dPc dis PLACED consulting

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Purpose

This document outlines the framework employed by Displaced Consulting Ltd (dPc) in its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of projects and programmes that it designs and implements. Most of the work conducted by dPc involves policy research, analysis and writing, as well as MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning) studies. Research, and particularly publicly funded research, is increasingly expected to be:

- Relevant to public concerns, to influence policy, and shape programmes to improve human and environmental conditions
- Demand-led, explicitly incorporating stakeholder engagement mechanisms and involving stakeholders in identifying research questions from the outset
- Combined with other interventions (e.g. accompany development interventions)
- Able to deliver results in complex and changing contexts (Pasanen & Shaxson 2016)

M&E can help assess what difference projects and programmes are making (or have made) and can provide vital intelligence, for example to help:

- Assess and demonstrate effectiveness in achieving stated objectives and/or impacts on people's lives;
- Improve internal learning and decision making about project design, how the group operates, and implementation i.e. about success factors, barriers, which approaches work/ don't work etc;
- Ensure accountability to key stakeholders (e.g. affected communities, funders, partners);
- Influence government policy;
- Share learning with other communities and even more broadly;
- Contribute to the evidence base about effectiveness and limits of such activities.

Definitions

Monitoring is the collection and analysis of information about a project or programme, undertaken while the project/programme is ongoing.

Evaluation is the periodic, retrospective assessment of an organisation, project or programme that might be conducted internally or by external independent evaluators.

Guiding Principles

This guidance note is structured around the six M&E areas:

1. Strategy and direction: 'Are we doing the right thing?'
2. Management and governance: 'Are we implementing the plan as effectively as possible?'

3. Outputs: 'Are outputs audience-appropriate and do they meet the required standards?'
4. Uptake: 'Are people accessing and sharing our work?'
5. Outcomes and impacts: 'What kinds of effects or changes have the work contributed to?'
6. Context: 'How does the changing political, economic, social and organisational climate affect our plans and intended outcomes?'

These six M&E areas are operationalised by taking three practical steps:

1. Clarifying the purpose and deciding the appropriate intensity and timing to monitor and evaluate this area
2. Defining key M&E questions you want to answer for this area
3. Identifying appropriate approaches, methods and indicators to answer the key questions.

It is useful to develop some guiding principles to ensure that your M&E is relevant, useful, timely, and credible. Some examples might include making sure the M&E and/or information you collect is:

- Focused and feasible in relation to your available resources so that it supports rather than diverts resources from action (i.e. make sure you focus information collection on what you 'need to know', not on what would be 'nice to know');
- Useful and timely information to improve group learning, group decision making, and project design;
- Useable by, and/or comparable to, data collected by other stakeholders so it contributes to the wider evidence base;
- Credible, valid and reliable to the extent possible within your available resources;
- Sensitive to unequal power relations when you collect information (i.e. ensure that you listen to people who might be marginalised in the community or do not have a strong voice);
- Ethical e.g. in relation to data consent and protection.

Engagement

To ensure M&E is relevant to its stakeholders, it is important to consider their information needs, as well as one's own. It is thus important to identify the key internal and external stakeholders, and decide how to involve them in the design, implementation, analysis and/or communication of findings. Examples of people to potentially include are (a) people directly involved in the project(s) (b) stakeholders within the wider community (geographic or community of interest) such as specific groups of residents, specific networks, community groups, the wider civil society, and/or (c) other stakeholders e.g. funders, local and national policy makers.

Data collection

It is likely that information will be required in order to:

- Track and assess what has changed (both intended and unintended);
- Understand the reasons for any changes - i.e. what factors/organisations/individuals have facilitated/constrained change (including one's own contribution);

- Interpret these changes i.e. people's perceptions and experiences of change. The information collected might either quantitative, qualitative or a combination of both:
    - Quantitative information is expressed in numerical terms, and this will facilitate in addressing questions about 'what', 'how many' and 'when'.
    - Qualitative information is expressed through descriptive prose and can address questions about 'why' and 'how', as well as perceptions, attitudes and beliefs.

Indicators

In order to track intended changes resulting from programmes or projects, it will be necessary to identify indicators. These are specific and concrete pieces of information that track the changes the project/programme is aiming to achieve. Generally, it is preferable to collect data from a range of internal and external sources.

Some useful information collection methods for internal monitoring include: internal records to track project activities, processes and output indicators; keeping records of relevant secondary information to track changes in outcomes and impacts and accompany internal records, such as policy changes, media coverage, relevant surveys/databases; periodic group workshops, discussions, focus groups (including group ratings/ranking exercises and/or other visual techniques such as time lines, mapping, diagrams, and other diagnostic tools); and periodic surveys (e.g. to assess attitudes, event feedbacks and/or behaviour change). Tracking indicators on its own does not tell you what contributions you have made to any observed changes.

a. Organisational capacity/group processes

Access to resources (human, financial, technical); leadership, vision and understanding of change; management (e.g. clarity about aims, objectives, roles & responsibilities; working principles; adaptability); cost effectiveness; sustainability (e.g. finance, and/or supportive framework for volunteers)

b. Cost effectiveness/efficiency

Ratio of cost (including volunteers' time) to outcomes (e.g. amount of energy efficiency measures installed/energy reduction achieved)

c. Joint or partnership working

Perceptions of value added from working together; early wins; shared vision, objectives, strategy & working principles; clear roles & responsibilities; trust; recognition of value of different contributions

Issues/questions about outputs, outcomes and impacts

Relevance: Numbers, percentage and demographic mix of project participants; perceptions of participants and wider community about relevance of projects to their lives and needs.

Effectiveness (interim outcomes and impacts)

a. Hearts & minds

Individual and community attitudes/beliefs/values

b. Individual agency/empowerment
People's beliefs that they can take meaningful action and that change is possible (e.g. might include motivation, knowledge & skills, intention/commitment, capacity)

c. Behaviours/practices

d. Community capacity/resilience
Community resources (human, technical, and financial); networks, partnerships and/or collaborations

e. Social capital

f. Support base/participation in activities/public support

g. Participation in and/or influence over local and national decision making and policies

Impacts
a. Social well-being

b. Economic well being
Household - Financial savings on bills, wages, economic security new jobs; skills; access to resources/assets/markets; economic security
Community – Assets, income stream, jobs created, skills/ training opportunities

c. Equity
Distribution of costs and benefits e.g. who benefits and who pays for changes

d. Contribution/Attribution
Perceptions of a range of different stakeholders about the community groups' contribution to changes (or randomised control groups to track changes happening without intervention from projects or programmes)

Evaluations
You can either conduct your own evaluations or commission an independent external person to do it for you. External evaluations can be more useful as interviewees may be more likely to talk openly to them, however they can be expensive. External evaluators can use the information collected by the internal monitoring system but may also need to supplement this with other information collected from a range of internal and external stakeholders e.g. from group workshops, semi structured interviews and/or surveys.

Analysing and using the information
Information is only useful if it is analysed and put to good use. A key purpose of monitoring is to support internal decision making and planning, so it is important to ensure that one periodically analyses, assesses, and actually uses the information collected. It is important to check the credibility, validity and reliability of data collected. Once the data has been analysed, periodic internal meetings and/or specific evaluation workshop(s) could be held to share, discuss and interpret findings. The data should be used to answer the initial key

questions and objectives of the project. Such engagement may also facilitate mutual learning with other stakeholders.

Internal learning from M&E may inform the project team, donors and other stakeholders about what is working well and not so well, and why. What we have learnt about how to achieve change i.e. how plausible were our theory of change and change assumptions? What changes do we need to make to our change strategy, understanding of change, and ways of working?

Communicating the data

Depending on the purpose of the M&E exercise, it may also be important to communicate the data to relevant stakeholders. This might involve:

- Deciding key audiences e.g. community group, community, donors, policy makers and the media
- Tailoring and packaging the data to key stakeholders/audiences
- Converting data into visually accessible formats e.g. graphs, pie charts etc.
- Drawing out key lessons for key stakeholders/audiences

Ethics and Data Protection

It is very important that informed consent is acquired from research respondents or participants, and to ensure their anonymity in the communication of research findings, and respect data protection laws.

Sample M&E Framework Tables

Project Summary Logframe

	Project Summary	Indicators	Means of Verification	Risks/Assumptions
Goal				
Outcome				
Outputs				
Activities				

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Framework Template

	INDICATOR	**DEFINITION** How is it calculated?	**BASELINE** What is the current value?	**TARGET** What is the target value?	**DATA SOURCE** How will it be measured?	**FREQUENCY** How often will it be measured?	**RESPONSIBLE** Who will measure it?	**REPORTING** Where will it be reported?
Goal								
Outcomes								
Outputs								

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