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Module 2: Introduction to the Designing and Implementing M&E Systems Course

Session 1: Step One: Defining Results and Results Based Management and Results Frameworks (Part 1)

Welcome to Part one of Module 2 – Results Based Management and Results Frameworks. In this session we will review the first step in establishing a monitoring and evaluation system - What Does Change Look Like and Defining Results

At the end of this session it is expected that you will:

- Have a greater understanding about results based management (or RBM)
- Understand the cause and effect relationship between results

Before we begin, It is important to remember that while results based management (or RBM) is a common management approach, different users may use different terminologies.

In this course we will be using the terms:

- Results Framework to refer to the visual depictions of the relationship between activities, outputs and outcomes. Others may refer to this as a Logic Model.
- M&E Plan to refer to an eight column matrix which outlines the results, performance indicators, baseline, targets, sources of information, methods for collection, frequency and responsibility. Others may refer to this as a Performance Measurement Framework

Let's start by reviewing the definition of a result. A result is a change which can be described and measured. It is influenced directly or indirectly by our programme interventions and/or other external factors

There are various levels of results:

- Goal
- Higher Level Outcomes
- Lower Level Outcomes
- Outputs



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Remember other donors and stakeholders may use different terminologies like intermediate outcome or medium term outcome to mean the same thing as higher level outcomes. What is important to remember is that regardless of the terminology, there is still a cause and effect relationship that occurs.

These are linked together by a results chain. The results chain is a cause and effect relationship between activities, outputs and outcomes.

Let's look at the results chain in more detail and how they link together.

- Prior to the results coming together, financial, human and material inputs are required. These inputs feed directly into activities. Inputs are not part of the results framework, but are shown here to demonstrate how they contribute to activities.
- Activities are the actions taken to produce outputs. Activities are 'what' interventions will take place. It is important to remember these are not results.
- Outputs are the direct products or services stemming from a bundle or group of activities. In some cases however, depending on the donor, outputs are simply a completed activity and do not represent any change. It is also important to remember that outputs are tangible and therefore they can be budgeted for.
- Outcomes, both Higher and Lower Level, are changes that occur once outputs are achieved. They are often described as sustainable changes in behaviour, practices or state of individuals, entities, or systems. These results can either be short term or medium term.
- Finally, the goal is defined as a change that occurs as a consequence of achieved outcomes. It is often described as a sustainable change of state, individuals, entities, systems and happens in the long term.

Let's take a look at an example of a results chain from a water and sanitation project.

In this results chain (or result stream) we can see that the outputs lead directly to the outcome of increased availability and use of safe water. This in turn, leads to the expected change of reduced incidence of water borne diseases. And, which can contribute to improving the health status.

It is important to remember that logic is not always linear – from one set of outputs to one outcome.

In fact, more than one outcome can contribute to another outcome at a higher level. In this example we can see that two lower outcomes can potentially contribute to one higher outcome. However, in developing a results framework, we generally consider each results stream individually. The combination of these results streams together contribute to achieving the goal.

While this may be one disadvantage of RBM, using the results framework is still a useful way to visually depict logic.



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Any project or programme you design must be logical in terms of the results you aim to achieve

A useful way to ensure that the progression from activities to goal are logical is to test it by using “If and Then” for each results stream. This allows you to see if the basic assumptions of your results chain holds true.

For example, if the outputs are accomplished, THEN, the lower level outcomes should be achieved. And, IF, the lower level outcomes are achieved, THEN, it is expected that the higher level outcomes will be achieved and so forth.

In the results chain, the programme’s ability to control or influence the high level outcomes is lower than its ability to influence lower level outcomes.

Generally speaking, the higher up the results chain you go, the less influence you have and the more time it takes for the expected result to be achieved.

This brings us to the end of Session 1 on Results Based Management. In the next session we will explore how to define our results and develop clear result statements.



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Session 2: Step One: Defining Results and Results Based Management and Results Frameworks (Part 2)

Welcome back. In the last session we looked at the cause and effect of results and how these fit together. We are going to continue with defining and developing result statements.

When developing result statements, these must be SMART. This means:

S – the results statement must be specific in terms of what is expected to change. Who will it benefit? Where will the expected change take place?

M – the result must be measurable. This means that information on the expected change can be collected to demonstrate the change.

A – the results must be achievable. Is it within the scope of the programme? Will it be achieved within the time frame and with the available resources?

R – the results must be relevant. It must reflect the needs and priorities among the target community. Is it possible to contribute to the change occurring?

T – the result is time bound. This means considering the time frame as well as being able to track the change over time.

Result statements are generally written using a 'directional verb' in the past tense. These directions can either be positive or negative. For example something has 'increased' or been 'enhanced' versus something that has 'decreased' or 'reduced'.

Examples of these include:

- Increased Food Security of Targeted households in Country X
- Strengthened Institutional and Managerial Capacity of Organization X
- Reduced Child Mortality in Region X

It is important to remember that each statement should include the following:

- WHAT change do you want to see? For example, Enhanced Economic Empowerment
- For WHOM is the change intended? For example, enhanced economic empowerment for targeted households, especially female headed households



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- WHERE is this change expected to happen? For example, enhanced economic empowerment for the targeted households in a specific region.

“When” is not typically included in a result statement, particularly for higher level outcomes. In some cases, lower level results or even outputs can include a time period, particularly in cases where an intervention is a pilot or temporary.

Finally, when writing result statements we must be clear of the change we want to see. Terms such as ‘support’, ‘enabling environment’, ‘strengthening’, ‘and economic empowerment’ etc. should be clearly defined. This is referred to as operationalizing the result – defining specifically what is meant by the change.

Using our same example of Enhanced economic empowerment of targeted households, especially women in Region X, operationalizing this might mean:

- Household wealth status such as income, savings, level of debt, and asset ownership
- Decision making in the household
- Food security* and coping strategies. As you can see even Food security will need further defining.

In Summary:

A Results Framework is a visual depiction of your strategy and the logic of the changes you expect to see. Results are linked together in a results chain.

There are various terminologies used for results language by various donors. The key is to ensure consistency of terminology and definition.

Results rarely occur in a simple linear fashion with one following the other in a simple “if-then” pattern. Instead results are often interconnected and sometimes sidestep the linearity of the results chain.

Results should be as S.M.A.R.T as possible so that there is no confusion in what change is expected. Where there is any ambiguity, ensure that the result statement is defined in a footnote or corresponding document.

The programme’s ability to control or influence the high level outcomes is lower than its ability to influence lower level outcomes.

Congratulations. You have completed Module 2 on Results Based Management and Results Frameworks.



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For further information and additional resources on results based management, click on on the resources section for this session.

For this module, a self-directed exercise is also available in the [exercises] section for this section. We encourage you to take some time to go through this exercise to apply some of your new knowledge.