Module 5: Steps 4, 5 and 6 in Designing and Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Session 1: Step Four: Assumptions and Risks

Welcome to module five in the AKF designing and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems course. In the next series of videos we will be covering steps four, five and six in establishing a monitoring and evaluation system.

Specifically we will look at:

Step 4: Defining and monitoring risks and assumptions

Step 5: Preparing for monitoring by grouping indicators and scheduling data collection; and

Step 6: Developing output monitoring tools

Let's Begin.

Step four of establishing an M&E system involves integrating assumption and risk monitoring. Just like we monitor results, we need to equally monitor our assumptions and risks throughout the life of a project or programme.

To start, let's review some terminology.

Assumptions are factors that we rely on to be in place for expected results to be achieved successfully. These assumptions can be internal or external to the organization.

For example, assumptions can include such things as donor funds will be available, agricultural produce price will remain the same or increase, participation of stakeholders will be strong, etc.

Risks on the other hand, are factors or events that can potentially impede the successful achievement of results, if they occur.

Risks can be:

• Fully or partially out of our control

• Can include internal or external threats

• And can occur at different levels. For example at the macro level with variations in exchange rates between countries or changes in climate such as extreme drought or floods. At the national level such as the approval or disapproval of a new law or conflict. And, at the programme level such as retention of programme staff or lack of participants for a training

Just like results, risks also need to be monitored through key indicators. A useful template for doing so is the risk matrix. In some cases, certain donors will require one. Even if they do not. It is important that risks are identified and monitored throughout the life of a project or programme. The matrix should be developed jointly by M&E and programme staff.

In the risk monitoring matrix, we identify:

• The external and internal risks

• The indicator for monitoring the risk

• The likelihood the risk will occur. For example there would be low probability that an extraterrestrial invasion would happen!

• The impact of the risk if it does occur. For example, if there was a major flood, there would be a high effect on achieving results of increased production.

• The mitigation strategy the program will put in place to minimize the risk from occurring

• And who will be responsible for monitoring the risk, analyzing it and reporting on it. Just like we do in the M&E plan.

Overall, key assumptions and risks need indicators so that they can be monitored. While these are not performance indicators they are still signals to tell us what is happening. For example, the inflations rates. It is also important to prioritize which assumptions and risks you would choose to monitor. Finally, it is important to document systematically the assumptions and risks by using a risk matrix like the one we showed you.

This brings us to the end of Session 1. In the next session, we will explore Step 5 – Preparing for monitoring by grouping indicators.

Session 2: Step Five: Grouping Indicators and Planning for Monitoring

In this session, we will continue with Step 5 of establishing an M&E system – Grouping indicators as part of the process of planning for routine data collection.

Grouping indicators is part of the process of establishing an M&E system and is done for both output level indicators and outcome level indicators.

Also, including this step makes tool design much more efficient and ensures that multiple indicators can be included in one tool.

By definition, grouping is the process of categorizing our indicators to facilitate more coherent and synergistic data collection.

This means identifying indicators for which data can be collected using the:

• SAME method or tool

• Ideally from the SAME source

• And at the SAME frequency or time

So, why do we group?

First, grouping forms the basis for planning for data collection.

Second, grouping will assist us in seeing where the same methodology/tool can capture more than one indicator. The aim is to minimize the number of tools (and thus effort) required to collection

information. By grouping we can also visually identify any 'orphan' indicators, meaning an individual indicator that is not included on an output monitoring tool.

Third, grouping will assist in developing the appropriate number of tools.

As you can imagine, a group of indicators, often output indicators, is linked to a specific tool that will be developed by the programme unit.

The process of grouping indicators at the outcome levels is similar with the exception that target population should also be considered. Most often these indicators are grouped by survey or study planned.

Let's see how this is done.

Using your M&E plan, identify which indicators are to be tracked using the same methodology, source and frequency.

Then, group the indicators that can be collected by using the same tool – either output monitoring tools or study tools.

For output indicators, the frequency and often the source MUST be the same. For outcome indicators the target population MUST be the same.

A useful way to do this is to create and Excel spreadsheet which lists all the indicators from your M&E plan, the indicator number, and the tool name or number. You can also add in a column in your M&E Plan which lists the information of the tool name and number.

Often by doing this exercise you will be able to see if there are any individual, or orphan, indicators which remain. Meaning, those indicators which do not belong to any group. In these cases you may want to rethink the necessity of having the indicator or develop a more appropriate indicator.

Congratulations, you have completed session 2 – Grouping Indicators. Our next session will explore Step 6 of establishing a monitoring and evaluation system – developing data collection tools.

Before beginning the next session, click on the Exercises section to complete the self directed exercise on grouping indicators.

Session 3: Step Six: Developing output monitoring tools

In this final session, we will explore step six of establishing an M&E system – developing output monitoring tools.

At the end of the session, it is expected you will gain a better understanding of the principles of developing data collection tools for output monitoring and the elements that should be included when designing robust tools for routine monitoring.

While development of tools for studies follows some of the same basic principles, it is a more complex topic and therefore will not be covered during this course.

Before we begin, think about what tools are currently being used by your programmes for routine monitoring. How many tools are there? When were the majority of these tools developed? When were they last updated? For those of you who do not have any tools, how are you collecting data?

When developing output monitoring tools, there are several elements that must be included. Using an example of an output monitoring tool from a programme in Mozambique, let's review each of these.

Every output monitoring tool and all tools for that matter must have a tool name.

It should also include a short description of the tool which includes information such as:

• The purpose of the tool and what does it track

• Who should use the tool

• When and how often is the tool administered

• To whom the tool should be submitted when it is complete

As you can see from the example, this tool has each of these elements:

• The purpose of the tool

• Who should use the tool

• When it is used

• How often the tool is administered

• To whom the tool should be submitted when it is complete

Next, it should include the data when data was collected.

By Whom.

The geographical location such as a district or other administrative unit if this is applicable.

The indicator reference. This means including the indicator number on the tool. This comes directly from your M&E plan and grouping exercise. It will help to later use the data to report on the specific indicator from the tool.

The version of the tool. This is very important as tools often get updated. And they are pretested so version dates change. It is important that all people responsible for data collection are using the same version.

Where possible use coding on your data collection tools. This means that instead of writing out text, the person collecting data uses a pre-defined code. As you can see in our example of a nutrition training register, the tool is capturing data about which nutrition messages are being disseminated to schools. Instead of the data collector writing in full form the school level, they use a code of 1, 2 or 3. Coding saves time and should be used whenever possible.

Finally, all tools should contain a space for verification and Review. This serves to ensure that the data on the tool is verified by a supervisor. A space dedicated for review by M&E staff is also important to check for completion prior to data entry.

Once your tool is developed, it is important that it is pre-tested or piloted. This will allow you to see your tool in action and make any necessary changes before it is administered.

As mentioned, all tools need to be checked by supervisors and M&E staff for data quality once data collection is completed. There are two types of checking. First, is spot checking at the field level during collection. The second is when the completed tools are submitted.

Checking data quality during routine monitoring means that the data is:

• Reliable, meaning that data is collected based on protocols and procedures that are consistent.

• Valid, also referred to as accuracy. Information that is collected by the tool is what was intended.

• Timely, meaning that data is up to date, available on time and collected at appropriate frequencies; and

• Traceable, that data can be traced by others to the original source

Checking also involves ensuring that data is complete. Meaning that all fields on the tool are completed and sufficient detail is provided. For example, if an indicator requires the number of male and female individuals who received a training, that this disaggregation is included.

That brings us to the end of last session in this module. It is also the end of the Designing and Implementing Monitoring and evaluation systems course. In the next and final video, we will summarize the content of the course

Before viewing the summary of the course, we encourage you to take the quiz for this session by clicking on the quiz section for this session to test your knowledge and understanding on this module.