200 female) pass the competency tests. 2) Within a year after graduation, 50% of 400 graduates are employed and using computer skills
Improve knowledge of adolescent health topics among 250 secondary school students	Over one school year, provide two weekly classes (1 hour each) on adolescent health topics to 250 secondary school students	Percent and number of youth who demonstrate knowledge of new critical information about five key adolescent health topics	80% of participants (100 male, 100 female) 80% of participants answer questions correctly on new critical information about five key adolescent health topics
Increase number of youth who graduate from secondary school	After-school weekly program for 250 3rd and 4th year secondary students provides extra academic support in math and science	Percent and number of participating students who graduate	1) 95% of participating students graduate (compared with lower rate for these years in school as a whole)

General and Specific Objectives

OBJECTIVE –**describes what your program aims to accomplish: what will change for the better as a result of your activities**.

- General objectives (also known as "goals," or "long-term" objectives) are broad. EMpower's general objectives, listed in the first pages of the M&E Plan, represent our overall grantmaking goals. We know that your work aligns with some of these; that is why we have supported your work or are considering it. So please choose which EMpower objectives best relate to your proposed work, and then define your related specific objectives.
- Specific objectives have a time frame (in this case the grant period), and details about the expected benefits for a set number of participants.

EXAMPLES OF GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

GENERAL (EMpower)	PROGRAM SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES (Examples that a grantee

OBJECTIVES FOR YOUTH	partner might give)
Increased prospects for employment through acquiring vocational skills	40 youth will gain the marketable vocational skill of small appliance repair
Increased knowledge and/or capacity to protect health	Improve knowledge of adolescent health topics among 250 secondary school students
Increased income or assets from decent employment or microbusiness	75% out of 100 graduates of vocational training program have decent employment in local businesses or in their own small business one year after graduation.

In addition to objectives to directly improve the lives of youth, many organizations work towards organizational and community-level goals. EMpower uses three categories of objectives to capture the results of such efforts:

1. Organizational strengthening of grantee partners
2. Support and opportunities for youth development goals in local communities where the grantee program works
3. Contributions to youth development goals through influence on organizations and decision makers beyond the local communities.

Below are some examples of general and specific objectives in these categories.

GENERAL (EMpower) OBJECTIVES FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES	PROGRAM SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
Strengthened capacity in monitoring, learning and evaluation (for grantee partner)	Improved timeliness of reports and follow-up of youth program participants through better data collection via mobile phones.
Increased community support and opportunities for youth education, livelihoods, and/or health and wellbeing.	Increased active support from 50 parents so that their daughters stay in school past grade 10 (age of compulsory education).
Increased opportunities or improved services for youth implemented by stakeholders (employers, officials, agencies, NGOs, etc.) influenced by grantees.	Expansion of improvement of the M_____ state Youth Education Program through use of grantee training materials.

INDICATORS

INDICATOR: describes what you will measure or observe to assess progress towards specific objectives.

Quantitative indicators measure increases or decreases over time in numbers for key results of your program. Most of the proposed and actual results for the youth served by your program are measured in numbers by this type of indicator.

For some objectives at organizational or community levels, such as gaining an influential partner in a youth coalition or having specific local officials support youth program goals, quantitative indicators don't make sense, and the result is described in words, not numbers.

Engagement in thinking through the most important measures for your specific objectives is crucial.

The indicator examples in EMpower's M&E Plan are intended as a reference. For each of your potential indicators, judge it using two related criteria -- significance and feasibility -- to help you collect the most essential information to judge whether your strategies are working.

SIGNIFICANCE AND FEASIBILITY

Is the indicator significant? Only collect information you need to know in order to judge whether your program is working. Does the measure indicate the most important benefits you hope for? Having too many indicators often leads to failed M&E systems, because staff cannot organize and analyze such a large amount of data to report on progress towards objectives in a timely & useful way.

Is using this indicator feasible?   What methods could you use to collect and analyze data? Do you have the human resources (time and skills of staff, consultants, or volunteers) and other requirements (materials, equipment, or software) to collect and analyze the information?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. OECD, 2010. Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, developed by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Working Party on Aid Evaluation.
   http://www.oecd.org/development/peer-reviews/2754804.pdf
   - This is the standard guide to use of evaluation terms in the UN system, and is trilingual – English, French, and Spanish.
2. W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004. *Logic Model Development Guide.*   Step-by-step guide to filling out logic models.   http://www.smartgivers.org/uploads/logicmodelguidepdf.pdf
3. Urban Institute and What Works. The Outcome Indicators Project.
   - This site has excellent tools for designing outcomes and indicators in 14 types of programs, including employment training, youth mentoring, youth tutoring, and health risk reduction. The site also includes a general guidance "The Nonprofit Taxonomy of Outcomes: Creating a Common Language for the Sector." Although the guides were written for US non-profits, much of the content would be useful in any country. http://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/performance-management-measurement/projects/nonprofit-organizations/projects-focused-nonprofit-organizations/outcome-indicators-project