Monitoring and Evaluation Guidebook

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GLOCAL
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

A Guide to Strategic Thinking through Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

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Preface

At Glocal (MA in International Development at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem), we aim to support a new generation of development practitioners. We are lucky to regularly engage with individuals who wish to see a better reality around them. It is a privilege to explore together with them the theoretical knowledge along with the practical tools and skills to strengthen communities around the world.

This guide was born after almost a decade of exchange, teaching and learning on the topic of planning and assessing community development at the Glocal Program. Dr. Nancy Strichman, an expert in strategic planning and evaluation for social change, and author of the blog: "Spotlight on Civil Society" in The Times of Israel, offers us a meaningful framework to approach project design, monitoring and evaluation.

And through our longstanding partnership with the co-founders of Amal-Tikva, Meredith Mishkin Rothbart and Basheer Abu Baker, this guide is being used both by the students in our classrooms and by practitioners in the field. Our ongoing collaboration has led to a companion workbook on the topic of peacebuilding, with detailed worksheets available in English, Hebrew and Arabic along with real-life case studies and examples. All of these rich resources can be found at www.amal-tikva.org/resources . We want to thank Meredith (a Glocal alumna!) along with her team at Amal-Tikva for bringing these tools to the field and ensuring that we are continually bridging theory with practice.

Thank you, Nancy, for your leadership, dedication, creativity, and attentiveness. We also want to extend our greatest appreciation to Oso Bayo for her engaging graphic design and to Dr. Ruba Simaan for her expertise in translating both the languages and concepts into Hebrew and Arabic. And again to the team at Amal-Tikva, we are grateful for the ongoing partnership and opportunity to continue building tools that can be practically applied in the field.

We wish you great enjoyment in reading this guide and hope you will have many opportunities to turn the lessons learnt here into practice. It is the students in our classrooms and countless practitioners out there who continue to keep us inspired and working toward positive social change.

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Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel   October 2022

Introduction

Let's start with considering what makes a good conversationalist. Do we carefully listen with an open mind? Do we take time to build rapport and ask questions that signal interest? Or do we tend to rush through conversations, perhaps jumping in too soon with our opinions or continually checking our phones?

If we stop and think about it, there are certain skills that we can cultivate to make us better listeners. We can learn how to be more attentive and invite dialogue.

And in a sense, a good conversation is like a listening feedback loop - with each participant checking in with the other, staying in sync, listening with purpose.

Essentially, this guide offers an approach to help civil society actors and nonprofit practitioners create a listening feedback loop as part of their efforts to promote social good.[1]

Starting the conversation

We have all seen firsthand the spirit and passion required to take on some of the biggest social challenges of our time - everything from poverty alleviation to women's empowerment, peacebuilding, youth development, environmental sustainability and more. Such ambitious efforts require energy and boundless commitment from so many individuals in the field.

What we are proposing in this guide is a way to ensure that we have an ongoing conversation with those around us. We believe that strategic conversations held on a regular basis with the support of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can advance our many varied efforts to make the world a better place.[2]

As we see it, being a good listener is more a mindset than just a checklist of do's and don'ts. You can train yourself to look and listen – to slow down and get some help in making sense of things. We will be exploring in this guide how to approach strategic planning and M&E in a way that enables you to listen more intently.

Throughout this guide, you will frequently see an icon for ways to **start the conversation.** Each time this appears, we will list a variety of questions that you and your team can consider at each stage of your work related to strategic thinking and M&E. This offers you an opportunity to examine the variety of practices, patterns and behaviors that together inform and shape your efforts.

Facilitating strategic conversations and employing the practice of M&E can strengthen your work in the field at any stage of implementation, helping to ensure that your efforts are relevant, responsive and in sync with your community.[3]

Making the case for M&E

In the following pages we present a series of tools and templates in support of efforts to continually engage in conversation with your community.

We see so many creative and innovative initiatives to address vast societal needs. Yet with all of the surprises that life keeps throwing at us, we have to find a way to continually stay apace with both expected and unexpected change.

Each time we implement a new project, even if it is designed well, we will always want to monitor how it is working in practice. We have to take it as a given that we will always be learning as we go, and that there are unanticipated problems and circumstances that we will not be able to predict.

After all, we already know that we are unable to learn very much from our conversations if we never take a breath from talking to actually listen to what people are saying. We also know that if we make assumptions even before the start of the conversation - thinking we already know everything about the people we are talking to - it limits our ability to connect and to gain new insights.

We can think about how to systematically build conversations into how we do our work, aware that we always need to be open to what gets discovered along the way.

Throughout this guide we will be exploring ways to continually elicit feedback, refine our efforts and strengthen our capacity to respond. You will often see an icon for a **toolkit**. Each time, suggestions for ways to connect to your stakeholders and target communities will be presented.[4] In reviewing the toolkit, we will be building a shared language and skillset on the topics related to strategic planning and M&E.

We suggest structured processes and tools that can help your organization stay curious and open to possibilities as you continually adapt your work. Organizations develop these skills the same way people do, and it takes awareness, focus and experience.[5] Always make yourself available to listen.

Asking questions along the way

With so many great social causes to champion, we need all of the spirit, commitment and optimism that so many talented individuals who we have met bring to their work. And what else? We also need to ask big questions as we go.

These big questions guide the work. Each time that we make an investment of time, energy and resources, we want to see what is feasible. Asking questions encourages us to be aware of obstacles in our path and helps push us to adjust our efforts as needed, nudging us to continually adapt to changing realities.[6]

Asking questions is crucial in keeping us from becoming too complacent. And we will be asking many questions! For example: What is the extent of the problem we are seeking to address? Are we up to the challenge? What are the next steps down the road and how will we measure progress along the way?

Why ask so many questions? Well, strategy is about making complex decisions under great uncertainty with long-term consequences.[7] Asking strategic questions can help us understand the big picture, assess risk, challenge assumptions and define success.

With so many questions, we will definitely need coffee here! And you will see the coffee icon signaling a **coffee break** throughout. You can take this opportunity to reflect, consider a different angle, maybe approach a question differently. During the coffee breaks you may want to hold up your plans to the light, play out various scenarios or reimagine possibilities.

Our goal throughout this guide is to try to take lots of tools – many of which may seem a bit too technical at first– and see if we can breathe some life into them. We want to make them work for your organization in a way that only adds to all the heart and soul that you have already brought to your work.

Our hope is that if you are able to do this, you can increase the likelihood of bringing these ideas to your own community. When that happens, the prospect of involving more individuals in championing your important social causes increases.

Shifting expectations – for ourselves, for the field

While we firmly believe in the potential for strategic thinking and M&E efforts to strengthen your own work and engagement with your community, we would be remiss if we did not address the broader, and often challenging context in which this takes place.

In the past two decades, we have seen a multitude of factors that shape expectations regarding the measurement of social impact - everything from the social entrepreneurship movement to advances in technology.[8]

For example, now, within minutes, we can learn from the experiences of like-minded programs, access data collections tools and study research on best practices in our field. And with social media and other tools, we can more easily find ways to stay in touch with funders, board members and supporters all over the world. We see more creativity than ever in terms of the possibilities.[9]

At the same time, it is very easy to become overwhelmed by too much information, too much communication, and an expectation that we are always

available. Organizations have to juggle such diverse stakeholder pressures, while also getting the critical work done. It's a formidable balancing act! And, needless to say, this includes the expectations by stakeholders to prove social impact.

As we know, the funding community has greatly influenced expectations regarding M&E over the years.[10] Nonprofits are now expected to have reliable data about their programs. Yet, while we see that great energy, talent and commitment is being brought to bear, we also see that too many organizations lack the expertise to carry out the M&E process and tend not to be supported financially to expand their capacities in measuring results.

And there is more… Taking on complex social topics, organizations are pressured to show impact quickly and are often held to unrealistically high standards.[11] To add to this, many innovative nonprofits that do important work are already operating in constant survival mode.[12]

Yet the need is still there. Funders often lack access to M&E data on which to make informed decisions, and many organizations are not using rigorous data for strategic decision-making.[13] One of the many challenges to consider then is how to make sure that reporting requirements contribute to organizational processes that are meaningful for the work.[14]

Thankfully, more and more conversations on this topic are taking place in an effort to strengthen the field as a whole, building more partnerships and encouraging more openness regarding these challenges.[15]

Our goal with this guide is to enable you to lead in these conversations. It is essential for you to take ownership over this process, determine what you are holding yourself accountable for and what you expect others to hold you accountable for.

As part of our encouragement for you to take a leading role in this process, you will see **tips** offered throughout the guide. Our hope is that the tips can help encourage you to reflect on the principles of strategic thinking and M&E – as you build greater community engagement, enhance your outreach and broaden the conversation you are having.

Who is this guide for?

In designing your own process of M&E and use of strategic conversations – we should all keep in mind that each organization will have to adapt to what fits its own context.

Context matters. A lot. Expectations will be different depending on various factors, such as how long you have been operating, and if your strategic focus emphasizes advocacy, provision of social services, community development efforts or any other type of intervention. Whatever the context, we hope to present fundamental principles that can apply to each type of initiative you are engaged with.[16]

For ease of use, we will be referring to 'your organization'. We wish to emphasize, however, that we are speaking to anyone who may find these practices relevant.

No matter if you are part of a nonprofit, a social initiative, community effort, or consider yourself working in the social sector in the field of social entrepreneurship or civil society, these principles apply. Likewise, whether you may refer to yourself as an activist, social entrepreneur, nonprofit practitioner, an innovator or anything else, we are speaking to you!

To sum up, what are a few key principles for us?

We want to note some major ideas underlying our work, and make sure that we give you a sense of our thoughts throughout the guide.

Practical M&E that fits your context and helps sharpen your strategic thinking.

Use is a big thing here. Throughout the guide we want to continually emphasize that you can adapt and adjust any of the tools in order to better help you shape your own efforts.

Engaging with your team, your supporters and your target community in a participatory way.

We will be offering opportunities to consider your ongoing conversations with the individuals who matter most to enhancing your impact. We hope to provide ongoing suggestions to signal this respect, better equipping you in efforts to empower people to act, to influence and to ultimately become champions of your work in its implementation and its ultimate success.

Cultural sensitivity that should be appreciated each step of the way.

In the work that you do, a keen cultural sensitivity is of paramount importance. All throughout the strategic planning and in the M&E process, such awareness is essential- from project design to implementation and feedback. Our hope is to present a toolkit that can be adapted as needed.

An overview of this guide…

As you can see below, there are three parts to this guide with each part highlighting the cycle of strategic planning and M&E process.

We will make every effort to simplify things as much as possible and make these tools accessible and user-friendly. And since we are in our own learning feedback loop as well, make sure that you let us know what you think. We look forward to getting your feedback!

Part One: Setting the Stage for Strategic Design and M&E

Chapter 1:
Setting Strategy
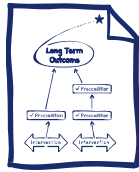
Chapter 2:
Facilitating a
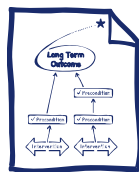Theory of Change

Chapter 3:
Moving from Strategic
Planning to M&E

Part Two: Building a template for M&E

Chapter 4:
Creating a
M&E Plan

Chapter 5:
Refining
Project
Design for
M&E

Chapter 6:
Setting
Indicators
for M&E

Chapter 7:
Developing
a Data
Collection
Plan

Chapter 8:
Analyzing
Data and
Pinpointing
Key Findings

Part Three: Using M&E in Strategic Development

Chapter 9:
Moving from M&E
back to Strategic Action

Chapter 10:
Communicating and Sharing
your Organizational Story

Chapter 1: Setting Strategy

So, here we are - starting to figure out what we need to do in order to begin a M&E process. In a sense, we are learning a new language and a new way of thinking.

We are presenting here both a tool kit and dictionary of terms. What matters most though, all the jargon and templates aside, is how you assess your strategies, learn from experience and continually improve on efforts to make a positive impact on your community.

Getting started

In this chapter we will begin by exploring tools for articulating your strategies. This is so important even though it is so much more tempting just to jump into the work. And there is always so much to do!

But as you will see, often it will be very helpful to take a break, think carefully about the problems you are trying to solve and reflect on the change that your organization wishes to make.

Perhaps you feel confident that you can clearly articulate how your organization works to create change and how you know whether your approach is successful. Yet, what is essential is to make sure that every member of your team, as well as your partners and supporters, also shares this same understanding.

Starting the conversation...

Do an early check- in with a few stakeholders (i.e. staff, volunteers, funders, members of your target population, community partners). You can ask questions such as:[17]

- What changes do we hope to see? What are we trying to accomplish?
- How would we describe the work of our organization? What do we do?
- How can we be sure if we are making progress toward our goals?

Essentially, we want to make sure that you and your team of supporters can easily fill in the blanks here:[18]

Our organization hopes to achieve _____.

So our organization does _____.

And these efforts are resulting in _____.

We can measure if these efforts are leading to desired results because of _____.

What we are getting at here is your ability to outline what is the change that you hope to see over time and how this is linked to your day to day efforts. You also want to be able to articulate how you can track your progress toward achieving these desired results.

All of this together helps you to learn from experience, sharpen your organizational strategies and share your organizational story. For now, it is about spelling out your strategy and carefully outlining how all of the work that your team does on a daily basis will lead to your planned result. With this goal in mind, we will start by introducing the strategic planning tool – theory of change.

Introducing a theory of change

So here we will be discussing a key term to help guide you in these efforts- *theory of change*. Essentially you will be outlining the theory that underlies your work, the change you seek to achieve.[19] It is a strategic planning tool that helps you clarify how you intend to create and measure change.

It is just like when you hear a good story, you want to know about the *who, what, when, where, how* and *why*. A theory of change, in essence, is a visual representation of the answers to these questions and more.

We do want to emphasize that a theory of change, widely used for decades in the field of community development, is flexible. It comes in all shapes and sizes. What is important though, is that it illustrates your organization's desired trajectory for change in a visual way, such as in a diagram or chart.[21]

So while the visuals vary, what matters is the idea of using a single, simple methodology to clarify your strategy.

By making this visible, the process of outlining theory of change can help guide you in making educated decisions, sharpening the focus of your programs, communicating your approach more clearly, and tracking the progress of your work.[22]

And, don't forget, as your work evolves, so should your theory of change. It can illustrate any stage of the planning and implementation process and be updated as needed to reflect any adaptations to ever-changing circumstances.

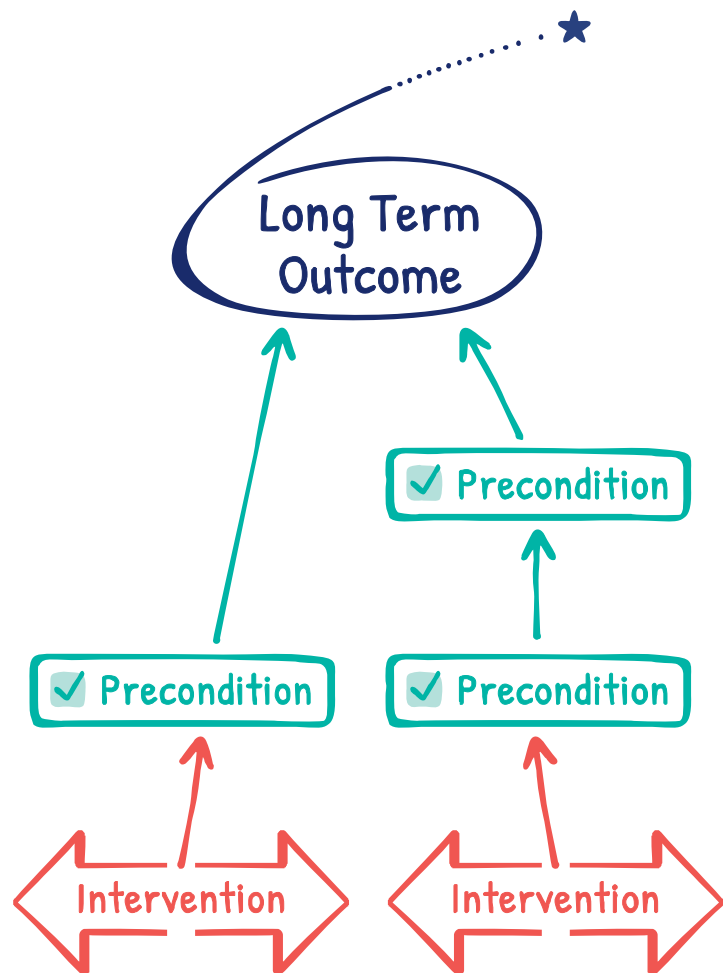## Beginning with a simple pathway of change

A *pathway of change* diagram is one of the most recognizable components of a theory of change process.[23] You can initially start the process by considering this one aspect of your theory of change.

How do you begin? You want to first describe the long-term outcomes your organization seeks to achieve. Then you will want to set the intermediary outcomes that should be considered as the preconditions for reaching your desired long-term impact.[24] Lastly, you will want to link your activities (referred to here as interventions) to the intermediary outcomes you wish to produce.

By articulating this, you are able to build a shared understanding that links your work to the desired change you seek to effect.

To put it simply, you can consider how you complete the sentence- "if we do X, then Y will change because…"[25]

Slowly, slowly, this will all begin to make sense, with each of the pieces gradually fitting together.

Outlining the building blocks that make up your theory of change

Once you have considered a simple pathway of change, you can begin to detail each of the various elements along the way. It helps us to visualize and better explain our trajectory, with all the messiness and surprises that will come our way.

Facilitating a discussion around this will help your organization think not only about the *who, what, when, where,* but also about *how* and *why* you think change happens.[26]

As we review the building blocks, keep in mind that there are many terms associated with the theory of change, including some concepts that have more than one name. A theory of change usually includes the following components:[27]

Long-term outcomes are linked to your organization's mission (more about this soon!). As the name suggests, they are broader changes or impacts that your organization expects to see over time.

Preconditions, also known as intermediate outcomes, describe the necessary stepping stones to have in place in order to bring about a desired impact.

Interventions/ Activities are what your organization does - the service, product, or type of intervention - in order to advance specific outcomes.

Indicators, help measure whether change has taken place. (We will have a whole section later just on this topic).

Assumptions explain your reasoning as to why planned activities should lead to desired outcomes.

A pathway of change, as we addressed briefly above, helps to illustrate how each component builds on the other. This diagram showing the connections is also referred to as an *outcomes map* or *theory of change diagram.*[28]
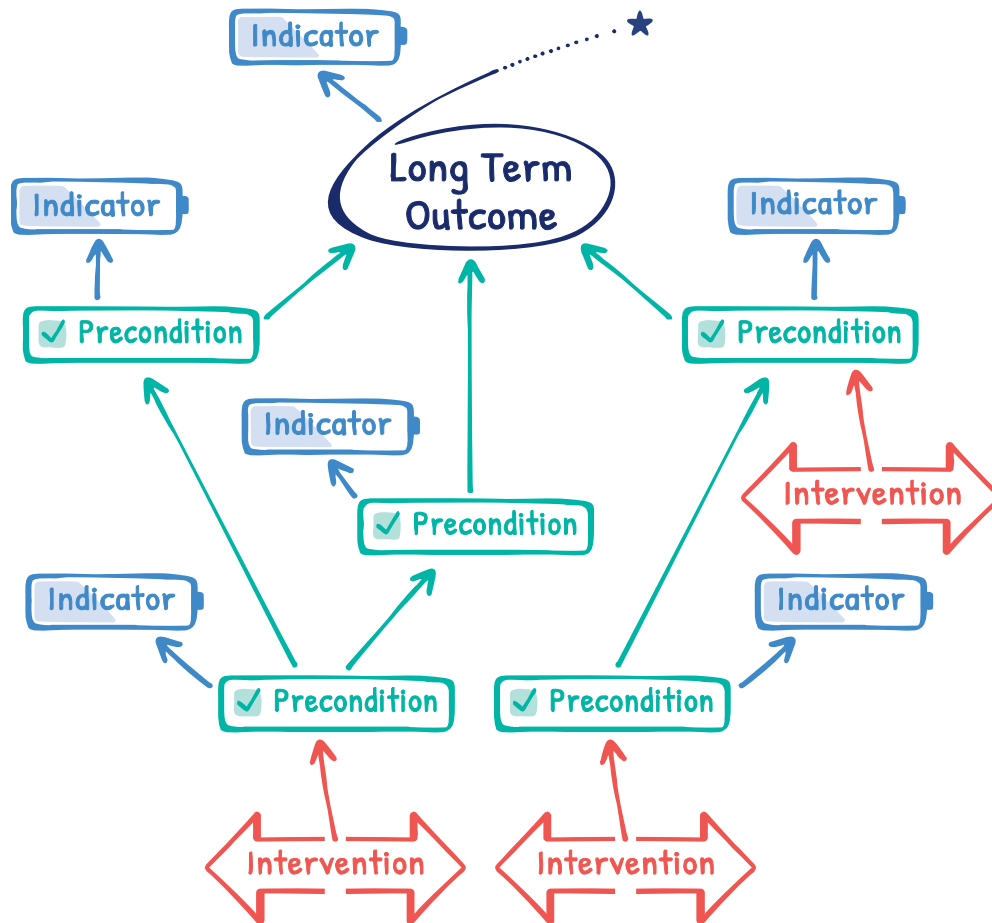
Of course, we should note that there are a variety of options in a strategic planning process that are similar to a theory of change, including the use of the logical framework that we will address more in Chapter 5.

Whichever tool you may use, they all generally have the same purpose – to help you think critically about the causal links between your efforts and the anticipated result.

As you begin to consider what this could look like for your work, you will want to consider how your theory of change relates to everything else that you do.

So let's take a quick break from the theory of change and review some of the basic tools often used in strategic planning. These are tools that help guide you in efforts to clearly articulate your organizational identity and DNA- which is grounded in your core values and history.[29]

This is an essential piece of any process because as we begin to advance conversations about strategy, learning and evaluation, it will be important to be in sync with any other designs or work plans.

And the added value here? Strategic discussions will help you create a shared language and build consensus on how to approach your work. The cheerleaders of your efforts will be better equipped to promote your organizational story and get more individuals on board with your mission.

Let's briefly review strategic planning tools such as your problem statement, your vision statement and your mission statement…

As with any tools introduced in this guide, you will want to consider where your organization is in terms of its readiness to carry out a strategic and organizational process such as M&E.

Where you are depends on lots of things. Just for starters, you can consider your previous experience with strategic planning, organizational capacities, openness to learning, and engagement with key stakeholders in your community.[30]

Tip: Engage your stakeholders!

Staying connected to your community can only strengthen your efforts. Doing so will help you keep in mind the big picture, including issues related to the broader context in which you operate.

As you explore your organizational strategy, make sure to create various opportunities to hear from different individuals who are informed about the kind of work that you do. Those with a *stake* in your efforts include everyone from community activists, local leaders, and researchers to governmental officials, private sector representatives and funders.[31]

As you explore these opportunities for strategic conversations, you will want to consider both the content - the *what*, as well as the process-the *how*. *How* are you engaging and building a community of support around your work? It will be an ongoing question not only in this early phase of strategy development, but also at a later stage when you begin to examine options for instituting a M&E process at your organization.

For now, we can do a quick review of some of the strategic planning items that are part of your toolbox.

What is the problem that you hope to solve?

In designing programs or implementing strategies, it is always essential to understand what the problem is that your organization is taking on and the complexities involved. This initial step in a strategic planning process helps to ensure that you engage in more systematic thinking, and do not jump to conclusions or offer solutions before gaining a thorough understanding of the problem[32]

Problem Tree Analysis
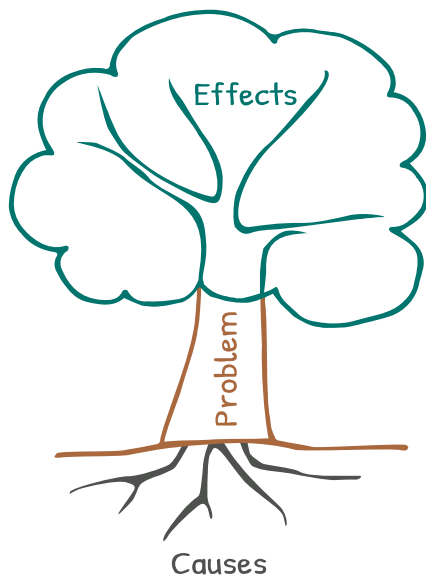
This process of clarifying the problem is often called a situational analysis or a problem analysis.[33] It helps to better focus your work. And there are a variety of tools to help you do this including problem tree analysis[34] and force field analysis.[35]

Essentially, you want to make sure that you are properly defining the problem, situating it in the broader context and addressing the most critical challenge versus lower priority issues.

Following the logic of a problem tree analysis, you address the root of the problem instead of one of the symptoms. This process will help you map out the causes (i.e. tree roots), as distinguished from the effects (i.e. tree branches) of the problem.

Questions to consider when developing a problem statement include:[36]

- What are the economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions to this problem? What are the opportunities as well as the obstacles in the way?

- What does the research or social science evidence tell us about this issue?

- What are the relevant experiences of our target community?

- What information can we learn from others engaged in this field? How likely are they to support or oppose our efforts?

- Are our existing assumptions reasonable?

Once you have identified the key problem, you will also want to carefully reflect on who is affected by this problem. Any initiative carried out to address the issue should of course engage the target population. As such, your problem statement should reflect both the needs and the interests of those your organization wishes to serve.

Okay, let's get to those vision and mission statements...

So, in addition to a problem statement, organizations are usually equipped with both a vision and a mission statement that are reflective of their core values. We will briefly review this topic here, and make sure that we can link both the vision and mission statements to our theory of change and eventually to any M&E effort later on.

Essentially, you are asking the question of what is your vision for the future – what is the change you want to see. To write a vision statement, imagine that your organization has accomplished what it set out to do. In short, if your organization was able to meet all its goals, what would the world look like?[37]

Answering these types of questions helps to build an understanding and shared consensus on the exact nature of change you want to create in your community and society at large.[40]

Keep it inspirational! This is your time to dream big, be bold, go beyond the present reality and think of what might be possible.

Creating a vision statement helps to ensure that everyone involved in your work - staff, board members, donors, program participants, volunteers and other supporters - are working toward the same shared belief about what is possible.

And remind me again about a mission statement?

So while a vision statement articulates the kind of future you want to create, a mission statement focuses on what your organization will do every day to work towards that vision.

A mission statement should give brief insight into the specifics of why you do what you do. By outlining the fundamental reasons and rationale, it serves as an important guide in developing your organization's strategic approach.[42]

Tip: Make sure that you bring the dynamic energy of your work to your strategic planning tools.

As we know, your problem, vision and mission statements provide clarity to both your external and internal stakeholders. For your tools to be relevant and of use, they need to be up-to-date and reflect the ongoing changes in your work.

In particular, a sharply focused mission statement will be especially important in helping you determine what to do as well as what *not* to do.[43] A well-articulated, compelling mission statement enables your organization to think more strategically, prioritize your work, and engage only in those activities that further your goals. Still, we don't want to forget that nothing stays quite the same for long!

Your mission statement communicates to the outside world the kind of specific contribution that your organization is seeking to make and what sets you apart from other like-minded organizations. Essentially, it describes why there is a need for what you do and why people are committed to your organization.[44]

Starting the conversation....

Your mission statement, in short, should answer the question, "What good, for whom?"[45]
Ask yourselves:[46]

- Who are we? What is the purpose of our organization? What distinguishes us as an organization. What defines our public value?

- What are the assumptions that form the basis for our work? What are the methods we use to accomplish our purpose?

And then, reflecting a bit, ask yourselves:

- What does our mission statement say about who we are and what makes us unique?

A mission statement should be concrete, compelling and simple enough to be easily cited. If sharply focused and clear, your mission statement will help inspire stakeholder engagement and guide your decision-making process. You want it to be used in a way that makes it 'live and breathe' for your organization.

The balance here is important in how you articulate your mission statement. You will not want your mission statement to define your efforts too narrowly as that may be limiting. Yet, at the same time, you will want to make sure that your mission statement is not too broad or vague. Otherwise this can lead to confusion or conflict when you are formulating strategies.[47]

After all, you will want to be able to point to a planned set of actions that are designed to achieve your mission. Your mission statement should help direct you towards the programs and activities that serve your purpose, and away from those that do not.

Let's get values in here too. You don't want to forget them!

Since you are engaged in advancing a social good, you know firsthand that values form the basis of so much of your work. These core values underpin how you function as an organization, shaping both your organization's culture and its priorities.[48] Articulating those values is a critical piece in developing your organizational strategies.

And because your values and guiding principles play a significant role in the life of your organization, we encourage you to have conversations to make your organizational values explicit. They should be discussed, debated and updated as needed. After all, shared values have drawn individuals to your organization. It is unlikely that people will be neutral on this topic.

Your mission statement and other strategic planning documents should be a reflection of your values, and it's a good idea for your organization's board and team to understand and affirm them.[49]

Making sure that these values are embedded in all aspects of your work only serves to strengthen staff and stakeholders' commitment and motivation. We all know that

there is often a very close correlation between personal values and the values of the organization. It is often what makes the work so meaningful for all of us!

Starting the conversation…

It will most likely be a challenge (especially if it is the first time) for key stakeholders to articulate the values that guide the organization they support. And we can prepare for strong emotions to be expressed when people are talking about something that is so important to them. Ask yourselves questions such as:[50]

- What are the beliefs that individuals in our organization consider the most important?
- What do we really care about? How do we want to conduct ourselves as an organization?
- How do we want to treat each other and our external stakeholders such as members of our target community and community partners?
- How should our values be reflected in our mission statement?
- How does the way we operate reflect our values? Is there anything else that we should be doing to ensure that our values are put into action in all aspects of our work?

Facilitating constructive conversations on this issue helps to support the alignment of your programs and policies with the articulated values of the organization. As we move to the topic of strategy development in the next section, keep in mind that your organization will want to select strategies that are compatible with your philosophy and values.

Building strategy for your work

Whatever strategic planning tools you decide to use, it will be valuable to consider how they shape your work moving forward.

Tools such as the theory of change, problem statements, and the articulation of your vision, mission and core values will help you set your strategy. Doing so will naturally encourage you to continually assess both your internal and external environment which are always in flux.

Setting strategy is all about determining the right 'fit' for your organizational mission, your organization's capabilities and your external challenges and opportunities.[51]

Finding the fit for strategic development

(see Barry, 1997)

Vision and mission
What do you hope to accomplish?

Capabilities and resources
What are you capable of doing? What are your strengths (and weaknesses)?

The Fit

Broader context of your work
What is needed and feasible for your target community? What are opportunities (and threats)?
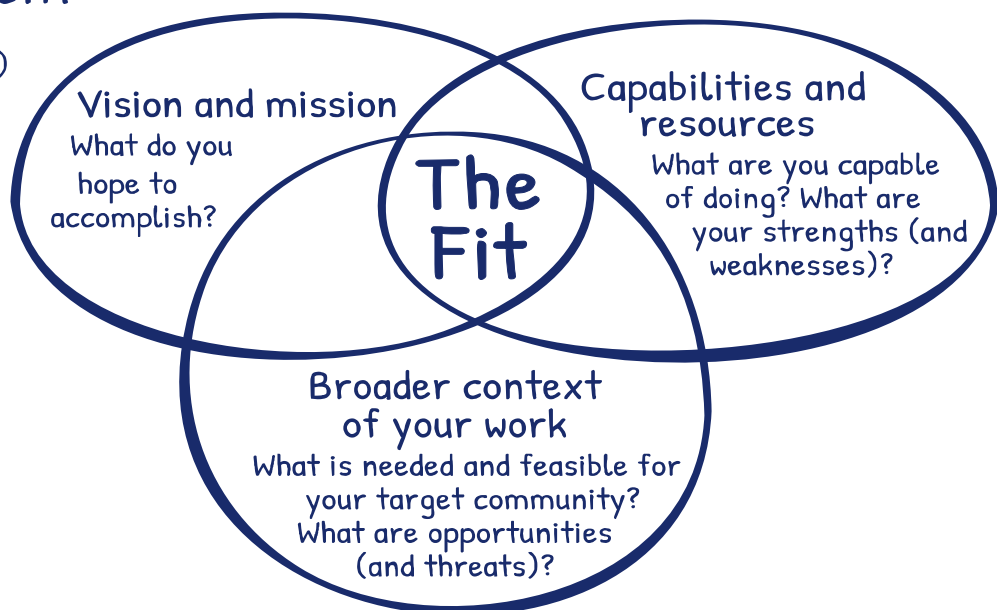
Finding the fit for strategic development requires developing three kinds of strategies that should be in sync- your organizational, programmatic and operational strategies.[52]

Your **organization strategy** is what shapes how you define yourself as an organization- your organizational identity, your DNA and is the first strategy to be considered.

Next is the **programmatic strategy** which represents the work that is carried out by your organization in order to advance your mission in the most effective way.

Generally, programmatic strategies include efforts such as: 1. the gaining of knowledge to identify the scope of a problem, its causes, and potential solutions; 2. the provision of direct services; and 3. advocacy in public/private sectors to change policies.[53]

Operational strategy is essentially how your organization functions on a daily basis and how its infrastructure and systems support both your organizational and programmatic strategies.[54]

These three kinds of strategies, which should be in alignment, may be conceptualized as a pyramid. Yet, in contrast to the way a pyramid is built, you should start at the top with your organizational strategy because everything else flows down from it.

The Strategy Pyramid

(see La Piana, 2008)

Organizational
Determine mission, vision, trends, partners, and niche in the community

Programmatic
Decide on approaches, programs and activities to achieve specific outcomes related to the target audiences

Operational
Administer systems, policies, and staff in areas such as finance, human resources, communications, and information technology

Keeping track of your various strategies, and continually working on their alignment is essential. You will want to make sure that the three types of strategies stay in sync. You can especially keep watch for 'mission drift', which occurs when an organization broadens the mission beyond its core capacities, competencies and interests.[55]

Let's take a break!

We can take time to reflect a bit more on 'finding the fit' within the context of focusing your mission.[56] With so many organizations facing severe funding constraints, 'mission drift' can become all too possible.

And it's not easy to resist! Philanthropic trends often inadvertently promote this with constant pressure placed on organizations to innovate. Funding is often geared towards targeted projects rather than general operating support.[57]

When reflecting on various opportunities, you will want to consider the degree to which your organization may stray from key competencies, or possibly take a detour from your core mission.

When you think strategically, you take care to consider each of the three levels of your strategy and how the levels are interrelated. If they are aligned, then your programmatic choices and organizational resources will fully support your organizational strategy.

We all know that it is not possible to develop expertise in everything. So, each time a new opportunity presents itself, you want to assess not only if you have the skills, resources and management capabilities needed, but also whether this new direction is consistent with your organizational strategy.

Exploring the relationship between each of these elements of your strategy is part of the learning cycle that organizations engage in and is where strategic thinking and M&E tools can be so helpful.
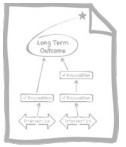
Summing up

As we move forward with our toolbox, keep in mind that what you are essentially building is a shared vocabulary. And as you do so, it will be important to ensure that each of these components are aligned with each other and that each is developed in participatory ways.

Your community will certainly be more likely to embrace your efforts if you involve them in the development of the idea.[58] Moreover, creating these tools in a participatory manner will be most effective because you are more likely to come closer to an accurate map of the environment in which you operate. And with participatory efforts and community feedback built into the process, you are more equipped to make whatever course corrections are needed along the way.

As you will see throughout, as tempting as it might be to create any of these tools on your own, the tools will be more relevant, reflective of the work, and more supported by your key stakeholders if you create an inclusive process.[59]

Once we begin to consider the strategic questions that are raised by such conversations, we start to understand how we can articulate our direction, determine what we are setting out to achieve, and track some type of progress toward the desired change. (This is where the M&E comes in.)

Yes, we begin by first asking lots of questions. But it is in evaluating the answers to these questions that we can better understand and direct our efforts for social good. After all, it's hard work to change the world! Explaining how we set about doing this is a good place to start.

Chapter 2: Facilitating a Theory of Change

So, now that we have an initial introduction to strategic planning tools, we will examine various elements of the theory of change in greater detail. We will be using the theory of change as the basis for us to begin outlining the M&E process.

Your theory of change, like many of the tools that we will be discussing throughout, is designed to be used collaboratively. What does this mean? For starters, you will keep hearing the word 'participatory' a lot!
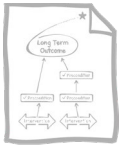
Each time you facilitate a learning process, you are creating an opportunity for individuals to sign up and be a part of your work.[60] By so doing you will be eliciting feedback thereby making your work that much more meaningful and relevant.

Building in a feedback loop for learning

We are going to take it as a given now that your organization has done the work of articulating an initial theory of change along with your vision, mission and core organizational values.

Your long-term desired outcomes, as outlined in your theory of change, should be entirely in sync with your vision and mission statements. And your theory of change, of course, should incorporate all levels of your strategy- organizational, programmatic and operational.

As we dive into the topic of M&E over the next few chapters, we will be examining primarily how this plays out in terms of shaping your programmatic strategy. The learning cycle at the level of programmatic strategy looks something like this:[61]

The Learning Cycle

Design phase
- Determine the problem, map community needs
- Develop a theory of change together with key stakeholders

Planning phase
- Design a M & E plan
- Collect baseline data

Implementation phase
- Monitor project

Completion phase
- Carry out midterm assessment of project
- Conduct a final evaluation, set recommendations

Reconfiguring phase
- Assess lessons learned, adjust as needed

Here we can gain a sense of a cyclical process when we design, implement and build our programs with a constant feedback loop in place.[62]

Of course, we don't only reassess and reconfigure projects upon their completion, nor should we! We should continually learn from the feedback, improving and adjusting as we go.[63]

So, before we move forward with the development of a theory of change and then with the M&E process, we can discuss how to engage your organizational stakeholders, a critical component of building an ongoing feedback loop.
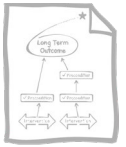
Community engagement as part of your feedback loop

Let's talk about stakeholders in your community, those who have a *stake* in the work that you do. You will want to be intentional about inviting perspectives from both internal and external stakeholders to be part of your strategic conversations.[64]

Internal stakeholders (i.e., board, staff and volunteers): Your internal stakeholders are the individuals most familiar with the work of your organization. They are especially equipped to share insights on the linkage between your present strategies and current performance as an organization.

External stakeholders (i.e., members of your target population, community partners, community leaders, funders): Nurturing a 'proximity' with the target community is a critical piece in helping to ensure your effectiveness because so much of your work depends on the strength of this partnership. This proximity can help your organization to build and develop its network, while staying updated on new ideas and insights in the field.[65]

Let's take a break!

Where does our credibility come from? To whom are we most accountable?

We can play a unique role as a convener for many varied interests. If you are a nonprofit, you are probably negotiating with a wide range of stakeholders.[66] And with supporters of your work often located in different countries, you are operating with multiple languages across multiple time zones.[67]

With so much to navigate and so many stakeholders, we sometimes need a reminder that our accountability is still first and foremost to members of our target community.

Keep in mind how you are continually building a platform that is empowering and inclusive, especially because so often we work with communities that may have been disappointed by existing institutions or that have been marginalized in some way.[68]
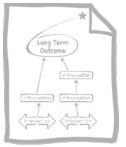
As organizations seeking to bring about social change, your legitimacy depends in large part on your ability to create ongoing conversations with key stakeholders. We have all too often heard of well-intentioned, but top-down decisions being made 'for the benefit of' communities which wind up entirely backfiring.[69]

Your community of supporters can help you to more effectively shape your programs and ensure that you stay grounded in the long-terms goals that you hope to achieve.

Mapping your stakeholders

As part of your many efforts to be 'participatory', we see community engagement as an absolute necessity. One of the most common mistakes that organizations make is failing to reach out to a wide range of individuals. Don't miss this opportunity!

Mapping Stakeholders
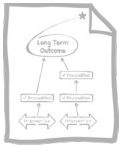
You can brainstorm all the likely players who could be affected by your work. Make a list of them. Ask who cares and why?

Consider as possible stakeholders public and private representatives, spiritual and community leaders. How about other nonprofit practitioners working on the problems you are addressing? Grassroots activists? Or scholars or researchers who have studied the issues for years?

You will also want to think about how to be inclusive and take into account factors such as race, religion, gender, class, sexual preference, age, ethnicity, or profession of possible stakeholders.[70] It is of the utmost importance that you invite diverse members of your target community to be co-creators in your design.

Considering the insights and information that your stakeholders can offer is essential. Even organizations that work hard to engage with their community sometimes get this wrong, investing precious resources and often a good deal of time only to have their efforts thwarted.[71]

Let's take a break!

Should we explore this idea of proximity just a bit more?[72]

We purposely will avoid terms like 'beneficiaries' throughout this guidebook for a reason. We want to talk about relationships based more on equal footing, on partnerships.

We know that one of the ways that organizations can go off course is by losing touch with the needs and desires of their target community. You will want to keep finding ways to stay close to your community.

For example, look at your team, your board members and other key stakeholders. Are there individuals directly involved in your efforts who have themselves suffered from the social ills that you are trying to address? Think carefully how you are involving members of your target community in your organization (i.e., hiring program alumni, reserving board membership for members of the community)…
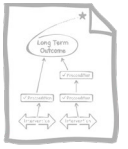
Social problems and their solutions are always more complex than initially anticipated. And there are always surprises in the field. That is why we need to get out there to share, test ideas and stay responsive.

Starting the conversation…

At all stages of your work, you will want to consider how you actively engage your stakeholders. Ask yourselves the following questions:[73]

- How are we opening up channels for ongoing feedback and communication with our community? How are we using our platform to give voice to the community?

- Are we hearing different perspectives and soliciting new ideas while reflecting on our work in the field?

- Have we created a shared understanding of our organization's current and future direction? Is the rationale for our strategies apparent to those individuals engaged in the program's implementation?

- What type of efforts do we have in place for building dialogue, strengthening connections to our stakeholders and identifying possibilities for enhanced collaboration?

- What are the barriers to community participation? Have we considered what might inhibit community stakeholders from expressing their needs and wishes?

As you can see, there is so much to ask, so much to consider… But there are no simple answers here. Often you will have to sift through varying, even contradictory responses from stakeholders. You may be forced to deal with the fallout from having mutual stakeholders who strongly disagree with one another or are even in active conflict.[74]

And this is just the beginning! You will have to continue to see how you address the complexity in engaging your stakeholders. Either way, without this work on the ground of building partnerships, there is little possibility of creating projects that can effectively achieve change over time.
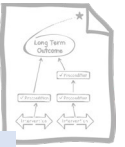
Ideas for your Toolkit: Focus groups

One common tool for gathering insights about your programmatic efforts is the focus group.[75] Focus groups can be a useful way to hold 'strategic conversations' - in the form of a group interview- with key stakeholders.

You have an opportunity to talk to a number of people in a relatively short period of time. In focus groups, small groups of people (usually 8-12) are brought together to discuss specific topics under the guidance of a facilitator.[76]

This way, you can engage with individuals who are knowledgeable or have a valued perspective on your organization and its function in the community. Participants are invited to freely express their views and reflect on issues that are important to your work.

And a few quick guidelines? Each meeting should be held for about 1 ½ hours... Make sure you offer refreshments if you are meeting in person! Pay careful attention to engaging with everyone and creating a space for the less vocal participants to contribute. And make sure to note key discussion points with the help of tools such as flip charts.
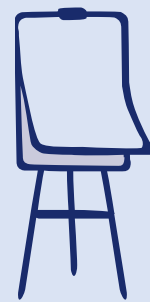
The essential role of facilitation

Talking about facilitation at this early stage? Yes! We have to get enthusiastic about becoming facilitators of learning or else we will just get stuck. Then we could soon find ourselves just filling out strategic planning documents on our own and carrying out M&E as required, but with little engagement and less likelihood of impact.

For the conversations about your organizational strategies and potential impact to be meaningful, it is essential to bring a real sense of curiosity and openness to these discussions. The role of a facilitator builds a supportive environment that encourages participants to share their knowledge, ideas and concerns and learn from one another.
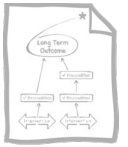
Starting the conversation...

So many of the processes we address throughout this guide depend on the role of the facilitator. And there is a lot to keep track of during these conversations! If facilitating, ask questions such as:[77]

● How are you making people feel comfortable? How are you managing group dynamics, and how do you adapt if online versus in person?

● What steps are you taking to encourage people to share? Are there options for different ways to effectively communicate?

● How are you making sure the conversation stays on target? What can be done to keep it practical and relevant?

An agenda needs to be set for every meeting, and the facilitator needs to make sure that the group stays on course, with conversations that remain focused on the topic at hand. Recognize though, that this is not always easy, especially when conversations become emotionally difficult for some participants.

> **Ideas for your toolkit: Facilitating discussions**
>
> When you are facilitating conversations in person, remember there are visual tools that can help guide your work and increase engagement. These ideas can also work online with a little creativity as well:[78]
>
> - **Get out your poster paper or make sure to have board space with chalk.** You want to get important ideas down, on the record. Everyone can then see the group's thinking process and the insights that are being put forward.
>
> - **Make sure you have markers and sticky notes on hand to invite engagement.** You want to make sure that you able to easily encourage participation with the use of flexible tools for communication.
>
> - **Provide different opportunities for feedback.** You can have participants prioritize ideas and give feedback in a variety of ways. For example, you can have them vote using stickers or checklists that you place on the walls.

And, lastly, where do we find our facilitators? Should they be internal or external?

With the importance of facilitating conversations at all stages of your work, the question of who takes on this role will come up often in strategic planning and in the M&E process.[79]

Having experienced outside facilitators guiding the process with your team can be great. They are likely to be impartial and they have might have specialized facilitation skills and training to gently lead challenging conversations. However, unless you can find a volunteer or colleague to do this pro bono, it can be another added expense. Because of this, it is worth seeing if you have skilled in-house facilitators willing to engage with your team.

Keep in mind though that any designated facilitator needs to be able to check their biases at the door. And of course, existing organizational dynamics also need to be taken into account. A supportive and receptive environment to critical feedback has to be established.
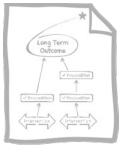
Starting the conversation...

Perhaps you are considering facilitating the discussions yourself. If so, ask questions such as:[80]

- What is your comfort level with all aspects of the strategic planning and M&E tools? Make sure you do your homework.
- What is the degree of trust that you have as a facilitator with your colleagues? The ability to create a forum for dialogue and open inquiry is of primary importance.
- What is your experience in helping to create a supportive environment? How on board is the organizational leadership in ensuring this? You need to be able to help your colleagues and other stakeholders listen to each other and provide a safe space.

- Are you stepping into the role as a neutral facilitator? It will require you to set aside your own ideas and beliefs about how your organization should work during the discussion.

'Sensemaking' is what you are looking for here in building strategic conversations.[81] It is an essential step in your organization's ability to think and act strategically, thereby helping to ensure that collective learning and reflection can take place in M&E or any other organizational process.

And now, back to building a more detailed theory of change…
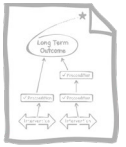
As we discussed in Chapter 1, your theory of change is one of the key strategic planning and M&E tools to use for creating a feedback loop of organizational learning. Given its importance, an ideal scenario moving forward would be to designate a planning team to lead the process outlined below, one that involves your leadership and program staff. You may also want to invite various external stakeholders to join the planning team or engage them in other ways.

Ready to begin? Since you have already developed an initial draft of your theory of change, this next step is to broaden your feedback loop and get more of your stakeholders fully involved. You can keep this diagram in mind as we now walk through the suggested process for facilitating the theory of change.
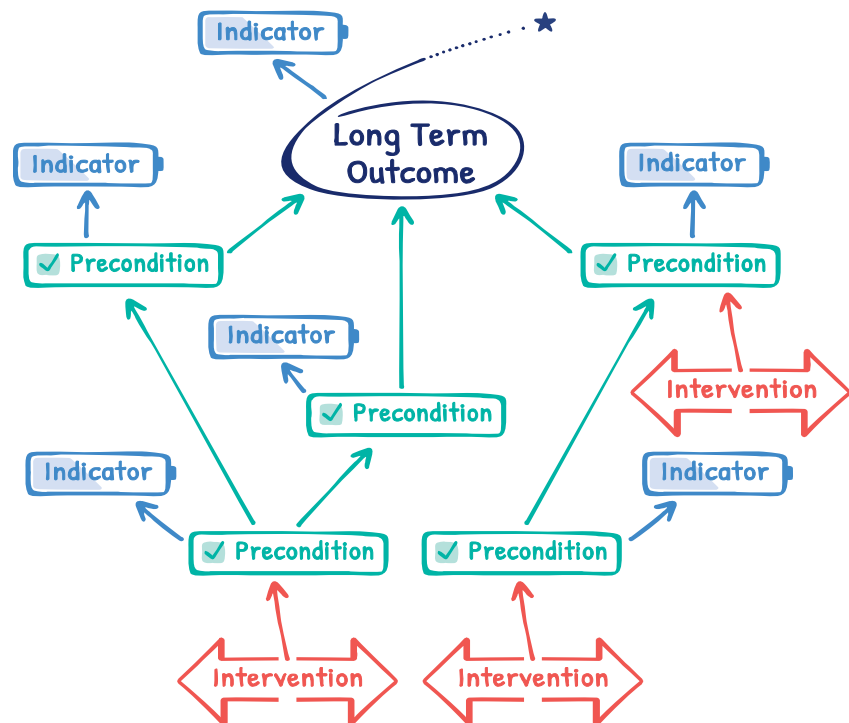
Here are the suggested steps for facilitating theory of change discussions (see Anderson, 2008):

Step 1:   Articulate the long-term outcome(s)
Step 2:   Define your target population
Step 3:   Develop a pathway of change
Step 4:   Add indicators to your preconditions
Step 5:   Determine interventions
Step 6:   Explore assumptions
Step 1:   Articulate the long-term outcomes

If you recall, your long-term outcomes are the specific, concrete changes that your organization seeks to make. Why do you begin here? It's a fair question, but here's the thing. There is a reason why the theory of change tool has become popular. It is because it requires us to be much more precise about the type of change we want to see. [82]

We are always expected to be able to describe what we hope to achieve. What does that actually look like in practice though? And that is why we start here first.
We need to come up with a clear definition of our long-term outcomes.

This is hard work! Our desired impact has to be specific enough to guide action and instruct our work moving forward. If our audacious goals are too vague, too "fuzzy," it can lead to lots of misunderstandings or little prioritization of strategic decisions. [83]

There is another reason why we start with defining our long-term outcomes. When we are being strategic, it is essential to view current program choices and activities as adaptable and flexible rather than static or permanent. [84] While we tend to fall in love with our solutions, we always want to remember to stay open to adapting our interventions as needed.

And be prepared. You may be surprised to discover that even with regard to well-established programs, stakeholders can hold very different ideas about the ultimate purpose of your work. It is only another reminder of the importance of crafting a clear definition and shared consensus of the desired impact.
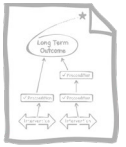
This is just the beginning. As you go along, it will be important to consider this more specifically. In the next step, you have to carefully determine your target population.

For now you can step back a little and see the bigger picture. You want to be able to outline the steps that eventually will lead to the desired long-term results. You can then more easily build a consensus about what is important in programming and in allocating funds.

And of course, you are then better equipped to develop a M&E plan and to track progress toward your long-term goals.

Step 2: What's Next? Define your target population

Here you will want to devote time to carefully defining your target population, your partners in the work. With limited time and even more limited resources, you are more likely to produce a measurable, positive outcome if you carefully determine the core group of individuals you are aiming to impact.

Your team should define this population as thoughtfully as possible, being sure to consider factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, place of residence, family status, interests, personal abilities, needs, goals, capacities, and resources.
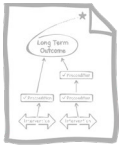
A question to consider is which factors among your target population are only temporary and/or could be changed in time. Often referred to as 'risk characteristics', these include situations such as unemployment, housing insecurity and insufficient job skills.

Starting the conversation…

With the input of diverse representatives from your target community consider the following questions:[86]

- What kinds of individuals are involved in our activities? Where do they come from? What are their needs? Are these the individuals we set out to work with as determined in our mission statement?
- How have the characteristics or needs of our participant/target population changed over time?

After you have determined your target population, consider their direct link to your desired long-term outcomes and ask:

- What is the current status of our target population? What changes are we hoping to see? What will indicate success with regard to our target community?
- How will we measure the success of our planned long-term outcomes? What do we see as the time frame for progress on these outcomes?

Whew! Not easy stuff, we know! You will likely have many discussions and take a bunch of needed coffee breaks- all the while managing the art of facilitation.

Next we move to putting all of this together in a pathway of change, which is in essence, a visual representation of what needs to take place in order for you to achieve the long-term outcomes you have projected for your target population.
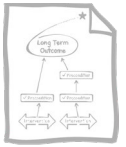
Step 3: Develop a pathway of change

Okay, this is a big one. Once you have outlined your long-term outcomes and target population, you are ready to create your pathway of change- which means you will want to specify how and why you expect change to happen. Outlining this pathway will encourage you to reflect on how your big, ambitious, desired changes are logically linked to the smaller changes that will occur as you progress with your project.

What is being asked of you at this point is to make predictions knowing that you will have uncertainty and surprises along the way. We will start at the end of the program and go backwards, a process which appropriately is called 'backwards mapping.'[87]

You will want to outline this for every single step so that you can determine the initial and intermediate changes that need to take place in order to realize the desired long-term outcome. These steppingstones can be thought of as 'preconditions', which are required to occur in order to achieve social impact.

Let's take a break!

Too much jargon! Yes, it is not easy, and it will take time to become familiar with some key concepts.

We will have to become accustomed to new terminology. And you can already see that there are different names for the same ideas, and often they are used interchangeably. To add to this confusion, the terms used often depend on the setting, context or stakeholder group.

Keeping this in mind, it is worth focusing on the concepts underlying each of the terms, and to make sure you build a shared vocabulary with your key stakeholders.
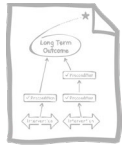
Let's first get used to the idea of preconditions, a key component in a pathway of change. Each of the preconditions which are short-term and intermediate outcomes along the way, are all necessary to reach results. Short-term outcomes are often the most direct result of your work and tend to be expressed at the individual level. They might be for example, a change in a person's knowledge, attitude, behavior, skills or status.[88]
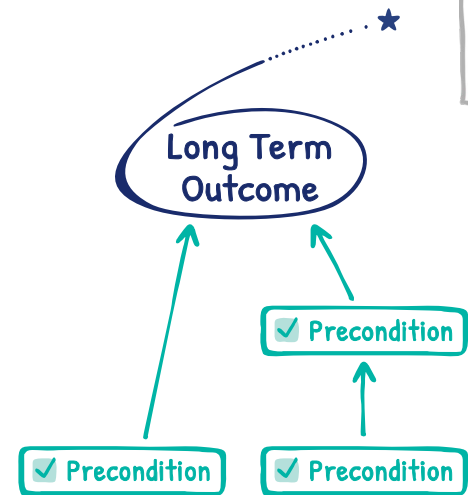
Intermediate outcomes usually build on the progress of short-term outcomes. The shift often moves from the individual level to determining more broadly desired effects that can take place over time - at the level of organizations, families, communities. If these preconditions - the short and intermediate outcomes- are accomplished, it will lead to the desired long-term outcome.[89]

Starting the conversation...

Questions to spark the discussion can include:

- What are the necessary preconditions? What are the short term or intermediate outcomes necessary to achieve your long-term outcomes?
- If all of the preconditions you identify are satisfied, will that be enough to achieve your long-term outcomes?

Step 4: Add indicators to your preconditions

If we thought things were already tough, hang in there. We have to tackle indicators. Your indicator, simply put, is your 'evidence' of change.[90] You can select a variety of indicators to *indicate* that some type of change has occurred.

An indicator is the information that tells you whether or not your program is achieving its intended outcomes. While often quantified by specific measures, indicators can take many different forms.

Ideas for your toolkit: Break-out groups

Are you finding yourself in the middle of a difficult discussion about indicators? Perhaps things are getting a bit tedious? You may find that just like coffee breaks are a good idea, you may want to shake up group discussion and break into smaller groups- especially effective if you are facilitating a meeting online.

You can then take one of the topics at hand – for example- on indicators. Assign a small group to the task of matching key short term outcomes to possible indicators and give everyone fifteen minutes to discuss. After this, each group could report back to the larger group using the visual aids in the room such as poster boards or a flip chart (or virtual aids on the computer screen) to post their ideas and explain their rationale.

This type of activity encourages different interactions and important conversations and is worth having in your facilitator's toolkit.

These conversations with various stakeholders will promote reasonable expectations about what can be achieved by your efforts. And with a shared understanding of how to identify and track desired changes, you can make sure that there is a logical connection between the selected indicators and what is being measured.

Starting the conversation….

In developing your indicators, it is helpful to ask:[91]

- What does the short or intermediate outcome look like? At what level (i.e., individual, organizational, communal) does the change take place?

- How will we know if the short term or intermediate outcome has occurred? What will we be able to see? Who or what do we expect to change?

- What is our timeline for each indicator?

Another term that we often see used for indicator is 'metric'. Essentially the purpose of indicators is to help us understand how we will know we have created the preconditions for the desired impact.[92]

We will be addressing indicators further once we discuss M& E plans. For now, we can keep in mind how indicators help us to tell the story by tracking progress at each step of the way. As such, they are a key piece in outlining the steppingstones toward long-term outcomes and ensuring that our theory of change makes sense.
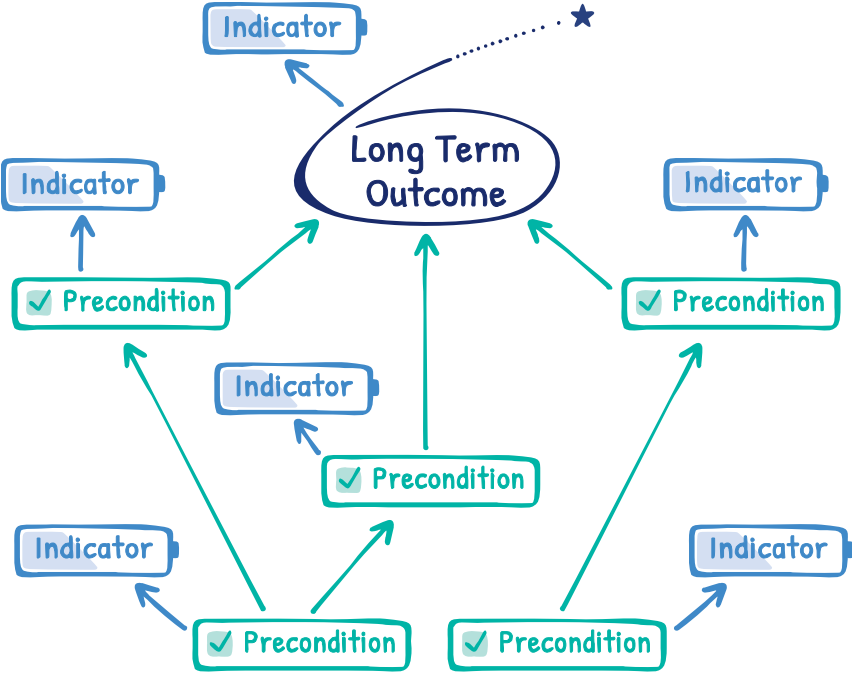
Step 5: Determine the interventions

Okay! So yes, it's been a lot. We are heading toward the end though, at least in developing an initial theory of change.

After all of this preparatory work, now is the time to identify interventions- the activities, products, or services that your organization will provide to produce your preconditions.[93] Hopefully you are now seeing how everything ties together.

All the work you have undertaken already in plotting your pathway of change should be the starting point for this discussion about interventions. With that said, this is often a very difficult stage - a sort of reality check for what can realistically be implemented.

It is time to consider the fit between the strategies, the capacities and the existing resources of your organization. Is your plan working to affect your long-term outcomes? And what are the preconditions that your organization can do something

about and those that are beyond the reach of your work? The conversations with your stakeholders may not always be easy.
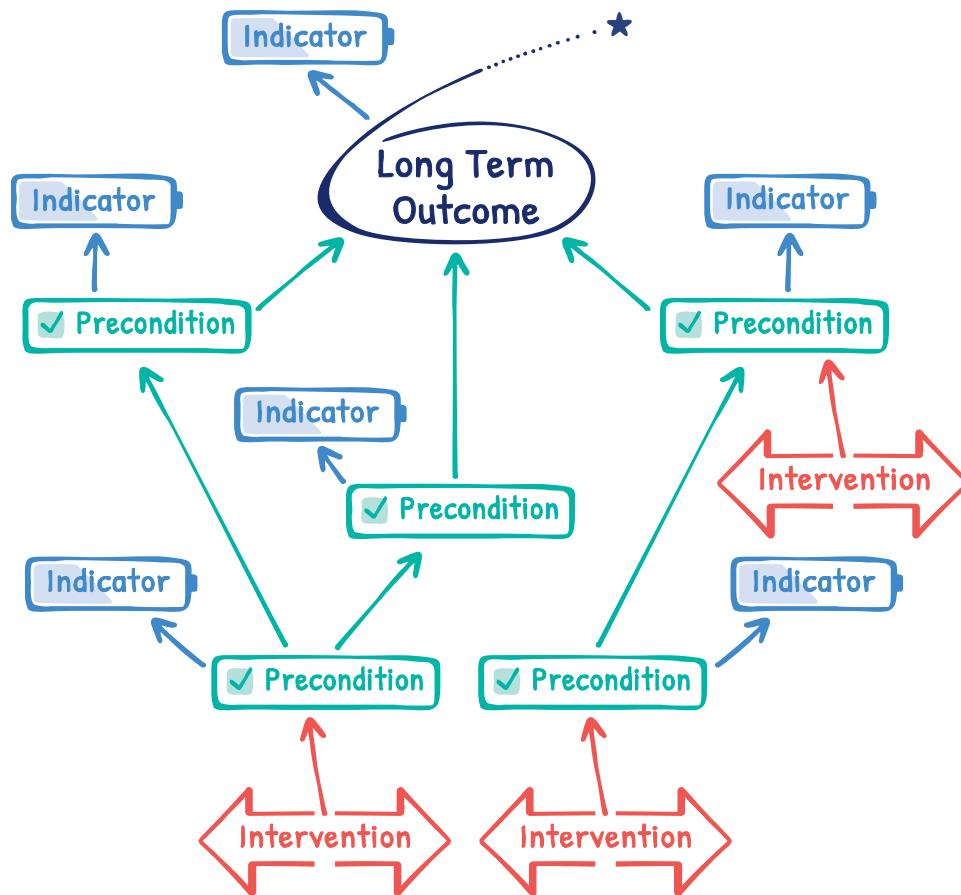
You may find that existing programs no longer fully fit what you are now spelling out as your primary strategic direction. Or it may turn out that there are major gaps in your programmatic efforts. Or perhaps you have little capacity to act on each of the designated preconditions, thus necessitating a new approach and/or a shift in organizational resources.

As we mentioned, one of the difficulties may be managing your expectations at this point. You may want to have critical conversations about the direction of your programmatic strategy in light of new insights.

Step 6: Last Step! Explore assumptions

We are now at the last step of this process. Examining our assumptions is a built-in part of the process. And that is a good thing.

Now that you have created some type of initial draft, you want to make your assumptions explicit. So even after all of your hard work and investment in articulating a theory about how long-term outcomes are to be achieved, you still have to step back and reflect on everything. You have to take your theory of change and see it for what it is - a theory![96]

There are all kinds of assumptions to be aware of. Some are grounded in your values and beliefs, others in knowledge and prior experience. Each of us brings our own baggage to the table- our worldviews, mindset, experiences and how we believe
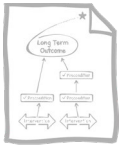
things work in the world.[97] Now is the time to reflect on how your assumptions have played into the development of your theory of change.

Of course, this doesn't mean that your assumptions are wrong! It just means that you should be aware of what you have taken as a given, carefully consider those assumptions and come to a shared understanding about them.

Starting the conversation....

As you articulate assumptions consider the following:[98]

- What are our assumptions that come from our past experience and knowledge of the field?

- Which assumptions are grounded in 'best practices' noted in the field or in previous research?

- What are we taking for granted, and what are the potential risks in our proposed pathway of change?

- What assumptions are we making about our broader context or local environment? Are we taking into account the possibility of uncertainty in our external context that could upend our expectations about our operating environment?

This whole process has likely been quite exhausting, and still more questions! But this signifies an open-mindedness and readiness to challenge 'group think'.

After all, planning is a leap of faith of sorts. You want to make sure that you openly acknowledge this critical piece of your work and be certain to question assumptions as needed.
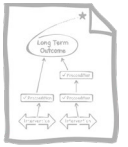
Are we done yet? Summing up for now…

As discussed in the previous chapter, you are building up a skillset for strategic conversations and a feedback loop for organizational learning.

For now, you have done significant work. Theories of change are challenging! A great deal of hard thinking is required to clearly define long-term goals and every precondition on the pathway of change.

With your theory of change in hand, your stakeholders have a better understanding of what you all are trying to accomplish. It will now be much easier to build consensus on how success is defined (and eventually measured).

In the next chapter, we will make that transition from planning to M&E, keeping in mind of course, that the learning cycle and our strategic thinking are ongoing.

Chapter 3: Moving from Strategic Planning to M&E

Wow, so much stuff to do! And we are only just starting Chapter 3. But let's cheer ourselves on a bit. If you have gotten this far, you are already starting to think evaluatively. You are getting used to the idea of framing your efforts in terms of desired change.

In this chapter, we are going to move forward in building a feedback loop for carrying out M&E- setting yourselves up in a way that will enable you to shape programs in a participatory way, engage with your community and monitor your progress in addressing social problems.

Overlapping evaluative thinking with strategic thinking

Let's now briefly address classic evaluation areas that are often explored in M&E - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability- and show how they are linked not only to your operational and programmatic strategy, but also to your broader organizational strategy as well.[99]

How is this all connected together? We can consider the questions, for example, of whether your project is relevant to the needs of your target community, is well-managed or is likely to make an impact that is sustainable. You certainly would not want to wait for a long-term evaluation only to find out that you should have addressed this topic much earlier in the process!

To avoid this, it is essential that you bring the rigor of both strategic and evaluative thinking to your work exactly at the time that you are developing your projects. We can review each of these five evaluation areas a bit more....

Relevance - How do you make sure that your work is relevant to the field and to your target community?

What you are asking here is if your strategies and planned efforts make sense in light of your target community's main priorities. Have you checked the underlying logic of your program with community stakeholders? Are you taking steps to

ensure that your efforts fit into the current context and that you are adapting
to the changes that are taking place?[100]

Let's take a break!

Aren't we really asking more here? When you think of relevance you
also want to consider the degree to which you are grounded in your
community, as we have discussed in earlier chapters.

In the field of community development, you especially need to ask this
question again and again. Often, members of a target population have been
marginalized in some way or have actually been left out of the services
provided. So you will want to keep in mind how your work is changing this
dynamic- and how you are not only making sure to stay well-informed of their
primary concerns but also to help empower diverse stakeholders in your target
community.

**Effectiveness - How do you ensure that you are working as
effectively as possible?**

Here we are looking at the extent to which your interventions have the potential to
be carried out as planned and achieve their objectives.[101] In reviewing your
planned implementation it is also important to identify factors that may present
obstacles to accomplishing your desired outcomes.[102]

In assessing the implementation of your programmatic and operational strategies,
you want to make sure that they are creating a 'sum of reactions' that is aligned
with your organizational strategies and long-term goals.[103]

Let's take a break!

So before theory of change models became widely used in the field, much of M&E was focused on the implementation of programs. Years ago, organizations were primarily held accountable for carrying out their work effectively and efficiently (operational and programmatic strategy combined).[104]

These days we don't stop at just examining implementation, nor should we. After all, you can pull off a project perfectly, but its positive impact can be entirely unsustainable, with lots of unexpected negative effects added into the mix.[105]

Today there is more of a shift to focusing on outcomes to help ensure that we are making strategic decisions that are actually geared toward desired positive impact.

? Efficiency - How do you check that you are most efficient in carrying out your programs?

We always will need to know whether or not we are being efficient, especially with limited resources and endless challenges facing us. It is here that you should consider your operational strategy, time, resources and investment. Efficiency tells you that input (i.e., money, hours, staff, equipment) is in line with output.

And what else? Tracking efficiency allows you to assess if you are following a reasonable timetable for progress at an acceptable and sustainable cost.

Impact - How are you assessing your progress and making sure that you are moving towards your long-term impact?

Prioritizing impact keeps us continually focused on our long-term goals as articulated in our organizational strategy. Examining impact tells us whether or not we are making a difference with the problem we are addressing. In other words, was our strategy useful?[106]

Here we can consider if we have set up the programmatic and operational strategies to support the desired impact. This is often the heart of what the M&E process explores, as we seek to understand the negative or positive outcomes produced, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Let's take a break!

We hear the term 'impact' used often, and of course, it is entirely necessary to stay focused on results. Little else in the end matters. But! Guidelines are needed. Impact takes time, as do the steps we take to reach our desired changes.[107]

With the unrelenting pressure to prove impact, you will want to make sure that you have notable markers that can indicate success along the way. Those markers go right up there next to long-term outcomes in importance. At least that is our vote on the topic.

Prior to any decisions on whether to scale up programs and/or replicate them elsewhere, discussion among stakeholders on what makes sense in terms of impact is essential.

? Sustainability - How are you designing your work to be sustainable and to have results that are long-lasting?

As with each of the principles reviewed above, it is helpful early on to keep in mind the idea of sustainability. How are you making sure that your work and its positive results can be maintained?[108]

All of us know too well of abandoned projects, and of times when little was done once funding was withdrawn and/or when organizations moved on to a different community or priority. We want to examine the idea of sustainability from every angle in our efforts.

Let's take a break!

Sustainability can be defined in so many ways – from sustaining resources to sustaining impact and everything in between.

One noteworthy shift that we have seen in the field in the past decade takes on the challenge of sustainable organizational capacities. In response to this concern, many international development organizations have sought to hire only local staff.[109] After too many years of expertise being 'flown in', there is a movement to nurture the talent and capabilities of those who come from the community being served.

We should consider how such an approach and other types of efforts can strengthen and sustain desirable outcomes over time.

Overall, we can see how these key evaluation areas contribute to our ability to apply both evaluative and strategic thinking.[110] And we certainly can't afford to be complacent about too much these days...

Getting your theory of change ready for M&E

M&E is all about measuring progress and learning as you go, so you want to make sure to get ready for this! As we know, by preparing strategic planning tools such as a theory of change, it will be easier for you to develop a meaningful feedback loop.

Yes, building your theory of change is tons of work, but you are then able to present, in essence, the core of what you are trying to achieve. Both the visual diagram of a theory of change and an accompanying narrative can be used to tell your story. And since you have done the groundwork, as described in Chapter 2, you should be ready to share a draft of your theory of change with stakeholders.

And while you should rightfully be proud of your initial theory of change, we do want you to remember that this is the time to re-check assumptions, invite more stakeholders into the mix and get feedback on your rationale and approach. Any confusion will be revealed as you begin to converse with others, especially concerning the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of your efforts.

Broadening your audience, broadening your engagement

Moving towards M&E is also a process in which you are spelling out what you hope to achieve. You can keep dreaming big, but at the same time, you want to manage expectations- establishing an agreement among your diverse stakeholders as to what you are holding your organization accountable for.

This is what helps to make the theory of change so useful. Once articulated, it encourages important conversations about your strategic direction and efforts to measure your progress.

Tip: Make your theory of change accessible to all your diverse stakeholders.
You may consider creating a few versions of your theory of change, with some versions containing more detailed information or different terminology depending on the audience. The basic requirement in your graphic is to depict how your interventions are logically linked to important preconditions and outcomes.

Either way you can keep it as straightforward as possible while also staying flexible. And think creatively about how to communicate - everything from short videos to simple drawings are possible options.[111]

As part of this effort to communicate, you can develop along with your theory of change, a narrative that accompanies your visual diagram. Doing so, can further explain your understanding of how change is anticipated and you can throw in extra material if needed.

Some additional material as highlighted below could include: an explanation of the broader context, a reflection on your assumptions, a review of relevant research in the field and an overview of your efforts at community engagement:[112]

☑ **Context.** You may include broader social, political and economic factors about the communities in which you operate, as well as more information about your target population.

☑ **Assumptions.** Assumptions provide your rationale for the causal links between your interventions and desired outcomes. As we know, assumptions play an important role in creating your theory of change, and it will be helpful to make them explicit.

☑ **Research / Evaluation Findings.** When available, you can cite research or other forms of evidence that show how your activities are likely to achieve your stated goals. After all, your interventions are hopefully based on best practices and existing knowledge of what works in a particular field. This will only add more legitimacy to your own efforts.

☑ **Communal Engagement.** An overview of your connection to the community, and how you have built relationships and worked with your target community can be outlined as well. This is often pivotal to a project's success, especially since progress is so often based on an ability to influence and engage with individuals and groups.

Moving to M&E

As we move on to the topic of M&E with our theory of change ready to go, we can review again the feedback loop, introduced in the previous chapter, that illustrates the link between programmatic strategy and evaluative thinking.
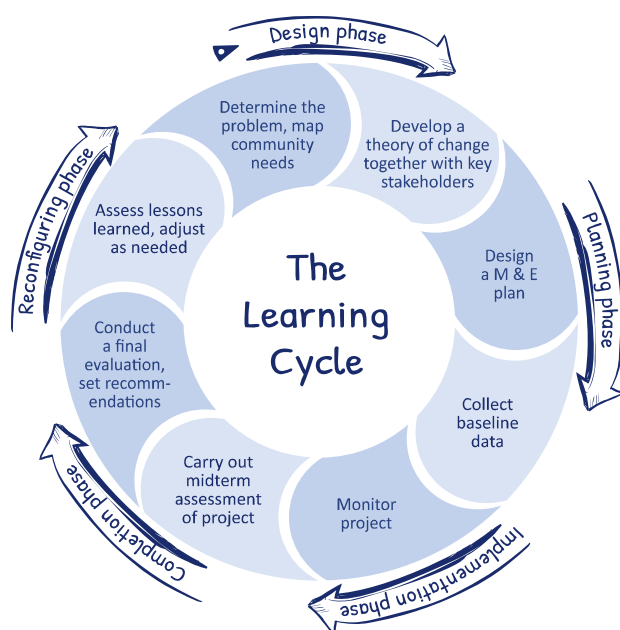
And once we have a learning cycle in place with M&E, your strategic conversations become grounded in data. You are able to establish a mechanism to systematically capture learning and experience over time.

This feedback loop also helps establish a shared language to be able to both design and improve your work to meet the evolving needs of your target community

In this next section we will begin to explore the definition and distinctions between monitoring and evaluation.

So why M&E?

M&E helps you understand various aspects of your work and supports your ability to make strategic, data-driven decisions when necessary.[113]

You can think of it as a puzzle. You are using M&E to help you find where all the pieces go. Through data, you will be better able to put the pieces together by collecting, managing and using information about your projects.

Before we get started, let's review a few important terms that are relevant to the M&E process.

Monitoring. On a regular basis, monitoring is the collection and analysis of information. It is done systematically and in a methodical way.[114] Monitoring is generally focused on helping to improve the effectiveness of projects and the efficient use of resources.

Why is this so essential? It helps to keep your work on track and allows you to monitor performance over time. You are able to see more about your organization's capacity to carry out the project- whether the resources you have are sufficient and being properly used, and whether you are doing what you planned to do.[115]

By helping you to make informed decisions, it becomes an invaluable tool for good management. Monitoring also provides you with a useful base for evaluation.

Evaluation. Evaluation is used to help us gauge what we have set out to do, what we have actually accomplished, and how we have done so.[116]

We are evaluating our work in order to measure whether the project activities have achieved the project's objectives and how much the project's outcomes are directly linked to the project's interventions. And while there are all kinds of evaluation, often it helps us to see what the results are compared to what our original projections were.[117]

Various types of evaluation can be used in a range of instances - from improving the strategy and implementation of a project to gaining knowledge about best practices from a completed project to better inform future programming.[118]

Together, we will refer to monitoring and evaluation as M&E. And while monitoring and evaluation are related, nevertheless they are still distinct sets of organizational activities.

And there are two more terms that we will want to get used to as we move forward to unpack our M&E toolkit.

Data. Data used for both monitoring and evaluation is the information that we gather about our programs. We will discuss over the next few chapters the range of options that you have to collect data, including everything from surveys and interviews to community mapping and observations.

Tip: Data sounds intimidating, but it doesn't have to be!
We don't want to give the impression that there is only one way to collect data that fits each organization.
You have choices - all depending on your own context and target community. Don't forget that there are many creative ways to gain meaningful insights into the work that you do.[119] You want to keep in mind that useful data can come in all types of shapes and forms.

Bias. We are purposively using the word 'bias' in our discussion of data. All of us have our own biases -a set of beliefs or expectations of how people should behave, how the world should work or how our projects will play out once implemented.[120] What is noteworthy is that biases, like our assumptions, are often not supported by data and may undermine our effectiveness.

Summing Up…

Whether we're talking about monitoring or evaluation, your overall approach is the same. You are making an effort to collect facts and data to inform your decisions. With limited resources and great social needs, you have to understand what works, what doesn't work, and why. In the next chapter, we begin to outline the many steps in building a M&E plan to assess your own efforts.

Chapter 4: Creating a M&E Plan

So what is the next step? Well, here we really need to gather our strength as we dive into M&E. Since there are many factors to keep in mind when creating a M&E plan, we recognize it will require you to invest both time and resources. In light of this, we want to encourage you and help make sure that all your efforts are worth it!

Knowing what a challenge this is, we are going to first present the basic set of principles and then we will consider how these principles can be adapted to suit your own individual needs.

Tip: Start with one project, building capacity over time.
Over the years we have found that starting with an individual project is a valuable way for an organization to begin building its own evaluation capacity.

By focusing on one project at the start- and not all of your organization's work at once- your team then has the opportunity to get used to the shared vocabulary, the toolkit and the practice of M&E. It makes it more doable and builds up your skillset over time.

Over time, ideally as more and more individuals are able to see the value in the process, M&E will be integrated into your organization's operations from project design to financing and fundraising.[121]

In the following chapters, we will walk through the components of a M&E plan - a set of documents that state which information you will collect, how it will be collected, and what you will do with the information.

Again, what is the M and what is the E in M&E?

We are generally able to differentiate between monitoring and evaluation based on the kinds of data that are explored, when the data are collected and what the data are used for.[122]

When we do the work of monitoring, we are collecting data - daily, weekly or monthly - in order to use that information for the day-to-day management of our work. It is a capacity that we develop within our organization to track progress and make informed decisions.[123]

Evaluation, in all its various forms, usually involves the collection of data every few months, once a year, or at the end of a project – and takes a more comprehensive assessment of all the work that was done. Evaluation will often involve comparing the findings to the original theory of change to gauge progress toward the stated goals.[124]

How to start distinguishing between monitoring and evaluation?

	What are the kinds of questions that our data methods will answer for us?	How often do we gather data?	What kinds of data are we hoping to collect?	Who is responsible for carrying out the process?
Monitoring	• How is the implementation of our project going? Is our project spending money and resources efficiently? • How effectively are we moving towards indicators that we have established? Are we making progress? • What types of difficulties have come up in the implementation? What signs of success in the work have we seen?	Regular intervals: daily, weekly, or monthly.	Data about activities, expenses and short-term outcomes. Tracking project performance.	Members of your team who are involved with the project.
Evaluation	• What difference has our project made? Did our project achieve what it planned on achieving? • What has taken place that was unplanned ? What have we learned that was unexpected? • How sustainable are outcomes and what are the implications for the various stakeholders?	Usually at specific times. May be halfway through, or at the end of the project, depending on the evaluation purpose.	Data about intermediary outcomes and long-term outcomes.	An internal or external team of evaluators, or some kind of combination.

For now, with so much to cover here, we will mostly focus on collecting data for monitoring purposes. This is especially important for creating a participatory process- your team will need to be on board!

How so? You will want to get your key stakeholders accustomed to the idea of regularly collecting data as part of your efforts to set up a feedback loop of learning and then adapting your work as needed. All of these combined efforts not only help build your team's readiness to articulate what is to be measured, but will also eventually help strengthen their capacity to gather and analyze data for ongoing decision-making.

And once you begin collecting data for monitoring, you begin to develop an organizational infrastructure that will allow you to be better prepared for evaluative processes.[125]

Information collected for monitoring your projects often serves as the basis for evaluation- whether carried out by internal or external evaluators. With mechanisms in place for tracking and measuring progress, your entire team becomes much better equipped to effectively engage with evaluators about setting long-term measures for success.

And tell me again why M&E is important?

As we go through this process, you will be encouraged to think carefully about how you can develop M&E to serve your own organizational needs. M&E helps you to know your projects better, to continually improve, to make the case for your work and so much more.

Yes, the impetus for M&E often comes from funders, but if you are already putting in all that effort, wouldn't it be fabulous if first and foremost those efforts also improved your work and empowered your team?

A well-prepared M&E plan will help your team better plan projects, set expectations, coordinate roles and responsibilities and gain feedback. All the knowledge and insights gained will then in turn impact on your decision-making going forward.[126]

Tip: Everyone on your team should get used to the idea of M&E.

We know this gets tough. There is already so much that needs to get done on a daily basis. And many of us are managing our organizations in way too many languages. It is tempting to have much of the work related to M&E written only in English for funders abroad and categorized only under the fundraising 'to do' list.

But dear leadership team, we are speaking to you here! Take this on. You will have to invest extra time in making sure that M&E is accessible to all members of your team in order to shape your day-to day work.

Start with modest steps and then adapt the process to what makes sense for your organization. Over time you will then be able to develop some kind of feedback mechanism to ensure that your efforts are as effective as possible.

We need to think about how our conversations about strategy and evaluation fit into the context of our organization, a necessity when we are part of this messy and complicated space of trying to make the world a better place.

And we all know of too many times when good intentions were not enough- when well-meaning efforts backfired, and when nonprofits did not learn from experiences and failed to reach their potential for making real change.[127]

So how do we view our organization? What is our organizational DNA? What contribution do we want to make to the field? What is our ethical duty? To whom are we obligated?

Our integrity and character as an organization is not just about the amazing work that we set out to do. It also includes the way that we do things - how we listen to our target community, how we keep evolving and learning as we go. We can of course do this without formal M&E plans in place, but M&E helps set up a systematic way for us to keep having a conversation with our community.

Ideas for your Toolkit: Observing the world around you

When we think about outreach to our community and eliciting feedback, we tend to think first of surveys and interviews. But we have such a broad range of other data collection tools that can be a part of gaining insights into our work.

One of the tools we often forget is the power of observation.[128] What happens when you get out there and see what is happening in your community? What can you learn from observation? And with your programs too, what can you see? All of this can be a way of gaining insights, beginning more conversations, and setting the stage to keep expanding your feedback loop.

Having an observation guide can be of great use. It provides you with a list of specific topics to pay attention to, such as the setting, the participants, the activities and interactions.[129]

As we jump in now to M&E, think about what value M&E will add to your work and how you are going to use its findings. Of course, you will want to carefully consider what the big fat questions are that you really need M&E to answer – and, as we can see below, setting up an M&E plan is the first place to start.

Key components of a M&E plan

While there is a great deal of variation, most M&E plans contain the following steps in some form:[130]

Step 1
Articulate your pathway of change

Step 2
Select indicators

Step 3
Determine the data collection process

Step 4
Develop the data analysis process

Step 5
Determine how to use findings for strategic decisions
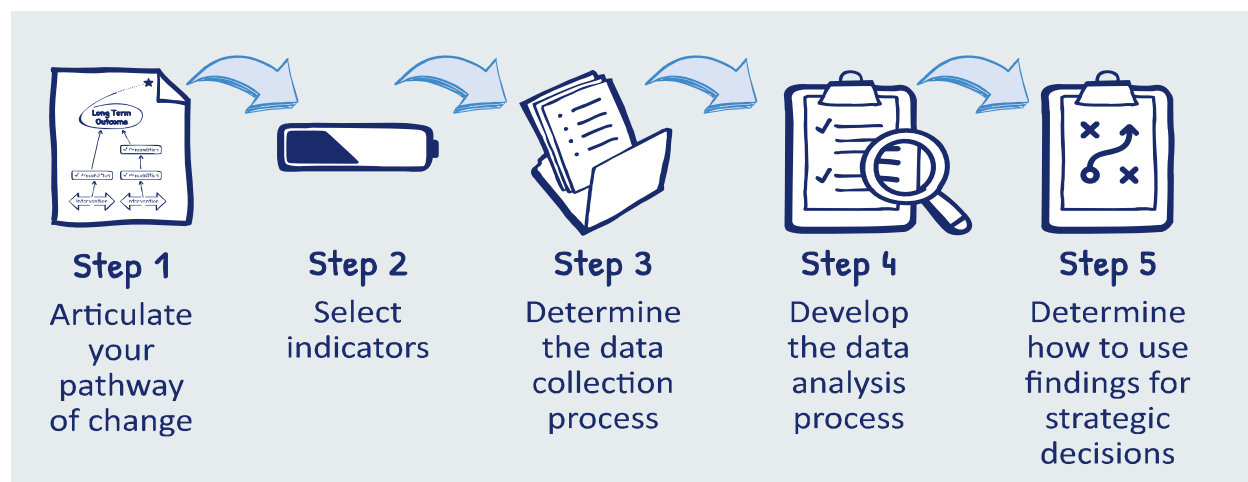
Together, these five steps indicate how you intend to collect, manage, analyze and use data. Each of the next five chapters will tackle one of these steps. For now, we will give a bit more of an overview.

Step 1:   Articulate your pathway of change
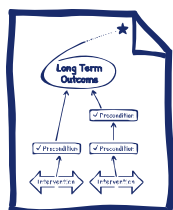
As you know from our previous discussion on the topic, it is critical to have a shared understanding of how and why you are taking a particular approach to your work. Your M&E plan is a set of tools that will help you measure progress toward the desired outcomes that you have articulated in your theory of change.

We will explore further how to ensure that your theory of change can be used for this purpose. We will also take your theory of change to develop a specific logical framework, also known as a 'logframe'.

Step 2:   Select indicators

For your M&E plan, you will want to review and refine the indicators that you selected during the process of articulating a theory of change. You may find that your project indicators need to be either more varied or more specific.

Again, your indicators are the evidence or information that you can use to show that some type of change has occurred. While indicators are often quantified by specific measures such as numbers or percentages, we want to keep in mind that your indicators can come from many different sources and in a variety of forms.

Step 3:   Develop the data collection process
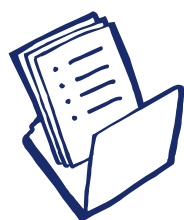
At this stage it is the time to consider in more depth your selection of data collection methodologies for your M&E and determine guidelines for the data to be collected- when, how and by whom. Your choice depends on a number of factors, including what type of data is needed.

You will also want to consider realistically what organizational resources are available for data collection (and data analysis!). You want to select data collection that will provide the most information with the least effort required.

Step 4:   Outline the data analysis process

As 'raw material', your data needs to be interpreted and placed into a context in order to inform your decision-making process.

Data analysis takes all the data that you have collected and organizes it so you can reach conclusions. Your M&E plan should set out how the data is to be analyzed, when, how and by whom. The scope and nature of your data analysis, as with other aspects of your M&E plan, will depend on your informational needs and your organizational resources.

Step 5:   Determine how to use findings for strategic decisions

And at this stage of the M&E plan, you will have the challenge of interpreting the data, communicating the findings and providing useful information to inform the planning process and day-to-day management.

After all, the success of any M&E effort should ultimately be measured by the knowledge and action that takes place as a result. From the start, it is worthwhile to consider how an M&E process can help enhance the decision-making process and support action.

Should we talk a bit more here about the purpose and use of M&E?

We want to make sure that we get used to the idea of reframing how we see our efforts in this challenging field of social change. Since it is difficult to understand the causes of complex problems, or why some solutions don't work, or why some projects succeed while others do not, we have to set up a mechanism for capturing these insights as they come up.

And we can keep in mind that there are many stakeholders who will be thankful for more a nuanced picture of how to make progress in light of so much need. After all, understanding how best to invest limited resources is difficult for everyone -for those who are working in the field and for those who are seeking to support these efforts.

Let's take a break!

We see today that, with the growing use of M&E, a 'culture of inquiry' and transparency about lessons learned is enhancing the credibility of many organizations.[131] In the past decade the field as a whole has had a greater appreciation for the role of M&E. And more and more stakeholders understand the inevitably of new insights as well as the unexpected roadblocks that come up along the way in efforts to advance social good.[132]

This acceptance is in part due to courageous organizations that began years ago to publicly share their stories of experimentation and failure [133] They helped push the social sector forward, reminding us all that failure is a vital springboard to innovation and creative thinking.

In recent years, the use of M&E only continues to grow as part of an effort to encourage more openness, more learning, and more effectiveness over time.

Yes, we know the civil society sector generally does not have the resources to invest in R&D like the private sector does. And we already know that our version of venture capital looks very different with few resources going to seed funding, testing and development.[134] But what we do have though, is strategic planning and M&E to make sure that we explore and adapt ideas as needed.

So it is important to rigorously test, check implementation and handle setbacks through the feedback loop of learning that M&E offers.[135] And this has to be accompanied by an acceptance on the part of key stakeholders not only of the bumps along with way, but also of the recognition that mistakes and failures can very well be the stimulus for more productive efforts. [136]

Tip: Take advantage of many resources on M&E!

In recent years, M&E has taken on a more significant role in international development and nonprofit efforts.[137] In this guide we will only be able to touch on some aspects of the work although we will provide an extensive list of references at the end.

For each topic you may be addressing like youth leadership, peacebuilding, poverty, environmental damage, human rights, women's empowerment, agriculture and more, there are research guides and evaluation tools that are readily available.[138]

Make sure to check resources listed here and in many other places. You will find that past evaluation reports, data collection tools and M&E guides on your selected topic may be especially valuable.

Summing up…

As you know, this is a formal guide and we are going to use formal language here. It will be part of your responsibility afterwards – as part of your efforts to build a shared vocabulary - to translate these ideas to the rest of your team and supporters.

Ongoing communication and stakeholder engagement will help you avoid many pitfalls - plans that don't fit the context, that do not engage the team, that focus on issues of low priority, or use inappropriate methods and measures. We could go on and on.

And without participatory efforts, there is little likelihood of creating a sense of buy-in or trust in the value of the M&E process. We have to work hard at this, or realistically, we really have to wonder if it is worth limited organizational resources. We already have enough to do, thank you very much.

You will want to ask yourself what the added value is at each step of building a M&E plan - stop, take a break, take stock, and then move forward. Checking in along the way helps you build a meaningful process that will only serve to strengthen the work that you do.

Chapter 5: Refining Your Project Design and Pathway of Change for M&E

In this chapter we will be focusing on how to articulate a pathway of change for your project, the first step of an M&E plan.

You will always want to start a M&E plan by outlining what are the desired outcomes for your work and how you expect to get there. Our discussion will draw on many of the ideas introduced in previous chapters, but now we will be diving into more of the necessary specifics of program design.

Key steps of an M&E plan: Step 1

Step 1
Articulate your pathway of change

Step 2
Select indicators

Step 3
Determine the data collection process

Step 4
Develop the data analysis process

Step 5
Determine how to use findings for strategic decisions

Should we review aspects of designing and planning your work?

In earlier discussions on building a shared consensus about your organization's strategic direction, we have suggested planning tools such as a theory of change to outline your desired impact. As we now begin to build a M&E plan for a specific project, you can further refine the design of your efforts with questions such as:

1. What are your project's desired outcomes?
2. What are your project's activities/ interventions?

3. What are aspects of your project that will enhance the likelihood of its success?
4. What are some potential problems that may arise?

Sound familiar? It should! Hopefully, you have already thought about these questions in terms of both your programmatic and operational strategy, as well as your larger vision of your organization. These are questions to ask at each stage of the process with the help of M&E tools.

Getting used to the logical framework as well…

To ease into a M&E plan, we want to introduce another popular project design tool: the logical framework- 'logframe' for short, also referred to as a logic model.[139]

Essentially what you are doing is zooming in on a specific pathway that is outlined in your organization's theory of change. And since the theory of change and logical framework are commonly used in the field of community development, it is helpful to have a comfort level and familiarity with both.

We want to re-emphasize here that all these planning tools will help you sharpen your program theory - a theory about how and why your programs will work.

Each of these techniques offers a visual representation of what you are trying to achieve, thereby enabling you to clearly outline and communicate the underlying logic of your efforts in the field.[140]

In our experience we find that the theory of change is especially useful for broader organizational strategic planning. When you are developing a M&E plan for a particular project though, it can be helpful to be guided by the specificity of the logical framework.

Of course, we can all keep in mind that life isn't as neat and tidy as it looks when we place it into the template of logical framework.
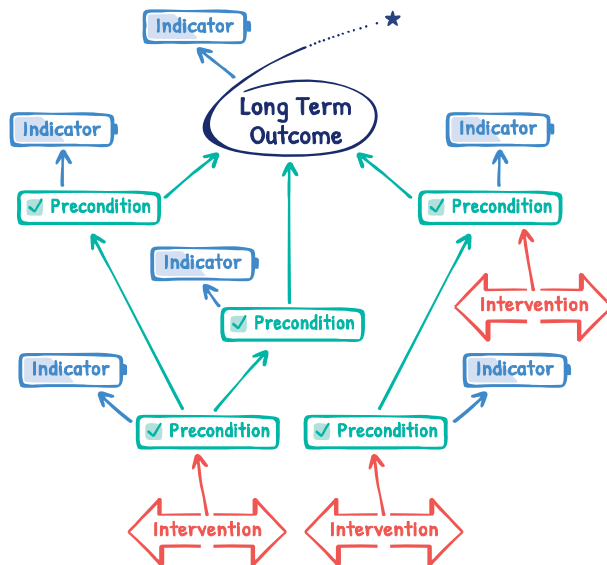
Theory of Change

Logical Framework
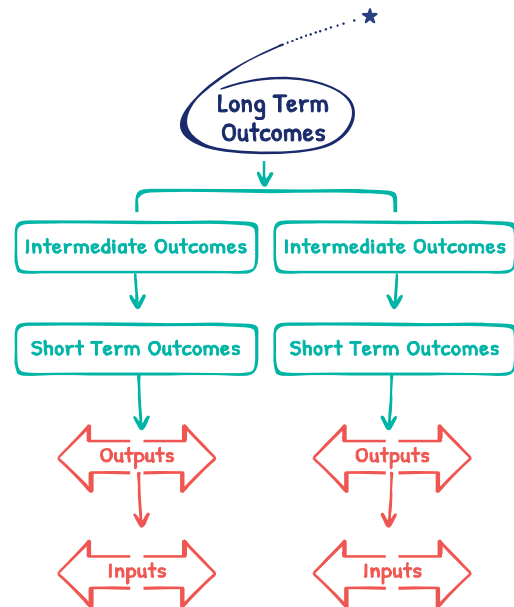
What's different about the logical framework?

As you can see, there is much overlap between the logical framework and the theory of change. The theory of change leaves more room for conveying the messiness and complexity of the work, yet the logical framework does have many of the similar elements.[142]

We can review each of the components and see the link between these tools:

Long-term outcomes (also known as long-term goals, desired impact)- large-scale, desirable change that you hope your project will create for the world.

Short-term and Intermediate outcomes (also referred to as preconditions) - positive (or negative) effects of your project, - the steppingstones needed to achieve desired changes as you go forward.

Activities (also known as interventions)- consist both of your inputs - resources that go into your project and outputs - products or services that your project makes.

The logical flow – as presented in a logical framework

Long Term Outcomes → Intermediate Outcomes → Short Term Outcomes → Inputs → Outputs

Intended Results (Intermediate Outcomes, Short Term Outcomes)

Activities (Inputs, Outputs)
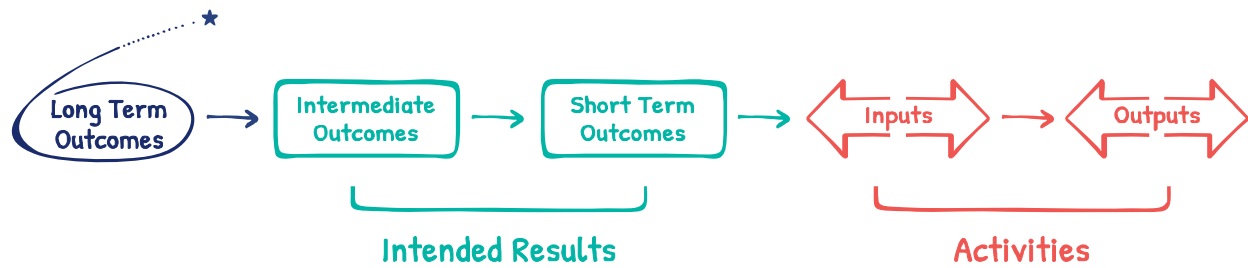
Tip: Stay focused on the principles behind the labels.

We know, more jargon. This is so unfair! You will find though that many of the concepts are the same, even if various tools use different titles or labels.

What matters again is that you understand the principles underlying each of the terms. Inevitably you will encounter various names for these templates and tools depending on the country context and on your financial supporters. So we purposefully are introducing the many possibilities for this reason. We have a rationale for it, we promise!

For now, stay focused on examining the concepts here and how you will agree on a shared vocabulary to use with key stakeholders.

Hopefully you are getting an initial sense of how a logical framework can be used to articulate your pathway of change. We are going to continue exploring this more in depth, but let's take a quick break to see how this first step of our M&E plan fits into the larger picture. We will introduce a template that can help provide a structure for your M&E efforts.

Suggested Template for your M&E Plan

A basic template can be helpful to guide discussions on designing your M&E plan.[143] While it is an oversimplified version of what you will eventually develop, the template provides a convenient way for you to begin conceptualizing some fundamentals in your M&E plan.[144]

You can get an overview here of key elements that you will need to determine in moving forward with M&E:
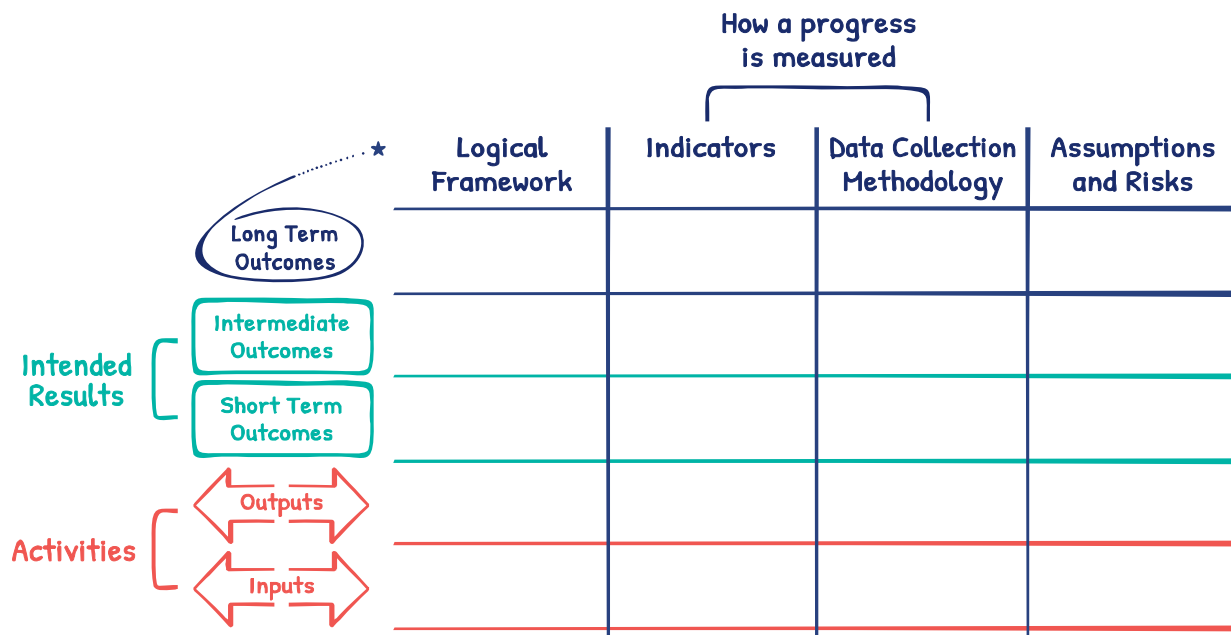
In brief, the template outlines:

Logical framework of your project - your planned activities and desired results.

Indicators -how you'll measure progress. (discussed in chapter 6)

Data methodology - how you'll collect the information for the indicators. (discussed in chapter 7)

Assumptions and risks - factors that are linked to your logical framework to help focus the inquiry process. (discussed at the end of this chapter)

This M&E template reminds you to stay focused on questions that you already are getting used to asking such as: What is the project going to achieve? How will the planned activities be carried out? What resources, people, equipment will you need? What potential problems might you come across? And how will the progress and ultimate success of the project be measured?

You can see that the first column of the M&E template is essentially the first step of the process, outlining your logical framework. That is where the project's logical flow (also known as pathway of change) is illustrated.

Let's review more in depth the aspects of articulating a logical framework for your project.

Outlining the elements of your logical framework for M&E

Step 1: Define Long-term Outcomes

As you are well-practiced in articulating a theory of change by now, you already know to start first with long-term outcomes.

You haven't forgotten (hopefully!) that impact is the most important part, the point of all of your efforts. So start first by deciding your long-term outcomes, not your activities. We do this in order to stay focused on what we are hoping to achieve and to avoid designing interventions that will not lead to our desired results.

Makes sense, right? You then work backwards to determine your intended results - your short and intermediate outcomes- followed by your planned activities.
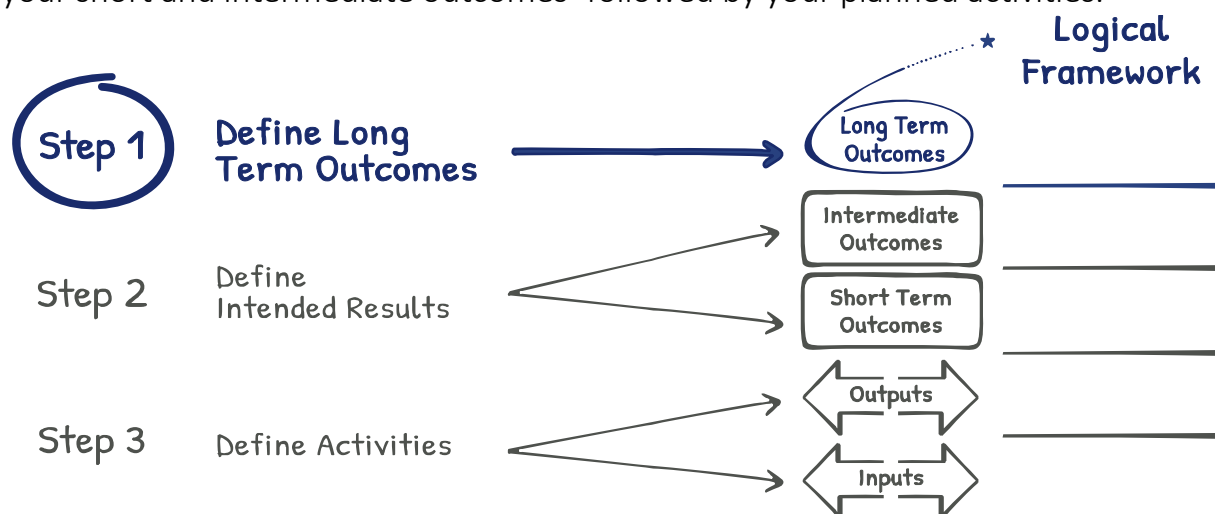
Your long-term outcomes, also referred to as expected impact or desired results, are the ambitious goals that you set out to achieve as an organization.

Keeping in mind the alignment of your programmatic strategy with your operational and organizational strategies, you want to make sure that your desired long-term outcome(s) of a particular project are directly linked to your broader organizational goals.

The articulated long-term outcomes for each of your individual projects are then, in essence, the common denominator, a unifying theme that connects your programmatic strategy to your organization's overall vision.

Step 2: Define Short Term and Intermediate Outcomes

So far, we have discussed the long-term outcomes of your selected project. The next step is to outline the preconditions, referred to here as your short and intermediate outcomes.

You can think of these types of outcomes as a bridge between activities and impact-the steppingstones- that if achieved, will lead to your long-term outcomes.
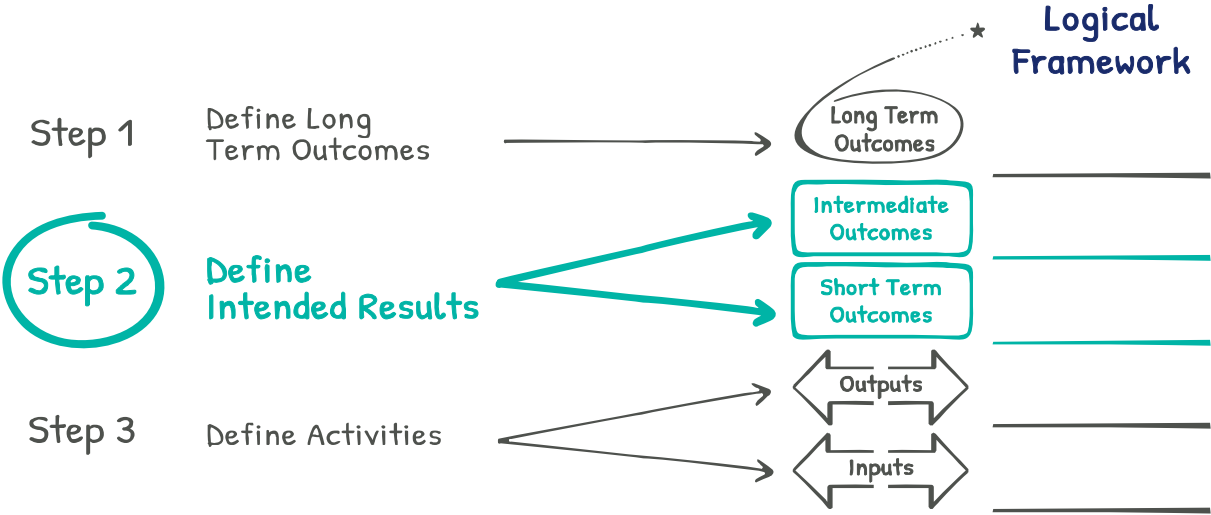
Step 3: Define Activities

And now that you have set your intended results, you are ready to design your project's activities.

In the logical framework, activities are made up of the inputs and outputs. Inputs are what actually gets put into your project – your financial resources, rented space, expertise of your team, etc. Outputs are what you plan to actually do- build houses, offer loans, provide workshops, etc.
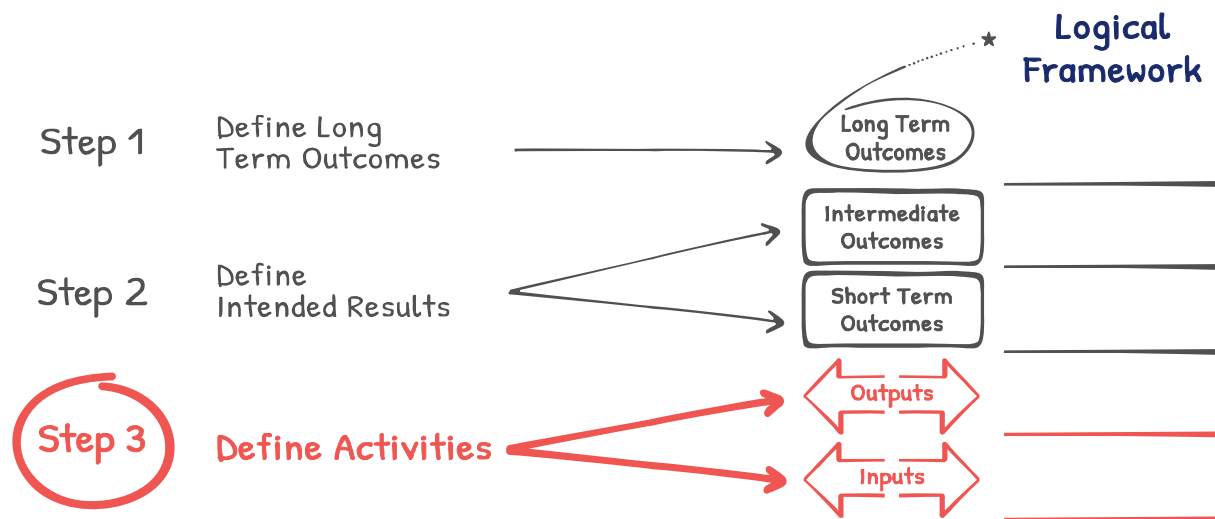
For our purposes, we will use the term 'activities' to include both inputs and outputs. As such, your activities refer both to the needed inputs to get your project off the ground and the outputs that will result.

As we move forward, you will want to make sure to keep track of the distinct terminology used in your logical framework.

You can especially note the difference between outputs and outcomes. For example, you may specify in your logical framework that your planned output is a training workshop, but that does not guarantee the desired outcome - an acquired new skillset for your participants- will necessarily be produced.

Keep in mind that there can be gaps between what you anticipate given a particular output and what the actual outcome really is.

Let's take a break!

Outputs and outcomes sound too much alike. Aren't they the same thing?

All organizations, even those which have been doing this for a long time, grapple with distinguishing between the outputs and outcomes. (And yes, to add to the confusion, we often see varying definitions of outputs.)

In general, outputs are defined as the basic measurements of a project's activity, such as how many individuals attended workshops, used services or received goods. While such statistics are vital measures, outputs are not adequate indicators of actual impact on the lives of those involved in our projects.

In recent decades, a significant shift in the field has led to a much greater focus on measuring desired outcomes.[145] Recognizing this, we need to differentiate between tracking outputs - the implementation of your activities - versus tracking actual outcomes. It is the difference, for example, in how many people undergo job training versus how many people remain employed upon completion of the job training.

Okay, so you are getting the picture here. And we hope that you are getting more comfortable with how to articulate your logical framework in a way that can summarize concisely what your planned efforts are and what you wish to achieve.

By doing so, your stakeholders will be able to more readily see the logical flow that links each stage in your project design thereby making the underlying logic explicit.

Ideas for your toolkit: Interviewing individuals one on one

Of course, you won't want to forget one of your key resources in project design- your stakeholders. Remember that your data collection from the field can take place at any phase of the project - from the early stages of planning to the end when you are trying to understand your impact.

So perhaps during your project design you would like to have more one- on-one conversations with stakeholders? Interviews can always be helpful here.[146]

And while you will want to keep the interviews conversational, it is helpful to come equipped with some type of interview guide. Ideas for some open-ended questions about project design include:[147]

- What is your understanding of what this project does?

- How do you see this project fitting into the work of other like-minded initiatives out there?

- How do you define success for this project?

- And what are some of the possible obstacles it faces?

Remember, all of us can learn through practice how to collect data about our work. Interviews can be a great place to start in helping your team get accustomed to thinking about M&E and the toolkit available.

You are almost finished with Step 1 of a M&E plan! But there is one more thing- we just want to make sure that as part of articulating your pathway of change, you also outline your assumptions and your understanding of the risks associated with your planned project.

Let's revisit assumptions (and add on risks)

As we know from our earlier discussions on the theory of change, assumptions are a critical piece in explaining why you believe that your program can be successful.

Your assumptions are grounded in your beliefs, biases, opinions and experience. And they can also, hopefully, be evidence- based. With so many organizations that openly publicize their past experiences and insights, you are often able to corroborate and substantiate your assumptions, and thus your logical framework, with data and/or well-documented best practices.

And what about risks? This will also be the time when you want to add possible risks to your discussion about project design. Since we are always in some type of 'experiment mode', even with the best -laid plans and years of experience, we want to keep in mind all the things that may disrupt plans.

For each part of your logical framework - inputs, outputs, short and intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes- you can ask these tough questions:[148]

- What are potential roadblocks to our project? What could go wrong? Is there anything that might prevent us from carrying out our planned activities based on the inputs we have allocated?

- Is it probable that the inputs invested in our project will lead to our projected outputs?

- Lastly, what is the likelihood that our planned activities (inputs and outputs) will, over time, result in the desired long-term outcomes?
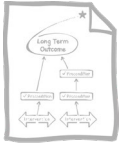
Let's take a break!

A quick note on assumptions and risks… For the M&E plan you want to be very specific about assumptions and biases, and you also want to carefully articulate what are the risks associated with your project. As you can see, there is a whole column devoted to this in the M&E template.

Why do we have to be so upfront about this? Well, we all know that as mentioned before, a great project design does not guarantee a successful result. Many factors could affect your success once you get started, including factors that you can't predict. We have to take it as a given that we will have to learn as we go and so we need a way to monitor this.

Of course, we do want to try to anticipate potential problems and keep an eye out for them in our M&E plan as well.

And you may recall the 'if/then statements' from Chapter 2. When you write your project's logical framework as a series of if/then statements, you will be better able to identify assumptions and risks.[149] As you do so, you can then add assumptions and risks to the template that you are developing for your M&E plan.
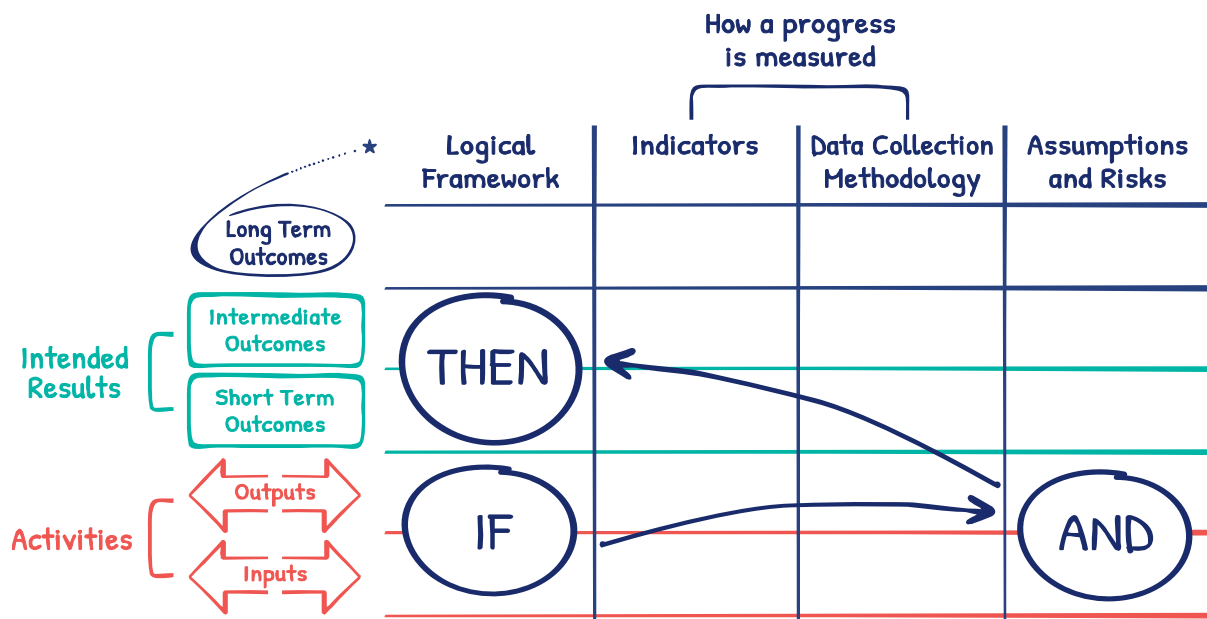
Assumptions and risks are good reminders for us - and it helps for us to always keep in mind the capricious nature of our work in the field- with ever-changing variables and unexpected detours that happen in real life.

Summing Up...

So you are already starting to think like an M&E expert! By now you can see that to begin filling out a M&E template, you really need to understand the project's activities and intended effects.

In outlining your project's logical framework/ theory of change, you hopefully have come to better appreciate its use both as a project design tool and as a first step in M&E. And in addition, you have probably become more aware of the importance of identifying assumptions as well as risks as part of this process. There is certainly a value in having lots of important information collected in one place and having it visually represented as a logical flow.

In the next chapter, we will explore indicators, the next step in your M&E plan.

Chapter 6: Selecting Indicators and Targets

'Dashboard indicators,' a common term used in the field, can provide us with an overall picture of the most important information that we need to know for M&E processes.[150]

As we go along, you can begin to think of your indicators like the dashboard of a car that shows you the time, your speed and perhaps even your direction. It is not only helpful to know where you are heading, but it is also important to have some markers along the way indicating that you are going in the right direction.

Selecting these markers of progress for your M&E plan- your indicators- will be the next step that we will take on in this chapter. We will discuss how they can be used to track progress as you implement your project.

Key components of an M&E plan: Step 2

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Articulate your pathway of change	Select indicators	Determine the data collection process	Develop the data analysis process	Determine how to use findings for strategic decisions

And while we highly recommend the use of indicators in your M&E work, we do want to point out that there are alternative M&E processes that are 'indicator-free' (and can be explored further in the additional resources provided in the appendices).[151]

Yes, we are back to indicators

We were first introduced to the concept of indicators during our discussion of theory of change. Now we will go into more depth on how they can spark more productive conversations about how to gauge ongoing progress.

Too often, indicators are often set for us by individuals who may not have direct engagement with our programs.[152] But joint ownership over how we define and measure our work is essential here. You want to make sure to develop relevant indicators with primary stakeholders including your project team and members of your target community.

The value of diving into this process in a participatory way enhances the likelihood of being able to set more realistic and meaningful indicators.[153] Doing so also helps you to consider the various information needs as well as the viewpoints of your diverse stakeholders on how to track change.

What you are doing is taking one of the trickiest elements of the M&E process – determining indicators - and making that whole process accessible to many of your stakeholders.

And why does this matter now? Because setting indicators with full participation by key stakeholders will help better determine shared expectations of what you and your organization will be accountable for now and in the future.

Let's take a break!

We know, so many conversations to have! Figuring out what social change means to members of your target community can be challenging. And creating participatory approaches to this work requires what we have little of, namely time, resources and yes- maybe patience too.

After all, so much of how we assess our success is defined by some type of shift in our target community - maybe in terms of status, attitudes, knowledge or behavior. Consider the topics we address - everything from improved agricultural methods to promoting immunizations, from encouraging safe sexual practices to eliminating gender-based violence. We can't move forward by simply imposing our ideas in a top-down manner without real partners.

You won't want to rush through this step. An investment now will help ensure that your M&E process going forward is not perfunctory, but that it enables you to carefully track your progress in a meaningful way.

So here's the deal. Determining indicators may be one of the most difficult steps in designing a M&E process, especially when you are trying to provide markers of change in complex settings.

And exactly because indicators are used to monitor the performance of projects and measure the impact of interventions, you want to embrace this part! Again, without taking ownership on this, this task could end up being left to others who may not fully understand the nature of your work.

A few key terms for us…

For now we can present a quick overview of terms that we will address in this chapter. In thinking about these ideas, we hope that the following discussion will push you not to just settle for measuring what is easiest.

We want you to think about *why* and *how* change has happened, and how important that change is to those affected by your projects.[154]

Indicators
An indicator measures your progress toward desired outcomes.

Targets
Targets are the numbers or percentages that you would like to reach and the dates by which you would like to reach them.

Quantitative Indicators
A quantitative indicator measures a number, percentage or ratio, while answering questions such as 'how much?' or 'how many?'

Qualitative Indicators
A qualitative indicator measures what people think, believe or feel.

Process indicators
Process indicators monitor the implementation of the activity and relate both to the input and output.

Outcome indicators
Outcome indicators measure your project's progress and are also used to assess if the project's desired results have been achieved.

As you begin having conversations on these topics, you will likely gain greater insight into how ideas about change may differ among your various stakeholders. Remember to consider not only *what* is measured but also *how* it is measured and *who* decides which indicators are important.

And of course, as we know, everything has limitations. Indicators are useful to have, yet they will not give us everything we need to know.

Combining both quantitative and qualitative indicators (and the subsequent data collected) can help compensate for this. And as we discuss further in next chapter, the richness of incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods in your M&E plan will help to ensure that you are able to gain as much insight as possible into your efforts.[155]

Let's consider the distinctions between quantitative and qualitative indicators[156]

Quantitative data

Helps answer questions such as:

To what extent has this occurred?
How much has taken place?
To what extent have our targets been met?

Expressed in numerical terms, counted, or compared on a scale.

Includes survey data, attendance numbers, and test scores.

Answers questions such as "To what extent has a change taken place?"

Quantitative indicators

Measures in numerical terms- numbers, percentage or ratio.

Helps to assess if projects are on track.

Qualitative data

Helps answer questions such as:

Why has our project made a difference?
Why has this change occurred?
How has this change occurred?

Usually presented in a narrative format

Includes information collected from observations, focus groups, or interviews.

Answers questions such as "Why has there been a change?"

Qualitative indicators

Measures what people think, feel or believe.

Helps us to assess how and why change has occurred.

What does this look like in practice? We might want to know, for example, how many participants showed up to our training workshop, or how many of these participants have passed the training exam at the end of the series of workshops. We can track attendance and knowledge acquisition with quantitative indicators.

If, on the other hand, we are seeking to build community engagement through the training, we may want qualitative indicators as well. Perhaps we want to know about the quality of the relationships or the nature of the dialogue among participants.

There is no doubt that quantitative indicators have advantages- starting with the fact that they are often easier to both collect and interpret.[157] Yet often we find that the most important indicators are the ones that are not quantifiable.

Tip: Keep in mind that you should check out pre-existing indicators!

There are already lots of indicators readily available in various fields of interest that could be helpful in your conversations on this topic. With many different organizations sharing similar long-term goals, we can learn a great deal from how progress is already being measured.

Not only will this save you time, but it will also ensure that the indicator you have chosen has been tested. You certainly do not need to invent your own indicators every time. But you do have to make sure they are appropriate for your own particular context.

In considering each kind of quantitative and qualitative indicator, you will want to make sure to select your indicators wisely, not choosing too many indicators for a single project.

And while you are weighing criteria for selecting indicators, take into account the idea of attribution by asking the question - 'would the change that this indicator measures have happened without the project?'[158]

In the following section, we discuss how to fit various kinds of indicators, especially process indicators and outcome indicators, into your M&E plan.

Linking indicators to your logical framework

We can return to our M&E template to help us consider how to develop specific indicators for our projects. The indicators will help measure how well you are providing inputs, creating outputs and bringing about short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes.
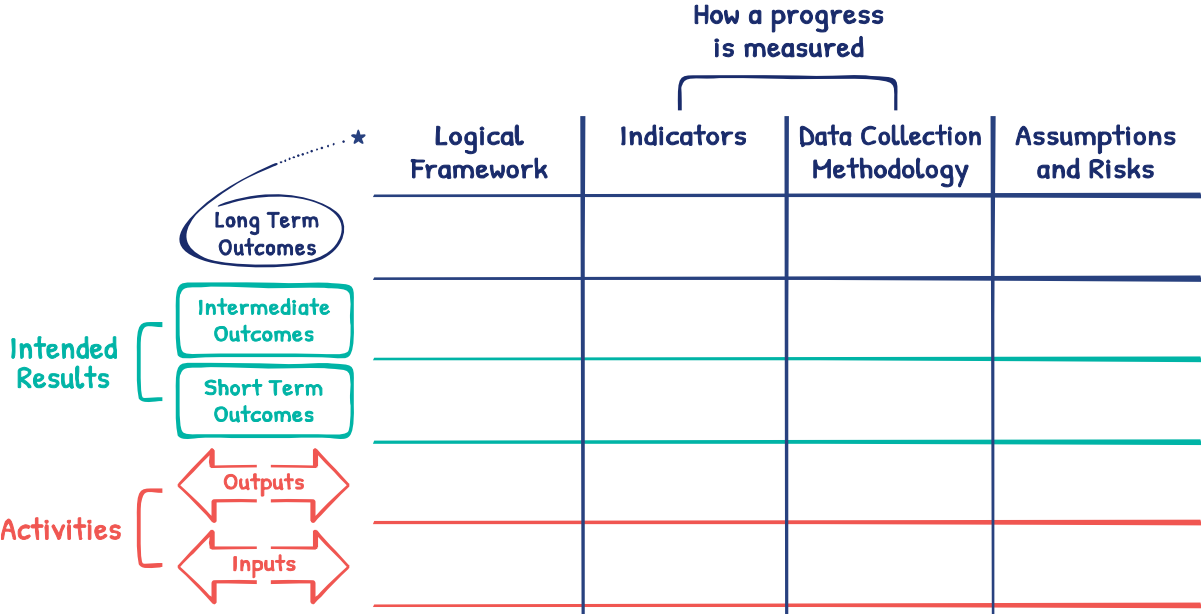
In general, indicators that measure inputs and outputs will help you with monitoring. We often call these kinds of indicators - process indicators.[159]

Process indicators call tell you about your activities, such as if services are being delivered, if participants are showing up, or if staff are being trained as needed. As you can guess, monitoring this kind of information is a critical piece of your M&E plan - you just have to define it first.

Process indicators

monitor the implementation of the activity - relating to inputs and outputs.

Process indicators that are related to input include:

financial resources, human resources, administrative resources, equipment required.

Process indicators affiliated with outputs can include:

# of participants, % of the target population participating in the program, % of the participants who attend or are involved, the dropout rate, # of key stakeholders engaged.

Process indicators can also consider participant satisfaction such as:

Do participants feel comfortable? Are the staff approachable? Is the venue set-up appropriate to the group activities? Is the project activity run at convenient times? Do the topics covered meet the project's purposes? Are the topics taught in an engaging way?

Process indicators also assess implementation through indicators such as:

# of workshops conducted, # of activities implemented, # of materials distributed, if materials were easy to comprehend, if materials used were appropriate for the target audience, etc.

.

Tip: Keep in mind the diversity of your target community

In determining indicators, you want to remember that there is often a great deal of variation in your target population.

For example, within your target community women and men may have unequal status. And if so, this likely impacts men and women differently, not only with regard to access to information, technology, education and opportunity, but also in terms of the behavior and norms of each gender (for example, a woman's freedom of expression may be inhibited).

It is fair to assume then that 'gender neutral' indicators might not be presenting an accurate picture of your target population.[160] You may also want to create specific indicators for other relevant personal characteristics such as age, economic status or ethnic group.

Indicators that measure the various types of outcomes, as outlined in your logical framework, are called outcome indicators, or alternatively, impact indicators.[161]

These outcomes are especially important in understanding the progress of your project toward its desired results. In exploring the longer-term effects of your work, these types of outcomes often include a range of topics such as behavior modification, health status and quality of life.

Outcome Indicators

monitor the intended results of the activity -
relating to short-term and long-term outcomes.

Short term outcome indicators

Short-term outcome indicators monitor your project's progress. This usually relates to some type of short-term change.

Short-term outcome indicators may include:

- Changes in awareness, knowledge and skills

- Changes in intended behavior

- Changes in individual capacity, i.e., confidence, self-esteem, social skills, problem solving skills, increased help-seeking behavior, coping skills and optimism

- Increased confidence

- Increased social networks

- Improved relationships

Intermediate / long-term outcome indicators

Intermediate and long-term indicators, also known as impact indicators, are used to assess if the project's goal has been achieved (longer-term changes or changes sustained over time).

Impact outcome indicators may include:

- Increased mental wellbeing

- Increased physical wellbeing

- Community engagement

- Increased education

- Increased employment

In general, you will want to keep indicators manageable, making sure that you limit the number to a reasonable amount. It is more useful to select a small number of meaningful indicators that can be examined regularly rather than accumulating an

extensive, complicated list of indicators that may be too time-consuming to actually be of use.[162]

Once you have selected your indicators, it will be much easier to track your project targets if you have decided to also use these as part of your M&E plan.

Project targets

You may want to use project targets in conjunction with indicators for better tracking and estimating your progress. Project targets state the specific measure that your project will meet by a certain date.[163] Essentially it is a commitment that you are making in advance to reach certain results.

You will want to set project targets in tandem with your selected indicators. Whereas indicators are how you will measure, targets are the goals that you plan on reaching. And of course, whether you are deciding to set pre-determined targets or not, you will still want to continually think about how you can consider these issues with your stakeholders in a participatory way.
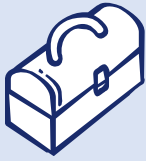
Ideas for your toolkit: Community mapping

One way to reflect on possible indicators in a more accessible way is to explore the idea of community mapping- a participatory approach to gather insights from your stakeholders.[164]

Community mapping is a way to let individuals tell their story and how they view aspects of their community including everything from infrastructure to basic services and existing resources. Then together, you can build a shared community map which will present a snapshot of their perspectives.
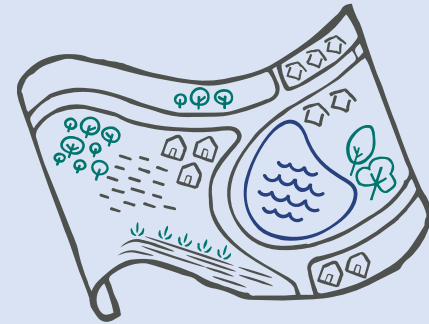
Creating a community map is a helpful tool to build participatory engagement.[165]

The process itself introduces the idea of a baseline, (i.e., the current map of the community), coupled with a look into the future). It asks: 'This is where we are now, but where do we want to be?'

The insights gained can eventually be translated into indicators for your project. And you can have these types of conversations without once mentioning the term 'indicator'!

Let's be thoughtful about this...

Indicators take time to figure out, and you will then have to determine how you monitor whether you are making progress on your selected indicators. While it would be wonderful to have all the needed data, it is important to remember that collecting and analyzing the data takes time and resources. And, of course, there is some information that will be too difficult or expensive to try to track down.

As we move forward, we want to make a plug for practicality. You will want to always balance available measurements with realistic expectations.

And one of the most practical considerations, of course, is to think about whether your selected indicators will actually help you make better decisions. After all, M&E helps us to adjust our plans as needed and improve the work as we go. It is always useful to ask: is this indicator useful for making decisions about the project implementation?

SMART and SPICED Indicators

So while there are no set rules in choosing indicators, there are guidelines that are useful in the selection process. A common framework that is used is the 'SMART' framework, which helps keep particular characteristics in mind when setting indicators.

SMART guidelines tend to be especially suitable for quantitative indicators.

SMART Indicators

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound

You can ask the following questions about your indicators.

Questions to pose about your SMART Indicators:

Specific - From the way the indicator is phrased, is it clear what exactly will be achieved?

Measurable - Are you sure that it is possible to collect data for such an indicator? Do you have the expertise, time and staff to collect the required data?

Achievable - Is it realistic to expect the indicator's targets to be achieved with the time, staff and funding you have?

Relevant - Does the indicator capture the change described in your inputs, outputs, and outcomes?

Time-bound - Is it clearly specified by when the indicator will be achieved?

Another acronym that is especially useful while engaging in a participatory approach to M&E is the **'SPICED'** approach, which draws heavily on qualitative and descriptive measures.

The SPICED approach offers a list of guidelines for the development of indicators *with* stakeholders and encourages you to consider how to be inclusive in the process. And this is with good reason - for it encourages and helps ensure that the selection of indicators marking social or individual behavioral change will be most relevant and important.

SPICED Indicators

S	P	I	C	E	D
Subjective	Participatory	Interpreted	Cross–checked	Empowering	Diverse

We should point out that this approach encourages much more involvement of stakeholders to define indicators of social change and, as such, requires more time and resources to facilitate. The following questions spark discussions about the process as much as about the indicators themselves.

Questions to pose about your SPICED Indicators:

S — **Subjective -** Are the indicators subjective-with the ability to capture an individual's unique insights (i.e., where the 'anecdotal' becomes critical data because of the source's value)?

P — **Participatory -** Are the indicators developed together with those persons best able to assess them (i.e., members of target community, project team)?

I — **Interpreted and communicable -** Do the indicators hold meaning, and can their rationale be easily explained to other stakeholders?

C — **Cross-checked and compared -** Are the varying indicators and measures of progress cross-checked by using different informants, methods, and researchers?

E — **Empowering -** Has the process of setting and assessing indicators helped to empower members of the target community to carefully reflect on desired changes?

D — **Diverse and disaggregated -** Has there been an effort to seek out specific indicators from different groups, including men and women separately? In addition to the need for gender disaggregated data, is there a way to analyze data on other important differences such as age or educational level?

The SPICED approach can help you and your stakeholders in identifying the various ways of defining and capturing change, marking progress along the way towards your desired outcomes.

Summing up...

So we have a caveat here. We want to always keep in mind the limitations of working with M&E tools. While M&E is primarily about improving your own work, it would be remiss of us not to note the degree to which this process can become messy - when for example, M&E issues get embroiled in some internal politics or tied up with proving accountability due to funding requirements.

Since indicators are a way to measure progress on your projects, we have to be cautious about them when considering the broader context of organizational sensitivities. Indicators can be valuable tools, yet they may not always be able to capture complex realities and relationships. And while we can use indicators to measure some types of change, we may not be always be able to get enough insight into the reasons behind that change.

Keeping all of this in mind, we can be reminded of the value of the extra effort needed in this ongoing process to keep organizational stakeholders on board.

In this next chapter we will explore the ins and outs of the all-important step of data collection.

Chapter 7: Developing the Data Collection Plan

We are now ready to move on to data collection methods. As we explore in this chapter the many kinds of data collection tools, you will want to consider the methods that may be the most appropriate for your particular M&E plan.

Key components of an M&E plan: Step 3

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Articulate your pathway of change	Select indicators	Determine the data collection process	Develop the data analysis process	Determine how to use findings for strategic decisions

The data collection and data analysis tools that we will be examining are often referred to as research methods.[166] We want to keep in mind though the distinction between research methodology and M&E.

In carrying out M&E, your focus is on 'practice', with much less emphasis on 'theory'. You are not setting out to make a theoretical contribution to the field which you tend to do in research studies.[167] Instead, in your M&E efforts, you can use well-known research methods to improve your own work and your chances of making a long-term impact.

So, checking back in with our M&E template, we are now at the data collection methodology column.

	Logical Framework	Indicators	Data Collection Methodology	Assumptions and Risks
★ Long Term Outcomes				
Intermediate Outcomes				
Short Term Outcomes				
Outputs				
Inputs				

Below is a brief overview of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods that are commonly used in the M&E process.[168] You can note that each of these methods has variations and that this is certainly far from being a complete list of all the many possibilities for data collection available in the field.

A few different kinds of data collection methods used for M&E:

Interviews

Individual interviews allow you to achieve a greater understanding of how your work is experienced by individuals who are affected by your programs. One on one conversations, usually conducted with a list of prepared questions, can be done face-to-face, by telephone or by video.[169]

Interviews can be in-depth, semi-structured or totally unstructured depending on the information being sought.[170] Talking to people is an especially useful data collection instrument when you are interested in an individual's perceptions, opinions, ideas, experiences, and, of course, stories.

Potential benefits of interviews include…

As a more natural form of information sharing, interviews suit a wide range of populations.

Individuals are more apt to express themselves without being restricted to pre-determined categories.

Interviews provide rich information with the opportunity for follow up for clarification. As such, they offer an opportunity to examine more complex topics.

And limitations to account for…

Sensitive issues may be challenging to address in a conversation.

A good 'fit' between the interviewer and interviewee is essential, as is the need to create a welcoming format for interviewees.

Interviews rely on language communication and listening skills-providing more of a challenge to capture when translation is needed, and as such requires skilled interpreters.

Document Review

Documentation that you develop for your project can provide an ongoing record of activities.[171] This can come in the form of details about your participants in informal feedback and/or in reflections through journals, diaries or progress reports.

Documents such as budgets, organizational policies, attendance sheets, workplans, as well as existing records from external sources (also referred to as secondary data sources) can also be valuable.

Potential benefits of using documentation include…

Incorporating documentation) into your everyday work (i.e., intake forms, sign-up sheets) is often essential, giving you the ability to gather data about program implementation and your target population

There is much creativity in how you define 'documents.' For example, taking pictures at events or videotaping certain activities can be categorized as documentation.

Existing records from outside your organization, if accessible, can also be important data sources.

And limitations to account for…

In creating your own documentation, you need to carefully manage your organizational infrastructure and watch how you build upon existing efforts. Otherwise you risk data overload.

With documents from external sources, you will have to take into account issues of privacy and accessibility.

Observations

Observations that are directly seen or captured on visuals such as through photographs and videotapes, provide insight into what is actually happening in the field.[172]

Data that can be gathered by 'seeing' include everything from physical surroundings and ongoing activities to the behavior of individuals and their interactions.[173] Generally, it is helpful for observers to be equipped with an observation guide that serves as a checklist, which provides more uniformity in the data collection process.

Potential benefits of observations include…

Data that is collected is based on actual behavior that is observed (in contrast to self-reported behavior that is recorded either in interviews or in questionnaires).

Observations take place in 'real-time' rather than retrospectively.

While there are variations in types of observations (i.e., 'unobtrusive', 'participant' or 'obtrusive') - it is generally non-intrusive and does not require active participation of those who are part of the M&E process.[174]

As such it is less burdensome than asking individuals to fill out a questionnaire or participate in an interview.

And limitations to account for…

There is potential for observer bias. It is therefore helpful to have a team of observers to provide a more complete picture of what is happening, helping to counter any individual biases.

Observations require sensitivity, so as not to affect or disturb those under observation. 'Participant' or 'obtrusive' observers have to be especially careful to not be perceived as disruptive to the setting.

Participatory Community Mapping

As a collective approach to data collection, community mapping a can help you build a shared understanding by presenting a snapshot of how members of a community currently perceive the present situation.[175]

Community mapping can be useful, for example, in the identification of infrastructure and basic services, in identifying existing resources and in helping to establish a baseline for data collection.[176] It is a participatory process that affords opportunities for group discussion and for building a rapport among participants.[177]

Potential benefits of community mapping include…

Community mapping gives an opportunity for self-expression - where individuals can represent themselves and their understanding of the world around them.

The process provides a way for stakeholders to work together, thereby encouraging relationship building.

By helping to increase everyone's understanding of the community or whatever is being mapped, community mapping often helps to identify issues of concern and to generate discussions about priorities.

And limitations to account for…

As with other participatory tools, the results of a community mapping process may be perceived as less rigorous a source of data or too unconventional.

In a community setting, not all participants may feel comfortable (perhaps due to gender, power dynamics etc.) to actively engage.

Participants may also be less inclined to raise negative or dissenting views due to the communal nature of the process.

Creative Tools

Various creative approaches provide an alternative to the written word, activities such as creating a play, an exhibition or a video.

Storytelling. Through writing and performance (play and/or dance), storytelling can be used as a way to capture the personal and/or group experience. (We will talk much more about storytelling and its importance in Chapter 10)

Dance and drama. Each of these methods can offer insights into how individuals interpret their experience which can then be shared with a broader audience.

Impact Drawings. Illustrations can portray past, present or future situations, and can be especially useful for encouraging reflection and showing change.

Other examples of self-expression include photo essays and collages.

Potential benefits of these creative tools include…

Creative tools often enable participants to reveal insights that they may not have been able to articulate otherwise, offering a distinct opportunity for self-expression.

An arts-based approach can provide data which could then be used to supplement and enrich more traditional data. It is an alternative approach that might not have been accessed otherwise.

Creative tools can accommodate those who learn in various ways and come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

And limitations to account for…

Like other participatory tools, some individuals may not feel 100% comfortable if, for example, they are not inclined to engage with art. It is important to have a clear rationale for the selected approach defined in advance.

It is essential to convey a non-judgmental attitude so that participants are assured that they or their efforts will not be judged.

A lack of familiarity with less-conventional tools may lead to skepticism and even awkwardness depending on the context.

Surveys

Questionnaires as a very common M&E tool, are helpful in gathering four types of information about individuals: 1. Knowledge 2. Beliefs/ Attitudes/Opinions 3. Behavior and 4. Attributes.[178]

Survey questions come in various forms, including closed questions, open-ended and scaled questions, and multiple-choice questions.[179]

Closed questions are usually in the format of yes/no or true/false options. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, leave the answer entirely up to the respondent and often provide a greater range of responses.[180]

Potential benefits of surveys include…

Surveys, which can be administered online, by telephone, by mail or in person, are practical for gathering a large amount of data and thereby in providing a broad perspective.

If the same set of questions is asked at the beginning (for baseline information), at various intervals during and after your program is completed, surveys can be useful in tracking change over time.

Questionnaires can be anonymous. Respondents may therefore be more inclined to honestly share their true feelings.

And limitations to account for…

Surveys tend to have a low response rate when trying to reach a wider audience and are limited to target groups that are literate.

Based on self-reporting by respondents, there is a possibility that answers may be biased, particularly if the issues involved are sensitive.

Careful attention must be given to the design of the survey as biased and leading questions can skew results. Pilot testing the survey on a sample of your target group is essential.

Focus Groups

Group interviews, or focus groups, give you an opportunity to talk to a number of people in a relatively short period of time. In focus groups, a small number of people, usually 6-12 individuals, are brought together to discuss specific topics under the guidance of a facilitator.[181]

Equipped with a prepared set of interview questions, the facilitator leads the discussion. Participants are encouraged to freely express their views and engage in a dialogue with each other, often resulting in meaningful insights and perspectives.

Potential benefits of focus groups include…

Focus groups provide rich information, especially on how and why individuals think in a particular way, how they have experienced various events or developments and what particular beliefs and values they hold.

Focus groups offer the opportunity to engage with individuals who may not have the reading or writing skills to provide feedback through tools requiring literacy.

The group setting lends itself to examining complex issues and for gaining deeper, collective insights. A group context provides an alternative to those who are less inclined to engage in one-on-one interviews.

And limitations to account for…

Skilled facilitation is required, especially to create an inviting environment, deal with possible conflict, and ensure a balanced discussion among all participants.

Focus groups risk discussions being dominated by a few or the possibility of 'groupthink.'

Individuals might hold back without the privacy or anonymity given in other types of data collection tools.

Homogeneity is preferable in focus groups to encourage more free and open discussion. To gain perspectives from diverse groups, several series of separate focus groups is preferable.

As you begin to select your methodology…

So many choices in data collection! And since there are a wide range of options to choose from, it is essential to consider your context, needs, indicators, and capacities.

You want to be strategic about this, as your M&E process is an organizational investment in terms of time and resources. So just like you reflect on 'the fit' when you are setting your strategic direction, you can do so in M&E by reflecting on your capacities, what you most want to learn, and your particular context.[182]

Goals of M&E
What are the current priorities for your project? Most pressing questions?

Capabilities and Resources
What are you capable of doing? What skillset, expertise and investment can you bring to the process?

The Fit

Context of the M&E
What is feasible in terms of your target populations for M&E? Which methods are most suitable? What are the constraints to be considered?

Selecting a data collection method

When you are determining which methods to use and developing your data collection plan for M&E, ask yourself the following questions:

	First ask…	**And then ask…**
What Data?	What kind of data will we need in order to measure our indicators?	Will the selected data collection method(s) provide the correct type of information?
From whom?	Who are the individuals who can provide the needed data?	Are these selected data collection methods appropriate for the groups of people from whom we would like to collect data?
How often?	How often do we need to collect these data?	Will we be able to use these data collection methods as often as we need to?
By whom?	Who will be collecting the data? Who will be carrying out the data analysis?	Are they qualified to use these selected data collection methods and the subsequent data analysis?
Is it a possibility?	Will these data collection tools be practical to use?	Do we have the time, expertise and resources needed to use these data collection methods? Are we able to properly address any ethical concerns or issues of confidentiality?

Let's review each of these questions more in detail...

What kind of data will you need to collect to measure your indicator?

We definitely should consider this question carefully. As discussed in Chapter 6, keep in mind the various types of data that you need depending on how you define your indicators. The purpose of the data collection (and if relevant, process and outcome indicators) will largely guide your decision-making process here.

Qualitative data and quantitative data together, often referred to as a mixed method approach, is highly recommended in providing varying insights regarding your project. You will want to see what types of data collection tools can complement one another in giving you a broader understanding.

Tip: Make sure you always shake this up - in life and in your data collection. Use mixed-methods!

You will find that it is preferable to use more than one method of data collection or source of information (i.e., talking to both participants in your project and non-participants). We have a name for this- 'triangulation'. And collecting data with different research methods and then comparing the results helps to enhance the accuracy of your findings.

And don't forget, combining data collection methods can also help you to refine your data collection instruments. For example, you can use exploratory interviews to help design a structured questionnaire. Then, upon analyzing questionnaire findings, you can carry out a focus group to gain greater insight into the findings.

Of the many considerations that will influence your selection of data methods, one to particularly note is whether the data you are collecting is especially personal and/or should be conveyed in a confidential manner.

Group settings for data collection, in a focus group for example, may be too public a forum if you would like to collect particularly sensitive information. In this type of context, the use of questionnaires, with the built- in option of reporting on perspectives in an anonymous fashion, might be more suitable.

? **Who are the individuals to provide the data for your indicator?**

You want to consider here who offers you the needed data.

For example, if you take your selected indicators into account, do you need to collect data from a large number of individuals in various locations or would reaching a few key individuals suffice? Or for example, if you are running a youth program, should you also be eliciting feedback from the parents and teachers of your participants as well as the youth themselves?

You also want to think about the most suitable way to reach out to the individuals who can provide key data.[183] For example, would your respondents be willing to fill out complex, written tools? Or would they prefer in-person conversation? Alternatively, could you reasonably ask them to spend an hour in a one on one interview? Do they have the time to spare? You always need be sensitive to how much you are asking of people.

As you consider your options, keep in mind the value of participatory engagement. Inviting participation into the M&E process signifies a real openness and willingness on your part to create a feedback loop with your community.

Depending on a particular situation, the act of eliciting feedback can prove to be empowering in and of itself, and is all the more so when your stakeholders see that their voice matters.

And, at all stages, you want to consider cultural sensitivity in data collection methods and in all aspects of M&E work.

Let's take a break...

When we are collecting data, just as with the entire M&E process, we should remember that nothing is 'culture-free'. We want to be 100% conscious about how we approach these issues.

Culture affects everything, including how your data collections methods are perceived and how individuals respond to your inquiries.

A definition of what culture entails is quite broad and includes everything from nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation to gender, age and more. You also want to be cognizant of issues such as regional contexts, economic status, language, sexual orientation, and organizational affiliation in the design of your M&E plan.

You don't have to travel far to recognize the importance of cultural sensitivity. Even within your own communities, you will always want to consider the need to work with a bridge builder or cultural translator.

And what is a good start? Always pilot test your data collection tools! There are so many reasons to do this, including the need to avoid common mistakes, such as the assumption that particular concepts or terms mean the same to everyone. Consulting with translators and/or interpreters and pilot testing your questions and tools will hopefully avoid such pitfalls.

How often do you need to collect these data?

This is a good question. If you are using indicators, you can be guided by the timing that you have set out for tracking progress. For example, whereas output indicators are measured often (i.e., weekly or monthly), outcome indicators may only need to be measured quarterly or annually.

In setting your timeline, you want to weigh your resources and capacities together with the kind of data methods you are employing. For example, there are certain tools, such as structured surveys, that may require a significant financial and time investment to both design and administer.

These methods might be worthwhile to use only once or twice a year. Other methods, such as observations, are easier to do and can be used more frequently if necessary. Whatever your timeline though, leave time to check your instruments in advance.

Tip: Pilot test your forms, surveys or other ways you are collecting data!

Why do we always have to pilot test? Well, for starters, it will help you keep track of all the things that you may have forgotten or overlooked.[184]

So, for example, test out your focus group or observation guide with a few of your more intrepid volunteers. Or select a few participants to test out your questionnaire. You say it's not possible to pre- test your tool in the real world? Well, you can be creative. Find another member of your team to help you (i.e., they could fill out the survey themselves). You also should pilot test your data analysis as well.

Afterwards, you can ask such questions as:[185] Was there any information missing or any information that was unnecessary? Were certain words or questions subject to misinterpretation? Were there any questions that did not help measure the indicator? Was the tool used as expected?

Then you can revise your data collection tool if called for to avoid any slip-ups or missteps.

And, one last point in figuring your timelines for data collection and pilot testing – make sure you do not forget the natural calendars. You want to be respectful of your target community and key stakeholders by checking such things as school calendars, agricultural seasons, public and private celebrations, and various religious and ethnic group holidays.

Who will be collecting the data?
And then, who will be doing the analysis?

Here you will want to think carefully about the detailed process of data collection - the use of tools, how they are administered, what happens to the data once collected, and who is available to assist you.

With each data collection tool, ask who will be collecting (and then analyzing) the data? Who is available with the experience in group facilitation or research methods? Do they speak the same language as the individuals they will be communicating with, or will we need to translate tools and guides into different languages?

In terms of preparing a M&E plan, much depends on your team's experience and comfort level with each of the suggested data collection tools.

Tip: Consider data collection as another way to engage your stakeholders...

You should be creative here and think about how stakeholders can enhance your capacities and save limited resources.

Perhaps you have volunteers who would like to become involved in a different aspect of your organization, or a board member who would enjoy gaining firsthand knowledge of your programs. Maybe there are students who are interested in internships and looking for opportunities in applied research?

In weighing possibilities, consider your key stakeholders as assets who can also broaden your existing networks even further and widen your outreach.

Depending on varied skillsets, you want to see whether it is feasible to invite stakeholders to become part of your data collection and analysis process. A word of caution though...

Consider who is involved in your M&E work and your particular context. It may be inappropriate or even unethical in certain circumstances to involve those outside

of your team when sensitive or confidential information is being shared or when the strictest privacy standards are required.

So while participatory efforts are encouraged throughout the M&E process, it isn't always easy to do so, nor does it work in every situation.

? Do you have enough time, money, and expertise?

This can be a tough one. We tend to get ambitious about what types of data we can collect and then lose steam midway. We know there is a wide variety of options in your toolkit for data collection, ranging from simple and easily organized tools to those that are complex and quite expensive to administer.

What adds to the challenge here is the discipline required to stay focused on only the essential information. It can be so tempting to add a few more steps, a few more data collection tools, a few more questions…

Then, before you know it, your tools can become too complicated or confusing. And your entire process can become too unwieldy and time-consuming to be practically implemented. So remember to keep things as simple as possible.

Let's take a break!

Now is the time to think ahead. You don't want to 'drown in data'![186] We would be remiss not to acknowledge the degree to which the pressure for better impact measurement and reporting has left many nonprofits feeling entirely overwhelmed.

Make sure to plan in advance for what happens when all of the data are collected. You want to think carefully about how to organize your own internal data management in a way that makes sense for your work – and of course, so that data collected not only meets a funder's requirement, but can also be used for better informed decision making.[187] Not easy, we know!

One way to help is to consider in advance how to set up a reasonable and not too ambitious data collection plan that fits your own situation.

As we discussed, you want to be selective and keep your M&E template nearby. If you are using indicators, choose only those that are most critical to track success. Then select those data collection methods that have the best potential to produce meaningful data.

You will also want to keep in mind what types of records are needed in the data collection process for your M&E plan. Relevant information that explains how your data was collected should be noted (i.e., the title of the tool, the version of the tool used, who administered the tool, the location and date). Recording all of this will help you track information back to its source if needed, and it can help ensure the quality of data.

Completing your M&E template

So now we can return to the M&E template discussed in the past two chapters. Review your logical framework and selected indicators and then choose a data collection method for each of the indicators that is listed.

You want to read through your completed M&E template as you fill in the section of 'Data Collection Methodology.' You can measure several indicators with the same tool as long as those indicators have the same data collection method, source, and frequency of collection. You can group indicators together in order to reduce or eliminate unnecessary data collection efforts.

Now that you have selected your data collection methods, it is time to start designing the tools that you will use…

To review, ask what data, from whom, how often, by whom, and can it be done. So here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Carefully consider who will be using the tool and how.
- Make sure that your team is trained and has instructions/ guidance as needed.
- Pre-test your tool, pilot test everything!
- Stay focused on gathering only the essential information.
- Keep track of the details of data collection (who, what, when, where).

And to make just a few more suggestions…

Check out existing data collection tools:

As with the many existing indicators, there are already hundreds of data collection tools that have been developed in a broad range of fields.[188] Often it is possible, and even preferable, to use a data collection tool that has already been developed.

Using a pre-existing tool can save a lot of time and resources, while having the added advantage of having already been tested in the field.

Pay attention to ethical concerns in your data collection:

As with all your efforts, keep watch for the many potential ethical issues in M&E.[189]

Carefully consider the past experiences of individuals from whom you are collecting data. Remember the broader context and make sure that your data collection efforts do not cause any worry or discomfort to members of your target community or to others.

For example, check that you are not creating a stressful or confusing experience that takes up too much time or causes hardship in some way. You will need to check that participants give their informed consent to collect and use their data, and that they

understand exactly what they are agreeing to. And of course, when necessary, ensure that participant data is kept anonymous and confidential.

Tailor your data collection tools to your own context:

Your data collection tools, just like your projects, should accommodate your particular situation and target community.

Before you design a data collection tool, assess the cultural context, especially with regard to language, technology, and literacy. Similarly, you will also want to consider culturally preferred methods of communication (i.e., comfort level talking to strangers, appropriateness for a person of one gender to interview a person of another gender).

Explore the option of sampling:

Depending on your specific M&E plan, you may need to incorporate an appropriate sampling method. You can keep in mind that there are several sampling methods available.

If you are only working with a small group of individuals, then you probably will not have to use sampling. However, with larger projects, you will likely gather data from a sample of the group.[190]

Who and how many you choose for your sample will have a large impact on the validity of your data, as your sample should be representative of the larger group under study.[191]

Summing Up….

With so many options for your data collection methodology and multiple considerations and cautions to keep in mind, it is critical to think through many of these issues ahead of time. Planning is essential. At the same time, it will also be important to keep a built-in flexibility to respond to any unexpected surprises along the way.

And the next step? What do we do with all the data we are collecting? That's the fourth step of the M&E process, everything from data management and data analysis to data presentation.

Chapter 8: From Data Collection to Data Use

So, what are you going to do with all the data you've collected? Perhaps now you have pages of transcripts from your focus groups, piles of photographs taken at events, or endless amounts of survey questionnaires?

Whatever you have, you now need to interpret what everything means, decide how to make it digestible and extract lessons from it all as you go forward.[192] Of course, hopefully, you have anticipated this prior to getting started and have thought about how to take all this raw data and turn it into information for M&E.

Key components of an M&E plan: Step 4
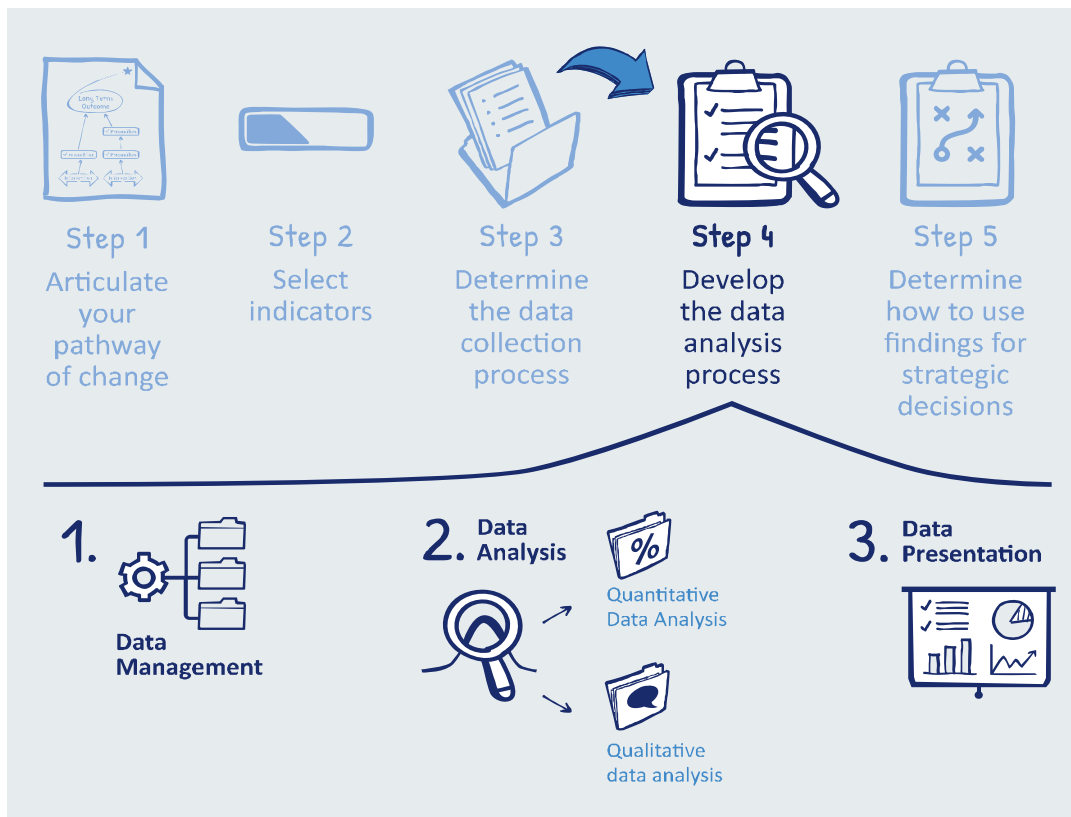
In this chapter we examine the next phase of the process that follows data collection. That step involves data management (how you store, organize and access data), data analysis and data presentation. These steps help us transform collections of data into something that eventually enables us to learn and improve our work which is of course, the goal of our M&E process.
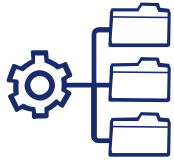
Starting with data management

It is likely that you are already managing way too many documents at your organization these days. And this is before the added difficulty of managing data systems in multiple languages, as is the case for so many of us working in the field of international development.

To handle all of this, your organization probably has some type of database. Whether you have a file cabinet where documents are stored in different folders or a series of digital folders on your computer, you likely have created some kind of system for labeling and organizing documents. Otherwise it ends up being so difficult to find whatever you are looking for!

With the M&E data you are now gathering, you want to be careful about setting up a system- how your data will be stored in an organized and secure manner and who will be given access to it. As with any data collection process, ethical concerns of confidentiality and data quality are important considerations.[193]

You can anticipate this ahead of time, and as you do so, make sure that you do not overcommit to a M&E plan that is beyond your organizational capacity.

Let's already take a break? Yes, you've earned it!

We all have such high expectations for impact, the pressure is on... So it will be important to keep managing expectations - both our own and those of our stakeholders.

As you can imagine, it is easy to have unrealistic expectations about a M&E plan. And one place that you really need to check yourselves is the collection of an excessive amount of unnecessary data.

If there are too much data to properly manage, you may find yourself unable to adhere to expected standards for data quality and confidentiality. And of course, with too much data to unpack, your M&E process will not be useful in shaping decision-making.

So you will want to coordinate expectations with particular stakeholders now, moving forward only after there is a shared understanding of what your organizational capabilities are to manage and analyze data.

You will want to consider how you should train your team to use, modify and fix your data management tools. And there is much to choose from with hundreds of digital tools available.

> **Tip: Remember to keep in mind the advantages of planning ahead!**
>
> Determining well in advance how you will manage your data will save you a big headache later on and lots of premium time.
>
> If this is done, the data are easier to find and there is less chance for data loss. And of course, when you need to check data quality, with a system for organizing in place, you are more apt to quickly locate and verify data.

And what about data format and data storage?

Data management requires you to make decisions about how data is formatted, organized, stored and accessed. However, with all your variety of data (possible audio recordings, videos, completed questionnaires, etc.), your team should follow a few rules for data formatting and storage, record those rules in a single document and share with anyone who manages data.

The same rules should be used for every single piece of data, and there should be an established, recognizable pattern for the naming and recording of the rules. You also need to take the appropriate measures to protect the privacy and identity of those whose data you have collected.

In considering your data management, you also have to make sure that your findings are accurately represented. And of course, you should be open about the limitations of your M&E process, as it will never be possible to have perfect and complete data. Some humility is called for.

Focusing in on data analysis…

The term 'data analysis' refers to the process and the tools for interpreting data. As with other topics related to M&E, we are only able to touch on this very complex issue.[194]

At each step, you can always circle back to the purpose of your M&E plan. Your data need to be given meaning - interpreted and placed into a context in order to inform the decision-making process.

As such, you will want to develop a plan for interpreting your data that provides a consistent, yet flexible, structure for the analysis. Creating and 'pilot testing' the data analysis process during these early stages will help ensure that it is realistic and feasible.

Data analysis includes the following steps:

- Code, enter, 'clean' your data
- Analyze
- Interpret
- Reflect

- What do these findings mean? What can we learn from them?
- What conclusions can we draw? What are some other interpretations of these findings?
- Are any of these findings surprising? What do these findings confirm?
- What are the limitations of our analysis?
- What are some of the possible implications of these findings?

Tip: Let's balance inevitable limitations with learning.

We know that each data collection process and the subsequent findings can be flawed in some way. There are so many possibilities - from problems with the research sample and/or biased collection tools to collecting reliable data once in the field. One or more of these problems might become evident especially during the data analysis.

So should you get a free pass on this? Not so fast. Recognizing the limitations of data collection doesn't give any of us the luxury of giving up on the process entirely. Just because it's hard or not 100% precise, doesn't mean that much of the information collected shouldn't offer important insights.

With all types of data analysis, you will generally want to begin by reviewing your M&E questions and indicators. Then sort the data pertaining to each question by

type, either quantitative and/or qualitative, and 'clean' the data to eliminate any incomplete or incorrect data.

Depending on what you want to know and the type of data you have collected, you should then determine the appropriate type of analysis you want to make.

Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis interprets data that can easily be counted, measured and expressed with numbers. Sources of quantitative data include surveys, sign-in sheets, health and demographic data, census data and budget data.[195]

Depending on the indicators selected, quantitative data analysis helps us answer questions about our projects such as:

- What is the percent distribution?
- How do participants rate the usefulness of the intervention?
- How much variability is there in the data?
- Are the results statistically significant?

Quantitative data analysis can consist of simple calculations yielding information on topics such as attendance, usage, changes in performance, or changes in knowledge (e.g., pre- and post-tests). Analysis can be done with the help of spreadsheet software (e.g., Excel).

Quantitative data are analyzed with statistics- either descriptive statistics which are used with census or non-random sample data or inferential statistics that are used with random sample data.[196]

Some examples of commonly used descriptive statistics include: frequencies (numbers, a count of how many), percent (proportion) distributions, means (average), medians (mid-point), and modes (the most frequent value).

And qualitative data analysis...

We need to shift our mindset a bit as we move to qualitative data. Whereas quantitative data analysis tends to be quite mathematical, straightforward and precise, qualitative data requires much more flexibility and effort during the process data interpretation.[197] The sources of qualitative data include text, images, and narrative (e.g., interview notes, unstructured observations, open-ended questionnaires, focus group transcripts), and visual data such as photographs and film/video). As such, analysis techniques are based on reflection, categorization and interpretation.[198]

What does this look like in practice? Qualitative data analysis helps answer questions such as:

- What are some of the difficulties faced by the team?
- Why did some participants drop out early?
- What is the experience like for participants?
- Is there any unexpected impact on families and communities?

Qualitative data are especially useful when you are looking for a description of a program, process, or experience or if you would like to understand the context of a situation and/or understand perceptions.[199] A suggested method for analyzing this type of data is outlined as follows:

Five Steps of Qualitative Data Analysis (Taylor Powell & Renner, 2003)

Becoming well-acquainted with the data. Start by carefully reading, watching or listening to your data.

Focusing the analysis (review your indicators/ M&E questions). You can then move forward by examining a detailed analysis of a single response and/or comparing responses - looking for connecting themes, topics, ideas or events that show up in more than one response.

Categorize and code the information. Either using pre-defined categories or coming up with them as you go, identify similar themes and types of responses, and then sort the information accordingly.

Identify patterns and connections within and between categories. With categories now assigned in your qualitative data, consider the question of patterns, interesting themes or observations.

Interpret the information. You can begin to reflect on the larger meaning of the data, exploring the broader insights and lessons that come up along the way.

For qualitative data analysis, it is highly recommended that you have more than one person do the 'coding' or 'categorizing'. Bringing additional perspectives to the analysis can offer valuable insights and help control for bias in analyzing qualitative data.

And what does participatory data analysis look like?

As you can guess, we will always be coming back to your stakeholders. And while participatory engagement is most common during the planning or implementing stages of the M&E process, having key stakeholders analyze data together is an opportunity that shouldn't be missed. And keep in mind the possibility of structuring different conversations for both your quantitative and qualitative data.

Starting the conversation…

What are some ways to elicit stakeholder input with *quantitative* data? You can start by presenting preliminary data from items such as surveys and charts for their analysis and interpretation.[200]

Examples of questions to guide your discussion can include:

- What surprises you about the data?

- What factors may explain some of the trends you are seeing?

- What do these findings confirm? What did you expect to see in these data, but don't?

- Does this lead you to raise new questions?

With qualitative data it's a little different. The findings often do not lend themselves to obvious interpretations, so discussions with your team and key partners can be particularly valuable.

Starting the conversation…

And how do we elicit stakeholder input with *qualitative* data? Examples of questions to guide discussion include:

- How does this information align with your experience and perceptions?

- What doesn't fit? How so?

- Are there other interpretations of the data that are missing?

- Where would you add context to clarify or explain the findings?

As data are collected, ask your key stakeholders what is most interesting, illuminating, or important. By doing so, you are creating a process that helps to ensure a rich interpretation of the data over time. Including multiple perspectives in your analysis can allow for a more accurate portrayal of program implementation and impact.

And what else? The process can increase stakeholder understanding of what conclusions should be drawn from the data and eventually, to greater support for findings and recommendations.

Tip: Be cognizant of the nuances with M&E, that nothing is black and white.

M&E is sometimes driven by a desire to show that a project was successful. Yet M&E will almost always show mixed results.

Being open to honest conversations about what the data have to convey will enable you to go beyond claims of 'success' and ask: what specific changes are taking place (both positive and negative, intended and unintended), how and for whom?

The nuances and subtleties in the data often can teach a great deal about how to fine tune your efforts, while also helping to spark meaningful strategic conversations with key stakeholders.

And of course, we want to think about how we present our data

While we have focused primarily on the *kind* of data that you are organizing and analyzing, we now want to focus on options for *how* you can present your data.

Data presentation is part of what needs to be a broader communication strategy to ensure that your organization manages and disseminates information in a way that promotes shared learning.

It's worth repeating that with each step of the M&E process, you want to select presentation methods that fit your data and that are targeted to meet the various needs of your diverse stakeholders.[201]

You can keep in mind that individuals 'consume' information in different ways.

Your quantitative and qualitative data each have to be presented in an engaging, distinct way.[202]

Qualitative Data

- Text
- Images
- Narrative

Quantitative Data

- Averages
- Comparisons
- Proportions

Graphics can help to simplify the M&E data and clarify the results.[203] You have lots of options in conveying quantitative data like those below:
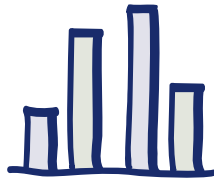
Tables   **Bar Graphs**   *Pie Charts*   *Line Graphs*

And certainly, you won't want to forget possibilities for qualitative data in addition to narrative text such as:
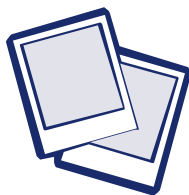
Photos   **Videos**   **Community Maps**

Starting the Conversation...

In facilitating discussions about the preliminary results of the data, make sure to consider various questions such as:[204]

- What is the best way to communicate with this stakeholder or group of stakeholders?
- Would an in-person/online meeting be the best way to reach them? An email? A written report? A video clip? Or would a community meeting be more effective?

And if it is a written report, ask:

- Are communications and reports presented in a clear, jargon-free style?
- Have tables and figures been used effectively to make information more understandable?
- Does the format of each communication/report facilitate easy interpretation of its content?

Summing up...

Each of these topics - data management, data analysis, and data presentation – is a complex topic in and of itself that we have only touched on in this chapter. As with other topics, we hope that you will continue to explore the many options available and the references listed at the end of the guide.

So we are now heading towards the last stop of the M& E process! In the next chapter, we tackle another important piece in this puzzle and that is how to translate acquired insights into strategic action.

Chapter 9: Moving from M&E back to Strategic Action

Now you're at Step 5 in your M&E plan. Congratulations! You are ready to move to data use - the last and most essential piece of your M&E plan (that is of course, until you start the learning cycle again!)

Key components of an M&E plan: Step 5

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Articulate your pathway of change	Select indicators	Determine the data collection process	Develop the data analysis process	Determine how to use findings for strategic decisions

During the M&E process- if you have focused primarily on monitoring data- your team is better equipped to make decisions on how to allocate resources and implement projects.

And if you have gathered evaluation data, you will probably be making weightier decisions such as determining which projects may be the most effective to implement.

We will discuss in this chapter the many ways that you can be purposeful about using your M&E finding to make strategic decisions affecting all levels of your organization. By doing so, you will be integrating the principles and the practice of M&E in all aspects of your work.[205]

Let's review possible M&E questions that are posed throughout the learning cycle:

What are **best practices** in the field and, where are possible, **evidence based** solutions?

Design phase

Planning phase

If we decide to scale up this project, what **adjustments** are needed?

Reconfiguring phase

The learning cycle

What is **realistic** for us to achieve in terms of our short term and intermediate outcomes?

Completion phase

Implementation phase

What recommendations do we have for the **next cycle** of the project or to offer to the field?

How could we be more **effective** in the implementation of our project?

Using data in strategic decision-making...

As we can see above, your organization can use M&E data to make good decisions at any point.

Yes, our instincts can get us far. Yet while our intuition can lead us in the right direction, over time, organizations that regularly use data will be able to make better informed decisions.

This again, is one of the main goals of M&E. We always want to make sure that we focus on using data to translate our acquired knowledge into 'know-how' that affects our everyday efforts.

And what happens when M&E becomes a part of how you do your work? Well, for starters, it helps provide you with some evidence that you are heading in the right direction as outlined in your theory of change. With discussions that are grounded in data, you are also more likely to avoid being swayed by built-in assumptions and biases that everyone has in making decisions.

Tip: As you make the case for using M&E data, you can remind everyone of possible bias.

Just a few examples here of the most common types:

Confirmation bias. What happens -and this may not be too surprising to hear - is that we tend to favor those ideas that confirm what we already believe.

In-group bias. In this case we are more likely to believe people who belong to the same group we do (i.e., religious background, ethnicity or gender).

Bandwagon effect. Again, not a big surprise to hear this, but we are much more likely to adopt the most popular opinion.

We love intuition and encourage you to follow it! But we also have to appreciate the degree to which we have biases that can affect our decision making -without us even realizing it.

As we jump into this topic of linking M&E with strategic development, we have to keep in mind that our M&E data may not point to the findings that we may want to see. Your findings may be a big surprise- positive or negative, encouraging or discouraging.

And your conversations, even if now grounded in M&E results, will not always be easy or tension free in determining your next course of action. But this is part of building an organizational mindset that becomes accustomed to both evaluative and strategic thinking processes.

Building a culture around M&E

As we have discussed throughout, encouraging participatory engagement at each step of M&E is of primary importance. One aspect of this is getting your team and key stakeholders more acquainted with the idea of using data in strategic conversations.[206]

Structured opportunities to reflect on the M&E findings will help to incorporate this into your routine and underscore the value of data-driven decision making. [207]

But how do you get everyone used to the idea of using M&E data? Well, it starts with having accessible data that is available at regular intervals to key stakeholders and then providing the opportunity for all to reflect on the data.[208] By holding periodic meetings that encourage your team to review data, you can get everyone comfortable with the idea of grounding decisions in your M&E findings.

Starting the Conversation…

As your M&E data becomes available, you can facilitate discussions with questions such as:[209]

1. What did we plan for our project over the past six months? (or whichever period of time you choose for reflection.)
2. What progress have we made? What did we achieve?
3. What can we now learn from the data? What does the data tell us? What else do we need to know?
4. How are the data consistent with our own impressions and observations of our work? What is worth exploring further?

While facilitation skills, as always, will be critical in making these conversations meaningful, it will also be essential to have the relevant data easily accessible to those who are making decisions.

And whether you use an indicator dashboard/data dashboard, stakeholder reports or some other option, the idea is to provide a current picture of how your projects are moving forward. This is especially imperative when you are focusing on monitoring your work

When tracking implementation of your projects, you want to create tools that not only offer simple ways to understand progress, but that also can be regularly updated.

An example of a visual tool that can work with all kinds of data, similar to a data dashboard, is a 'traffic light table.' How does this work? Data indicating positive results are colored in green; data which are neutral/no movement are colored in yellow, and data showing less progress are colored in red.

	Indicator	Target	Results	Explanation

Of course, depending on your data, your stakeholders and your capacities, you will decide which tool is best for presenting data. Either way, to ensure that the M&E data get used, you will have to invest time in helping your team familiarize themselves with the idea of looking at findings and drawing conclusions.[210]

From M&E data to action

As you slowly begin to get used to relying on M&E data, it also becomes easier to incorporate new insights into the decision-making process, and more importantly, how you proceed moving forward.

Essentially, you are building a learning cycle that continues to shape the design, implementation and assessment of the work. The five steps of the M&E plan start over again each time...

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Articulate your pathway of change	Select indicators	Determine the data collection process	Develop the data analysis process	Determine how to use findings for strategic decisions

Setting up a series of strategic conversations to accompany each phase of your M&E plan will help build consensus on how to make ongoing adjustments to your work.

Selected recommendations will be much more acceptable to everyone if these decisions are grounded in data *and* your key stakeholders can offer their input along the way.[212]

And managing change? Not the easiest thing...

Not surprisingly, tension and conflict are possibilities at this critical stage. After all, there is much passion and emotion here- as we all tend to be quite committed to the work that we are carrying out to improve the world.

And we also are used to the status quo, accustomed to our routines and way of operating.[213] We may be working towards social change, but this doesn't mean that we always happily embrace change in our day-to-day work.

So as you revisit your theory of change and consider various aspects of your organizational, programmatic and operational strategy in light of M&E findings, keep in mind there very well might be forthcoming challenges.[214] Any strategic shift in the organization can understandably lead to fear or anxiety on the part of your team and key stakeholders.[215]

During these times of transition, it is vital to communicate with stakeholders in order to maintain their commitment.

As we know, your work can be very demanding, fast-paced and labor intensive. If there is a need for strategic shifts, explore how members of your team are rewarded for taking on new responsibilities, embracing new directions or instituting new patterns of behavior.

Several options that should help in this regard include staff training, formal mentoring opportunities, and improved supervisory practices and communication protocols, especially if there is little flexibility in financial compensation.

During times of transition, additional staff support and guidance may be especially welcomed. Sensitivity to all kinds of concerns regarding change in the daily work is vital.

Once again, make a plan.

Any shift in strategy should be a choice that your team and key stakeholders are easily able to imagine.

Your team and your board members should be able to envision their role in the process and understand what actions are needed. To effectively address the variety of possible obstacles you might encounter, update your strategic tools like your theory of change and your new workplan with your team.[217]

Starting the Conversation...

Select just a few key strategic issues to work on versus doing everything all at once. Here are a few sample questions to guide the discussion:[218]

- What is the particular kind of change that we would like to see?
- What are the specific steps needed in order for us to bring about this change?
- Who is responsible for each step as outlined?
- What is our timeline for completing each of these particular steps?
- What are the exact resources needed (including financial, administrative and needed expertise)?

By clearly outlining implementation guidelines, it facilitates the adaptations that are needed in your day-to-day work.[219] And drawing up a workplan together with a budget helps ensure that sufficient resources are allocated in a way that appropriately reflects any new organizational priorities.

Conceptually you want to make sure that through the use of tools such as your theory of change or workplan, the strategy is clear and simple to grasp for all involved. For your project team especially, a full understanding of what change entails will be essential. And as you proceed, you will want to set aside time for the development of new norms and routines if adjustments are required.

Summing up...

Through your M&E efforts, you will be able to outline your strategic direction and build a shared consensus on how to move forward. Doing so will not only reduce the possibility of surprises and ambiguity but will likely enhance everyone's capacity to better implement decisions.

Of course, workplans will need to be modified over time to reflect changing circumstances or new insights. As you know by now, your strategies will not stay static; rather they will develop based on your organization's experimentation and experience.

In the next chapter - the last one! - we will address your communication efforts and how sharing your story can be a very effective addition to the feedback loop that you are creating with your community.

Chapter 10: Communicating and Sharing Your Story

So this is it! You're nearly at the finish line after having spent so much time with all the challenging steps you've taken along the way.

Now it's time to focus on this one last effort - how to communicate your accomplishments to the field. After all, you won't want to miss out on this critical piece of M&E. If you have stories and data that can showcase your work, make sure that you share them. You have earned the spotlight a bit, no?

Building a communications strategy

Hopefully you have had lots of practice actively involving your supporters and have likely gained a certain comfort level in presenting information to diverse stakeholders.[220]

Now is the time to decide how you will share your M&E findings and organizational story with key audiences. And yes, you will probably be submitting reports to funders...but how about writing up a briefing to news outlets? Or holding a community meeting to discuss new learnings with members of your target community? Perhaps you could use social media and make a short video?[221] There are so many possibilities....

Think about what steps you can take not only to increase community awareness but also to make that presentation more engaging. And of course, you also want to share your hard-earned insights with other like-minded organizations.

Adapting your communications as you go...

You know your audience best. Adapt your communication style and materials to them, but always tell your story and share valuable insights.

Whatever you do, your M&E data will always need context. There is no scenario in which you should simply be reciting the raw numbers on a page. You have to set the stage for the findings, including articulating your theory of change. And you will want to share how you have already used or plan to use the findings going forward.

Your stakeholders will find their own way to connect your data and make it useful. Your job is to make sure to offer lots of options for them to consider .(And we don't underestimate the work involved here in doing that including the use of multiple languages!).

You can use your data to tell a compelling story about why your programs are showing progress and even more importantly, why this matters.

And a quick note on transparency

As we discussed earlier, ethical challenges arise in all stages of the work and in the M&E process as well. We just want to add a reminder here for you to be cognizant of these ethical parameters, including preserving anonymity and other concerns related to data privacy in sharing your M&E findings.

Consider also how you are adhering to values of honesty, accuracy, and humility, when presenting findings. It is important to detail the data collection methodology and, as previously noted, outline the limitations of the process. You want to nurture

this openness and transparency to allow your various stakeholders the opportunity to fairly judge your work.

This also links us to the issue of accountability. We are well-aware of the pressure to make lots of promises to our supporters. We tend to be ambitious when there is just so much to be done!

But this may be the time to have frank conversations with your stakeholders about what is actually possible moving forward.

In light of the M&E data, you may find that you need to adapt your day-to day efforts to a new reality and adjust expectations accordingly. Having a shared understanding of your next steps and future plans will serve you well.

Communicating your M&E data

Why is this important?

- Help primary stakeholders to stay informed and to make data driven decisions.
- Nurture trust with your community and promote greater transparency.
- Share your lessons learned with the field.
- Raise community awareness about your efforts.

Some key ideas to keep in mind…

- Explain the 'so what' of the information to stakeholders, and why it matters.
- Select data presentation methods that meet the needs of various audiences.
- Provide a needed context for your data as part of a larger story.
- Engage your supporters as storytellers and champions of your work.
- Think about how you are building community and expanding your outreach.

And what about storytelling? Telling your organizational narrative

Now we get to the important topic of storytelling. Just like M&E should be participatory, so should outreach and communication.[222] Stakeholders are your ambassadors and cheerleaders. They are the ones who go out into the world, so why not have them prepared to share your narrative?!

Your stakeholders need to feel comfortable sharing their personal stories of why they are engaged in your work- why it is important to them and why it should be to the rest of us.

After all, we already know that statistics, charts and quantitative data can go only so far. It turns out that most of us are much more likely to respond to stories- either a story about an individual or a group of people.

Tips: Embrace storytelling with intent! How to encourage the practice of storytelling?

Ask who are the 'go to' people of your organization. Is it always the same individuals? Remember, you can find ambassadors everywhere from participants of your programs, your team, volunteers, board members, and others.

How well does everybody know your organizational history, about day-to- day efforts, about what you have already accomplished and the impact you have had?[223]

To encourage the practice of storytelling you can try, for example, storytelling workshops or weekly check-ins to share stories about the work in the field.

While the emphasis in storytelling often focuses on an individual or a group, try to link that story to the larger picture and to your M&E findings. To highlight this, you may want to add quantitative data to your narrative as well.[224]

Keep thinking about how you are building community

With all of the pressing social issues that we are championing every day, more storytellers would be welcomed to bring these topics to the attention of the larger public. And this would energize us as well and validate our efforts.

It also makes sense to share stories in a way that helps to include your audience in the solution. Consider questions such as: What draws people to action? What convinces them to listen, to make a tough decision?

Remember that you can look at this type of communication as a way to continue reaching out, building your movement, and gaining more support for your efforts.

And make it personal! These are the ways that we connect to people.

Telling stories also reminds us that everything we are doing is about individuals and communities. Stories can help in finding a way for them to take center stage.

We learn about this through the mantra – story of self, story of us, story of now.

What stories to tell? (Ganz, 2009)

Self

Us

Now

The story of self
What is unique about yourself?
What have you overcome?
What have you learned?
Why are you connected to the organization?
How has it affected your life?

The story of us
What is a common experience we share?
How are we each affected by this issue?
Why is this topic of relevance?

The story of now
Why is this a problem of urgency?
How can we become ready to address it?
What can we hope to achieve?
Which specific steps can be of use?

Consider how you are issuing a call to action when you tell stories about your own personal connection to a social cause.[225] Present it in a way that gives your listeners a ready pathway into your world.

And as you get ready for your own moment in the spotlight…

Remember that storytelling should be part of your pursuit to bring about concrete social change which involves a much broader mission than just courting potential funders.[226] It's everything you have been working hard to create. So get your compelling message out there!

Here are lots of storytelling tips to keep in mind as you get started:

1 Tell the story of us, not just of you.
Getting from the 'me' to the 'we'.

Moving from personal stories…
- Your audience will care about your stories if they somehow connect them back to their own lives.
- While you are telling your story and explaining why it matters to you, you want to help others see why it matters to them.

To articulating organizational stories
- Keep in mind both the value of something personal and the appeal of something universal.
- Consider how your story illustrates a larger topic.
- Since everyone's point of entry is different, a good story offers many ways for the audience to connect to your efforts.

2   **Give us access and relevance.**
Take bold ideas and make them into the everyday.

Moving from personal stories…
- We need to see the everyday in stories.
- Shrink down any story topic so it becomes manageable for others to absorb. Take the big ideas and make them digestible.

To articulating organizational stories
- Translate your organization's ambitious visions and bold ideas into common experiences.
- Often it is those moments of authenticity, vulnerability and universal truths when the audience can see themselves and the world around them.
- Make your organization's story accessible by also highlighting the small, subtle moments

3   **Stay Focused on the story, not an itinerary or a to do list.**

Moving from personal stories…
- We are much more interested if you sift through your experiences first- just because it happened does not necessarily make it interesting.
- Share with us only the meaningful insights of your adventures.

To articulating organizational stories
- To connect with your story, we need to understand the 'why'.
- We want to understand the essence of your work, not just what you do.
- The goal has to be focused on the strategy- what you are seeking to change.

4   **Talk *with* us, not *at* us**

Moving from personal stories…
- Keep it conversational.
- This is not the time to go on a rant or make a political speech, nor is it a formal theatrical performance.
- You also don't want to be too heavy-handed with your message.

To articulating organizational stories
- Invite the audience into your organizational experience as if you are in a casual conversation.
- Keep in mind that no one wants to be lectured to, and they certainly don't want to be told how to feel.
- Consider both your tone and tenor as you seek to transport us in time and place.

5   **Keep asking yourself, what is this story about?**
Share your point of view, one theme at a time.

Moving from personal stories…
- Drive one single story forward with precision.
- Think in terms of a memoir versus an autobiography. Not everything you remember, nor every family memory gets to go in.
- Ask yourself, what is the underlying theme?

To articulating organizational stories
- You will not want to present an exhaustive 'everything you wanted to know' about the organization.
- Decide on the perspective and share that particular aspect of the work.
- Try to have an underlying theme in your organizational stories- something that holds the narrative together.

6 **Invite your audience in with context and try to be hospitable.**

Moving from personal stories…
- We are looking for your take on the world, but the challenge is that you know it too well. You live it every day.
- Consider how to transfer what is obvious to you to your audience.
- We have to feel a part of it to go along for the ride.

To articulating organizational stories
- Think about how you can invite your audience in, and make sure no one feels excluded.
- Don't just show us data and expect us to interpret it on our own. We won't connect to the statistics without context.
- If you want us to care, you have to work to create some kind of shared experience by giving us the needed background and setting.

7 **Getting from A to B or to C.**
Either way, show us how you have evolved.

Moving from personal stories…
- Great story telling is always about some kind of transformation. We are fascinated by how people change.
- The story needs to be about a journey – some way that you have been transformed or enlightened.
- Create an arc for the story by starting in one place and landing in another.

To articulating organizational stories
- We want to hear how events have shaped your organization, how you all have moved through particular experiences, how your work reflects change of some kind.
- Use signposts to mark what has changed and what are the desired changes in the future.
- We will then feel like we are going somewhere, immersed in the world you are leading us to.

8   **Stay Real, you know that we always root for the underdogs.**

Moving from personal stories…

- No one wants flawlessness in storytellers - in fact, we will reward you for being genuine and vulnerable.
- We tend to smooth out our rough edges, editing our indiscretions. But in storytelling, it is the quirks, the imperfections, that are celebrated.

To articulating organizational stories

- We really don't expect organizations to be perfect- share with us the learning, the transformation.
- Give us a realistic assessment of what is possible to achieve, sharing the insights that inevitably come along the way.
- Balance ambition with a dose of realism, while throwing in reflection too.

9   **Show us high stakes, high expectations, and we will be hooked.**

Moving from personal stories…

- Stakes are the reason your audience wants to hear the next sentence in your story.
- If the audience doesn't know why they're listening to the story, or what's to come, it's easy to stop listening.

To articulating organizational stories

- Stakes are non-negotiable. And it's not only about making a story resonate with your audience. Knowing what is at stake signals where the story is headed.
- You want your audience asking questions like: What will happen next? How is the story going to turn out?
- Stakes invite us to become invested in the outcome.

10 Bring us your perspective.
Keep asking who you are in the story.

Moving from personal stories…
- We want to see ourselves in your story and be able to relate. But we also want to see you. What's your personality? Your perspective?
- We need for you to be a reliable narrator and reveal your inner monologue.

To articulating organizational stories
- This goes for your organization's story as well. Keep asking what is the essence of your organization.
- How easily can you articulate your organizational DNA? How is it reflected in the stories you tell? What keeps everyone motivated? What keeps the momentum going?

Knowing what you are as an organization, where you want to go, and how you are getting there – these are the stories we want to hear. And we also want to hear personal stories and the passion that is invested in your work.

Through the many tools referred to in these pages, through the stories you tell and through the real impact your organization is making, you will motivate more people to get involved with your important efforts.

Storytelling is just one aspect of your efforts, but it is an integral part in building your community and advancing the change you seek. We can all be change makers. We all have something to give. We just need to be encouraged and equipped to take advantage of the opportunities to get on board.

Summing up!!!

We move in the direction of the questions that we ask and in the direction of the conversations that we have. This is one of the most significant benefits of an M&E process as we see it. Truly, truly.

It is the result of the simple idea that you build the capacity of your organization when you engage with your community and adapt your efforts as you go. With the help of the many tools presented, you can help guide your organization and enhance your team's ability to plan, think and act strategically.

We once read that "*the organization of hope is what makes hope reasonable.*"[227] It seems that this is a perfectly apt quote with which to end. It reminds us to think about the function of both M&E and strategic thinking that underpins our organization. And it reminds us to stay optimistic with perhaps just a little dose of skepticism thrown in along the way.

Both in your efforts to keep organizing hope and in bringing hope to others you are making an impact - helping to bring about the meaningful social change that is so needed in the world today. Know that we are always cheering you on in your important work!

[1] For more on listening and conversations, se Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid, (2015) Anderson, M., Brown, D., & Jean, I. CDA . And for more on how organizations can advance their own learning with M&E see Monitoring and Evaluation Guide. Shapiro. J. CIVICUS.

[2] Van der Heijden, K. (1996). Scenarios: The Art of Strategic Conversation. New York: Wiley.

[3] To understand more about the philosophy of participatory development, see Chambers, R. (2009) So that the Poor Count More: Using Participatory Methods for Impact Evaluation, Journal of Development Effectiveness. 1:3, pp. 243-246. For examples of participatory approaches to M&E, see Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit Lennie, J., et a. (2011)

[4] On the importance of engaging with stakeholders see Keystone Alliance's Constituent Voice.

[5] For more on organizational learning see Garvin, D. (2000) Learning in action. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

[6] For in-depth research on the adaptive capacity of social change nonprofits in the local context in Israel, Strichman, N., Bickel, W.E., & Marshood, F. (2007). Adaptive capacity in Israeli social change nonprofits. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 37(2), 224–248. And Strichman, N., Marshood, F. & Eytan, D. (2018). Exploring the Adaptive Capacities of Shared Jewish-Arab Organizations in Israel VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 29 (5), pp 1055–1067.

[7] For definition of strategy see and strategic planning see: Strategic Planning Toolkit Shapiro. J. CIVICUS.

[8] For more on the measurement of social impact see The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 71-93). And for more on how M&E can be of use in complex settings of in development and humanitarian programs, see Supporting adaptive management: Monitoring and evaluation tools and approaches Pasanen, T. and Barnett, B. ODI: December 2019.

[9] For ideas on communication strategies see, Successful Communication A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations Hovland, I. October 2005.

[10] See, for example, Leap of Reason, Managing to Outcomes in an Age of Scarcity 2011, Morino. M. Venture Philanthropy Partners.

[11] For example, see Monitoring and Evaluation for Human Rights Organizations: Three Case Studies. Schlangen, R. (2014). Center for Evaluation Innovation.

[12] See Janus, K. (2018). Social Start Up Success: How the Best Nonprofits Launch, Scale Up, and Make a Difference. Da Capo Publishers.

[13] For new approaches from funders like Development Evaluation, see Implementing Developmental Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Funders (2019) USAID.

[14] A growing interest in the use of evaluation has made approaches such as Developmental Evaluation (DE) more prominent among evaluators, funders, and organizations.

[15] For more about how M&E can be of use in complex settings see Supporting adaptive management Monitoring and evaluation tools and approaches, Pasanen, T. and Barnett, B. (2019).

[16] For information on various stages of organizational growth, see The Five Life Stages of Nonprofit Organizations, Simon, J. Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance, 2001.

[17] See Angelica, E. (2001) Crafting Effective Mission and Vision Statements, and Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change. Shatil: Israel.

[18] See Strichman, et al (2011) and Angelica, E. (2001).

[19] See Organizational Research Services (2004). Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning. Prepared for Anne E. Casey Foundation.

[20] See Anderson, A. The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change: A Practical Guide To Theory Development.

[21] For more on the use of visualization and participatory methods see Introduction to PRA Visualisation Methods (1999), Cornwall, A.

[22] See Anderson, A. The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change.

[23] See Anderson, A. The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change. See also Theory of Change Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 2. (2015) Rogers, P. UNICEF.

[24] For examples see Examples of Theory of Change. Collated by Vogel, I. and Stephenson, I. DFID EVD, July 2012

[25] Another approach for similar goals is known as outcome mapping. Balls, E. & Nurova, N. (2020): Outcome mapping and research into use: analysing monitoring data for effective strategies, Development in Practice, DOI: 10.1080

[26] See Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change. Shatil: Israel.

[27] For practical application, see: Examples of Theory of Change. Collated by Vogel, I. and Stephenson, I. DFID EVD, July 2012

[28] For more on outcome mapping see Balls, E. & Nurova, N. (2020): Outcome mapping and research into use: analysing monitoring data for effective strategies, Development in Practice, DOI. And For more on methods to enhance learning as a means to improve development and humanitarian work, see Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations Ramalingam, B. (2006) Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London.

[29] For more on articulating your organizational history and DNA see Young, D. (2001). Organizational identity in nonprofit organizations: Strategic and structural implications. Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 12(2), 139–157.

[30] For more on stakeholder analysis, see DFID, (2003) Tools for Development. A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity, Performance and Effectiveness.

[31] Further details on engaging with stakeholders can be found at Civicus toolkits at https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-center/resources/toolkits/civicus-resources/organisational-plannin and https://www.thegrassrootscollective.org/stakeholder-analysis-nonprofit

[32] When you begin to identify strategic concerns, make sure that you give your organization the time to focus first on defining the issues. Often conflicts may arise over possible solutions before the problem itself has been defined properly by your organization. See Fisher, R. & Ury, W. (1981) Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In. New York: Penguin Books

[33] For more on the problem tree analysis, see ODI Toolkit, Successful Communication, A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations. www.odi.org/publications/5258-problem-tree-analysis.

[34] For more on problem tree analysis, see Skovdal, M and Cornish, F., (2015) Qualitative Research for Development, Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing and Successful Communication A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations Ingie Hovland October 2005.

[35] See Skovdal, M and Cornish, F., (2015). And VSO Facilitator guide to participatory approaches. Bradley, D. & Schneider, H. 2009 Voluntary service Overseas.

[36] See Allison, M. & Kaye, J. (2005). Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations. and Barry, B. (1997) Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations.

[37] See Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change. Shatil: Israel and Senge, P. (1990). The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization. New York: Doubleday. p. 206.

[38] Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change and Senge, P. (1990).

[39] For more about distinctive competence and organizational 'niche', see J. Galaskiewicz and W. Bielefeld, Nonprofits in an Age of Uncertainty: A Study in Organizational Change (NY: Aldine De Gruyter, 1998).

[40] See Angelica, E. (2001) Crafting Effective Mission and Vision Statements and Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change

[41] See Angelica, E. (2001) Crafting Effective Mission and Vision Statements.

[42] See Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change. Shatil: Israel.

[43] See Bryson, J. (2004). Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations and Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change. Shatil: Israel.

[44] See Senge, P. (1990). The Fifth Discipline

[45] Cited in Angelica, E. (2001). Crafting Effective Mission and Vision Statements. Fieldstone Alliance. St. Paul Minnesota. Quote by John Carver. p. 5

[46] See Angelica, E. (2001), and Barry, B. (1997). Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations.

[47] For discussion on local context, see Strichman, N., Marshood, F. & Eytan, D. (2018). Exploring the Adaptive Capacities of Shared Jewish-Arab Organizations in Israel VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 29 (5), pp 1055–1067.

[48] Allison, M. & Kaye, J. (2005). Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations.

[49] See Strichman, N. et al. (2011) and Allison, M. & Kaye, J. (2005). Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations; McKinsey & Company, (2001). Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations. Reston, VA: Venture Philanthropy Partners

[50] See Strichman, N. et al. (2011) and Allison, M. & Kaye, J. (2005). Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations.

[51] Barry, B. (1997) Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations. p. 7.

[52] La Piana, D. (2008). The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution. Fieldstone Alliance. St. Paul, Minnesota. p. 26.

[53] See Bryson, J. (2004). Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations

[54] See Bryson, J. (2004). and La Piana, D. (2008).

[55] La Piana, D. (2008), P. 26

[56] Barry, B. (1997) Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations.

[57] For more on these issues see Janus, K. (2018) Social Startup Success: How the Best Nonprofits Launch, Scale Up, and Make a Difference. Da Capo Lifelong Books; Letts, C.W., Ryan, W. and Grossman, A. (1999). High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Greater Impact. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

[58] For more on stakeholder analysis, see DFID, (2003) Tools for Development. A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity, Performance and Effectiveness

[59] For more information on engaging stakeholders in evaluation and organizational self- assessment see Strichman, N., Marshood, F. & McKay, E.G. (2008). Asking Your Way to Organizational Success. and Strichman, N. & Marshood,F. (2007). So How Are We Doing? Introducing Evaluative Processes to Your Organization. Shatil: Israel.

[60] For more on the philosophy of participatory development, Liberating Development Inquiry: Freedom, Openness and Participation in Fieldwork (2017) Chambers, R. & Loubere, N. And see M. Volpe and V. Marsick (1999), "The Nature of and Need for Informal Learning," Advances in Developing Human Resource 3 (1999): 1–9.

[61] For different ways of using learning cycles in M&E, see Considering Evaluation: Thoughts for Social Change and Movement-Building Groups. Borgman-Arboleda, C. & Clark, H. https://www.actknowledge.org/resources/documents/ACT_K_layout6909hr.pdf Act Knowledge for more information on evaluation for practitioners working to build organizations, organize networks, alliances and movement building.

[62] For examples of how to link program design, management and M&E, see Mercy Corps. 2012. "Program Management Manual."

[63] To explore links to broader organizational learning, see Making Evaluations Matter: A Practical Guide for Evaluators, Kusters, c. et al. / Center for Development Innovation (2013).

[64] Further details on engaging with stakeholders can be found at Civicus toolkits at https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-center/resources/toolkits/civicus-resources/organisational-plannin

[65] Considering Evaluation: Thoughts for Social Change and Movement-Building Groups. Borgman-Arboleda, C. & Clark, H. Act Knowledge for more information on evaluation for practitioners working to build organizations, organize networks, alliances and movement building.

[66] For more on diverse stakeholders in a local context see Guide for Shared Society Organizations in Israel, (2019) Eytan et al, https://www.iataskforce.org/sites/default/files/resource/resource-1770.pdf

[67] For research specifically on the local context, see Strichman, N., Bickel, B & Marshood, F. (2008) Adaptive Capacity of Social Change Nonprofits in Israel. Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly. 37: 224–248.

[68] In response, various approaches have been created to encourage participatory approaches, such as Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit Lennie, J., et a. (2011).

[69] Likewise, efforts such as Development Evaluation address such concerns. See Implementing Developmental Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Funders (2019) USAID.

[70] For more on listening and conversations, see Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid, (2015) Anderson, M., Brown, D., & Jean, I. CDA ; And on gender sensitivity, for example, see Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations (2018) United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

[71] For more about how to engage with key stakeholders, see Managing and Implementing an Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Evaluation Managers (2015).

[72] The concept of proximity, see Ted Talk by Bryan Stephenson at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMKIpycFaOg&ab_channel=Unyte.Life

[73] For more on this topic, see Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change. Shatil: Israel.

[74] See Guide for Shared Society Organizations in Israel, (2019) Eytan et al. at https://www.iataskforce.org/sites/default/files/resource/resource-1770.pdf

[75] Krueger, R. A. 1988. Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. Focus groups. Morgan, D. L. 1988. Focus Groups as Qualitative Research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

[76] Krueger, R. A. 1988. Focus groups guidelines.

[77] For facilitation guidelines for M&E processes, see Introduction to Designing & Implementing M&E Systems - Facilitator's Guide (2013). Aga Khan Foundation. Also see A Facilitators' Guide to Participatory Workshops with NGOs/CBOs Responding to HIV/AIDS (2001) for more about facilitate participatory workshops (especially on the topic HIV/AIDS in developing countries). The International HIV/AIDS Alliance. And for ideas on participatory facilitation, see Useful Tools for Engaging Young People in Participatory Evaluation. Gawler, (2005) Unicef.

[78] For more detail, see Introduction to Designing & Implementing M&E Systems - Facilitator's Guide (2013). Aga Khan Foundation. For more on the use of visualization and participatory methods see Introduction to PRA Visualization Methods (1999), Cornwall, A. Institute for Development Studies., which includes explanation of tools such as mapping, transect walks, timelines and historical maps, problem walls and solution trees.

[79] For participatory approach to M&E facilitations see Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit

[80] A Facilitators' Guide to Participatory Workshops with NGOs/CBOs Responding to HIV/AIDS (2001) offers more about facilitate participatory workshops (especially on the topic HIV/AIDS in developing countries). The International HIV/AIDS Alliance.

[81] Weick, K. (1995) Sensemaking in Organizations. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

[82] For more on the importance of 'unpacking', see Anderson, A. p. 11.

[83] See Bryson, J. (2004). Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations and Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change. Shatil: Israel

[84] See Bryson, J. (2004). p. 114.

[85] For ideas on step by step approach, see Organizational Research Services (2004). Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning. Prepared for Anne E. Casey Foundation.

[86] For more about the target population can be defined and engaged as key stakeholders, see Managing and Implementing an Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Evaluation Managers

[87] See an Introduction to Concept Planning, for Planning and Evaluation by Trochim, B. (1989) at http://www.billtrochim.net/research/epp89/Trochim1.pdf

[88] For examples, see Organizational Research Services (2004). Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning. Prepared for Anne E. Casey Foundation.

[89] See Anderson, A. The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change: A Practical Guide To Theory Development

[90] For participatory approach to indicators Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit Lennie, J., Tacchi, J., Koirala, B., Wilmore, M., Skuse, A. (2011) Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit.

[91] A toolkit on indicators can be found at Civicus toolkits at https://www.civicus.org/monitoring-toolkits/toolkit/indicators/

[92] For discussion on how to develop a theory of change model see Organizational Research Services (2004). Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning. Prepared for Anne E. Casey Foundation.

[93] And see Theory of Change Methodological Briefs – Impact Evaluation No. 2. (2015) Rogers, P. UNICEF.

[94] For examples, see Examples of Theory of Change. Collated by Vogel, I. and Stephenson, I. DFID EVD, July 2012

[95] For more about advocacy and policy change, see A User's Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning. (2009) Coffman, J. Harvard Family Research Project.

[96] For examples of different frameworks and definitions, see Catholic Relief Services' Guidance for Developing Logical and Results Frameworks (2017). Levine, C

[97] For examples of assumptions, see Catholic Relief Services' Guidance for Developing Logical and Results Frameworks

[98] For more on this topic, see Strichman, N. et al. (2011). Guide to Strategic Thinking for Social Change. Shatil: Israel.

[99] See *Chapter 6 Developing Evaluation Questions and Starting the Design Matrix*. *The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 221-245)*

[100] See Chapter 4 Understanding the Evaluation Context and the Program Theory of Change. The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 141-173)

[101] Kettner, P. M., Moroney, R. M., & Martin, L. L. (1990). Designing and managing programs: An effectiveness-based approach. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

[102] See Chapter 4 Understanding the Evaluation Context and the Program Theory of Change. The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 141-173).

[103] For more on how organizations can determine their own effectiveness, see How Do They Do It? Civil society monitoring self-effectiveness (2011) Eiden, A., Tepel, R. & Trittler, B. NGO-IDEAs.

[104] See Janus, K. (2018). Social Start Up Success: How the Best Nonprofits Launch, Scale Up, and Make a Difference. Da Capo Publishers.

[105] For more meaningful approaches see, Making Evaluations Matter: A Practical Guide for Evaluators, Kusters, c. et al. / Center for Development Innovation (2013).

[106] For a reflection of ngos on this topic, see How Do They Do It? Civil society monitoring self-effectiveness (2011) Eiden, A., Tepel, R. & Trittler, B. NGO-IDEAs.

[107] To consider this in different contexts, see for example, ALNAP Guide to Real Time Evaluations of Humanitarian Action, Cosgrave, J., Ramalingam, B. and Beck, T. (2009).

[108] For more about the issues of sustainability, see David. T's (2002) "Reflections on Sustainability" The California Wellness Foundation

[109] For examples on how to empower local communities see: One step back, two steps forward: CARE's journey towards doing development differently by Tom Aston. 07th Aug 2017, CARE Organization.

[110] For more about how evaluation findings be used and more likely to bring about change, and to be engaged with key stakeholders, see Managing and Implementing an Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Evaluation Managers (2015). See also International Program for Development Evaluation Handbook IPDET, World Bank, Carleton University (2013) for an overview of the evaluation process.

[111] For more ideas about communicating your theory of change see Goodsmith, L. and Acosta, A. (2011). Community Video for Social Change: A Toolkit. Minneapolis, MN: American Refugee Committee International. 'Insights into Participatory Video: A Handbook for the Field' (2007). Lunch, N., & Lunch, C. InsightShare.

[112] See more about how these issues can be explored in project planning and M&E in Managing and Implementing an Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Evaluation Managers (2015).

[113] These types of questions (and other questions to promote organizational learning in the evaluation process) are explored in depth in Preskill, H. and Torres, R. (1999) Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

[114] See Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization- Focused Evaluation. 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

[115] In the field of health, for example, see A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Adolescent Reproductive Health Programs (2000)Pathfinder International.

[116] See Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization- Focused Evaluation.

[117] See International Program for Development Evaluation Handbook IPDET, World Bank, Carleton University (2013) for an overview of the evaluation process.

[118] There are varied approaches. See for example, ALNAP Guide to Real Time Evaluations of Humanitarian Action, Cosgrave, J., Ramalingam, B. and Beck, T. (2009).

[119] For varied approaches to capture the learning, see 'Evaluating the impact of flexible development interventions using a 'loose' theory of change'. And ALNAP Guide to Real Time Evaluations of Humanitarian Action, Cosgrave, J., Ramalingam, B. and Beck, T. (2009).

[120] International Program for Development Evaluation Handbook IPDET, World Bank, Carleton University (2013).

[121] Making Evaluations Matter: A Practical Guide for Evaluators, Kusters, c. et al. / Center for Development Innovation (2013)

[122] See International Program for Development Evaluation Handbook IPDET, World Bank, Carleton University (2013) for an overview of the evaluation process.

[123] See Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization- Focused Evaluation. 3rd Ed. This also can be referred to as Implementation Evaluation - 'program monitoring' or 'process evaluation'. p. 196

[124] See Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization- Focused Evaluation. 'Outcome Evaluation' will help you to answer the question: What changes occurred as a result of our work?.

[125] For more on the planning and implementing of an evaluation plan within organizations, see Managing and Implementing an Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Evaluation Managers (2015). Willard, A. CRS, American Red Cross.

[126] Patton, M.Q. (1997). Utilization- Focused Evaluation; Hernandez, G. and Visher, M. G. (2001) Creating a Culture of Inquiry: Changing Methods- and Minds- on the Use of Evaluation in Nonprofit Organizations. San Francisco: James Irvine Foundation;

[127] For new approaches to capture the learning, see 'Evaluating the impact of flexible development interventions using a 'loose' theory of change'. London: Overseas Development Institute. Often there are circumstances, such as in humanitarian emergencies or participatory development programs, where a more flexible approach is required.

[128] For more on observation as a data tool see International Program for Development Evaluation Training Module on Data Collection at http://www.worldbank.org/oed/ipdet/modules.html

[129] See Online Evaluation Resource Library at http://www.oerl.sri.com/instruments/instruments.html for examples of observation guides and checklists for observations.

[130] For a comprehensive overview see , for example, International Program for Development Evaluation Handbook IPDET, World Bank, Carleton University

[131] See more on a 'culture of inquiry' see Preskill, H. and Torres, R. (1999) Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations.

[132] See for example Admitting Failure for stories of failure and learning opportunities in international development.

[133] Watch, for example, David Damberger of Engineers Without Borders Ted Talk (2014) at https://www.ted.com/talks/david_damberger_what_happens_when_an_ngo_admits_failure?language=en

[134] See Janus, K. (2018). Social Start Up Success: How the Best Nonprofits Launch, Scale Up, and Make a Difference.

[135] See International Program for Development Evaluation Training's Module on Data Analysis. With both data collection and data analysis, only a broad overview is provided, and we highly encourage the use of additional references.

[136] Focus group add. m

[137] See, for example, International Program for Development Evaluation Handbook IPDET, World Bank, Carleton University.

[138] Sample guides on various topics include ALNAP Guide to Real Time Evaluations of Humanitarian Action, Cosgrave, J., Ramalingam, B. and Beck, T. (2009), and for examples of case studies see Monitoring and Evaluation for Human Rights Organizations: Three Case Studies. Schlangen, R. (2014). Center for Evaluation Innovation.; Guide to Evaluating Psychosocial Support in Emergencies UNICEF. (2009) Boothby, N, Ager, A & Ager, W.

[139] See W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide, 2004. See BOND- Networking for International Development

[140] For more on the use of visualization and participatory methods in all types of planning and evaluation, see Introduction to PRA Visualisation Methods (1999), Cornwall, A. Institute for Development Studies. Includes explanation of tools such as mapping, transect walks, timelines and historical maps, problem walls and solution trees.

[141] For a discussion of the varying perspectives on the theory of change, see the Intrac Report on Theory of Change (2017) and Theory of Change Review. James, K. (2011). Comic Relief. And for new ideas on how to approach constraints in the tools, see Davies, R. (2016) 'Evaluating the impact of flexible development interventions using a 'loose' theory of change'. A Methods Lab publication. London: Overseas Development Institute. Often there are circumstances, such as in humanitarian emergencies or participatory development programs, where a more flexible approach is required

[142] For more on the difference, see Theory of Change Review . James, K. (2011). Comic Relief

[143] For an overview, see Chapter 1, Introducing Development Evaluation. Morra Imas and Rist (2009). The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. The World Bank (p. 7- 41)

[144] The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. The World Bank

[145] See Outcome mapping: building learning and reflection into development programs, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

[146] For more about interviews and additional references, see General Guideline for Conducting Interviews at http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/intrview.htm

[147] For more on PEST and SWOT for strategy development, see Shatil and See Allison, M. & Kaye, J. (2005). Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations. And Barry, B. (1997) Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations.

[148] On detailed strategic questions, see Barry, B. (1997) Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations.

[149] See W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide.2004 "If, then" is articulated in the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide. See tools4dev for the graphic of "if, then.." and more templates, reviews and how-to guides for international development and aid professionals.

[150] For example, see Council of Nonprofit materials at https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/dashboards-nonprofits

[151] See Capturing complex change: Is it really all about confidence? by Tom Aston 22nd May 2017 Care Insights. Development Blog. For alternative methods on exploring change, international ngo such as CARE have explored methods such as Most Significant Change , see Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2005, (which does not use indicators for example) and Outcome Mapping. And with contribution analysis, it is possible to explore impact differently, use a loose theory of change and rethink how much data is necessary.)

[152] To address this, efforts at participatory approach to indicators include Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit Lennie, J., Tacchi, J., Koirala, B., Wilmore, M., Skuse, A. (2011) Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit.

[153] See Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit

[154] For field-based efforts, see for example, Violence Against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators (2014) Bloom, S. USAID, IGWG and MEASURE Evaluation.

[155] For an accessible approach to qualitative data see DFID Introduction to Qualitative Research Methodology, Kielmann, K., Cataldo, F. & Seeley, J. (2011).

[156] For the sake of space we will only refer to the difference in qualitative and quantitative approach in terms of methodology and data collected. See Research Method's Knowledge Base at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualdeb.htm for insight into the ongoing "qualitative-quantitative debate". For more information about a pragmatic approach of mixed-method methodologies see National Science Foundation's Directorate for Education and Human Resources at http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/EHR/REC/pubs/NSF97-153/CHAP_1.HTM

[157] A toolkit on indicators can be found at Civicus toolkits at https://www.civicus.org/monitoring-toolkits/toolkit/indicators/. For example, specifically on peacebuilding indicators, see Theories and Indicators of Change: Concepts and Primers for Conflict Management and Mitigation (2005) USAID, AMEX, Babbitt, E. Chigas, E.& Wilkenson, R.

[158] See, for example, a detailed discussion of peacebuilding indicators at Catholic Relief Services GAIN Peacebuilding Indicators Report, 2010 at https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/gain-peacebuilding-indicators.pdf

[159] An in depth discussion can be found at Civicus toolkits at https://www.civicus.org/monitoring-toolkits/toolkit/indicators/.

[160] See for example, Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations (2018) United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). And Toolkit for Integrating Gender in the Monitoring and Evaluation of Health Programs (2017) Fehringer, J et al MEASURE Evaluation

[161] To explore further, see https://www.civicus.org/monitoring-toolkits/toolkit/indicators/.

[162] For more on the topic of use, see Ramírez, R., & Brodhead, D. (2013). Utilization focused evaluation: A primer for evaluators. Malaysia: Southbound.

[163] See Making Evaluations Matter: A Practical Guide for Evaluators for discussion of these issues more in depth.

[164] Skovdal, M and Cornish, F., (2015) Qualitative Research for Development

[165] For more on community mapping and other participatory approaches, see VSO Facilitator guide to participatory approaches. Bradley, D. & Schneider, H. 2009 Voluntary service Overseas.

[166] See Rossi, P. H., & Freeman, H. E. (1993). Evaluation: A systematic approach (5th ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

[167] While there are a variety of types of evaluation and of research, it is possible to make the following distinction as defined by Patton, 2002: "the purpose of evaluation is to produce useful information for program

improvements and decision making. And the purpose of research is to produce knowledge about how the world works." Also see Research Method's Knowledge Base at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/

[168] Chapter 8 Selecting and Constructing Data Collection Instruments. The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 289-349)

[169] For more about interviews and additional references, See DFID Introduction to Qualitative Research Methodology, Kielmann, K., Cataldo, F. & Seeley, J. (2011). For sample interview protocols, see Online Evaluation Resource Library at http://www.oerl.sri.com/instruments/instruments.html

[170] See Patton, M.Q. (2002) Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, p. 341. A Guide to Using Qualitative Research Methodology MSF Medecins Sans Frontiers, 2015, Bricki, N & Green, J

[171] In J. S. Wholey, H. P. Hatry, & K. E. Newcomer (Eds.), Handbook of practical program evaluation (pp. 374-385). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

[172] For more on observation as a data tool see International Program for Development Evaluation Training Module on Data Collection at http://www.worldbank.org/oed/ipdet/modules.html

[173] See Online Evaluation Resource Library at http://www.oerl.sri.com/instruments/instruments.html for examples of observation guides and checklists for observations. A Guide to Using Qualitative Research Methodology MSF Medecins Sans Frontiers, 2015, Bricki, N & Green, J. and see DFID Introduction to Qualitative Research Methodology, Kielmann, K., Cataldo, F. & Seeley, J. (2011)

[174] More on this topic can be found at A Guide to Using Qualitative Research Methodology

[175] Skovdal, M and Cornish, F., (2015) Qualitative Research for Development

[176] See DFID Introduction to Qualitative Research Methodology, Kielmann, K., Cataldo, F. & Seeley, J. (2011). For participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) in rural development, see Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Field Experiences (2005) India. NGO Programme Karnataka-Tamil Nadu

[177] For more on community mapping and other participatory approaches, see VSO Facilitator guide to participatory approaches. Bradley, D. & Schneider, H. 2009 Voluntary Service Overseas.

[178] Taylor Powell, 1998. University of Wisconsin Extension's Program Development and Evaluation

[179] It can be noted that the term 'survey' is also used in the literature to refer to face to face interviews or telephone interviews

[180] See International Program for Development Training's Module on Data Collection Methods at http://www.worldbank.org/oed/ipdet/modules.html

[181] Chapter 8 Selecting and Constructing Data Collection Instruments. The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 289-349)

[182] Barry, B. (1997) Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations.

[183] For more information on ethical considerations see Research Methods Knowledge Base on Ethics at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/ethics.htm

[184] This section draws from the International Program for Development Evaluation Training Module on Data Collection at http://www.worldbank.org/oed/ipdet/modules.html For more information about developing questionnaires see the above resources and Research Methods Knowledge Base at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/survey.htm

[185] Explore further pilot testing in International Program for Development Evaluation Training Module on Data Collection at http://www.worldbank.org/oed/ipdet/modules.html

[186] Drowning in Data Snibbe, A. C. Stanford Social Innovation Review Fall 2006.

[187] See Mattessich, P. (2003). The Manager's Guide to Program Evaluation. St.Paul, MN: Wilder Research Center for more about how organizations can use data. And see Davenport, T and Prusak , L. (1998) Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

[188] McKenzie, J. F., & Smeltzer, J. L. (1997). Planning, implementing, and evaluating health promotion programs: A primer (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon. For existing data instruments used by community-based organizations, see Aspen's Institute's Measures for Community Research at http://www.aspenmeasures.org/index.html, Online Evaluation Resource Library

[189] For more information about the ethics of interviewing DFID Introduction to Qualitative Research Methodology, Kielmann, K., Cataldo, F. & Seeley, J. (2011)

[190] See more Choosing the Sampling Strategy. Morra Imas and Rist (2009). The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations.The World Bank (p. 355-367). And Research Method's Knowledge Base at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampterm.htm

[191] The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations.The World Bank (p. 355-367)

[192] See Preskill, H. and Torres, R. (1999) Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations.

[193] For more information about ethical considerations see Research Methods Knowledge Base on Ethics at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/ethics.htm

[194] Chapter 10 Planning For and Conducting Data Analysis. The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 373-404)

[195] The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 373-404). Also see International Program for Development Evaluation Training's Module on Data Analysis and Interpretation at http://www.worldbank.org/oed/ipdet/modules/M_08-na.pdf or Research Methods Knowledge Base at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/analysis.ht

[196] See more in depth Chapter 10 Planning For and Conducting Data Analysis. The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p. 373-404). For more about inferential statistics and for general references on statistics, see The Statistics Homepage at http://www.statsoft.com/textbook/stathome.html or Hyperstat Online at http://davidmlane.com/hyperstat/index.html and Research Methods Knowledge Base at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/analysis.htm

[197] For more information on qualitative data analysis, see Research Methods Knowledge Base at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/analysis.htm

[198] A Guide to Using Qualitative Research Methodology MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres, 2015, Bricki, N & Green, J

[199] For participatory approach to data analysis see Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit Lennie, J., Tacchi, J., Koirala, B., Wilmore, M., Skuse, A. (2011) Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit.

[200] For more about facilitating learning from evaluation and reviewing data, see Preskill, H. and Torres, R. (1999) Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations.

[201] Chapter 13 Presenting Results. The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p.467-491).

[202] The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effecting Development Evaluations. (p.467-491).

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[211] See Torres, R. T., Preskill, H. S., and Piontek, M. E. (1996). Evaluation Strategies for Communicating and Reporting: Enhancing Learning Organizations. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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[216] See Beer, M. & Eisenstat, R. "The Silent Killers of Strategy Implementation and Learning". Sloan Management Review. Summer 2000 (p. 29-40).

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