



INTEGRATED MONITORING



A Practical Manual for Organisations
That Want to Achieve Results



Written by Sonia Herrero
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"You need to be ready to taste the food while you cook."

PREFACE

I began working on this manual more than two years ago. By then I had over 10 years of professional experience, having worked for a major donor and a range of non-profits, both from within and as a consultant. Yet for all this experience, I didn't really know how to monitor a project, since I had never done it before.

Thus I embarked on a long research journey, where I encountered extensive literature, experts, and training courses on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). On my way, I got lost in forests of sophisticated Excel tables and endless data collection tools, and nearly drowned in oceans of monitoring books that treated it as a separate and sophisticated science. The more I got into the topic, the more complex it appeared and the more overwhelmed and confused I became. But eventually I discovered some islands of common sense that were not about monitoring itself, but about the difference non-profits can make with their work and how they can truly achieve results. These were the "off-stream" writers that you will find in the references section of this manual and to whom I am deeply grateful.

I spent another year developing what you will find in these pages, which reflects the content of our M&E and Project Management courses that we have delivered to hundreds of course participants, using their feedback to improve our approach. This manual is dedicated to them.

Just as a cook won't succeed in preparing a gourmet dinner and satisfying his or her guests simply because he or she is using fancy kitchen implements and the best ingredients, non-profit professionals can't expect monitoring tools alone to solve the challenge of achieving meaningful results. More than anything else you need to be ready to taste the food while you cook, assess that taste, and then decide whether everything is fine or if you need to add more of certain ingredients. It also helps to invite others to taste since they may have a different opinion and, if you are really serious about becoming a good cook, you need to ask your guests for feedback.

This is what we mean by integrated monitoring, a way of getting feedback from your "guests" on whether you are making progress towards achieving your goals while you are working towards them, so that you can take the necessary measures to change your strategy if needed. In the pages that follow, you will see that monitoring is not a tool or a method, but a way of doing, an attitude that needs to underpin everything you do.

We hope this manual will support you and your organisations in enhancing your understanding of monitoring and evaluation, and help you become confident chefs of projects that succeed in making a positive difference to the communities they aim to support.

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INTRODUCTION

Does this picture ring a bell? Have you ever found yourself working on a project or programme, like the man on this cloud, without knowing if your efforts were really making a difference -- or even worse, knowing that they were not making one?

Look carefully at the picture above. You'll see that the man is not so far away from reaching his goal. He may have even planned his intervention very carefully. Perhaps when he started watering, he was actually hitting the plants, but then the cloud moved a little and he didn't notice that his efforts no longer reached their mark. Because he is absolutely convinced that he is doing the right thing, he has stopped paying close attention to what he achieves because he assumes that he is "doing good."

Many organisations successfully implement projects and programmes within a given timeframe and budget, and produce outstanding outputs. But have they generated actual results along the lines of what they intended? In development and humanitarian work, it is not enough to pour water and assume that, in doing so, you are supporting the plants. You need to make sure that the actions you are taking are, in fact, benefitting them as you hoped. While this line of reasoning may appear basic, it can take a lot of thought, reflection and practice to begin thinking in terms of outcomes and results, rather than activities and outputs. In order to do so, people need to get down to earth.

For some, this will not be an easy task. It takes courage to question the way you work and to acknowledge that there may be ways to work more effectively.



It can be frightening to admit that you are not sure how to do things differently. You will have to leave your comfort zone and start experimenting with ways to get down from the cloud. This can be difficult. It requires a lot of motivation and courage to jump into the unknown.

But for those who do manage to get down to earth, the satisfaction will be great. In fact, you will probably wonder why you didn't jump earlier!



The aim of this manual is to help those working in the non-profit sector -- non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other civil society organisations (CSOs) -- and the donors which fund them, to observe more accurately what they are achieving through their efforts and to ensure that they make a positive difference in the lives of the people they want to help. Our interest in writing this guide has grown out of the desire to help bring some conceptual clarity to the concepts of monitoring and to determine ways in which they can be harnessed and used more effectively by non-profit practitioners.

The goal is to help organisations build monitoring and evaluation into all your project management efforts. We want to demystify the monitoring process and make it as simple and accessible as possible. We have made a conscious choice to avoid technical language, and instead use images and analogies that are easier to grasp. There is a glossary at the end of the manual which contains the definitions of any terms you may be unfamiliar with.

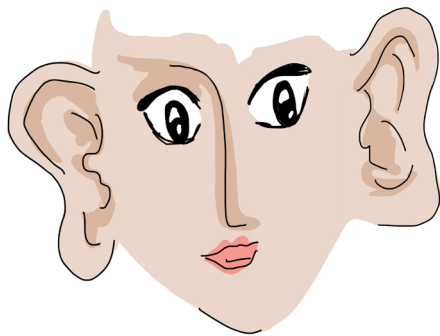
This manual is organised into two parts. The first section covers the 'what' and 'why' of monitoring and evaluation; the second addresses how to do it.

I. KEY ASPECTS OF MONITORING

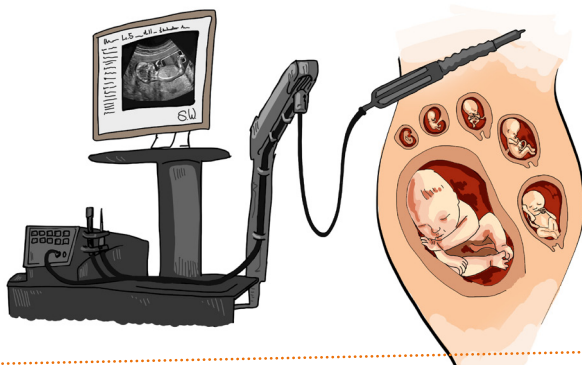
1. What is Monitoring?

At our courses, we ask participants to draw an image which reflects what monitoring means to them.

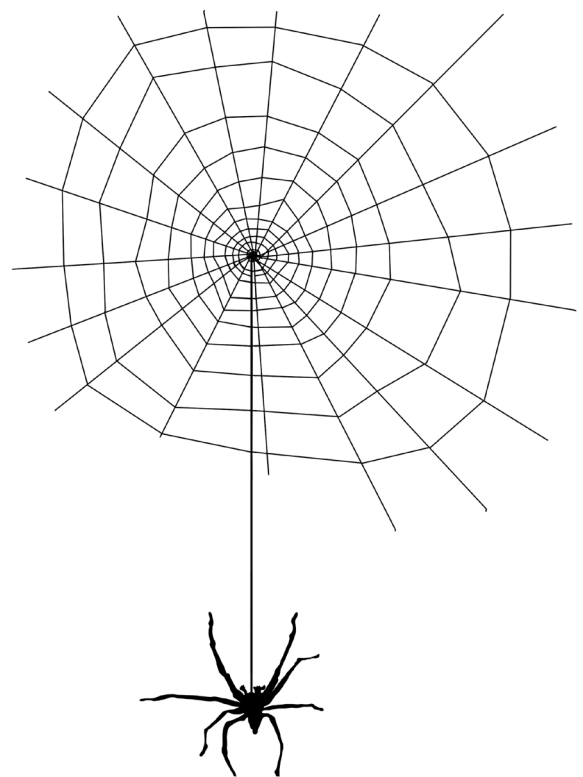
The most commonly used image is a head with big eyes and ears. It shows that monitoring is about keeping one's eyes open to observe what is happening during a project, and about being able to listen carefully. By observing, listening and asking the right questions, it is possible to improve one's project.



Monitoring has also been associated by some to an ultrasound, which allows us to follow the stages of a project, from beginning to end. An ultrasound helps to highlight possible problems, allowing us to take corrective measures if needed.



One group drew a spider's web to depict the concept of monitoring. The spider represents the staff involved in the project. The spider may leave the web occasionally, but it always remains connected to the centre of the web and returns to it. That's what monitoring is. It ensures that we don't lose sight of why we are doing things and keeps us connected to our objectives.



This is what we understand monitoring to be:

- Monitoring is a way of getting feedback on the usefulness of the work that we do for the people we are trying to help.
- Monitoring is an integral part of everything that we do. Non-profits sometimes see monitoring as an add-on activity that, in the best case scenario, might indirectly support their work. But this is like saying that our bones or our blood are there only to support our bodies! If you want your projects to be relevant and to make a difference, monitoring has to be an integral part of the project process.
- Monitoring starts with being absolutely clear about what we want to achieve: if we are not clear about the changes we seek to bring about, then we will only be able to get feedback (monitor) on what we do, not the results of our actions.
- Monitoring is not only about observing and listening, but also about assessing information, learning from it and adjusting one's approach if necessary.

Monitoring and Evaluation are closely interlinked and they are often presented together (as M&E), but they are different in nature. It is a two-step process and each part intervenes at different stages in the project cycle. Monitoring is the process of constantly checking and reviewing what you are achieving. Evaluation is conducted once the project has already been running for a certain period of time, allowing you to go deeper into the examination of longer-term changes in practices and behaviour. Hence, the information compiled through the monitoring system will serve as a basis for the more in-depth evaluation of the project. While this manual focuses on the monitoring process, it also contributes to evaluation since the tools and thinking behind the two processes are very similar and mutually reinforcing.

2. Why Do We Monitor and For Whom?

Many different actors are involved in projects, including donors, the leadership of the implementing organisation, project managers, field workers, local communities, partners and the broader public. These groups may have somewhat different interests when it comes to project monitoring. Some of the most common reasons given for monitoring are:

- To generate specific information required by donors about the progress being made on NGO-implemented projects
- To ensure that funds and resources are used properly
- To keep project activities on schedule, and to review and update the project plan as necessary
- To review projected costs, timelines and deliverables and to explain variances from the original plan
- To secure continued or new financial support: demonstrating the success to attract more funds

The reasons mentioned above reflect the fact that many non-profits feel accountable, first and foremost, to their donors. One of the main interests of donors is to ensure that project resources have been spent as planned and that there are no major deviations from the grant contract. These donor priorities have a huge impact on the way NGOs monitor: in many cases the desire to keep donors satisfied is the main motivation behind monitoring efforts. This is often referred to as **upwards accountability**.



Organisations that are very close to the communities they serve often name other reasons for undertaking project monitoring, however. These include:

- Improving the project by generating a better understanding of what works, what doesn't, and why
- Verifying the validity of assumed logic by comparing the activities being carried out with the anticipated results
- Making sure that the communities which are being helped are actually benefiting from the activities being conducted
- Identifying problems and mistakes, learning from them and finding solutions to emerging problems
- Ensuring that the organisation is achieving something useful, which is essential for personal satisfaction



If the people we want to help are at the centre of everything we do, our motivation for monitoring the project and learning from it is a quite different one. This is known as **downward accountability**.

Many of the problems non-profits have with monitoring originate from the fact that they are not clear why they are doing it. Whether it is to convince other people that you are doing what you set out to do, or if it is to learn whether your actions are working or not, so that you can take corrective action if needed. Why you monitor will significantly influence the way you do it. If you monitor as a compliance or accountability exercise, you will collect data on what has occurred, the quality of what has occurred, and what has been achieved with it -- and then share it with the donor. If, on the contrary, you do monitoring for learning purposes, you'll have to ask yourselves further questions such as: Why did it happen like this? What does it mean for us? What can we learn from it? What will be our next steps? Then we will need to develop a system that allows you to integrate that learning into the practices of your organisation.

This shows a tension between the needs of communities and the needs of donors, and non-profits often find themselves having to balance the two of them.



The need to satisfy donors can create a dynamic in which NGOs hide the problems they encounter in their projects because they are afraid of losing funding if they talk openly about challenges or failures. As a consequence, some NGOs monitor selectively in order to show only the positive aspects of their work. The actual benefit of activities for the communities receiving support is often a secondary concern at best. This creates an unhealthy environment in which donors and NGOs alike act as though they are achieving what they set out to achieve, whether this is the case or not.

For example, an organisation may continue to deliver training courses, in line with its original project proposal, knowing full well that participants are not learning what they are supposed to learn. By doing so, it ignores an interesting challenge from which it could learn. The underlying motivation may be to secure the funds that it needs to continue serving the community, but sadly, communities generally don't benefit from projects that are designed primarily to satisfy donors. The same happens with donors: the

more emphasis they put on achieving results, the more pressure NGOs may feel to claim that they have achieved them, independent of whether this is true or not. We believe that donors and NGOs need to talk more openly about this tension in order to find alternative ways of working. If individuals and organisations don't have a culture of openly accepting mistakes and learning from them, chances are that they will never be able to implement meaningful projects and achieve real developmental results. Donors must also actively support this culture in order for it to work.

For whom should you monitor? You should do it mainly for the communities* you want to support, since they are the ones who will benefit from your projects. You should also do it for yourselves, since doing useful work should be your main motivation, and monitoring allows you to observe the usefulness of your work and to learn and improve on an ongoing basis. Lastly, you should do it for the donors since they need to know how their funds are being used and what is achieved as a result.

****Clarification:** In this manual we refer to the people for whom projects are conducted as “the community.” We prefer not to use the term “beneficiaries”, because this implies a passive role on the part of those who are supposed to benefit from projects. However, without the active participation of those who are supposed to benefit, any project is likely to fail. For us the term “community” represents professional groups, such as university teachers; institutions, such as schools; or groups of people such as farmers, teachers, or women who ought to play an active role in the project while benefiting from it.*

3. Who is involved?

Let’s take a simple example to illustrate who is involved in what we have called integrated monitoring and how it works:



Imagine that an NGO has conducted a training course for community members. The NGO field workers compile some information at the end of the course about the costs of the course, the number of participants, the number of manuals distributed, and the results of a post-course evaluation administered to participants. They also interview some participants about the usefulness of the course for their daily work.

Many of the participants interviewed say that the training was good but that they’re not sure if they’ll be able to use the things they learned in their daily work.

Because monitoring is about observing what is being done and achieved, it has to be done by the persons who are conducting the activities – the “implementers” – with the active involvement of the communities. This is the **data collection phase**.



The field workers go back to their offices and organise a monitoring meeting with other field workers, the project manager, and the person responsible for providing support with monitoring. This person provides support to the monitoring process and, in some cases, the analysis of the information compiled. He or she also ensures that there is coherence across the organisation on how monitoring is being done.

At this meeting they compare the planned budget with actual expenditures, and realise that they have slightly overspent. They then update their records of the number of participants trained and manuals distributed, compare it with what was originally planned, and realise they are on track. They verify that all the courses took place within the planned timeframe and update their workplan accordingly.

The group then discusses what they have achieved through the courses that they have organised. The field workers share the information they have gathered, comparing the results of the tests from the different courses, and discuss the main points which emerged in the interviews with participants. They realise that, in most courses, people are concerned about not being able to integrate the course learnings into their daily work. This is the **data analysis phase** during which the organisation reflects on what has happened.



The same group now discusses the findings and draws conclusions on how the training courses could be improved. They involve the communities in that discussion in order to integrate their recommendations into their analysis.

They produce an internal monitoring report which recommends re-balancing the budget. They mention that they have delivered all planned activities within the scheduled timeframe. They describe the difficulties they faced in achieving the expected results and the comments from participants interviewed. They recommend changing the project by introducing follow-up activities for former participants, instead of implementing the five remaining courses in the cycle. This is the **review phase**: the group learns from available information and makes clear recommendations for improving the project.



Depending on the size of the organisation and the magnitude of the changes proposed, the project managers may need to share this internal monitoring report with their own managers, who discuss the progress made and make a decision about the staff's recommendations.

The senior managers may need to consult with the donors about the proposed changes. They will explain the findings and ask for permission to adjust the project strategy. The donors will decide whether to approve a revised version of the project plan and send it back to the NGO.



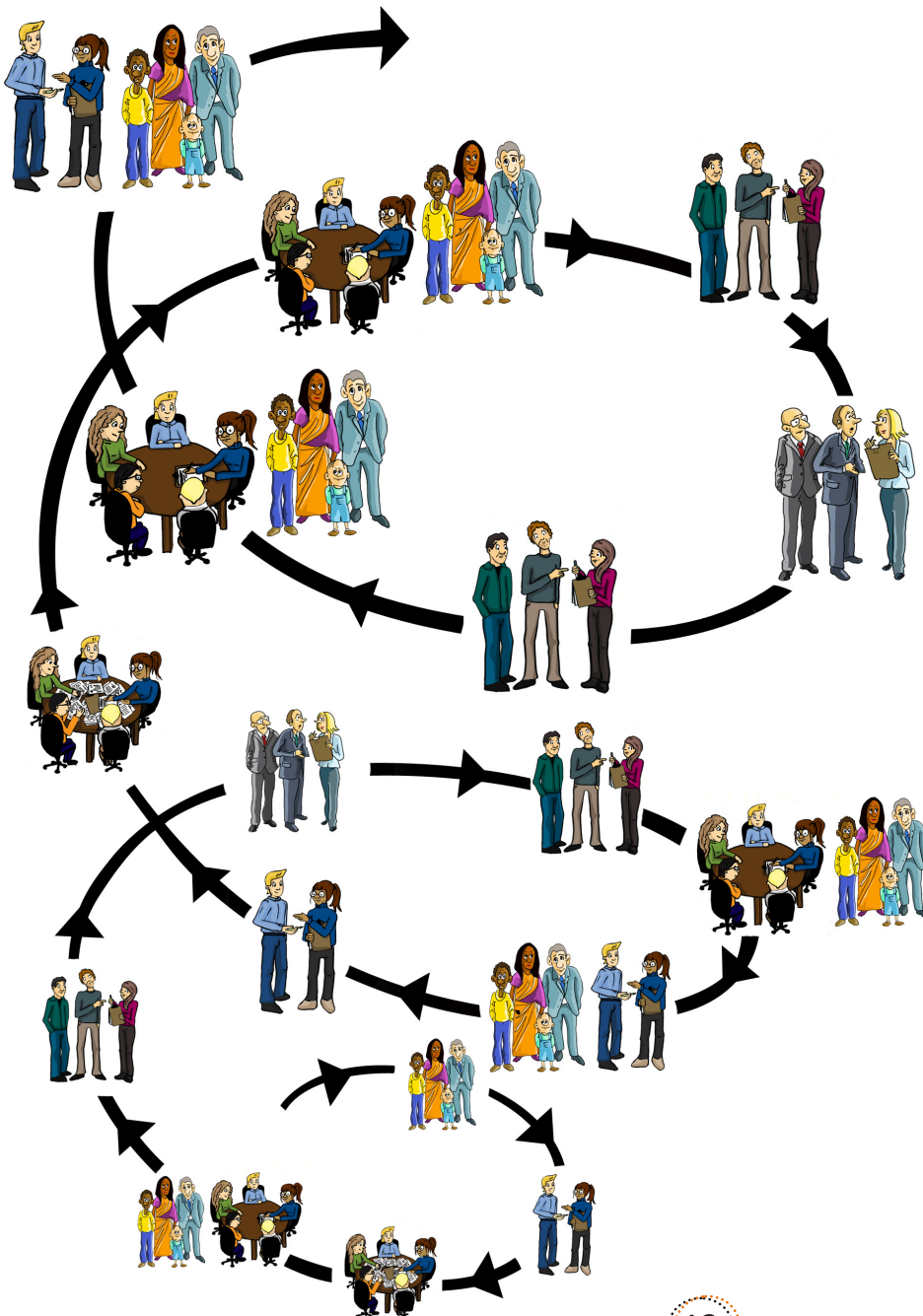
The NGO managers will receive the revised project plan and send it on to the project staff.



The project staff will then meet again to plan the remainder of the project according to the new strategy. This is the **planning phase**, during which the new project plan is **designed**.

Field workers will then return to the communities and share with them the changes to the project. They will start conducting follow-up and individual support activities and will interview participants again to assess progress. The monitoring process starts anew.

Through good monitoring processes like these, the organisation is positioned to do what it does, as well as it possibly can, through a process of continuous improvement.



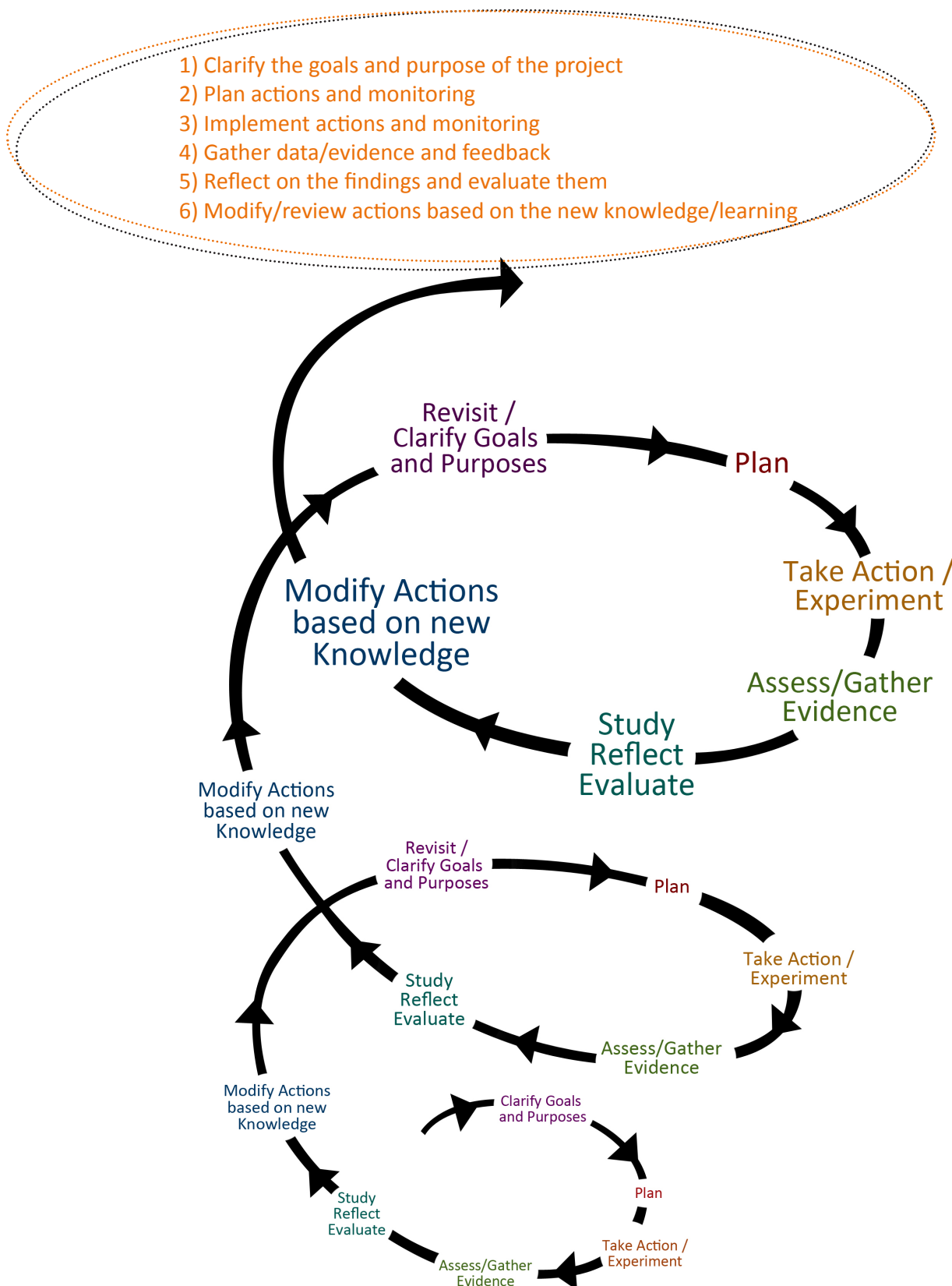
Thus the answer to the question of who is involved is that everyone who participates or benefits from the project has to be involved in it. All too often though, it seems that either an external consultant or a member outside of the project management team is responsible for monitoring. These “outside” people are often tasked with designing monitoring plans, but the problem arises that outside designers may not be fully aware of the complexities of the situation at the project site and the capacity of the team to implement the monitoring plan. As a result, the plan often remains unimplemented.

To solve these issues, it is imperative that the project team members, including management, go through all the project monitoring steps. The team may need to get some advice or assistance from outside sources, but ultimately they need to do the work themselves.

4. How does it work?

Our approach¹, which we call “integrated monitoring”, can be described as a systematic process of continually improving what we do by learning from what we have done and achieved in the past. This approach emphasises the need to learn by doing and to evolve alongside changes in the environment.

As shown in the graphic below, this way of management requires a series of different steps:



¹ The way we describe “integrated monitoring” in this manual is also known as “adaptive management.” This sub-section draws strongly on the two documents mentioned in the reference section on “adaptive management.”

THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT SPIRAL

Meaningful project management requires a constant process of:

Acting → Reflecting → Learning → Planning → Acting...

Over time, we go through the cycle multiple times, turning the process into a spiral, and growing and learning as we do so. In effect, the end of one round of the cycle is the start of the next round.

We begin by developing a model (a project) with certain goals and then experiment with an action because we assume that the action will lead to a certain result. Then, we collect and analyse data about this action. We use the results to modify the model and to suggest a slightly different set of actions that will help us better achieve our goals. In doing so, we will probably introduce a new round of assumptions which will need to be tested.

For example, you may have noticed that your organisation has difficulty obtaining donor funding. After soliciting feedback on unsuccessful proposals, you find out that donors have found the project proposals that you have submitted to be of poor quality. Your strategy is to train staff on proposal writing, because you assume that by doing so people will be able to write better quality proposals and the organisation will receive more funds.

People get the proposal drafting training (acting). You go out and ask the donor whether the proposals are better now and you may discover that the donor is not satisfied yet because the language used is very poor since staff members writing don't have a good command of English (reflecting). If this is the case, training people on proposal writing without addressing the language issue won't solve the problem (learning). So you decide that you will provide English support to staff (planning). You conduct an English training (acting). The process of acting-reflecting-learning-planning will start all over again.

As you go through the project management spiral you are better able to influence the wider environment through increasingly strategic actions. But at the same time, you are also influenced by a deepen-

ing understanding of the environment in which you work. Thus, knowing that your staff has a problem with the command of English influences your decision to conduct a different type of training. The original "end results" may also change as you proceed through the process and build the ownership, competence and commitment of the communities with which we work.

Being in a constant mode of action-reflection-action also helps to make one less complacent. Sometimes, when projects or organisations feel they "have got it right", they settle back (as the man on the cloud) and continue to do things the same way, without questioning whether they still have the formula right. They forget that situations change, that the needs of communities change, and that strategies sometimes need to be reconsidered. Indeed, if you don't integrate monitoring and learning into everything you do you are likely to make the same mistakes over and over again.

Therefore, it is important to create a strong connection between an organisation's monitoring system and its decision-making process. You need to monitor whether your strategy works and if it doesn't, you need to know why. Decisions related to the project should be based on the evidence generated through project monitoring. You use data to make decisions about the project.

What this means is that planning is also an integral part of the monitoring process. Planning is not meant to be a one-time event, never to be revisited once a project is underway. Instead, in order to learn over time and to continue to improve the effectiveness of projects, it is necessary to constantly revisit and adjust project parameters and core assumptions. Action plans, monitoring plans, operational plans, work plans and budgets may need revisions at various stages of a project, as project learnings emerge.

THE WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

In principle the willingness to learn should be the main reason why a project or organisation monitors its work or undertakes an evaluation. In order to be able to create a learning culture, there are some essential principles that an organisation needs to respect. These are:

- **Promote curiosity and innovation.** Implementing a proper monitoring system requires that you have a sense of wonder about how things work and a willingness to try new things to see whether they could be more effective than your current approach. Unfortunately, curiosity and innovation are often in short supply in organisations. As they grow, organisations tend to become more bureaucratic and less flexible. They develop systems and set ways of doing things. As a result, curiosity and innovation are not prioritised, and may even be actively discouraged. Spending time wondering about how things work can be perceived as wasteful daydreaming. It becomes safer for employees to use an existing procedure rather than try something new.

- **Value failure.** Fear of failure stops us from trying risky things. If you're scared of falling, you may never try to ride a bicycle. If you're ashamed of falling, you may not stop to think about why you fell and learn from your mistakes. You may also avoid discussing your experiences with more experienced cyclists. Valuing failure does not mean that failure is desired — falling off a bicycle hurts and causes delays in reaching your short-term destination. In the long-run, however, people who are willing to fall a few

times while learning how to ride a bicycle will reach future destinations faster than those who have to walk everywhere. A willingness to fail indicates that you are pushing yourself to improve. Many projects and organisations resemble the person too scared to ride a bicycle for the first time: under pressure to achieve short-term “results”, failure is seen as something to be avoided at all costs and risky activities are not undertaken. Furthermore, when – as is inevitable – things do fail, efforts are sometimes made to cover up the failures and pretend they never happened. As a result, no learning occurs and people keep making the same mistakes over and over again.

- **Search feedback.** You, your team, and your organisation should be reflecting, seeking feedback, and providing feedback on a continuous basis. That feedback could be formal or informal and might come internally from your team members or other staff. In creating a learning environment, it is important to be open to outside ideas that can give you fresh and insightful perspectives.

- **Encourage personal growth.** Projects and organisations are composed of people; effective project management requires people who have the necessary skills and experience. It also requires individuals who have a commitment to personal growth and learning. Unless the people in the organisation learn new skills and gain new experiences, it is unlikely that the organisation will grow. The organisation must invest in giving its people the resources, motivation, and most importantly, time to develop new skills and knowledge.

5. When do we Monitor?

By now the answer to this question should be clear: you monitor all the time, because it does not make sense to invest time or resources in a project if you are not monitoring it properly.

Monitoring has to be planned from the start, not tacked on later as an afterthought. It is very difficult to set up a proper monitoring system when a project is already in the implementation stage. The monitoring plan should be created when the project is designed and monitoring activities should be included in the detailed implementation plan. The very act of preparing the monitoring plan during the design phase of a project will push you to think harder about your project goals than you otherwise might have done. The result is usually a better overall project design.

During the implementation phase, monitoring is best done often, but in small doses. **An effective way to monitor is to integrate small measures of observation, reflection, learning, and planning into everything that you do so that it becomes a natural practice.** If information is compiled on a regular basis, it can be assessed on a bi-weekly, monthly or bi-monthly basis, depending on the type of project and

organisation. For most organisations, this regular practice of observing, reflecting and learning is a real challenge. **Often organisations are so busy doing, that there is no time left for thinking.** NGOs often feel a lot of pressure to deliver and produce, to reach a certain number of people or to conduct a certain number of activities.

The reality is that it's very hard to run and think at the same time. Like these guys on the treadmill, we keep running without stopping to check if we're heading in the right direction. Someone needs to slow those guys down! This is where the donors come in. Donors could reduce the "delivery pressure" on NGOs and start investing more in thinking and planning time. Unless this happens, it is unlikely that NGOs will succeed in setting up an integrated monitoring system and achieve the results that they hope to achieve.

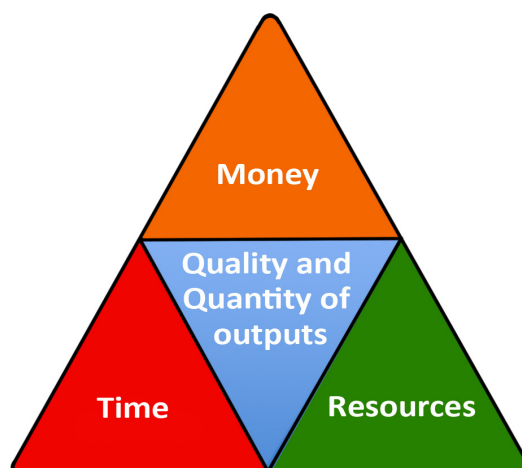


5. What do we Monitor?

In order to answer the question of what needs to be monitored, we first need to understand the different components of a project. A project is a temporary process, with a clearly defined start and end time, a set of activities, and a budget, which is developed to accomplish a well-defined goal or objective linked to a concrete benefit for a target population (what we call "communities").

A project is composed of three different elements:

- Time
- Money
- Resources (including people)



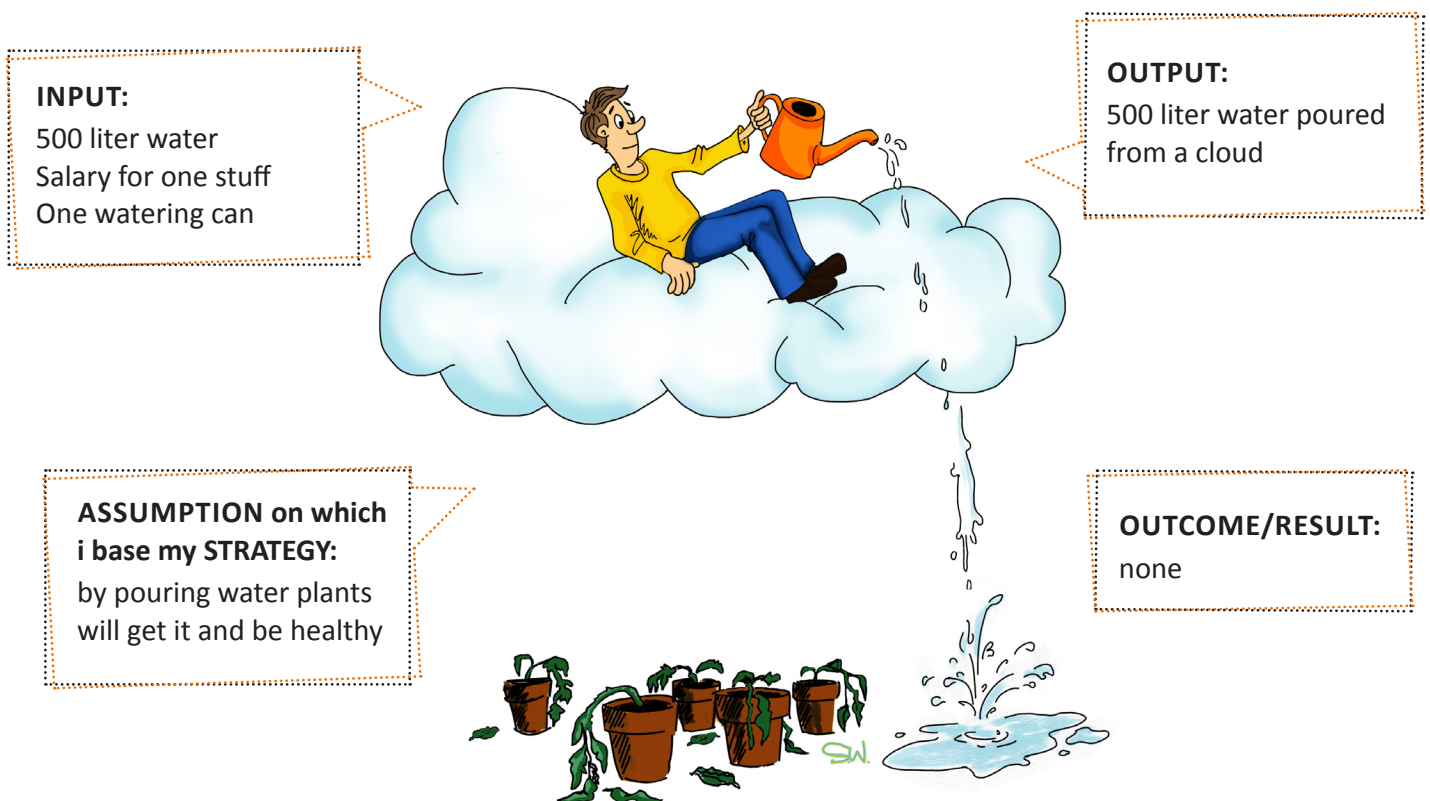
When we combine those elements (inputs), we obtain a certain number of products or deliverables (outputs) of a certain quality. Any change in the amount of time, funds or resources available will have a direct influence on the quantity and quality of the products that we produce.

Projects in the private sector are about producing concrete deliverables, such as a car, a chair, or a computer. These projects will be successfully implemented if those responsible manage to produce a certain number of products of a given quality for a given amount of money and resources.

However, in the non-profit world the goal of a project is not achieved by the production of certain products, but rather through the difference that those products make to the people we want to support. In other words, are those products useful for the people for whom they have been designed?

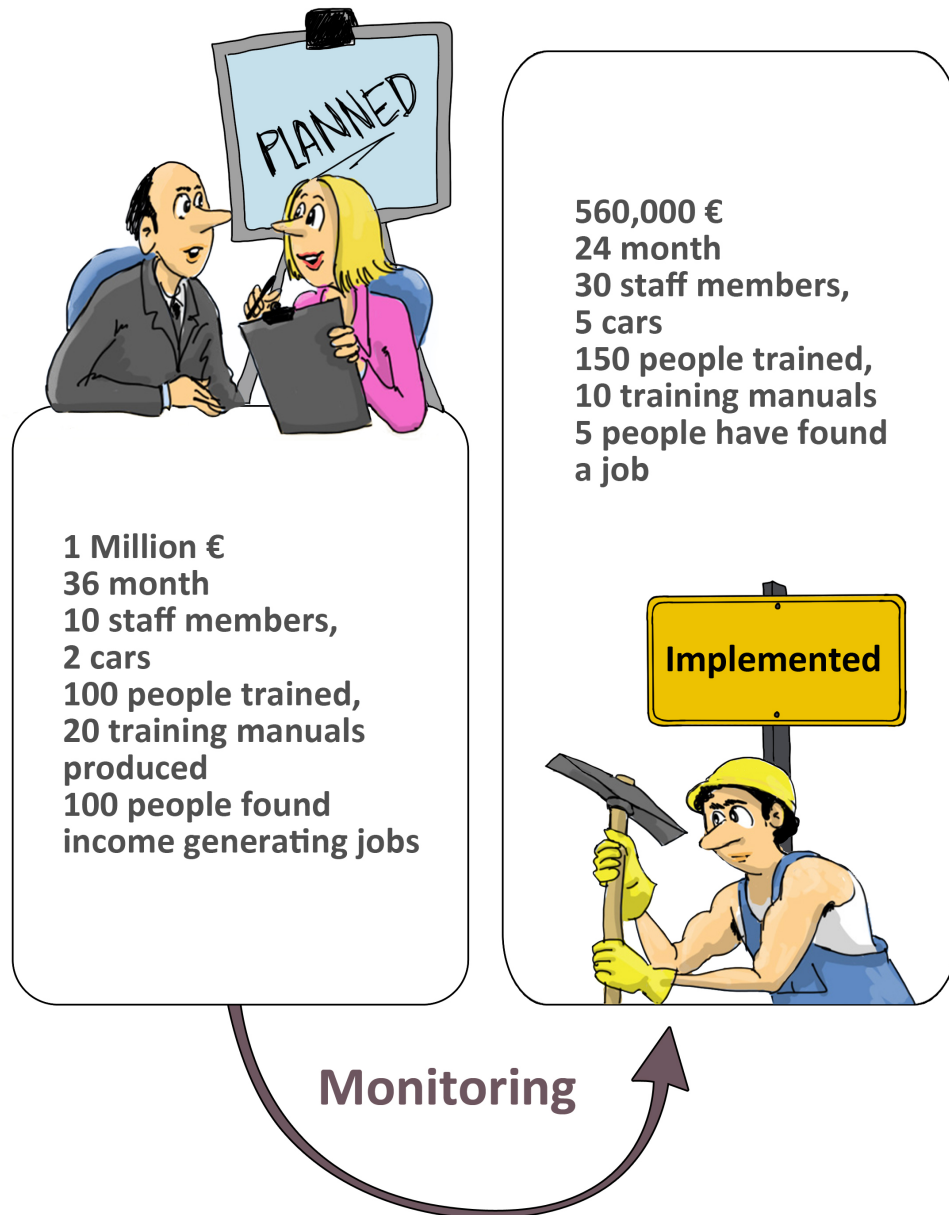
In this image, what the person does (outputs) is pour water from his cloud. What he achieves by doing it is nothing. So if you focus your monitoring system only on tracking what you do – e.g. the number of people you have trained, or the number of participants involved in a conference – and simply assume that what you do is useful, it's possible that you will continue doing things that are useless.

Instead, you need to monitor what you are doing, but also verify whether your actions are making the difference that you wanted them to make. In other words: is the water that you are using (inputs) and the activity you are conducting – i.e. pouring water (outputs) – actually benefitting the plants that you believe you are helping (outcome)? The most important data that you collect are those that tell you whether your actions are having their desired effect. To this end, you need to make your assumptions explicit. Are the assumptions on which I based my original theory correct? (i.e. if I pour water from a cloud the plants will receive it, and if they receive my water they will become healthy.)



Any monitoring system needs to take into account the following:

- **Inputs:** The use of money, staff, time, equipment and resources.
- **Activities:** The things that we do and how we do them.
- **Outputs:** The processes, products, goods and services that the project produces through the activities it conducts. For example: workshops, training manuals, research and assessment reports, and strategies.
- **Outcomes (also called results):** The observable positive or negative changes in the actions of social actors that have been influenced, directly or indirectly, partially or totally, by outputs. This is what an individual, group or organisation does differently as a result of an intervention.
- **Strategy:** Determining whether the results/outcomes observed have been achieved thanks to the planned intervention and strategy, or as a result of some other factor. It may be that the plants got the water they needed, but only because it rained and not because of the water poured from above.
- **Impact:** Long-term, sustainable changes in the conditions of people and the state of the environment that structurally reduce poverty, improve human well-being and protect and conserve natural resources. An organisation can only contribute partially and indirectly to these enduring results in society or in the environment. Hence, during project implementation it will not be possible to measure the overall impact, only whether the planned outcomes have been achieved.



The first stage of a monitoring system is to compare what was originally planned with what is being done and achieved during the implementation of the project.

Besides monitoring the different project elements and comparing them with the original strategy, you also need to understand the reasons why things are not going according to plan. In other words, it doesn't help you to know that you are behind schedule and overspending the budget, or that people are not reacting to your activities as you thought they would, if you don't gather information on why this is so. Hence, when you monitor, you need to understand the reasons behind your findings so that you can learn from them and adapt the project accordingly.

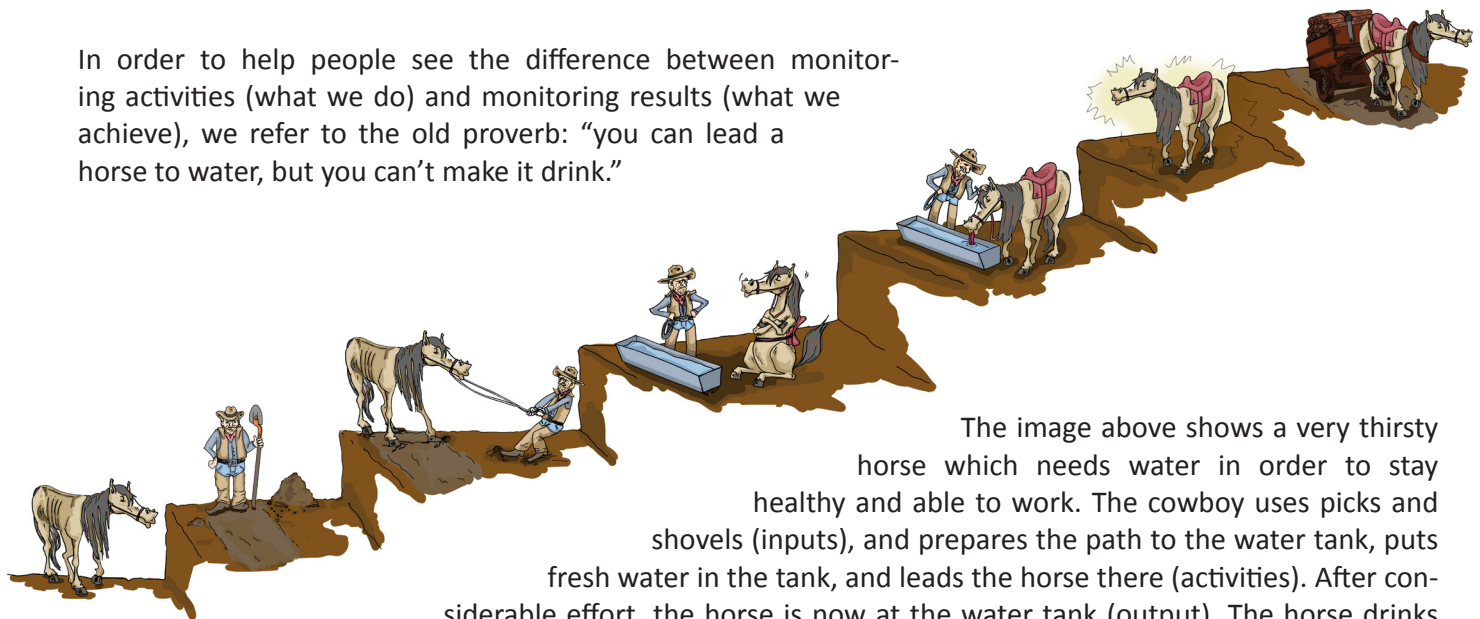
Checklist of things to be monitored:

- What work and activities have been done, versus what should have been done
- How long it has taken, versus how long it should have taken
- What it has cost, versus what it should have cost
- The quality of things produced and delivered, versus what was planned
- How people are reacting to our activities, versus what was assumed
- The benefits people are drawing from the activities, versus what was planned

5.1. Monitoring What We Do, Versus What We Achieve

Many organisations successfully implement projects within the given timeframe, budget, and resources, but does it naturally follow that they have produced the actual results they intended? For example, it is not enough to simply implement health programs and assume that successful implementation is equivalent to actual improvements in people's health. In the same way, it is not enough to observe that I am pouring water and to assume that by doing so I am supporting the plants.

In order to help people see the difference between monitoring activities (what we do) and monitoring results (what we achieve), we refer to the old proverb: "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink."

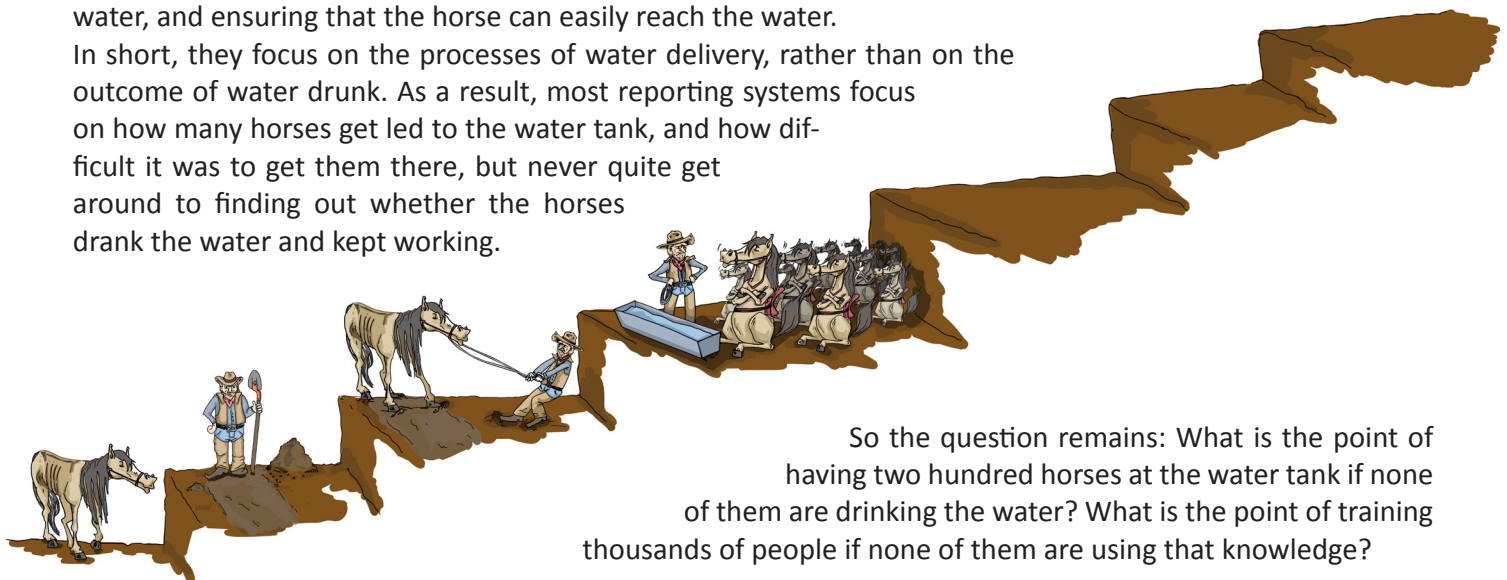


The image above shows a very thirsty horse which needs water in order to stay healthy and able to work. The cowboy uses picks and shovels (inputs), and prepares the path to the water tank, puts fresh water in the tank, and leads the horse there (activities). After considerable effort, the horse is now at the water tank (output). The horse drinks the water (outcome) and, as a consequence, is healthy and again able to work (impact).

It's a success story, but unfortunately, in real life, things don't happen in such a simple, linear way. We can indeed bring horses to the water tank because, if required, we can force them there, but we cannot make them drink. It is the horses' own decision and not subject to our control. Now, think of all the training courses, meetings, workshops and conferences that are organised by NGOs, all the reports that are being produced, latrines and schools built, and mosquito nets distributed. All of these things are outputs – or, in keeping with this metaphor, about bringing the horse to water. But who makes sure that people use the knowledge they acquire at all those events? Who ensures that people use the latrines, that children go to schools, that mosquito nets are used and not sold? Who ensures that people change their behaviours?

When we raise this question during our courses, people answer that it is too hard to influence people to change their behaviour. Thus, because people know they can't make a horse drink water, they focus on the things they can easily control: leading the horse to water, making sure the water tank is full, monitoring the quality of the water, and ensuring that the horse can easily reach the water.

In short, they focus on the processes of water delivery, rather than on the outcome of water drunk. As a result, most reporting systems focus on how many horses get led to the water tank, and how difficult it was to get them there, but never quite get around to finding out whether the horses drank the water and kept working.



So the question remains: What is the point of having two hundred horses at the water tank if none of them are drinking the water? What is the point of training thousands of people if none of them are using that knowledge?

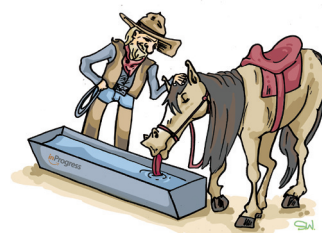
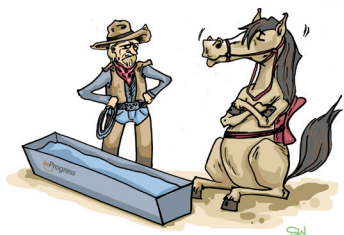
Unfortunately, many projects are about leading the horse to water – and the donors pay for it. This is understandable, as, in order to make it drink, the horse first needs to be at the water tank. However, if we stop our intervention at the point when the horse is at the water tank, we will never make a difference to anyone. **We need to continue our thinking process and push it forward until we obtain a genuine result.** This may entail bringing fewer horses to water, in order to free up time to work on the difficult task of motivating them to drink.

ANSWERING THE ‘SO WHAT?’ QUESTION

So how do we move from output design to outcome design? There is a very important question that needs to be answered when you define results. Answering the “so what?” question should bring in community perspectives into the project. Thus, most of the things that are formulated as “results” in project proposals can be challenged with the question “So what?” or alternately, “What’s the use?”. Grappling with this can help you see that the thinking process is not over and that you haven’t yet identified the right result.

If I formulate the result of my project as “200 horses will be brought to the water tank”, I can easily be challenged with the “so what?” question. What difference does being at the water tank make to the horses? That will help me reformulate my result into something like “100 horses drink the water from the water tank”, which is something that indeed makes a difference to the horses.

Let’s illustrate this point with some examples of “leading the horse to water”-type output results, and look at how we can transform them into genuine “the horse is drinking”-type outcome results:



Participants will openly discuss their dependence on cigarettes.	On its own, making participants discuss their dependence doesn't make the lives of people any better.	Participants will stop smoking.
People in the programme will learn how to repair computers.	Learning how to repair computers if they have no computers to repair doesn't make any difference to them.	People in the programme will get a job repairing computers.
50 farmers will participate in a farm tour to observe different milking practices.	Just participating in the tour won't make any difference to their work.	Farmers will adopt improved milking practices in their own farming operations.
Establishment of a comprehensive energy conservation programme.	Establishing a new programme doesn't necessarily have any bearing on energy conservation.	The corporation will significantly reduce energy consumption.
Twenty people will be trained on the importance of hygiene.	Knowing about something doesn't mean that we change our behaviour.	Twenty people wash their hands after having gone to the toilet and before dealing with food.
Women peer protection groups have been organised.	What is the difference that those groups make to women?	Women in the community are able to protect themselves and their children from violence.

As we will see later on, the first step in designing a monitoring system is to review the design of the project in order to make sure that your results are genuine results and not only activity, or service results (i.e. leading the horse to water). Otherwise, no matter how thorough and sophisticated your monitoring system, you will never be able to measure the difference you make to the people you are trying to help, because that difference was not properly stated in the project plan in the first place. In other words, you cannot possibly measure whether you are achieving things that you didn't even plan to achieve.

A note at this stage about impact:

For many donors and NGOs, the motivation for setting up a monitoring system is to be able to prove the impact of projects. In the example of the horse, the impact would be that the horse stays healthy and is able to work. Imagine you have been extremely successful with your project and the horse drinks good quality water every day. But what about the food that it eats? What about illnesses it could

get? You are not dealing with factors such as diet and disease in your project, which means that they are beyond your control. In other words, you will never be able to say that the horse is able to work solely thanks to your project. You may be able to say though that you have contributed to a process that has made the horse healthier, but if no one else is taking care of all the other factors that will affect the horse, it is very possible that it will be not be able to work for long.

If NGOs and donors are serious about achieving impact, they should support more complementary projects which all aim at the same broader goal. One NGO could take care of the water, while another could take care of food, and another health. Unfortunately, this is far from being a widespread practice in the non-profit sector, which is one of the reasons why the development sector has sometimes fallen short of its goals in bringing about significant social and economic change.



II. HOW DO WE MONITOR?

1. Steps for Setting Up a Monitoring System

A monitoring system is a system for collecting and utilising information on the progress of a project with the goal of improving it. Its purpose is to provide a structured framework of observation and record keeping to assist those involved to make evidence-based decisions. It also serves as a communication system, allowing information to flow in different directions throughout all levels of the organisation.

Monitoring is not the job of a single person: it involves all staff members and must be integrated into the culture of an organisation and into everything it does. Management has to decide that monitoring will be a priority and take the necessary steps to make it happen. This means that before you can set up an integrated monitoring system for your own project, you will first need for certain measures to be undertaken at an organisational level.

The following is a sequence of recommended steps for setting up a monitoring system:

- **Step 1:** Assess the readiness of the organisation to implement an integrated monitoring system. Since integrating monitoring into the organisation's work will require considerable effort, the first thing that needs to be arranged is meeting among staff members and management to discuss the reasons for setting up a monitoring system. Why do you want to embark on setting up a monitoring system? What are its advantages?

Other issues that should be addressed are:

Who will use the information generated by the monitoring system? What are their needs? What type of information do they require? How can we balance the interests and needs of different constituencies, e.g. donors or communities? What are the potential difficulties inherent in monitoring? Are there any risks? What supporting measures will be required? What incentives will motivate people to undertake monitoring seriously? Who will be the responsible person(s) for designing and overseeing the monitoring system?

• Step 2: Adopt measures internally to make monitoring a priority.

Some of the following steps might be helpful:

1. Appoint a small team responsible for ensuring that the organisation develops an internal monitoring system. The monitoring team should report directly to executive staff.
2. Assess the knowledge and comfort level of staff and, if necessary, organise workshops aimed at making management and staff aware of their responsibilities and the support they will receive.
3. Agree on periodic monitoring meetings that will be organised at both the project and organisational levels.
4. Make sure there is a budget to cover monitoring-related costs.
5. Agree on a feedback system, i.e. from the field workers up to senior management and back.
6. Develop standard templates for monitoring progress and results.
7. Have management decide and communicate what will be done with the recommendations by staff made based on the monitoring system.
8. Decide what will happen if mistakes are discovered.

• Step 3: Design a monitoring strategy for each project.

Agree on how you will monitor the process and the outputs and the results that you achieve. The following sections of this manual give recommendations on how to do so.

2. How to Monitor the Process and the Outputs

Depending on what is being monitored, different tools are available for our use.

In order to monitor project progress we need to observe the time, budget and resources that we are spending compared to what we originally planned. There are different tools which can help us to do this and it is advisable to have standard templates which can then be adapted to each project. **These can be used to:**

- Compare what was planned with what is actually happening
- Standardise the way data is recorded and stored
- Share information - from one person to whole departments
- Record and analyse discussions and decisions
- Use information for data analysis
- Aggregate data from many projects

Here are some of the tools that can be used for:

a) Monitoring Time

Time schedules depict the sequence of tasks that will be completed, by whom and when, in order to achieve the project result. One frequently used tool for planning time and for monitoring is the bar chart or Gantt chart (see image below). It tells us if the activities are being completed on schedule and in the right order. A Gantt chart contains the dates for performing project activities, identifies the sequence in which activities occur and their duration, and tracks and controls changes to the schedule. You can represent the activities using a bar chart schedule. The time from the beginning of the first bar (start) and the end of the last bar (finish) is the duration of the project. If the critical activities are completed on time, then the project will finish on schedule.

your co-piloting skills. If you don't know where you want to go, chances are you won't get there. But once you are clear about the destination, you can then determine how to get there — including the stops and turns you must take along the way.

In order to be able to monitor results, the following steps need to be followed:

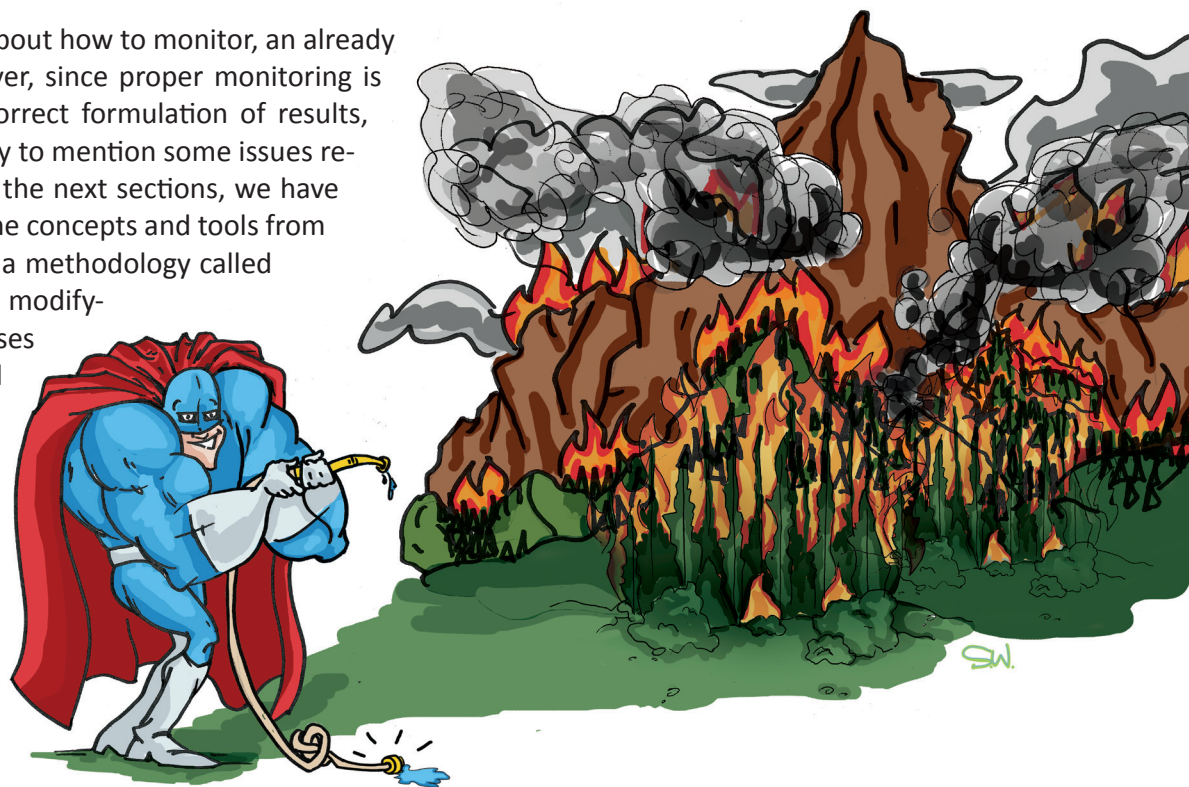
- **Step 1:** Define results (agree on where you are going)
- **Step 2:** Define indicators (agree on how you will know if you are making progress towards your destination)

3.1 Define Results/Outcomes

We believe that one of the main reasons for the limited success enjoyed by many development projects is the fact that there is too much focus on delivering products and services, while aiming for results that are overly ambitious, such as changing a whole institution or even a country.

If we are to be successful with our projects, we need to be more modest and much more concrete with the formulation of our results. Results should be formulated in a way that is achievable. This would help us to move away from the 'superhero syndrome' that a lot of non-profits (and donors, too) seem to suffer from. The syndrome manifests itself in an inexplicable optimism that, despite limited time and resources, organisations will somehow manage to solve an impressive number of complex and long-standing problems.

This manual is mainly about how to monitor, an already existing project. However, since proper monitoring is closely linked to the correct formulation of results, we consider it necessary to mention some issues related to this as well. In the next sections, we have selectively adapted some concepts and tools from an IDRC publication on a methodology called "Outcome Mapping"³, modifying them for the purposes of this document and its intended readers.



Outcome Mapping recognises that development is essentially about people relating to each other and their environment. The idea of this approach lies in its shift away from assessing the products of a project, to focusing on changes in behaviour and in the relationships between the people, groups, and other organisations with which an organisation works directly.

We recommend the use of this methodology, which helps in the design of projects with realistic, achievable and people-centred results. It aims to help a project be specific about the actors it targets, the changes it expects to see, the strategies it employs and, consequently, to be more effective in terms of the results it achieves.

³ To learn more about Outcome Mapping, refer to the manual on Outcome Mapping published by the IDRC, listed in our References section.

Here is a short overview of the steps required to design outcome-focused projects:

• Step 1: Identify the project stakeholders

Brainstorm a list of all the people and groups of people who can be affected, positively or negatively, by the project. Ask yourself which individuals, organisations or groups the project will need to work with in order to achieve its ultimate goal. Who will you work with most directly? Who can help or hinder your work? Who is the project aiming to help?

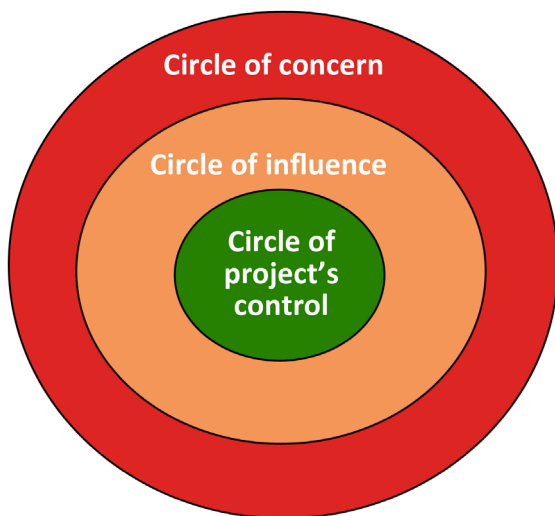


• Step 2: Organise your stakeholders according to your intervention strategy

Considering this list of stakeholders, you will probably realise that not all of them have the same status, nor do they occupy the same position in relation to your organisation. With the limited resources that you have available, you won't be able to support all those actors or to influence all of them. Rather, you will need to accept that there are things that your project can control, others that it will be

able to influence, and many others that will remain in your circle of concern, but will not be able to be addressed directly. Few actors, probably only your staff and your close strategic partners, will be in your circle of control—people who are on your side and will support your project. Other actors are in your circle of influence—people that you cannot control, but you think you can influence. And there are also actors who you will not be able to reach, but who are still a concern.

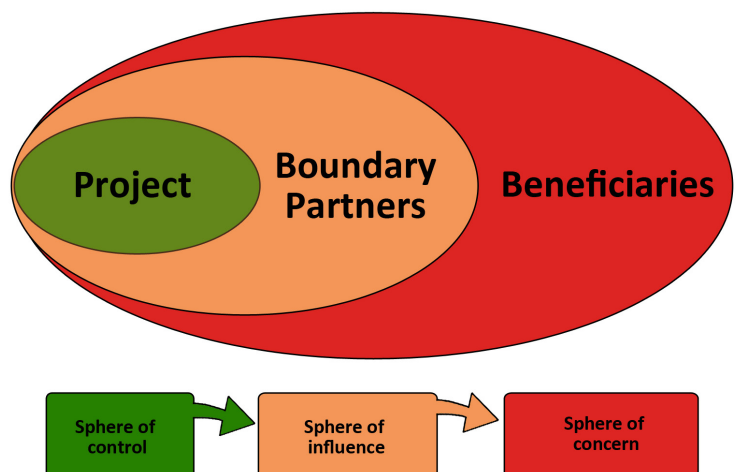
For example, in a project about access to primary education, an educational NGO (circle of control) will be concerned about the children (circle of concern), but will work to convince their parents (circle of influence) to send them to school. At the same time, it may also try to influence local politicians (circle of influence) to lobby national politicians (circle of concern) to approve laws protecting children from child labour.



• Step 3: Identify the groups that your project will influence

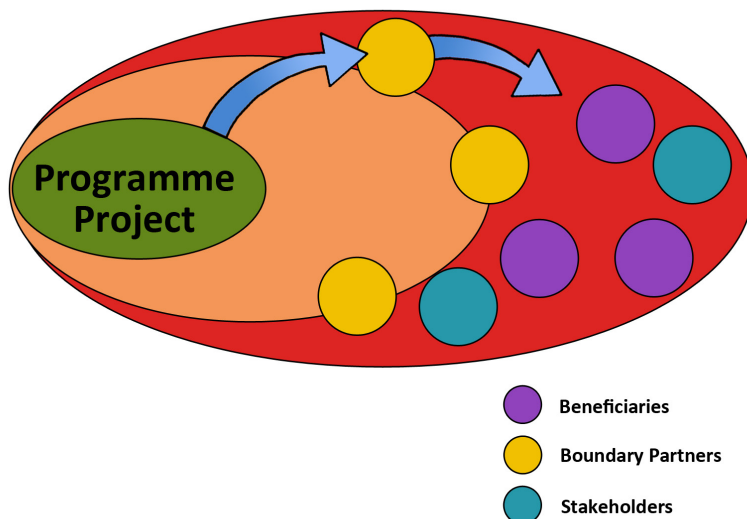
In Outcome Mapping, the people who are located in the overlap between our circle of control and the circle of concern are called boundary partners. They are those individuals, groups, and organisations with whom the project interacts directly and over whom the project anticipates opportunities for influence. These actors are called boundary partners, because – even though the project will work with them to effect change – it does not control them. A single boundary partner may include multiple individuals, groups, or organisations if a similar change is being sought in all cases (for example, research centres or women's NGOs). Boundary partners are also sometimes known as “target groups.”

For instance, a rural development NGO may be working with five different farmers' organisations in five provinces, but these can be considered a single type of boundary partner if the NGO is trying to bring about similar changes in all of these organisations. If there are other actors that the project needs to work with, but does not necessarily want to change, these can be listed separately under 'strategic partners' so that they can be considered later at the stage of developing strategies. Strategic partners are considered in terms of their contribution to the specific objective of the project.



When listing the project's boundary partners, the focus should be on the actors with whom the project works directly. If the project cannot directly influence an actor, the organisation needs to determine who it can influence, who will, in turn, influence that actor. The actor who can be influenced is then included as a boundary partner instead. In this way, the project maintains a focus on its sphere of influence, but with a broader vision.

Generally, a project should not have more than three or four boundary partners (although each boundary partner can include multiple individuals, groups, or organisations), since being able to positively influence their behaviour will usually be a difficult and complex task.



• **Step 4: Describe the change you want to achieve with your boundary partners**

Once the boundary partners have been identified, a result (“outcome challenge”) is developed for each of them. The result describes how the behaviour, relationships, activities or actions of an individual, group, or institution will change if the project is successful.

Most of the problems NGOs and donors are trying to solve are large scale, so the tendency is to try to solve them through commensurately big solutions. Yet because resources are usually relatively small, this creates significant frustration among actors involved in the process (including the communities) as they try to solve big problems with big solutions that they cannot actually deliver. Our view is that we don't need big solutions to solve big problems: most problems are solved by starting with very small steps that then begin to produce a change. Very often small changes can have a huge impact.

It is clear that a situation or a system cannot change without individuals in it changing, and a number of people need to change to make a visible difference in that system. Ultimately, all change efforts boil down to the same question: can you get people to start behaving in a new way? This is the reason why Outcome Mapping focuses on behavioral change of given individuals and why, when it formulates that change, it does so in a positive way.

Hence the next step is to take each of your boundary partners (target groups) and think about how those people would behave if the problem they currently have was suddenly gone. For example, how would a smoker behave if he or she was to quit smoking? (e.g. He or she would refuse ciga-

rettes, wouldn't buy them, etc.) How would certain politicians behave if they weren't corrupt? (e.g. They would advocate for decent salaries for their jobs; they would follow transparent procedures; they wouldn't ask for or accept bribes.)

There are many advantages when we use positive behavioral change to formulate our results:

It forces people to focus on concrete things that people will do or that you will observe and, by doing so, you avoid overly grand and unattainable results.

The result becomes more realistic since we can aim at changing the behaviour of a small group of people within years, not decades. These small successes in the short-term prove that change is possible and motivate people to continue with the longer-term projects.

The result becomes “human-centred”, meaning that we can easily see whether we have achieved our goals by simply asking the persons we want to influence or by observing their behaviour. It's easier to observe that certain officials are no longer corrupt than it is to observe whether we have managed to reduce corruption in the country.

Here we give some hints on how to design people-centred results following the Outcome Mapping approach.

You can use the following image to help think through the results you would want to see: “Imagine you are a butterfly, who in three years' time can go and see the people that your project has tried to influence. Imagine the changes you would see in those groups if you had been completely successful.”

Guiding questions for formulating results are:

- How will people behave after having been influenced by the project?
- How might the physical and social conditions in which people live be different?
- How would each of these groups or institutions be thinking, acting or relating to each other?
- What attitudes and values would people have?
- What might the public policies that affect them look like?
- What new capabilities would specific groups have?
- What new opportunities exist for whom?

Examples of types of changes:

Type of change	Illustration
Change in circumstances	Children will be safely reunited with their families of origin from foster care
Change in status	Unemployed young people will be employed
Change in behaviour	Parents will discuss with their children and educate them in a non-aggressive way
Change in attitude	Women will be speaking at public assemblies about their problems
Change in knowledge	Parents will understand the needs and capabilities of children at different ages
Change in skills	Increased reading level; able to parent appropriately

3.2 Define Indicators for Results

The question ‘What are the right indicators?’ dominates many discussions within the non-profit sector, to an extent that can seem obsessive. People can come down with cases of ‘indicatoritis’, a sickness that causes one to see things as more complicated than they actually are in an attempt to measure everything. So let’s start with the basics. What are indicators? They are simply a means to help us understand whether we are moving in the right direction in order to reach out to our final destination.

When we are driving a car and have a clear destination in mind, how do we know that we are on the right track? We use, for example, the distance already driven, the cities that we pass by, the petrol that we have used and the time that we have spent driving. All those signs will indicate to us that we are on the right track. The name of the city written on a road sign will be an indicator that we have reached our final destination. Implementing a project is like being on a journey: we need clear signs that show us that we are moving in the right direction. All those signs will be the indicators for our journey.



One of the main misconceptions about indicators is that people tend to believe that they are only supposed to show whether a result has been successfully achieved. In fact, we also need indicators that will help us check our progress on the way and show whether we are getting closer to our destination.

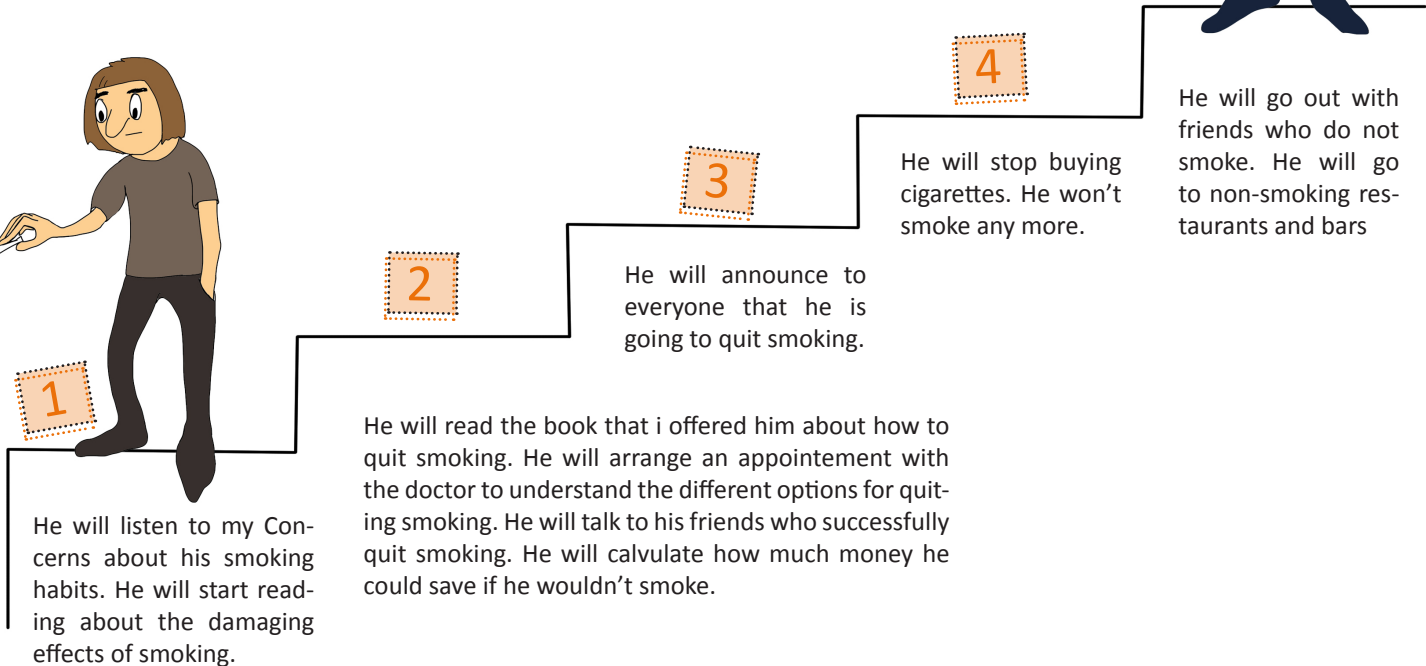
There are many reasons for using “progress” indicators as opposed to “success” indicators:

- Change isn’t an event; it’s a process. There is no single moment when a child learns to walk – the transition to walking is a process. And there won’t be a moment when the community starts sending all its children to school; this too will be a process. Progress indicators help us to break down processes and to adapt our strategy to it.
- The behavioural change process can be lengthy and we need small successes along the road to keep us going. We need to break down the trip into manageable distances that will make the overall journey easier. If you have ever faced a really long drive, you may have used this technique yourself. Maybe you thought about your journey one town at a time, or one hour at a time. Maybe you promised yourself a coffee stop after the next 100 kilometres. It is a lot easier to think “100 km to coffee” than to think “8.5 more hours of driving until I’m there.” We need to shrink the change that we want to achieve and think of small changes that are within reach. This is what we achieve with progress indicators.
- You need to motivate NGOs and donors to continue working on the process. Once people have started implementing the project, it is important to make their advances visible. The value of progress indicators is that they focus attention on small milestones (small changes) that are attainable and visible, rather than on the eventual big change, which can seem remote. Using progress indicators, organisations can show to their donors (and to themselves) that, although they may have not yet reached the final result, they are making significant progress towards it, have a clear idea of where they are in the process, and know where they need to go.

So the question is: how do you define progress indicators (called progress markers in outcome mapping terminology)?

You ask yourself the question: how will I know that I am moving in the right direction and getting closer to the intended result?

Let’s take a simple example to start with. Imagine you want to help your partner to quit smoking. You know that it won’t happen overnight, but you want to know whether you are making progress. So you ask yourself, how will I know that he or she is moving in the right direction? You will see that a certain number of steps need to happen in order for your partner to quit smoking:



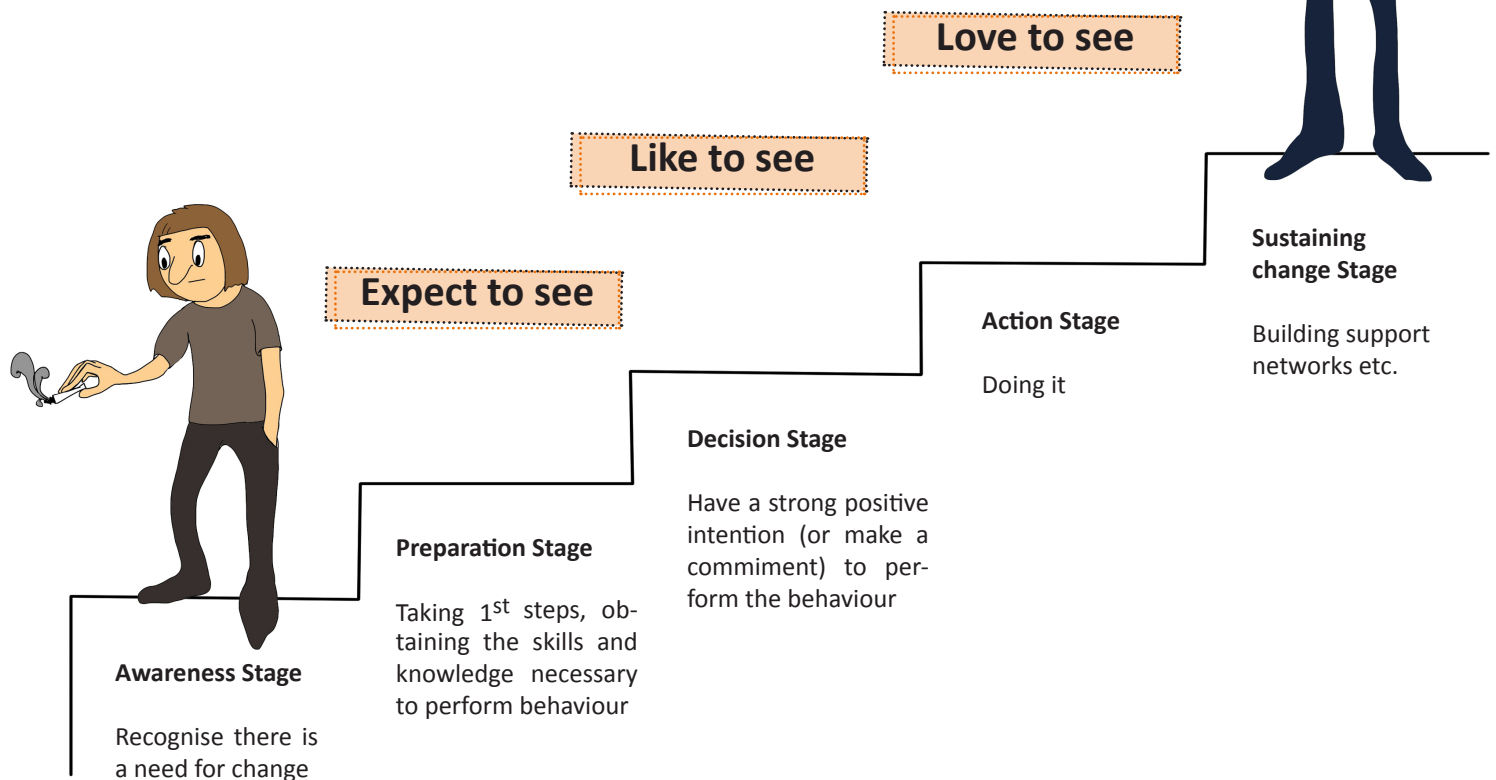
These different steps and small changes in behavior will serve as progress indicators that show you that the partner is moving in the right direction.

When behavioral change works, it tends to follow a pattern, and that pattern is what you show through the progress indicators. You will see that the change process often starts by being aware of something that you didn't know about before. But being aware of something and knowing about something is not the same as doing it. For example, many doctors smoke, and this cannot be because of a lack of awareness or knowledge.

Indeed, there is a difference between knowing how to act and being motivated to act. Knowing is not enough: people must apply that knowledge. In order to move from the step of "knowing about something" to the step of "using that knowledge," you need to work on people's feelings and motivations. You need to help them practice their knowledge. That will be the next step in the process.

Once people are doing the right thing, they have adopted the right behaviour. But there is something that you shouldn't forget: people who have quit smoking several times know how important it is to prevent a relapse. You need to be able to create an environment in which the change can be maintained over time.

Indicators should reflect that gradual process of behavioural change, with the person moving through the following stages:



Progress indicators should always start with the minimum one would **expect to see** the boundary partner (or target group) do as an early response to the project's core activities. Next come indicators we would **like to see** if the project is successful, followed by indicators for the changes that we would **love to see** if the project was really successful.

Progress indicators show the process that is being made by the boundary partner (or target group):

1. Expect to see: The boundary partner perceives project intentions; it is aware of and recognises the need for change. During this phase the involvement of the boundary partner tends to be reactive, i.e. participating in meetings, trainings, etc.

2. Like to see: The partner has acquired the knowledge and skills necessary, is acting independently in support of the project’s mission and carries out proposed tasks. The partner communicates the project’s intended goals to others, supports their participation, and makes the desired change relevant for them.

3. Love to see: Institutionalisation of intended change and ownership in continuing the desired changes. At the individual and group levels, the outcomes demonstrate cultural transformation. At institutional levels, the actions are reflected in strategies, changed systems and policies embedded into rules and regulations.

Some indicators may be linked to a date or deadline (that is, there may be an expectation that they will be reached by a certain point), but this is not obligatory and should not constrain the project’s work.

Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative. The choice between these depends entirely on the project’s information needs. We support the use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators; the widespread debates over which of the two indicator types is better are not an issue for us, as we believe that there are benefits to both.

Examples of Progress Indicators (or Progress Markers) with reference to an organizational development project:

Boundary Partner	Senior Management Group (SMG)
Outcome Challenge	Senior Management group becomes a leading and supportive group for all staff members. The SMG adheres to and exemplifies the core values of the organisation, (particularly transparency, open communications, and respect for staff), ensures that staff are treated fairly and equitably, and that policies are consistently applied.
Expect to see by the SMG:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept appointments with the project team to learn about the project • Attend training courses • Raise questions about the project and their involvement in it • Participate in project meetings • Allow people to dedicate time to project implementation
Like to see by the SMG:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate and learn during the management skills courses • Seek out to receive individual coaching support • Seek out information on issues related to management skills • Read materials provided by the coach • Request position papers from the relevant departments to solicit input into decisions on how to improve the management of the organisation • Produce a document clarifying their purpose, methods of organisation and internal functioning • Identify (their) environmental problems (in relation to the project’s initiative) • Schedule regular meetings to communicate the decisions and rationale of board meetings
Love to see by the SMG:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact frequently with staff to exchange ideas and provide clarity and consistency in the formulation and implementation of policies • Develop and put in place a communication policy guiding how information is shared within the organisation. • Initiate activities/meetings during which staff members can share, learn and cooperate together on aspects of organisational development • Encourage other management staff members, members of the board and main partners to interact with staff in a respectful and transparent way • Produce internal documents and guidelines to clarify decision-making process and other internal issues • Obtain the necessary financial support to implement necessary changes

4. Prepare a Detailed Monitoring Plan

Now you know where you want to go (results), and you also know how to check that you are on the right track towards reaching your destination. The tendency will be to start implementing the project and compiling information. However, we recommend not to jump into implementation and data collection without first having a clear idea of what information you need, for whom, and why. For that purpose you will need a monitoring plan for each project that you will implement.

There are several key questions to consider in order to set up a monitoring plan for your project (comments on the right column are only suggestions of the type of answers that you could give):



Information needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of outcomes by the boundary partner (target group) • Accomplishment of progress indicators
Intended use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow reporting and reflection on progress made by boundary partners and identify lessons learned • Use information on progress of boundary partners to judge effectiveness of support strategies carried out by the project in support of the boundary partner • To allow reflection on how recommendations from previous monitoring have been used • To inform future planning and restructuring/adjusting of work plan
Main users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Managers • Boundary partners • Management team
Who collects the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary partners • NGO support team members
Sources of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinion of participants • Behaviour of participants
How the information will be collected from sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring tool • Customised outcome journals (see below under data compilation) as guiding tools for collecting and organising data • A combination of data collection methods can be used depending on feasibility at the time of monitoring • Personal observations • Focus group discussions • Face-to-face or telephone interviews • Analysis of documents, pictures
When	<p>e.g. Twice per year (2x/yr)</p> <p>Cycle 1: Jan-Jun</p> <p>Cycle 2: July-Dec</p>
Cost of data collection	e.g. 5.000 Euro needed to run the focus groups

How we will learn from the monitoring data and make sure that lessons learned are fed into future planning	Progress monitoring meeting with core project team members to allow reflection on specific outcome journal at the end of each term Lessons learned and follow-up points for the next monitoring period identified during the meetings are captured on flipchart for inclusion in the monitoring report
How the report is used and formatted to be useful	Bi-monthly interim reports Format of the report: maximum 3 pages, summary, main findings, main recommendations..
Who prepares the report	Report is compiled by project core team coordinator, who also distributes the report
Who gets the report	Management team Project support team
How the project will be reviewed	During management meetings

5. Identify Sources of Information

Once the indicators have been identified, it is necessary to identify and agree upon the sources of information that will allow you to assess progress.

Sources of information can be likened to the evidence that a lawyer presents in a courtroom argument:

Lawyer: "My client is innocent."

Judge: "How do you know?"

Lawyer: "Because she was at home when the crime was committed."

Judge: "What evidence do you have?"

Lawyer: "A testimonial from her neighbour and the list of phone calls she made from her land line."

If you now transfer this conversation to the non-profit sector, you would have:

NGO: "My project is successful."

Donor: "How do you know?"

NGO: "Because women now know about their rights and they voted for the first time." (indicator)

Donor: "What evidence do you have?"

NGO: "Interviews with those women and a list of female voters that voted in the previous election and in this election." (source of verification)

There are data collection methods that are more qualitative or more quantitative, more or less participatory, and more or less resource intensive. Each method provides information of varying degrees of accuracy and reliability. Before starting the project monitoring, it is necessary to decide which methods to use and to plan accordingly.

Baseline Data

In order to observe changes resulting from project activities, it is often necessary to establish bench-

marks against which indicators can be judged.

Many baseline studies suffer from information overload and fail to put all the information collected to good use. When deciding whether we need to collect baseline data for a particular performance question, we have to ask ourselves if we need to compare the information to be able to answer the question. If not, or if information already exists, then we do not need to collect such information as baseline data.

One way to make meaningful comparisons in the absence of baseline data is by using control groups. Control groups are groups of people, businesses, families or other constituencies which have not had input from your project or organisation, but are, in most other ways, very similar to the groups with whom you are working.

For example, you have been working with a certain group of parents to encourage them to prioritise the education of their children. You want to know the difference you have made to the quality of the education being received by those children. If you don't have any baseline data on the quality of the children's education prior to the intervention, you could set up control groups. You would organise groups of children in the same geographical areas from families similar to the ones with whom you have been working. By asking both sets of children the same questions about their knowledge, motivation to learn, and other related issues, you may be able to determine the impact of your efforts by comparing the results from the two groups.

When you set up control groups, it is important to ensure that:

- The profiles of the control groups are very similar to those of the groups you have worked with.
- There are no other obvious variables (confounding factors) that could affect the findings or comparisons.

6. Data Collection

There are two data collection methods to consider:

Quantitative data collection methods: These are used to collect data that can be analysed in a numerical form. Quantitative approaches focus on measuring and counting. They focus on questions such as who, what, when, where, how much, how many, and how often. The most common quantitative research tool is the survey. Questions are asked according to a defined questionnaire so that the answers can be analysed numerically.

Qualitative data collection methods: These are designed to generate an in-depth picture among a relatively small sample of people (or institutions) about, for example, how the certain things are perceived or understood. Qualitative research explores the questions 'how' and 'why.' Among the techniques used are interviews, focus groups, participatory observation and other forms of enquiry.

The choice of methods is very broad. Below are some of the most common methods:

Methods	Characteristics	Examples of data collection method
Surveys	Collection of quantifiable data, predominantly through questionnaires or interviews. Usually a random sample and a matched control group are used to measure predetermined indicators before and after an intervention.	A questionnaire can measure participants' satisfaction with an activity. It can also ask what the participants learned and the extent they expect to apply their new knowledge and skills. A disadvantage of such a questionnaire is the tendency of participants to give socially desirable answers. More profound is a survey before and after a cycle of trainings or workshops. If done properly, it can measure the changes in behaviour or knowledge that are caused by the intervention. The questions should be very well formulated to really measure changes that are a result of your intervention.
Semi-structured Interviews	Instead of precisely formulated questions, a checklist of questions related to each topic of interest is used.	Semi-structured interviews can be used, for instance, during needs assessments in community programmes or before a cycle of training sessions or workshops. It is a good method to gain insight into a problem and the way people experience it. When monitoring a cycle of activities, semi-structured interviews can provide insight into participant opinion.
Systematic Observation	Behaviour of individuals or groups is observed using observation checklists.	Behavioural changes can be observed, registered and used to improve the methodology and/or show that an intervention is having an effect. This can be done as an on-the-job capacity building exercise, but observations can also be used to evaluate and observe long-term (unintended) changes in an area where you have been working. When creating an observation check-list, make sure the concepts to be observed are well defined. It is preferable to use two observers so you can control for inter-observer differences.
Focus Group Discussions	A small group of people with knowledge or interest in a particular topic is invited to discuss specific topics in detail. The group can consist of stakeholders with different backgrounds and ages.	Focus group discussions can be very useful during a needs assessment in a community or as a first workshop session in a cycle of workshops.

Storytelling	Information gathering with the help of stories, words, pictures, etc. The stories are used symbolically in order to activate memory of experience and opinion.	Storytelling can, for instance, be used during a needs assessment with groups of stakeholders. It can stimulate people who have difficulties remembering and sharing experiences or opinions to open up.
Case Studies	Detailed studies of an individual or group. In a case study a variety of methods can be applied e.g. Semi-structured interviews, Systematic Observation, Focus Group Discussions, Storytelling, etc.	A case study can be used as a methodology in an effect study. Following a small number of beneficiaries and making their development visible throughout the programme can give insight into the effectiveness of the intervention. The data can be used for learning and accountability.
Informal conversations	Unplanned collection of information, by spontaneous conversations with community members and other stakeholders. This is a useful way to crosscheck information obtained through other methods.	Asking people's opinions in a non-formal way can avoid socially desirable answers. Also, spontaneous comments of involved children, parents and other stakeholders can give insight into the unforeseen effects of the intervention. To collect and process information from informal conversations one can, for instance, make use of a community diary or a logbook present in the office.
'Most Significant Change' technique	A process of collecting significant change stories emanating from the field level, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff.	The Most Significant Change technique is especially valuable when insight into possible effect is limited, for example, in programmes with a fairly new approach. The technique allows participants to give information apart from set indicators. Various groups of stakeholders decide on the most significant changes over a period of time. The selection goes to a next level of people who select the most significant changes of all groups together. This process continues until a manageable amount of stories remains. When the technique is implemented successfully, whole teams begin to focus their attention on the results and effects of the programme.
Multi-media such as SMS and radio	Data collection through new media / technologies	Multi-media can be used to reach stakeholders in remote areas, and once the methodology is well accepted, it allows you to quickly access information, views, feedback and evaluations from your stakeholders.

There is one data collection tool that we find particularly useful: **asking good questions.**

Good questions are key to unlocking good learning. Our ability to ask good questions in an area that interests us can produce high levels of thinking and engagement. The way we ask a question can make a difference to the responses we will get: simply put, good questions are more likely to lead to good answers, while badly formulated questions are more likely to mislead our thinking and discussions. Therefore, careful construction of questions is necessary for questioners, whether they are facilitators or participants. We need to choose questions that suit the purpose of our inquiry.

Some types of questions to think about:

Closed questions are useful when you want specific information that is already known to the person being questioned. A closed question is seeking either a 'yes' or 'no' answer, or more details. For example: "Are you married? How many children do you have?"

Open questions do not invite a specific known answer, but rather open up new information, thinking and discussions. They encourage respondents to engage further. For example: "Can you say more about what happened? How do you cope with the stress? How do you feel about his criticism?"

Closed and open questions also work well together. Here you might be asking for more information or opening up the discussion. For example: “Are you employed?” (closed question) “What do you like about your work? What frustrates you?” (follow-up open question)

What, when, where, who, why, how questions help us to analyse and understand what has occurred or the reasons for it. For example: “When did that occur? Why was it helpful?” However, be careful not to use the question “Why?” inappropriately, e.g. “Why do you think you are struggling to make ends meet?” or “Why is there conflict?” People often feel interrogated and judged by this kind of question.

There are a range of questions that can help people gain greater insight into their own situations, create a vision of a preferred situation in the future, and start planning the change. The following is a list of the type of questions that can facilitate this process. These are only examples; you should devise your own questions that are appropriate to the situation.

Focus questions: What aspects of your community life concern you?

Observation questions: What do you see? What do you hear?

Analysis questions: What do you think about...? What are the reasons for...?

Feeling questions: How do you feel about the situation?

Visioning questions: How would you like it to be?

Change questions: How can the situation change for it to be as you would like?

Questions to explore alternatives: How could you reach that goal? Are there any other ways?

Considering the consequences: How would each of your alternative ideas impact on others?

Considering the obstacles: What keeps you from doing what you intend to do?

Personal involvement and support: What will it take for you to participate in the change?
How can I support you?

Personal action questions: Who do you need to talk to? How can you get others to work on this with you?

6.1 Tools for Data Compilation

After having thought about the methods of data collection, it can be useful to design standard formats for compiling the information so that all members of the project team present the information in a similar format. This will facilitate its analysis.

It will also be necessary to develop a filing system and database for collating and storing information. This may be done in the form of Excel tables or similar tools.

Well-designed, standardised and quality assured data collection procedures and data storage systems for the receipt, storage, retrieval, analysis and dissemination of information will save time later on and make data access more efficient.

Below is a sample of what is called the outcome journal in Outcome Mapping, a tool that helps compile information about the progress you make towards achieving results/outcomes:

OUTCOME JOURNAL⁴ (fill in one journal for each result/outcome challenge)
Period covered by the journal:
Who has been responsible for compiling the information:
Date of the monitoring meeting and participants:
Description of the result/outcome that we want to achieve (only 1 result):
Activities through which we plan to achieve the result:
Activity 1 (add as many activities as needed): What did you do? With whom? When?
Concrete outputs produced through the activities: Number of people who have benefited from the activities, number of products, etc.
How has the activity contributed to attaining the result? What change has the activity brought about? How has the situation changed compared since the activity was conducted?
Source of Evidence: How do you know that the activity has contributed to the result? What is the source of this information?
Lessons learned: What worked as we planned it? What is different that we planned? What has worked well? What has been a problem?
Required Program Follow-up or Changes: Are there any changes that will require donor consent?
Date of Next Monitoring Meeting:

7. Reflection and Analysis

Whether you are looking at monitoring or evaluation, at some point you are going to find yourself with a large amount of information and you will have to decide how to make sense of it. Many projects collect tons of “ore” that contains “golden information” about what works, what does not, and why. Unfortunately, like real gold ore, this data will not do you any good if you don’t refine it to produce concentrated nuggets of actionable information.

Analysis is the process of turning raw, detailed information into a synthesised understanding of patterns and trends that are useful for your project.

Monitoring data should be analysed at specific times throughout the project. To continuously understand what is going on in a project – and to be able to change things in a timely fashion – it is essential to capture and analyse monitoring data as part of routine project work.

It is important that the right people be involved in the analyses and be made aware of its results. As a general rule, analyses should involve members of the project team and, if possible, you should also invite the representatives from your boundary partners/target groups. Input from outside experts or those with other perspectives is valuable during the analysis of monitoring data.

⁴ This is just one suggestion for capturing and organising the monitoring information. The journal can be adapted to your specific needs.

Four distinct processes are involved in making sense of monitoring findings:

- 1. Description and analysis:** Organising raw data into a form that reveals basic patterns.
- 2. Interpretation:** What do the results mean? What's the significance of the findings? Why did the findings turn out this way? What are possible explanations of the results?
- 3. Judgment:** Values are added to analysis and interpretations. What is good or bad, desirable or undesirable, in the outcomes?
- 4. Recommendation:** The final step adds action to analysis, interpretation, and judgment. What should be done? What are the action implications of the findings?

It is important to show how conclusions have been reached. It can be useful to give a selection of direct quotes from interviews, which illustrate important points.

Some questions you might want to explore during your analysis include:

- To what extent do you have sufficient resources (e.g. financial, human, administrative, political) to carry out your project?
- To what extent do you have the physical infrastructure and equipment (e.g. office space, vehicles, computers) you need to do your job?
- To what extent does your project team operate smoothly or are there areas where you could improve how the team functions? (e.g. communications, delegation of responsibilities)

7.1 Documenting and Sharing

Once you have analysed your information, you still need to document your results and communicate them to the people who can use them, as well as to those who care about them such as the communities benefiting from your projects.

Reporting on how a project is going is more complex than we often realise, since there are different actors involved, and each of them needs different information. These are the questions that need to be answered about each actor in order to ensure proper, efficient and satisfactory reporting:

- 1. Who are they?** You first need to identify the persons or groups who will be interested in being informed about the project. This can include the project manager, board, local staff, community members, funders, project partners, headquarters, external partners, etc.
- 2. What do they need to know?** You then identify the type of information that each of them needs. Some stakeholders will need more detailed information than others.
- 3. When and how often do they need to know?** Decide whether it is sufficient to inform them once a month, or once every 6 months, once a week or on a daily basis.
- 4. What format is best?** We tend to focus too much on written information in the form of a report. However, Excel tables, photos or graphics, phone calls or meetings can also be effective communication tools.
- 5. What is possible in terms of data collection and resources available?** You need to keep a balance between the type of information that various stakeholders may wish to receive and what it is realistic for you to collect.
- 6. Who will produce the report?** Someone should be made responsible for compiling the necessary information; otherwise it will not be collected.
- 7. How will feedback be provided?** Whereas it is important to produce information and keep main stakeholders informed about the project, it is also important to set up a proper feedback system. How will those who receive the information give feedback on it? This could take the form of a monthly meeting, a short "report assessment" note or a more established feedback form that needs to be filled in by the person to whom the report is addressed. Lack of an agreed form of feedback creates a lot of frustration on the side of those who produce reports and this, in turn, affects the quality of the reporting.

8. Learning and Reviewing

8.1 Learning

Learning requires an organisation to have a commitment to figuring out how to do its work better and to benefit from its mistakes, rather than hiding them. It is also about systematically documenting the process that a team has gone through and the results which have been achieved.

Learning not only involves dealing with the situation at hand, but also fundamentally changing the way in which the organisation functions, so as to be able to deal with similar situations in the future. It is important to create safe spaces for learning. This can be done, for example, by adding an extra session to project meetings to allow for reflection by various stakeholders on the monitoring data. The outcome journal that we presented in section 6.1 can also be a useful tool for this purpose.

The **Action Learning Cycle**⁵ is a very practical tool that can help you move through the monitoring process. It poses a series of questions which allows you to review your own work, to learn from it and to ensure that the learning is fed into future plans and actions. The beauty of the method is its simplicity and the fact that it can be used not only at the organisational

level, but also within small groups. This means that you can employ it immediately with colleagues working on the same project, without having to wait for it to be integrated throughout the whole organisation.

The Action Learning Cycle is based upon certain key assumptions:

- **Learning comes when we take the time to reflect on what we have done**
- **Learning is increased when we ask, or are asked, questions**

We learn when we receive constructive feedback from others and from the results of our problem-solving efforts

Action Learning is usually illustrated through a four-stage cycle. Below is a list of questions that will guide you through the Action Learning process. Sit down with your close colleagues, choose an action you have recently completed or are currently working on – such as a conference, workshop or any other activity – and proceed through the questions. This process can be enhanced with the involvement of an external facilitator (someone who was not involved in the project).

STAGES:

• **Action** - There is an enormous amount that can be learned from our own actions. Understanding develops naturally from experience and does not necessarily have to involve formal teaching.

Guiding questions: What significant things happened? Describe the event. Who was involved, what did they do? What picture emerges? How did I/we feel?

• **Reflection** - This involves re-examining and thinking back to an event. The experience first has to be made conscious, then evaluated, analysed and understood. Asking thorough and searching questions aids reflection. Conscious reflection is best achieved in discussion with others.

Guiding questions: Why did it happen, what caused it? What helped? What hindered? What did we expect? What assumptions did we make? What really struck us?

• **Learning** - Reflection alone will not necessarily have an impact on how we do things in the future. We need to analyse and evaluate our reflections, draw conclusions and use the learning to improve future actions.

Guiding questions: What would we have done differently? What did we learn? What was confirmed? What new questions have emerged?

• **Planning** - This is the link between past learning and future actions. When we plan, we should draw together all previous experiences and try to predict what needs to be done in order to achieve our goals.

Guiding questions: What does this mean for practice? What do we want to do, to happen? What are we going to do differently? What do we have to let go of or stop doing? How will we not repeat the same mistake?

⁵ See the Barefoot Guide for more information about the action learning cycle

8.2 Reviewing

Finally, you've come to the last step in the integrated monitoring process. Despite all the hard work that you have done, this is not the time to sit back and relax. Instead, you have now come to the most crucial step in the whole process. It is now time to use the results of all your hard work. Unfortunately, all too often it seems that project teams don't make use of all the gold that they have mined and refined.

To make full use of your gold, you have to learn from your results and adapt your project. To do so, you have to go back to your original conceptual model and to the assumptions that you laid out and then tested experimentally. If your experiments turn out exactly as you predicted, then you will have confirmed your assumptions — you can now be a bit more confident about them. Chances are, however, that your experiments will not have turned out exactly as you predict. In this case, you will need to use the information obtained from your monitoring work to modify the actions that you are undertaking.

You will need to make effective decisions about how to move forward, as well as:

- Ensure that all staff, including senior managers and partners, support the required changes, which may include changes to working methods, job descriptions, resource allocation, training, etc.
 - Deal with any resistance to changes within the organisation or project, or even among other stakeholders
- Follow-up meetings to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the recommendations.

It can be difficult to get people to use information to change, however⁶. There is an inertia that often keeps people from modifying their actions.

Some of the reasons for this include:

- People are comfortable with things the way they are. They don't want to be pushed out of their comfort zones.
- People worry that any changes will lessen their levels of productivity. They feel judged by what they do and how much they do, and don't want to take the time necessary to change plans or ways of doing things.
- People don't like to rush into changes. How do we know that something different will be better? Sometimes they spend so long thinking about it, that it is too late for useful changes to be made.
- People don't have the "big picture." They know what they are doing and they can see it is working, so they can't see any reason to change anything at all.
- People don't have a long-term commitment to the project or the organisation. They see it as a stepping stone on their career path. They don't want change because it will delay the items they want to be able to tick off on their curriculum vitae.
- People feel they can't cope — they have to keep doing what they are doing, but also work at bringing about change. It can be too much.

How can you help people accept changes?

- Start with managers at the top: if an organisation is going to adapt and change continuously, then this attitude has to come from the top.
- Make the reasons why change is needed very clear. Take people through the findings and conclusions of the monitoring and evaluation processes; involve them in decision-making.
- Help people see the whole picture - beyond their little bit to the overall impact on the problem analysed.
- Focus on the key issues — we have to do something about this!
- Recognise anger, fear, and resistance. Listen to people, give them the opportunity to express frustration and other emotions.
- Find common ground — things that they also want to see changed.
- Encourage a feeling that change is exciting, that it frees people from doing things that are not working so they can try new things that are likely to work, that it releases productive energy.
- Emphasise the importance of everyone being committed to making it work.
- Create conditions for regular interaction — anything from a seminar to graffiti on a notice board - to discuss what is happening and how it is going.
- Pace change so that people are able to deal with it.

⁶ Read the "Toolkit on overview for planning" by Janet Shapiro, CIVICUS, for the ideas used in this sub-section.

9. Evaluation

Evaluation can be formative (taking place prior to or during the life of a project, with the intention of improving the strategy or approach) or summative (drawing learnings from a completed project or the work of an organisation that is no longer functioning). Both monitoring and evaluation are geared towards learning from what one is doing and how it is being done. Information intended to be used for monitoring purposes has to be gathered on an ongoing or continuous basis, since it is the source that will allow you to take informed decisions about your project while you implement it. While the results of the monitoring activity should be used as feedback into the project on an ongoing basis, the monitoring findings are also useful during more extensive and periodic project evaluations. Monitoring and evaluation is a two-step process and they intervene at different stages. Hence, the information compiled through the monitoring system will serve as a basis for the more in-depth evaluation of the project.

In some cases, such evaluations will also include additional special studies or surveys if the necessary information cannot be derived from the regular monitoring system. Because evaluation occurs less often, it can be more detailed and include data that takes a significant period of time and hence, costs, to collect, which often cannot be covered by the monitoring system.

CONCLUSION

As much as we hope that this manual will help you properly plan, monitor, evaluate and review your projects, we know that you can't just read about it and automatically become an expert.

Proper integrated monitoring as we have described it in this manual is more than just a series of principles and tools. It is also an attitude, a way of perceiving your environment and your work. And, like any attitude, you can't adopt it simply by reading about it, but rather by doing. You may also want to call in an expert to support you, but, more than anything else, you need to practice: to do it, look at and critique your efforts, and then try again.

We hope that this manual supports you in becoming an outstanding "chef" and an advanced practitioner of projects that succeed in making a positive difference to the communities they aim to support.

We envisage these pages as a living document, and invite user feedback in order to continue evolving. We encourage you to send us any suggestions, recommendations, or comments you may have to info@inprogressweb.com.

Evaluation aims at illustrating whether there have been changes in practices and the extent to which the project has contributed to those changes. Because they are conducted once the project has already been running for a certain period of time, evaluations allow the examination of longer-term changes. They look at the broader change achieved by the project, and what processes have contributed to that change. On the other hand, monitoring consists of periodic checking of progress as the project is conducted, against the results given.

An evaluation can be carried out at different times in the life of a project. The timing will depend on the purpose, audience and use of the evaluation.

An evaluation of a project may be needed to:

- Clarify its objectives and assess their relevance
- Assess how effective the work is and what progress it is making towards achieving its objectives
- See how efficient the work is in terms of using resources
- Look at long-term implications – is the work sustainable?
- Assess whether the project is making progress towards achieving its objectives
- Assess the impact on people
- Make recommendations on how the project could be improved
- Before you launch an evaluation it is essential to clarify how the results will be used. If this is not agreed upon by the main users at an early stage, there is a danger that the findings will be ignored and the whole exercise will not meet expectations. The emphasis should always be on learning, and feeding the results back into future policy and practice.

GLOSSARY ⁷

There is an endless debate among NGO practitioners and donors alike as to the relative meaning of technical terms such as goals, objectives, activities, targets, milestones, outputs, and results. Every donor, office, project, and even individual seems to have their own preferred set of terms. There is no right answer – the most important thing is that the members of your project team, and the people with whom you work, have a common understanding of whichever terms you choose to use.

Accountability is the need to justify or explain that the work is realised according to agreed-upon norms or regulations. Upward accountability is often understood as reporting towards the donor, whereas downward accountability implies reporting to community members and other stakeholders involved in a project.

Action Plan – A description of a project’s goals, objectives, and strategies that will be undertaken to abate identified threats and make use of opportunities.

Activity – A specific action or set of tasks undertaken by project staff and/or partners to reach one or more objectives. Sometimes called an action, intervention, response, or strategic action.

Adaptive Management – The incorporation of a formal learning process into action. Specifically, it is the integration of project design, management, and monitoring, to provide a framework to systematically test assumptions, promote learning, and supply timely information for management decisions.

Assumptions are the logical sequences linking project strategies to one or more targets as reflected in a results chain diagram. Other assumptions are related to factors that can positively or negatively affect project performance.

Boundary Partners: Those individuals, groups, or organisations with whom the program interacts directly and with whom the program can anticipate some opportunities for influence.

Effectiveness is to which extent an aid activity attains its objectives. In terms of the logical framework this relates to whether the results of the project have contributed to achieving the purpose.

Efficiency measures the human and financial costs of achieving a particular result.

Evaluation: A process by which a strategy, issue, or relationship is studied and assessed in depth.

Goal – A formal statement detailing a desired impact of a project, such as the desired future status of a target.

Impact- Long-term, sustainable changes in the conditions of people and the state of the environment that structurally reduce poverty, improve human well-being and protect and conserve natural resources. An organisation can only contribute partially and indirectly to these enduring results in society or in the environment.

Indicators are criteria or measures against which changes can be assessed. They help us understand whether we are moving in the right direction towards the results that we set ourselves to achieve. Indicators do not have any objective validity in themselves but only give a sign, symptom or suggestion of something else.

Inputs: What we provide in terms of resources in order to implement activities.

⁷ The definitions for the terms deriving from Outcome Mapping originate from the IDRC manual

Logical Framework – Often abbreviated as logframe. A matrix that results from a logical framework analysis that is used to display a project’s goals, objectives, and indicators in tabular form, showing the logic of the project.

Mission: An ideal description of how the programme intends to support the achievement of the vision. It states with whom the programme will work and the areas in which it will work, but does not list all the activities in which the programme will engage.

Monitoring Plan – The plan for monitoring your project. It includes information needs, indicators, and methods, spatial scale and locations, timeframe, and roles and responsibilities for collecting data.

Monitoring System - A system for collecting and utilising information on the progress of a project with the goal of improving it.

Objective – A formal statement detailing a desired outcome of a project, such as reducing a critical threat.

Outcome /results: The observable positive or negative changes in the actions of social actors that have been influenced, directly or indirectly, partially or totally, by outputs. This is what an individual, group or organisation does differently as a result of an intervention.

Outcome challenge: Description of the ideal changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, and/or actions of a boundary partner. It is the program’s challenge to help bring about the changes.

Outputs: The processes, products, goods and services that the project produces through the activities it conducts. For example: workshops, training manuals, research and assessment reports, and strategies

Planning: a process that clarifies the intentions and purpose of organisations and links them to its actions.

a) Strategic Planning begins with working from Organisational Identity and Understanding Context from which Purpose stems, out of which Strategy and Approaches are created. Strategic Planning is influenced by learning from the preceding Evaluation.

b) Operational Planning works from Strategy and Approaches and produces plans for programme activities and developing required capacities. Operational planning is influenced by learning from ongoing monitoring, enabling regular replanning and improvement of work.

Program – A group of projects which together aim to achieve a common broad vision. In the interest of simplicity, this manual uses the term “project” to represent both projects and programs since these standards of practice are designed to apply equally well to both.

Progress Markers: A set of graduated indicators of changed behaviours for a boundary partner that focus on the depth or quality of change.

Project – A set of actions undertaken by a defined group of practitioners – including managers, researchers, community members, or other stakeholders – to achieve defined goals and objectives. Relevance is to which extent an aid activity correctly addresses identified problems and needs of the target groups.

Result – The desired future state of a target or factor.

Results Chain – A graphical depiction of a project’s core assumption, the logical sequence linking project strategies to one or more targets.

Sources of verification are documents and methods that provide information about indicators and are used to monitor and evaluate progress of activities, results, purpose, and overall objectives. Common methods that can be used for data collection are, for example, Surveys, Interviews, Observation, Focus Group Discussions and Case Studies.

Stakeholder – Any individual, group, or institution that has a vested interest in the natural resources of the project area and/or that potentially will be affected by project activities and have something to gain or lose if conditions change or stay the same. Stakeholders are all those who need to be considered in achieving project goals and whose participation and support are crucial to its success.

Strategy – A group of actions with a common focus that work together to reduce threats, capitalize on opportunities, or restore natural systems. Strategies include one or more activities and are designed to achieve specific objectives and goals.

Vision – A description of the desired state or ultimate condition that a project is working to achieve. A complete vision can include a description of the biodiversity of the site and/or a map of the project area as well as a summary vision statement.

Vision: A description of the large-scale development changes (economic, political, social, or environmental) to which the programme hopes to contribute.



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We provide Monitoring and Evaluation, and Project management courses that are based on the methodology reflected in this manual. We also support organisations with the design and implementation of their own monitoring systems, and we conduct participatory external evaluations.

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