

Creating a Culture of Learning Through Monitoring and Evaluation: Valuing Information for Accountability, Programming and Identity

Section 1: Creating a Culture of Learning and Valuing Information

1. Background

This initiative to look at program information systems from the logframe down evolved out of the impact assessment of the status of DME capacities and practices in the SWARMU region, that was conducted as part of CARE's global initiative on the subject. A series of recommendations was made for the region based on the assessment.¹ First, three broad areas – and levels – were identified that require activities for strengthening DME capacities:

- I. Intra-project strengthening – pushing capacities and responsibilities down
- II. CO capacity and coordination strengthening
- III. Regional support initiatives.

And amongst the types of activities required, the following were identified as being of cross-cutting priority.

- Strategic assistance to COs
- Promoting tools and methods
- Developing case study and good practice guidelines for practical M&E implementation
- Orientation and dissemination workshop for the guidelines
- Developing a regional TA cadre
- Cross regional networking.

These recommendations were presented and broadly accepted by the region's Country Directors in February 2001. As a way of seeking to address many of these needs, a resource team of 11 people with broad experience of DME in the region met in Johannesburg from 11-14 December 2001 to develop an outline for good practice guidelines, which would provide the springboard for improving the quality of M&E in the region. Since a prior SWARMU initiative had focused on the project design process, with an all region workshop in Lilongwe in January 1999, and a Francophone follow up in April 2000, it was decided that the focus of the guidelines would be on planning from the logframe down.

The outline documented here is the product of the December meeting. It will be used to elicit broader feedback, as a prelude to using it as the basis of a more detailed document that will incorporate case material.

2. Purpose of Initiative

It was agreed by the resource team that a foundational principle of the initiative should be that the good practice guidelines should be substantially different from and therefore both complement and use in support existing materials on the subject of DME. In particular, the initiative should recognise

¹ 'Status of SWARMU Assessment and Planning Process for the Strengthening of CO DME Capacities', Michael Drinkwater, January 2001, CARE SWARMU

how CARE is beginning to use information systems differently in its most innovative programs and country offices, and should build on this.

In this light, **the purpose of the initiative can be described as to provide a guide to thinking about the role of information more critically, and hence to valuing its strategic nature more highly.** This includes perceiving and understanding the multiple uses of information, especially for the purposes of providing accountability for the impact of programmatic activities, for use in the ongoing management of projects, and for building the identity and reputation of CARE at its different operational levels.

Key definitions for each of these areas of information use will be described subsequently.

There are a series of intended audiences for the initiative:

- CO DME staff and project managers, and all those that play a cross-cutting role in the country office for DME.
- Staff in country offices, regional management units and CI headquarters that play a wider role in CARE in improving the quality and usage of information.
- Senior management at different levels of the organisation, in respect of the structural, capacity and resource implications of the evolving role of management information systems (MIS).
- Audiences beyond CARE with similar interests.

Monitoring and evaluation is a subject on which much has been written. Much of the existing literature, however, falls within a similar mould, being concerned with providing normative guidance as to the role of M&E in providing accountability on project impact. This literature is valuable in providing 'how to' guides on the subject. There are general shortcomings, though, three of which are specifically addressed here:

- The way in which programming is evolving in CARE increasingly requires information systems to be looked at in a very different way;
- The value of information to the organisation at all levels is both expanding and becoming increasingly important;
- The implications for the types of capacity and resource needs, and the structural implications of using these most effectively are rarely addressed in much detail.

This initiative thus aims to fill these lacuna, whilst at the same time drawing upon existing materials in supporting ways, as much as possible.

2.1 Key Assumptions

- The good practice guidelines are not about design
- They are still logframe based
- Current M&E documentation does not adequately cover core competencies
- There is often limited understanding in CO management of the range and nature of core competencies and how to value these most appropriately.
- Working toward building cross-CO teams / ability to mobilize resources
- Needs to spell-out roles of any cross-cutting team / unit
- Address issue of moving core competencies from individuals to CO's
- Not repeating info already available – use cross referencing
- Looking at key decisions that need to be made, not just a single M & E exercise

A final key assumption is that valuing the roles of information more highly in country offices does inevitably provide an argument for increasing the level of resources available for information

purposes. But perhaps even more critically, however, it provides an argument for using existing resources much more effectively.

3. Why should M&E and information be looked at differently?

What is the broad value of promoting a learning culture in CARE, and why does this provide a justification for looking much more systematically at M&E work in a different way?

The central argument for this is in the changing nature of CARE's programs. There are several facets to this.

- ⇒ The increasingly process oriented nature of projects and programs, in which more attention is being paid to the nature of relationships, as well as to the actual outputs that these produce.
- ⇒ CARE's growing expertise at playing a facilitatory or brokerage role with multiple stakeholders, as we gradually move away from direct service delivery.
- ⇒ The use of more programmatic approaches in the organisation, which has been encouraged by the use of frameworks such as HLS and more recently RBA, and the wider uses of information in these beyond the estimation of impact.

3.1 Challenges that need addressing

At the outset of the resource team exercise, individuals listed their views on what they felt were some of the key challenges and frustrations they commonly encountered with respect to M&E capacities and operations in country offices.

Operating environment

- Accommodating donor requirements
 - Reconciling upward accountability to donors with downward accountability to participants
 - Information is perceived as something that serves external needs
 - Convincing donors in program approach and leading to appropriate indicators argument
 - Unrealistic benchmarks
- Understanding the use / value added of information system
 - Timeless in data collection + report
 - Tradeoffs regarding costs, time + how these influence the final process + products
 - Poor planning for M&E activities (time commitment)
 - Poor linkage between planning for data collection , analysis + inf. uses + dissemination
 - To differentiate clearly the added value due to program intervention
- Capacity challenges
 - Capacity for analyzing in CO
 - Capacity for good baselines in CO
 - Low-in-house capacities + maintaining skills for M&E
 - Capacity of staff to implement M&E (decision making)
- Coordination and shared lessons across projects
 - Reinventing the squared wheel (making the same old mistakes in all projects – do not build on successes)
 - Don't build enough on cross-cutting approaches + emphasis on cross-cutting competencies
 - Independent M&E systems for each project

- Inter-project coordination + sharing

Information collection + Use

- Determining appropriate methods for information needs
 - Quantitative versus qualitative information and donor requirement
 - Quantitative qualitative dichotomy
- Information analysis and use
 - Information (both quantitative and qualitative) is collected but rarely analyzed and used
 - Too much data collected not enough analyzed
 - Still too much info collected during baselines (indicators appropriateness)missing data / uncollected data
 - Managing the data (often becomes another assessment) basically for information decisions
- Increasing complexity + unrealistic expectations
 - No single projects has consistently good MIS (expectations)
 - How to simplify the M&E process (it's getting more and more complex)
 - How to monitor intangible outcomes such as changes in rights
- Fitting M&E into management structures
 - Who is responsible for changing interventions at project level through M&E information (CD, ACD, Project Manager, DME staff)
 - Integrating M&E into project process it's not an add-on
 - Integrating information for M&E projects management (ie perception of M&E as outside day to day project management)

Insufficient reflective practice

- We don't build on successes enough eg building on early LMS work
- Information is not used
- Systems /practices do not result in dynamic learning + actions (read : no reflective practice)
- Building in time for debriefing and reflection

Little documentation of reflective practice

- documentation that is analytical + critical
- limited documentation of lessons
- not enough attention to information quality issue

4. Prerequisites for Creating a Learning Culture

To create a learning culture requires initiatives of three types.

- ⇒ The organisation has to value learning as a reflective process, and thus to accommodate the kinds of changes that are needed to facilitate this. Typically it will involve more team based work, with less hierarchical structures and decision making.
- ⇒ Individual (and team) reflection has to be valued and encouraged. This takes time, since typically when people are working in task oriented ways they feel constantly overworked. This means that the benefits and time saved through working more reflectively and strategically take a while and experimentation with different modes of working in order to be understood.
- ⇒ The production, processing and consumption of information has also to be valued more highly. There is an important caveat here: not information of any kind and quality. Much of the time today we are overloaded rather than underloaded with information, and unfortunately a great deal of it is of limited use. There needs to be more attention to producing quality information, conducive to learning, and to communicating this information in ways that will most easily reach and be absorbed by those to whom it has potential value.

4.1 Principles of a Learning Organisation

The set of principles here are drawn from (***) .

- 1 - Moving from a hierarchical decision-making leadership to a collective leadership
 - need to understand the structure
- 2 - Learning by doing – capture the learning along the way, not only at specific junctures
 - Embracing errors
 - Learning through performance
- 3 – Motivation to learn
 - Key people to leverage have to be part of the learning process
- 4 - Involves experimenting and then reflecting
 - Need to make time and space for this
 - Reflection requires documentation
- 5 - Has to be a connection between reflection / learning on future
 - Holistic view for decision making
- 6 – Learning space has to be working space
- 7 – Process and content cannot be separated
- 8 – Learning requires courage
 - Transform fear into a perceived need
 - Move toward information demand driven
 - Creating an environment of trust : people won't take risk when they don't trust / respect
- 9 – Move toward transformational learning
 - Conventional learning tends to be transactional
 - Challenge existing models
 - Seek post alternatives

Additional points from group:

- Learning needs to be cross-office, cross-regions, cross-continent

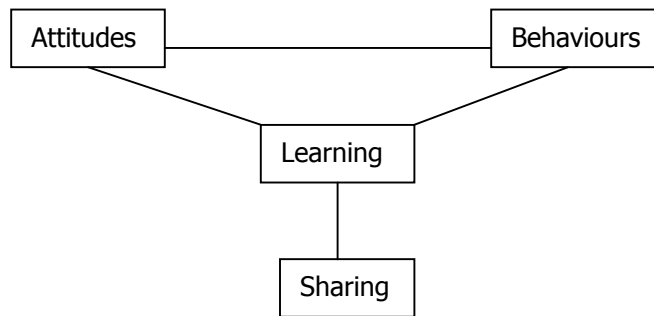
- How do we use our time most effectively?
 - How we value time does not lend itself to valuing reflective practice time (learning seen as down time)
- Need to be aware of the connection between communication and learning: need strategies for both capturing (use of case studies) and communicating learning
- How do we value organisational changes
 - We don't track these processes
 - What worked and why and what did not work and why (eg : Madagascar has captured their organisational changes)
- CARE'S overall communication strategy internally and externally
 - This reflects how the organisation values its programmes
 - No incentive for CO to share their information
- Teams need to have a very specific objective: forming learning teams around different themes and incorporating the learning into strategy

4.2 Linking Learning and Communication

Need to work towards the establishment of communication strategies in projects, and more broadly in country offices, and understanding the roles and responsibilities of all in this. The latter should at least embody the core capacity requirement of all staff: the ability to think about and learn from what they are doing!

A fundamental requirement of creating a culture of learning is the encouragement of an operating environment that facilitates better learning. Central to this is having a variety of 'sharing fora' as regular and respected parts of project and program processes, more team based methods of working and learning together, and infusing a respect for more democratic and less hierarchical ways of working, in which the capacity of all to contribute to learning through reflection on their own experience is recognised and appreciated.

5. Structure and Methodology



5.1 Methodology

The guidelines are developed in a way that attempts to identify the kinds of dilemmas that are typically faced, and the key types of decisions that need to be made in developing an information system.

- For each section, the main issues are set out through first of all a discussion of the role of that element in the information system, and then the nature of the key procedural and operational debates.
- Case material is used to illustrate the tensions and issues in the key debates and questions.
- The main lessons and implications for making decisions with regard to the issues are drawn out.

5.2 Document Outline

5.3 Reference Materials

6. Organisational Implications

For core competencies and how these should be viewed.

The structural implications of the above.

The trade-offs with respect to resource requirements.

INFORMATION IN THE PROGRAM CYCLE

1 – Type, nature and role of information (collected and used by projects)

- Secondary information used in design
- Assessment information
- Specialised studies (offer to help design specific strategy component)
- Action research
- Advocacy briefs
- How different kinds of information can be used for different purposes

2 – Types of information users (and what information do they use)

- Describing the program cycle
- Other organisational experiences (who can we learn from)

Section 2 : Logframe Interpretation and M&E Planning

LOGFRAME INTERPRETATION / M&E PLANNING

1 – Establishing common ground : understanding planned change

- Role of a logframe in M&E planning
 - transitioning from design
 - what are the key debates
- Hierarchical nature of projects
CS : MOZAMBIQUE KUYAKANA
- Logic modelling and different ways of doing things
 - why logic models
 - different types of logic modelling
- Terminology and language
CS :Zambia/Malawi,DFID & USAID
- Program versus projects
CS : IFSP / Bangladesh
- Implication for information systems
- The nature and role of the information project
- Partners and their role in the design of the M&E system

2 – Towards a coherent M&E system (comprehensive versus coherent – make the difference)

- Refining indicators
CS : MAHAVITA – Logframe A
 - who participates and when
- Planning for efficiency
- Planning for effective MIS
 - Building living M&E frameworks :
CRS – Gambia
 - On going-role of reflective practice
- Key elements that need to be kept in mind and continuously re-examined
 - Continuous learning of underlying causes
 - Why can we have greater impact
 - Behavioural changes
 - Unintended consequences
- Consolidating integrating M&E system

Section 3 : Baseline Studies

1. What is the purpose of a baseline?

A baseline has multiple purposes, the most obvious being for determining project / programme impact. Impact is determined during final (summative) evaluation using the initial baseline information as a point of departure. Any formative review should also link to the baseline information to capture changes. Baseline information is also used for informing the design of appropriate monitoring systems.

Baselines are an important learning opportunity for a CO when staff actively engage themselves throughout the process. This provides an arena for capacity building through deepening understanding of project objectives and the role of staff in achieving these, as well as enhancing staff analytical skills.

The baseline relates to three information areas that are critical for achieving high standards of operation. These are accountability, programming and identity, as outlined below.

Accountability

A CO is accountable to different stakeholders (donors, project participants, partners and staff) and at different levels. For example, accountability to our donors lies at the contractual level; in other words we have to provide results. A CO office is also accountable to the project participants. This occurs through transparency and different levels of participation during activities such as planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Programming

Baseline information should allow us to check on various aspects of the project / programme cycle, such as the relevance of indicators determined in the logframe, how realistic our targets are, and if linkages to the monitoring system and final evaluation are coherent. This is a key decision making moment for reshaping our interventions and / or the logic of the project if necessary.

Identity

Baselines are an opportunity to build the capacity of staff and partners through active learning - learning that results in enhanced conceptual and technical skills. It is an opportunity for deepening understanding and perceived value of the projects' purpose within the HLS and other frameworks. As staff recognize the value of their own activities within the larger picture and increase confidence in the projects' interventions, increased motivation for and commitment to work becomes a reality. Improved relationships with communities and other stakeholders as a result of dynamic information systems (resulting in improved orientation of interventions and) will also ensue as partnerships and alliances are strengthened.

2. Some Key Issues and Debates

A number of key issues require addressing in order to provide useful lessons and learning for the future. These include:

Identity:

COs may not always recognize the potential learning opportunity represented by the baseline for greater involvement of staff and the way this helps in shaping the staff / organization's identity and reputation.

Difference between assessment and baseline:

CO staff may not understand the difference between the assessment and baseline. It is important to focus on the projects' indicators and targets during the baseline and not fall into the enticing trap of collecting more information than can be used effectively. It may be necessary for the CO to conduct other specialised studies if it needs more information, but not necessarily during the baseline. This is becoming more common in CO.

Linking M & E events:

The importance of linking the baseline to monitoring processes and summative evaluation in a coherent fashion is not always realised. There is a danger of implementing these events in a one off fashion, thereby losing the value of the information and the opportunity for creating dynamic information systems.

Costs:

It is often challenging for a CO to determine an adequate budget for the baseline process before it commences. A CO must consider internal / external roles in the baseline and the capacity of internal staff to undertake this activity. Equally important is consideration of the time and space that needs to be created for internal capacity building to ensure staff not only are engaged in the activity, but have the minimum necessary skills to undertake this activity.

Methods and tools:

A good mix of both quantitative and qualitative information gathering techniques is valuable. Depending upon the nature of the project one may be given more attention, but both types of information can and should support the other. (Reference document)

Embracing Learning:

If the CO (and the CARE world in general) wants to embrace becoming a 'learning organisation' and take responsibility for creating dynamic information systems, it may need to revisit job descriptions to ensure that the importance of this activity is reflected and the specific role of each staff. This would ensure that staff are aware from the start the importance of the baseline and an initial understanding of their role in its implementation, and not that it is simply an 'add on activity' that someone else is responsible for. For example it is all too common in CO that staff perceive the role of M and E in general to be someone else's responsibility.

3. Key Steps and Practical Issues

3.1. When to start the baseline

Ideally the baseline should be conducted before the project begins implementation, not only for capturing the actual situation before activities commence, but for capturing learning among CO staff as well.

Seasonality issues require consideration, especially in relation to the indicators that we want to measure. For example, agricultural production measured 6 months after harvest.

3.2. Information Needs

Stakeholder needs and perspectives must be taken into account when deciding what the different information needs are. This is when decision making around the different needs and levels of information must occur. For example donor's requirements may not be related to a project's own information needs. How the information is going to be fed back and used will also differ according to who will be using it. It is ideal for stakeholders to play a role in the identification of information needs if possible. This could occur during an all-present stakeholder forum, or in smaller forums that may be appropriate for different groups.

It is important to think about information that may not exist within the logframe that will help us to shape or improve our interventions. There is a caution here to not over collect, but to give more thought to transformative changes that may occur and what indicators would be relevant.

3.2.1 What information and from where?

Secondary data can be valuable information that is often undervalued. However, an understanding of the units of analysis are critical as secondary data may provide information that was collected on different units of analysis from the projects own, and thereby have very little relevance.

3.3. Analysis Planning

Planning appropriate time for quality analysis needs careful consideration. This will help to keep the baseline focused on data that is absolutely essential to collect, and how the information will ultimately be used.

If the project decides to involve staff in the baseline, an assessment of staff capacity will be of critical importance and what is required to improve staff capacity both before and during the baseline. If the CO decides to engage external consultants to play a major role a plan for 'mentoring' key staff would be essential to ensure the analysis is internalised.

For quantitative surveys a good analysis plan should include a list of tables with variables used, statistical method (e.g. descriptive level only or more sophisticated analysis) and the rationale for the indicators. It is not uncommon for a CO to not take the extra time to do this and often the analysis plan is considered implicit to the existing indicators.

For qualitative data the plan should consider the adequate amount of time required to undertake analysis. More often, time for design, pre-testing and collection is given more consideration than time for actual analysis of qualitative data.

A sound analysis plan will help to link both qualitative and quantitative data and the importance of using both. (Reference document).

3.4. Sampling

What are appropriate levels and techniques of sampling for both quantitative and qualitative information requires consideration, as they will differ. These considerations should also occur during the analysis planning.

It is critical that a sound sampling framework is determined to ensure statistical validity and confidence in the results. (Reference document Rich's work)

Ethical issues such as the use of control groups will also require careful thought.

Case Studies

Mali – poor sampling

Malawi – poor sampling / qual and quan issues

Lesotho Livelihoods Study – qualitative and quantitative issues

3.5. Other important Steps for Baseline

Design of Tools

The consideration of who takes part in the design stage and at what level of effort is essential. Ideally, design should be organized in a participatory way with key staff involvement. There are many references to the types of tools that can be used for both quantitative and qualitative information gathering. (Reference document)

Training Materials

A manual should be developed that clearly outlines any quantitative and qualitative tools to be used. Logistics, the roles and responsibilities of each participant should also be clearly illustrated.

Time must be allocated for a debriefing session on issues raised in relation to both the questionnaire and other qualitative methods, especially when external staff is involved.

Time for translation in local languages is also crucial as it allows concepts and questions to be asked in the same way to a variety of individuals and / or groups.

Testing of tools

Test the coherence and the logic of the tools, as well as the adequacy of the translation and allow time for their refinement.

Implementation – Logistics – Planning

Data management

Should start as soon as the data collection commences. This includes checking in the field, data entry and data cleaning, and appropriate storage to create accessibility for different users and future needs.

3.6. Analysis and dissemination

3.6.1 Analysis

The capacity that staff will develop during this activity will help shape our identity as an organization capable of managing its own process.

Analysis is a very important step for the entire project because through it a CO may:

- confirm or reject the realism (adequacy, validity) of targets
- confirm or reject the relevance of the selected indicators (e.g. number of meals /per day)
- establish benchmarking according to the realistic timing for changes to occur (link to monitoring plan)
- take (and document) decisions on re-shaping interventions
- revise objectives determined in the logframe if necessary (this may be negotiable with the donor)

Case Studies

LMP

CARE Bangladesh

CARE Nepal - 2 baselines used for redesigning interventions

3.6.2 Documentation and communication

Documentation of the findings can take various forms depending upon the users of the information and how the CO wants to present the findings. A CO will have to evaluate the different stakeholders requirements and determine the most suitable way to present the baseline information. This could take the form of presenting findings to all stakeholders at once vs. specific stakeholder feed-back (specifically donors and community). The latter may be more suitable as information may need adapting to meet the level of understanding of the different stakeholders. Depending upon how the information is presented this process should reflect the CO's accountability to its' different stakeholders and reinforce its' positive identity.

Equally important is documenting the entire process for organisational learning, provided the CO provides the space and opportunity for reflection and learning from past practice.

This would include lessons on:

- the cost, time and human resources required and if they were adequately budgeted for – what were the constraints and how were they addressed? What trade offs did the CO have to make?
- capacity building issues for staff – what constraints did the CO face and how did they compensate?
- replicability for the summative evaluation – what worked well? What to do differently? How to do more efficiently / effectively?

These documented lessons are a valuable resource for designing future baseline and evaluative studies the CO will undertake.

Section 4: Monitoring

1. What is the Role of Monitoring?

The role of monitoring is to inform program managers and stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of project implementation. The information that is gathered through monitoring serves a variety of purposes including; 1) analysing the operating environment of the project; 2) discovering trends and patterns; 3) tracking project activities and the processes as they evolve; 4) measuring progress towards objectives and goals; and 5) making decisions about human, financial, and material resources. The monitoring system helps all those involved in the program determine what is working and what is not working, why, and what needs to be adjusted.

2. What are the Key Debates?

In many projects, monitoring systems have primarily been used to track outputs. Such systems have been used mostly to track project delivery for donor reporting. Staff that are responsible for monitoring expend considerable time and resources on tracking outputs and rarely focus on the process changes that are occurring. Projects need to strike a balance between these two types of information.

In addition to tracking project performance, monitoring systems should be used for getting feedback from participants and other stakeholders regarding the project strategy, and key changes in the operating environment. The monitoring system needs to be less extractive and more participatory to allow for learning and downward accountability to occur. Monitoring is the responsibility of all program staff and not only to be tasked to the M&E staff. Monitoring should be seen as part of the capacity building process.

Too often project staff regard themselves as being responsible for implementing project activities and much less responsible for tracking the change that comes about as a result of the project. Consequently, monitoring activities do not receive sufficient time and resources. This may result in a reactive form of M&E, rather than being proactive.

It is typical for projects to collect too much information that is not relevant to monitoring the results and impacts for which the project is accountable. By restricting the amount, and improving the quality and reliability of the data gathered, projects will have good information systems that allows them to make timely and informed decisions.

3. What Are We Trying to Learn and What is the Information Used For?

Information is collected through monitoring to determine whether the program activities are having an impact on peoples' lives and to continuously improve the quality of programming.

To insure that the monitoring system is user friendly, used for program management, and not only externally focused, the information needs to be demand driven. This will involve:

- Agreement among stakeholders on how the monitoring system will help in making better decisions. Consensus will have to be reached among the various stakeholders regarding what information will be collected through monitoring, taking into considerations the various tradeoffs.
- Good dialogue among program staff on information needs is required so that the appropriate information is collected through monitoring. The information should help program staff address

accountability, and improved programming. Through the sharing and use of information, the identity of the COs will be enhanced.

4. How Does Monitoring Link with the Baseline and Evaluation?

The monitoring system should be linked to the baseline activities in several ways. First, both data collection exercises track some common indicators for measuring change. Second, the baseline focuses on capturing effect and impact level changes while the monitoring system captures the processes that lead to these outcomes. Third, the baseline and final evaluation help program staff and stakeholders capture lessons learned for future programming while monitoring allows for continuous learning within a project. Good monitoring systems should be based on demand driven information needs of program management.

What Type of Monitoring Should We Do? (Types of Monitoring)

4.1. Output Monitoring

Output monitoring will continue to be important to assessing project progress. The issue here is how much information on outputs should we collect and what needs to be done to allow for more time and resources to be used for other types of monitoring and analysis. For example, a sample could be drawn of project outputs rather than gathering information on every project activity. This would free up time and resources for other monitoring activities.

Case study examples of COs where output monitoring was reduced to allow for other types of monitoring include India (Title II Project), and Bangladesh (IFSP).

4.2. Assumption Monitoring

The success of a project or program can be dramatically affected by changes in the operating environment. In many cases, the conditions of the operating environment are specified in the log frame. Part of the monitoring system should be focused on monitoring the macro environment (economic or marketing situation, policy changes, climatic events) where the project is being implemented. The Livelihood Monitoring Project in Bangladesh provides a good example of such a monitoring activities.

4.3. Process Monitoring

Process monitoring is rarely done in projects. This involves tracking changes in relationships among institutions, communities, and people, as well as changes in capacity. Process monitoring also helps the program staff take into consideration the linkages between people and their environment to better grasp the factors that contribute to poverty, vulnerability and marginalization. For example, longitudinal cohort studies being carried out in Mali and Bangladesh allow us to understand trends and to disaggregate the information according to gender, ethnicity and generational differences.

Process monitoring also allows for an assessment of the project strategy from various stakeholders perspectives. Process monitoring enables the program staff to adjust project activities to improve effectiveness.

Finally, as COs begin to implement programs that are rights-based, it may be necessary to monitor rights violations in the program area. How COs use this information for programming will vary by context.

5. Which Indicators Do We Use and How Do We Operationalize Them? (Indicator Choice and Development)

There are a variety of indicators to use in monitoring. The selection of indicators will be based on the log frame and the number of indicators used should be kept to minimum. A number of issues must be addressed in the use of indicators. These include:

- Who is responsible for choosing the indicators and who will be responsible for collecting the information.
- Striking the best balance between normative (standardized) indicators and relative indicators that are context specific.
- Developing indicators that capture institutional change and capacity building
- Developing indicators that help us track rights-based changes

Case examples will be drawn from Mali, Niger, South Africa, Ghana, Madagascar, and Nepal.

6. Methods of Monitoring

A number of different tools are used in gathering information used for monitoring. The use of more participatory methodologies has often increased the relevance and value of the information produced. When selecting a tool to be used it is important to keep it simple enough to be used by project staff and partners. The tools can be either quantitative or qualitative. The application of a tool must be reviewed and modified by the people who will eventually use them.

Monitoring information can come from a variety sources and in a variety of formats. Information can be anecdotal in the form of stories or case studies, and/or derived through participatory methods such as focus groups or various interactive tools. Some information can be obtained through community-based monitoring systems.

Case examples will be drawn from Bangladesh (IFSP), Lesotho (TEAM), and Zambia (LFSP).

7. Do We Need a Monitoring Plan? (Planning of Monitoring Activities)

A monitoring plan should be developed to allow for resourcing, sequencing and communicating effectively. The structure of the plan (in matrix form) should spell out types of information being collected, the kinds of collection activities, who will collect the information, the timing and periodicity of data collection, and the cost (including staff time). It also has to spell out data requirements for different stakeholders. The tools used should be appropriate to the level of capacity of those who will use them. Monitoring should lead to improvements in capacity of various stakeholders. Project staff should be involved in the monitoring process and in the development of the plan. Adequate time and space need to be allocated for learning. The planning development process should build room for reflection. Case studies will be drawn from Malawi, Bangladesh and Zambia.

How Much Data Do We Need To Collect?

A common rule of thumb is that the quality of the data gathered should be emphasized over the quantity of data collected. The quality of information is enhanced as the level of interaction with participants improves, and our understanding of the context becomes deeper. Quality can also improve with appropriate sampling, disaggregation and optimal application of rigor. Some types of information will have to be collected on a seasonal basis or at different frequencies. Monitoring teams should experiment with different data collection techniques to meet different data needs as the

program evolves. It is important to stress that the monitoring system has to be flexible in order to capture the types of information that will improve program decision making.

In addition to capturing the intended changes of a program, the monitoring system has to be designed in such a way to capture the unintended consequences as well. These consequences can be either positive or negative.

One type of sampling technique that will allow for program learning is to sample for the extremes. For example, identifying the positive deviant households and learning from their experience may provide good insights on how to adjust programming.

Case studies will be drawn from CARE Zambia and CARE Egypt.

How Do We Analyze, Document and Report the Monitoring Information?

It is not enough to produce good quality and reliable data; the ability to analyze it is also important. Data analysis skills are usually weak among most CARE staff implementing projects. Too often, inadequate attention is given to analysis at the beginning of a data collection exercise. Staff need to clearly plan how they will carry out the analysis and what format this will take before any information is collected.

When different methods are used to gather data, it is important to use the principle of triangulation when drawing conclusions. This involves using a variety of ways to capture information on the same topic. If there is agreement across a range of methods on a particular topic, the chances of drawing reliable conclusions is improved.

One problem that many projects have is that they do not allow for sufficient time to analyze data. Good analysis requires that sufficient time and space are made available for CARE and its partners to review the findings and to determine the program implications.

Skills in presenting data in useful and usable formats are also weak. It is important to have a good understanding of what types of information and in what formats different users will be interested in. This will be critical to a good communication strategy.

Once projects do have good documentation derived from monitoring efforts, they are often not easily accessible or available to those who would use the information. Information needs to be consolidated and made easily accessible to be used.

How Do We Use M&E Information for Learning and Reflection?

There are very few projects that regularly use monitoring information to reflect on and reorient project activities. This is related to perceptions of staff regarding the purpose and value of the information generated, and the extent to which different stakeholders feel ownership of it. CARE staff and partners need to feel empowered to take information generated from the monitoring system and make appropriate adjustments in project activities. This includes embracing error. If the project is generating negative consequences, then program changes will be required.

If monitoring information is community or partner managed, the time frame required to complete monitoring activities and adequate reflection will be drawn out. To facilitate this process, adequate space and time will be required to promote good reflective practice.

Section 5: Formative Evaluation

1. What is the role of formative evaluation?

1.1 Objectives:

To enable changes to improve potential for impact , key objectives should include:

- assessment of progress against objectives;
eg. achievements of outputs (what was done, how well and with whom and what lessons have been learnt)
- assessment of performance;
eg. project effectiveness, efficiency, use of resources, participant perceptions
- effects;
eg. what behavioural change can we see (trends/unintended outcomes and transformational change) and progress towards systemic change
- project strategy;
eg. why is / isn't project achieving envisaged change and what implications does this have?
- organisational capacity
eg. what does the above tell us about our own/partners/participants skills, capacity and systems

1.2 Linkages to M&E plan:

How does this "event" or learning process building on and/or link to previous monitoring and baseline activities and future M&E plans?

Key aspects to consider:

- FE should synthesize and make meaning of monitoring data;
 - Should inform changes to strategy/targets/indicators;
 - May use baseline for comparison;
 - Should contribute to the coordination of the overall programme/CO MIS
 - Should contribute to the development of similar or related projects in the CO, sector and country
- Explore at will!

Important aspects to balance during FE:

(NB – this a balance that should have been achieved during indicator formulation!)

- Normative vs relative
- Process vs product
- Behavior changes and systemic changes

1.3 Why is formative evaluation an important part of MEL (M&E and Learning!)?:

- To convince ourselves, communities / beneficiaries, donors, the public, others (government) that we are in fact, adding value to society – and therefore deserving of huge amounts of money and praise (identity and accountability value);
- Draw lessons to improve and replicate our excellent practice (programme value);
- To make public our experiences (accountability).

To achieve the above clarify:

- what stakeholder interests are;
- what information and contribution is required by each stakeholder group;
- how best to communicate to the different stakeholder groups

Explore at will!

2. Key debates



- Is this FE for us or for the donor?
- Who initiates the FE process?
- Do we do the FE ourselves or do we hire an ext consultant?
- If we do it ourselves is it the responsibility of the "specialist" or do we share the responsibility?
- How can we use FE to build analytical capacity amongst staff, partners and stakeholders?
- Who writes the TOR and designs the process?
- How are "mistakes" viewed – internal process may make people more comfortable to discuss shortcomings etc; but an ext process may reveal shortcomings more dispassionately.
- What commitment is there to actually following up on learnings and insights?

Upward acct ←-----→ Downward acct

- What is the extent of upward/downward accountability?
- How can we use FE to build analytical capacity amongst staff, partners and stakeholders?
- Who can make decisions about changes and what is the balance of proof required – link to value of different kinds/sources of information?

Process ←-----→ Product

- What value is placed on different kinds of indicators?
- See other pt below & above;
- How is information gathered?
- What information is valid (do we value formal info vs informal info)?
- Whose reality counts and who counts it?
- How can we use FE to build analytical capacity amongst staff, partners and stakeholders?

"Mid term" event ←-----→ Reflective process

- How will the FE be integrated into the project process;
- To what extent is the "working space" also a "learning space"?
- How is the connection between communication and learning reinforced?
- How is reflection, reading and writing valued and incentivised?
- How does sharing and learning inform attitude and behaviour and organisational culture? (See Michael's section)

Explore at will

Here ends the conceptual section!

3. Practical guidelines

Issues to be addressed include:

3.1 Timing

- When does FE happen in relation to other M&E events (eg seasonality)
- How does FE build on and contribute to other M&E events/processes – especially in relation to time that has elapsed since the project began and time remaining until EOP;
- What distinction must be made between annual reviews (OPRs) and mid terms especially in longer projects?

Case Study:

SCAPE – making time for reflection and learning for the Programme Team

CARE Malawi/Lesotho/Zambia – “Dry Run” methodology (ORP)
May go to “process/methodology” below

3.2 Process/methodology

- Who needs to be involved and when (see who are we trying to convince...)?
- What is the specific purpose and objective of the FE?
- How do we turn this into a TOR which enables learning as opposed to checking?

Case Study :**Rich’s fabulous TOR**

- take control
- build analytical capacity
- retain ability to think
- rule the world!

- Development of tools/methods and training materials.

3.3 Data gathering

- Who gathers?
- Considerations have to do with need for objectivity, trust and validity;
- Who gives?
- What information sources are valid and important – link to who are we trying to convince?
- What tools and methods will be used?
- Make time for testing, debriefing and redesign.

Case Study

CARE Malawi community feedback (perceptions of the community)

3.4 Analysis and recommendations

- Who is involved in the analysis process?
- What is the data telling us?
- How significant is this for the project strategy and for project participants and other stakeholders/programmes and the CARE World?
- Has it always been this way?
- Does the intervention logic still hold?
- Attribution / contribution – realistically, what is our contribution to the achievements/shortcomings of the project and how do we know this? What factors have contributed to the change/or lack there of?
- What are the key lessons?
- How do we translate lessons into recommendations?
- How feasible is it to implement recommendations?

3.5 Use of recommendations

- How do we use the findings?
 - Create identity internally / externally (marketing, recognition, valuing contribution , being seen as accountable)
 - Accountability
 - Assessing / impact / reporting progress to IP's
 - Using finding to create dialogue / debate around topical issues
 - Advocacy
 - Identity
- How do we incorporate/use new ideas in redesign process?

<p>Case Study: CARE Mozambique – Kuyakana CARE Bangladesh – IFSP CARE Malawi - CRIMP</p>

3.6 Implementation of recommendations

- How will chosen recommendations be implemented?
- What are the budget, resource and capacity implications for this action?
- Who decides?
- How do we deal with staff fears and concerns?

3.7 Communication with the CARE World and beyond

- How do we maximise coordination with the M&E plan; other M&E elements; the much worshipped logframe and the donor (incl negotiations)?
- How do we engage with other development initiatives in the sector/ geographic area;
- How do we share lessons with others in the CO; with same sector projects (CARE) and with same sector "foreigners" (eg. NON CARE)?
- How do we the outcomes of the FE to value and acknowledge staff and partner contributions?
- How do we involve project participants in changes?
- How do we communicate our new improved self to project participants; the public; government; and others ?

4. Links to other sections

See above ... and additional to be added later.

5. References

Explore Rich's computer

Section 6: Summative Evaluation

1. What is the purpose / role of the SE?

Summative evaluation activities are carried out at the end or after the end of the project's implementation span and are more often than not seen by Country offices as a donor requirement. A more holistic view of the summative evaluation provides opportunities for the organisation to:

- Promote organisational reflection and learning to feedback into the re-design of follow up programs or future program design in the Country Office of region
- Strengthen the culture of accountability to itself and others
- Build its identity and reputation with stakeholders and donors
- Strengthen its advocacy

1.2 Types of SE

Summative evaluation activities can take the form of:

- A broad impact study which looks at the full extent of what the project accomplished and how it did this – ***this is usually because of a donor requirement***
- More focussed / thematic studies based on a need to understand critical elements in the process or specific outcomes of the project – ***this is done more to promote our own organisational learning and communicate this internally as well as externally***

2. Some key issues and debates

A number of key issues require addressing in order to provide useful lessons and learning for the future. These include:

A cost-benefit analysis:

- How cost efficient was the implementation?
- What lessons are there for improving efficiency in future programmes?
- Does this promote CARE's image and reputation as an accountable partner?

Identify incremental changes, institutional changes, and transformative changes:

- What direct impact did the project have on the beneficiary/target community?
- What influence has the project had in promoting other personal or community initiatives among beneficiaries?

Benefits / harms - unintended and negative consequences:

- A key to promoting CARE's accountability lies in clearly understanding the broader impact of our work, particularly with regard to promoting the dignity of "the people we serve". Benefits/harms tools allow us a means of understanding the human rights impact (or lack of) in our work.

What changes took place in the operating environment during the course of project implementation (e.g. staff changes, policy changes...):

- How did changes in the operating environment (e.g. policy changes / staff shifts) influence the project (positively or negatively)?
- Could any of these changes have been anticipated? If so, why were they not?
- What implications does this have for monitoring systems in future designs?

Attribution – contribution:

- How much of the change (both positive and negative) can be attributed to the work of CARE? How can we demonstrate/prove this?

Key lessons and implications for future program design

What are key lessons for the organisation with regard to:

- How did we work?
- What did we do well?
- What could we have done better?
- What helped or hindered us?

These key lessons should be documented to capture organisational learning and act as a resource for future programme design.

When and how (what are the mechanisms) will the results of the SE activities be incorporated into key organisational processes such as:

- Design of further programmes
- Advocacy
- Marketing

Practical issues in Summative Evaluation

The design of a summative evaluation needs to take account of the following:

1. Information sources

Insights should be gleaned from a range of sources including:

Former staff:

In many cases, staff that may have been involved in the more intensive phases of the project's implementation may already have left (project is usually closed and staff is gone). Thought should be given to how the views of such individuals can be incorporated into the evaluation.

- *Stakeholders*
- *Baseline documents and monitoring reports*
- *Donors*

2. Identification of whom to involve in the evaluation, how and at what stage

A number of discrete stages can be recognised in the evaluation process:

- Data collection
- Analysis of information
- Writing up results
- Communicating results
- Post project research

3. Methods and tools

An appropriate mix of quantitative and qualitative information will enhance the validity of the results. Availability and use of secondary data may also be taken into consideration if relevant.

3.1 Indicators

These should reflect the impact indicators of the project, as well as others that allow us to identify transformative changes in the target group or its environment

3.2 Costs

Who will assume responsibility for covering the costs of the evaluation? And what personnel and time should be allocated to the evaluation?

4. Communication of Summative Evaluation results

Information arising from the summative evaluation can and should serve 4 key purposes:

1. Provide space and opportunity for reflection and learning from past practice

2. Demonstrate accountability of the organisation
3. Provide information for use in building/promoting the identity of CARE
4. Advocacy initiatives

4.1 Packaging

The various purposes for which information will be used require thought be given to the format that will work best for each audience. Some questions such as what is the appropriate mix of qualitative/quantitative data in the documentation? The inclusion of pictures/case studies/ "direct quotes" etc. will enhance any presentation.

5. Links to other processes

- Promoting a culture of learning
- Design process
- Use of baseline, formative and evaluation and monitoring information

6. References