

Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (PME)

HANDBOOK

Approved by the ACT Governing Board
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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	5
List of boxes, figures & tables	6
1.0 INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 ACT Alliance’s Strategic Framework	8
1.2 Purpose for PME in ACT Alliance	9
1.3 Monitoring and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationship	10
1.4 Key features of ACT PME	12
1.4.1 Towards common ACT PME terminologies	12
1.4.2 Planning, M&E and Learning: All Working Together for Results	13
1.4.3 M&E and Accountability	14
1.4.4 Focus on outcomes and impact	17
1.4.5 M&E in Humanitarian and Development contexts	18
1.4.6 ACT PME and Gender	19
2.0 SCOPE OF ACT PME	21
2.1 Direct activities	22
2.2 Advocacy and PME	22
2.3 Capacity Development and PME	23
2.4 Other conditions for ACT PME	25
3.0 PROJECT DESIGN (PLANNING)	27
3.1 Planning for project design	28
3.2 Assessment and Analysis	28
3.2.1 Stakeholder analysis	28
3.2.2 Needs assessments vs baseline surveys	30
3.3 Developing project objectives	31
3.4 Completing design: Proposal Writing	32
4.0 PLANNING FOR M&E SYSTEMS	35
4.1 M&E timeline	36
4.2 Selecting and defining indicators	36
	2

4.2.1	Types of Indicators	37
4.2.2	Qualities of Indicators	38
4.3	Towards Common ACT Global Indicators	42
4.4	M&E Frameworks	44
4.4.1	Developing the logframe	44
4.4.2	M&E Plan	49
4.5	M&E methods and tools	50
4.5.1	Quantitative and Qualitative methods	50
4.5.2	Type of M&E Tools	51
4.5.3	Choice of M&E Tools and Methods	51
4.6	Setting M&E databases	54
4.7	Pre-testing M&E procedures	55
5.0	DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	56
5.1	Data collection process	56
5.1.1	Preparations for data collection	56
5.1.2	Sampling	57
5.1.3	Building rapport and maintaining confidentiality	58
5.1.4	Conducting interviews and recording data	59
5.2	Data entry and Analysis	59
5.2.1	Analysis of quantitative data	60
5.2.2	Analysis of qualitative data	61
5.2.3	Dimensions of data analysis	62
5.3	Interpretation of analysis	63
5.3.1	Enhancing data interpretation	63
5.3.2	Issues for interpreting M&E results	64
5.3.3	M&E results and programme performance	65
5.4	Presentation of M&E results	65
5.5	Managing errors associated with M&E data	66
6.0	USE AND USERS OF M&E RESULTS	67
6.1	Evidence-based decisions	68
6.2	Evidence-based reporting	70
6.3	Evidence-based Advocacy	72
7.0	M&E AND LEARNING	72
7.1	Good practice and learning	72

7.2	Reviewing and learning from ACT appeals and RRFs	74
8.0	MANAGING M&E SYSTEMS	75
8.1	Quality of M&E data	75
8.2	Ethics and Integrity of ACT PME	76
8.3	PME Roles and Responsibilities	76
9.0	NECESSARY CONDITIONS AND CAPACITIES FOR ACT PME	77
9.1	Critical capacities for ACT humanitarian response	78
9.1.1	Organizational capacities	78
9.1.2	Critical PME capacities	79
9.2	Periodic review of M&E functioning – “monitoring the monitoring”	80
9.3	ACT PME Peer Support system	82
10.0	APPENDICES	83
	APPENDIX 1: The logframe (format)	83
	APPENDIX 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	84
	APPENDIX 3: Performance Tracking Table (PTT)	85
	APPENDIX 4: Beneficiaries Counting Table	86
	APPENDIX 5: M&E systems performance monitoring table	87
	APPENDIX 6: PM&E Glossary	88
	References	92

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACT	- Action by Churches Together
ALNAP	- Action Learning Network for Accountability in Humanitarian
AUP	- Agreed Upon Procedures
CDI	- Capacity Development Initiative
CDC	- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
CSOs	- Civil Society Organizations
CoC	- Code of Conduct
DAC	- Development Assistance Committee
DCA	- Dan Church Aid
ECD	- Early Childhood Development
EoP	- End of Project
FGD	- Focused Group Discussion
ICCO	- Inter Church Organization for Development Cooperation
IRS	- Indicator Reference Sheet
KPI	- Key Performance Indicators
LRRD	- Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
M&E	- Monitoring and Evaluation
MoV	- Means of Verification
MSC	- Most Significant Change
OCA	- Organizational Capacity Assessment
OVI	- Objectively Verifiable Indicators
OECD	- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCM	- Project Cycle Management
PME	- Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PRA	- Participatory Rural Appraisal
PTT	- Performance Tracking Table
Q&A	- Quality and Accountability
RM	- Requesting Member
RMA	- Resource Management Audit
RRF	- Rapid Response Fund
RTE	- Real Time Evaluation
SMART	- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound
SOP	- Standard Operating Procedures
ToR	- Terms of Reference

List of boxes, figures & tables

Boxes

- Box 1: PME and Accountability
- Box 2: Assessing the planning/design strength for an ACT appeal
- Box 3: Ten ACT global indicators
- Box 4: Programme design logic and the logical framework
- Box 5: Summary steps in constructing a Logframe
- Box 6: Advantages and limitations of Logframes
- Box 7: 10 steps in setting up a simple M&E database
- Box 8: Cases of wrong interpretation of M&E data
- Box 9: ACT progress report: Feedback & improvements
- Box 10: Learning mechanisms
- Box 11: Dimensions for reviewing & learning from multiple ACT appeals/RRFs
- Box 12: Managing PME systems - Good practice

Figures

- Figure 1: ACT Alliance's Strategic Framework
- Figure 2: Scope of ACT PME
- Figure 3: Steps in project design
- Figure 4: Project Design as a basis for M&E
- Figure 5: Constructing Logframe elements

Table

- Table 1: Hierarchy of programme results
- Table 2: Programme dimensions and Gender
- Table 3: Planning M&E for capacity building
- Table 4: Management-related assessment tools
- Table 5: Stakeholder analysis table
- Table 6: Sample M&E Calendar
- Table 7: Indicator with and without target
- Table 8: Measuring change on indicators
- Table 9: Recommended minimum M&E frameworks & tools for ACT Appeals/RRFs
- Table 10: Common data analysis computer programmes
- Table 11: Analysis plan
- Table 12: M&E results and programme performance
- Table 13: Programme level improvement decisions
- Table 14: Users and use of M&E results
- Table 15: Capacity building during crises – Systems and Tools
- Table 16: Key areas for PM&E Capacities
- Table 17: Assessing the functioning of PME in ACT appeals/RRFs

1.0 INTRODUCTION

ACT Alliance is a new global force with a unique role to play in humanitarian, development and advocacy work as articulated in its mission statement. Wide coordination within ACT members, capacity of the national forums in delivering humanitarian activities and the drawing on the capabilities of individual ACT members collectively enhance the strength of ACT Alliance. These institutional environments provide a broad spectrum for learning and continuous improvement, hence the opportunities for addressing issues of performance, and Quality and Accountability (Q&A) in ACT humanitarian and development work.

The ACT Founding Document provides, among other ACT objectives, that ACT Alliance shall “be engaged in high quality and effective transformational development programmes that contribute towards positive change in people’s lives” as well as “respond quickly and effectively to humanitarian emergencies to save lives, ease suffering and support communities¹”. It is in this founding document that ACT’s commitment to Q&A is established to guide the collaborative and joint work of ACT members. This is further translated into the first ACT strategic plan (2010-2014), and other various instruments including the ACT accountability framework.

The first ACT Alliance strategic plan (2011-2014) provides 6 strategic aims (see ACT strategic framework on pg 2) one of which is dedicated to addressing the issues of Q&A by promoting a culture of Q&A; ensuring accountable governance; enabling communities to make complaints; strengthening forum coordination; strengthening planning, monitoring, evaluation; promoting shared learning; and achieving and maintaining HAP certification. This strategic aim on Q&A is linked to the rest of other ACT strategic aims and ensures that the entire work of ACT is delivered in a manner that promises quality and impact.

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, along with other standards, provide the main vehicle through which issues of Q&A are addressed in the work of ACT Alliance. Systematic and regular monitoring will ensure collection, analysis and utilization of vital programme information to inform programme decisions while ACT evaluations will help identify lessons and leverage learning within ACT. It is envisaged that this handbook will provide a common Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) reference for promoting evidence-based decisions making and expanding opportunity for sharing lessons for improving programme quality and results of ACT appeals and Rapid Response Funds (RRFs) as well as development practice across the Alliance.

Better planning and functional monitoring and evaluation systems help in translating Q&A issues into real practice of programme management and implementation.

¹ Founding Document, ACT Alliance (February 27, 2009), Approved by Joint Executive Committee meeting, pg 4

1.1 ACT Alliance’s Strategic Framework

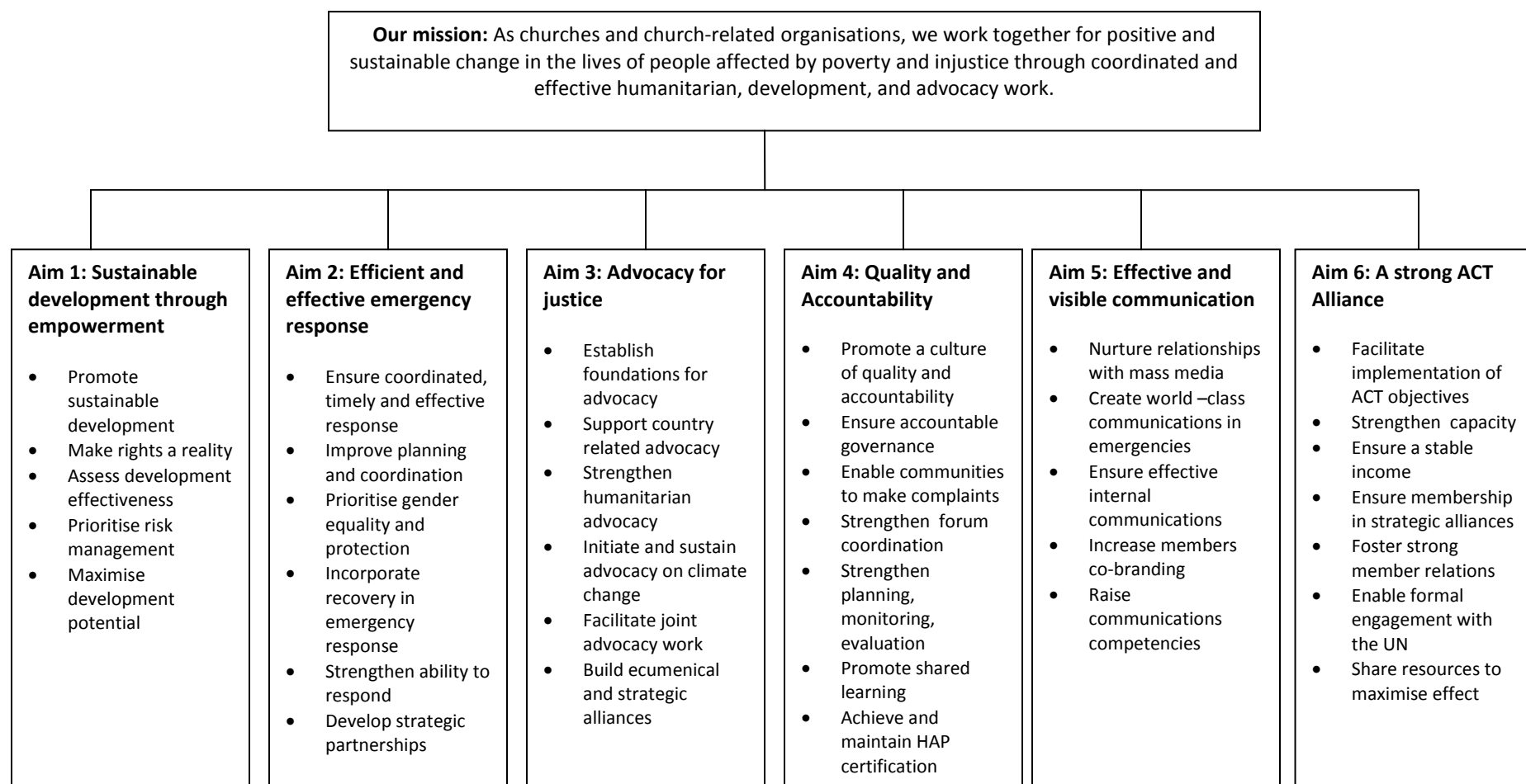


Figure 1 : ACT Alliance’s Strategic Framework

1.2 Purpose for PME in ACT Alliance

The desire and commitment for improved Q&A of ACT humanitarian response has meant developing policy guidelines supported by relevant management systems that can be used broadly within ACT Alliance.

There is recognition that a shared ACT PME reference point for a common ACT humanitarian system is crucial for realizing coherent, quality and accountable implementation of ACT appeals with a focus on impact. Based on the ACT strategic plan, ACT PME aims to clarify on procedures for establishing, managing and supporting monitoring and evaluation systems based on good project planning. The hope is that this will lead to utilization of M&E results to inform project improvement decisions and promote sharing of lessons and good-practice. Deriving from its commitment to work together for positive and sustainable change through coordinated work, ACT celebrates diversity of its members and does not necessarily seek to impose uniformity in work approaches. However, working together implies acting within some minimum standards that promote and support partnership and coordination for a collective engagement.

The PME handbook seeks to promote the overall practice of PME in ACT Alliance and emphasize the focus on project outcomes and impact rather than output and process. These will substantially contribute to increasing impact and strengthening the sense of mutual accountability and programme quality within ACT Alliance. The handbook takes forward the foundation work of “Building Bridges in PME²”, to promote good practice in the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in ACT Alliance

An effective monitoring system that enables collecting and analyzing performance data will increase the opportunity for taking evidence-based programme decisions and the strengthening of ACT evaluations. This necessary inter-phase between routine monitoring and specific evaluations is emphasized in this handbook to indicate how the value of results-management of ACT appeals and RRFs can be harnessed through good planning and systematic monitoring and evaluation processes. While the ACT PME handbook is about developing, managing and supporting regular PME systems, the ACT evaluation guidelines are a complementary resource that sets the principles and standards for ACT evaluations and ensures that *‘evaluations are conducted in an objective, impartial, open and participatory manner, based on empirically verified evidence that is valid and reliable, with results being made available and utilized’³*.

Monitoring and evaluation can help organizations extract relevant information from past and ongoing activities and use these as the basis for programmatic fine-tuning, re-orientation and future planning. Without effective planning, monitoring and evaluation systems, it is difficult to judge if work is going in the right direction, whether progress and success can be identified or claimed, and how future efforts might be improved.

Objectives of ACT PME

The goal for ACT PME is to become a main function through which ACT members, individually and collaboratively, promote learning and accountability. Based on these, ACT PME seeks to realize the following outcomes:

1. INTEGRATION: PME is an integral part of ACT appeal implementation and implementing agencies have increased the use of PM&E throughout the appeal/project cycle management.

² Building bridges in PME: Guidelines for good practice in the planning, monitoring & evaluation of community-based development projects implemented with support from European ecumenical agencies, 2000, ICCO

³ Standards for Evaluation in the UN Systems, April 2005

2. **UTILIZATION:** M&E data and ACT evaluation results are utilized at various organizational and programme to make evidenced-based decisions and promote shared learning from documented best-practices.
3. **CAPACITY:** PME capacities of programme staff and partners are created and sustained as an important precondition for PME to thrive throughout project implementation.

The commitment to support quality implementation of ACT humanitarian and development work is derived from the PME efforts of individual ACT members. ACT PME is generally motivated by the increasing need to demonstrate the collective impact of ACT Alliance. With this comes the need to embrace shared ACT PME minimum standards and coordination of PME activities in light of a joint commitment to accountability and quality of ACT interventions

1.3 Monitoring and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationship

***Monitoring** is a systematic and continuous process of collecting, analyzing, and documenting information that enables regular reporting on the progress of project implementation over time.*

Monitoring is a management tool for identifying the strengths and weaknesses in a project and it involves data collection and analysis of indicators throughout implementation and tracking critical assumptions identified during project design and planning. The OECD (2002a) defines monitoring as a “continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds” (p. 27). The power of monitoring is on the discipline of its “systematic” nature as this must translate into proper identification of what *monitorable* information to be monitored, being proactive with all pre-monitoring planning of how the process will be implemented, collecting only data on pre-defined indicators, and managing the information collected to produce analysis in time, and ensuring that the M&E results are utilized to inform programmes work and made available to relevant stakeholders who need them.

Monitoring provides early indications of progress towards the achievement of objectives and therefore assists all the people involved in making timely improvement decisions, ensures accountability, and provides the basis for evaluation and learning. Information and learning gleaned from monitoring activities are used to make adjustments during the life cycle of the project.

***Evaluation** is a one-time (as opposed to ongoing) function that reports on progress of actual versus expected results. Information and learning from evaluation are used to inform future projects and organizational learning.*

The OECD (2002a) defines evaluation as “the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program, or policy, including its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision making process of both recipients and donors” (p. 21).

Major differences between monitoring and evaluation

a) *Main focus*

Monitoring focuses on implementation—tracking inputs⁴, activities (what actually took place), outputs (resultant products/services, deliverables) and immediate outcomes. It looks at how well a project, program, or policy is implemented in relation to work plans and inputs. With the aim of helping to steer implementation and improving results, monitoring collects information on inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, and ensured the use of this information to influence project decisions. *Evaluation* is the systematic, objective assessment of projects (be it ongoing or completed projects) conducted during or after implementation. Evaluation aims to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives as well as the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project or program. However, the value of evaluation lies on learning lessons and the ultimate use of the information for decision making.

Monitoring answers the question “is the project doing the right thing?” and evaluation answers the question “is the project doing things right?” This implies monitoring focuses on progress according to implementation plan while evaluation focuses on intended purpose (outcomes and impact) with less consideration to whether or not the implementation plan was followed.

A key difference between ‘monitoring’ and ‘evaluation’ is in their respective focus: while monitoring focuses at operational implementation (processes and outputs) while evaluation focuses on the wider results of implementation (outcomes and impacts) on the community.

b) *Implementation control*

Monitoring deals with activities that are within the direct control and influence of project managers while evaluation is concerned with those long-term changes which are more externally influenced.

In term of a logframe approach, the project elements that apply to monitoring fall in the lower part of the logframe where implementation is more within the control of implementers. The lower part of the logframe represents routine activities for which monitoring data are easily obtained from available records of implementation. On the other hand, evaluation, focuses more on the upper part of the logframe where project managers have limited scope of control, hence the need for more rigorous analysis that relate to outcomes and impact.

c) *Frequency of data collection, analysis and reporting*

Another difference between monitoring and evaluation lies on the fact that monitoring information are collected, analyzed and reported on more routinely compared to evaluation. Whereas monitoring collects data on inputs, processes and outputs, evaluation studies intermediate to long-term changes associated with effects, outcomes and impact whose data collection, analysis and reporting can be realistically performed only at specific points during the project life (often at mid-term and end of project) rather than routinely.

Complementarity between monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation, by definition, are distinct yet complementary. Effective monitoring systems for collecting and analyzing performance data strengthen evaluations. The faith on evaluators’ sense of judgment even without reliable basis for building strong evidence is misleading, given that the short time evaluators spend in the field is often not adequate to make quality and reliable judgments unless such

⁴ Inputs include funds, human and material resources

judgments are supported by available monitoring data. This is a case of monitoring feeding into evaluation, besides making data available for short-term performance decisions.

Good evaluations rely upon and build on the information collected and analyzed during monitoring. If monitoring data indicate a big variance between achievement of a particular results and the planned target, evaluation can explore in greater detail why and how these trends are occurring, as well as decide the best way to make adjustments.

Monitoring data collected over the project's life period should be reviewed during evaluation in order to strengthen evaluation findings and support evidence-based judgement of achievements. Therefore, it is strongly encouraged that the monitoring systems for ACT humanitarian response programmes should take into account not only the short-term monitoring data needs to measure performance and support short-term decisions but also meet evaluation needs.

1.4 Key features of ACT PME

1.4.1 Towards common ACT PME terminologies

Continuous efforts to align the use of planning, M&E and general programming terminologies among ACT members shall not only improve joint planning and coordination of ACT appeals but also enhance shared learning. ACT Alliance advocates for the use of common programming terminology within ACT membership.

ACT PME encourages ACT members to work towards adopting common programme terminologies to make it easier for members to work together, increase shared learning based on common programming language and improve aid coordination.

The simple project structure outlined below, along with the results category for each level of objective, provides the planning terminologies that can easily be adopted by ACT members in the design/planning and monitoring and evaluation of ACT appeals.

Goal is a long-term development objective to which the project makes a contribution. It is a statement of program's intent, purpose or expected outcomes. Goals are stated in broad and general longer-term change in people's lives, hopes and aspirations.

Objectives are what the project is intended to achieve. Objectives are expressed as statements that describe in concrete terms the intended or hoped-for effects to be achieved among the target population, within the project period or soon after it. The term specific objective is sometimes used to stress the distinction from 'general objective' (goal).

Outputs are products or services, tangible or intangible, resulting directly from the implementation of activities. They are the deliverables or specific results, during the life of a project, of successful implementation of activities.

Table 1: Hierarchy of programme results

Project structure	Level of results to be measured
Goal	Impact indicators Measures change in fundamental & sustainable change in people's lives
Outcomes	Outcomes indicators Measures change in behaviours & practice
Outputs	Outputs indicators Measures quantities and qualities of goods & services produced (deliverables) by the project

Specifying outputs in advance helps define the accountability of management, for it is outputs that can be guaranteed by the project and for which the manager(s) responsible may be held to account (unlike objectives). They should be achievable in the short term (e.g. target for one year) so that they can be monitored; over longer periods, beyond the timeframe of an intervention, management is essentially unaccountable. An output should be specified as a measurable product, not merely as the delivery of some input. If outputs are specified in detail the targets are already clear (e.g. 15 oxen trained to plough by the end of June) and there is no need to have separate indicators for outputs⁵.

Activities are actions or series of actions undertaken in using inputs to produce the planned outputs and thus achieve the intended objectives. They are processes and not stated to be achieved.

Understanding changes at objectives level is very key for managers and objectives can be measured in two ways, at *effect* (immediate outcomes) level and *outcomes* (behavioural change) level. For instance: an increase in community's awareness on issues of personal hygiene only shows the immediate outcome of an intensive community public health sensitization but a change in hygiene practices and behaviours at household level (resulting from increased knowledge) shows the conventional outcome.

1.4.2 Planning, M&E and Learning: All Working Together for Results

Monitoring and Evaluation forms part of project design and planning but often it is divorced from programme design due to lack of capacity, unwillingness to do M&E or due to unrealistic implementation pressures. These are typical characteristics of PME status in nascent organizations and emergency response. If PM&E is not embedded in the design/planning stage of an appeal, it becomes difficult to do so during actual implementation. Project design involves developing clear objectives and choosing strategies that are not only implementable but also measurable. The question of measurability of implementation strategies calls for attention to PM&E at the project design stage as a way of setting a good pre-condition for a thriving M&E. Whether or not project outputs, outcomes and impact will be measured during and after

⁵ Building bridges in PME: Guidelines for good practice in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of community-based development projects implemented by southern NGOs with support from European ecumenical agencies, 2000, ICCO

implementation somewhat depends on the measurability of expected results as established at the project design stage and articulated in the Logframe. A strong project design sets the initial pace for effective M&E systems.

- Planning . Monitoring . Evaluation**
- Proper planning enhances clear articulation of expected results. If it is not clear what should be monitored and how; effective monitoring cannot be done. Good planning is an important condition for functioning PM&E systems.
 - Systematic monitoring ensures that the necessary data is collected and this, in turn, sets the basis for good evaluation.
 - Monitoring facilitates evaluation, but evaluation uses additional data not collectable during monitoring to make broad and informed analysis.

Project plans, whether annual, quarterly or monthly work plans and M&E are mutually reinforcing. With clear set indicators at hand to help with measuring progress and performance, planning helps to sequence implementation activities in a manner that supports the realization of results. Strong design and coherent implementation of projects is a profound ground for the systematic nature of PM&E. In other words, planning must ensure the minimum condition for M&E systems to be able to provide legitimate results for decisions and forward learning e.g. to identify performance issues for

improvement in next cycle of planning since it is mainly through planning that remedial actions are implemented, based on M&E results.

The overall quality of impact evaluations can substantially increase if program managers design programs with a clear view of how they will be evaluated. Deliberate and appropriate variation of project implementation strategies can make a significant impact.

In relation to PCM, there should be building-in of events for “learning before”, “learning during” and “learning after” implementation. PM&E causes improvements through learning and adopting new approaches and practice. Availability of M&E data is not a sufficient condition for decisions therefore learning is the inevitable linking force between M&E data and the translation of data into decisions and taking renewed (improvement) actions.



In essence, M&E can serve as a credible management, learning and accountability if the M&E systems in use are based on coherent project design and planning, and the M&E results are utilized to increase the quality and quantity of implementation.

1.4.3 M&E and Accountability

In programmes, accountability demands transparency and judgment on key attributes of results i.e. timeliness, meeting targets, quality, effective targeting of aid (based on needs/vulnerability) and being gender sensitive to delivery process and distribution of the results and whether overall results claimed are attributed to the programme. Therefore, PM&E is a key programme function for accountability in terms of being a transparent and open assessment of programmes, distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful results and providing evidence for taking improvement decisions/actions. Participatory

processes in programme design, implementation and M&E provide the basic form of accountability by ensuring that resources are being expended as planned and conditions for greater impact created. PME provides data for learning and taking actions that ensure accountability. When M&E analysis does not provide clear trends, programme lessons cannot be drawn and improvement decisions cannot be made. This affects the path towards accountability in terms of poor quality of programmes and low impact on the beneficiaries than possible.

For ACT, accountability is the acknowledgment, communication and assumption of responsibility for actions, decisions, and policies including administration, governance, implementation and consequences of the implementation of all activities the member is involved in

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Adapted from ACT Founding Document, February 2009, pg 14

To ensure accountability, there must exist the knowledge about what to account for and to whom, and there must be a system to ensure a shift from a less accountability condition to a higher level of accountability. The ACT accountability framework provides the parameters for accountable implementation of ACT appeals and RRFs. Due to different contexts of implementation, some accountability issues may vary depending on specific field conditions. However, accountability sits not only in the process of programme design and implementation but also is in the overall organizational management approach. M&E is a key vehicle for accountability since sound M&E systems provide the necessary check and balance in all programme and organization aspects that keep us accountable. Concrete planning, strategic management, capacity building, participatory implementation and prudent stewardship of resources are examples of results-based

management practices that help in realizing programme Q&A.

Box 1: PME and Quality & Accountability

The focus of ACT PME in promoting accountability is based on the following five results areas:

A. Organizational Learning**I. Organizational learning practice:**

Learning for better performance, results, Q&A, can only be possible when there is organizational learning culture that promotes regular reflection on programme and management issues. PME should find its place within this learning dynamism.

B. Functional PME systems**II. Focus on outcomes and impact:**

There is continuous focus on outcomes to demonstrate ultimate programme results, beyond the traditional outputs

III. Keeping high evaluation standard and closing the evaluation loop:

Consistent efforts taken in upholding high standards for ACT evaluations with particular emphasis in enhancing evaluation credibility and closing the evaluation loop⁶

IV. Monitoring of ACT global indicators:

Reporting on 10 ACT global sector indicators is routinely and adequately done through individual appeals and later collated by ACT Secretariat to demonstrate and communicate ACT's overall impact e.g. through ACT annual report & website

V. Functional M&E systems:

M&E systems for ACT appeals and RRFs are functional as an important operational mechanism for Q&A – 'what gets measured gets done'.

C. Key humanitarian standards, principles and guidelines: HAP standards, Code of Conduct

Consistent use and adherence to the following humanitarian standards, principles and guidelines:

- *Code of Conduct* for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and *Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)* in Disaster Relief
- *SPHERE standards*
- *HAP standards*

The ACT Alliance's accountability framework is a translation of the HAP accountability benchmarks into ACT Alliance's specific accountability commitments. The ACT Alliance's accountability framework promotes specific ACT policies and guidelines that promote accountability at various management levels and programme approaches⁷.

⁶ Closing evaluation loop is about taking forward lessons from evaluations and actions on their recommendations, hence serving the very purpose for which the evaluation was conducted.

⁷ The ACT accountability model/framework covers different programme and organizational management levels, approaches and processes. Accountability mechanisms are through various ACT policies, guidelines and systems.

Therefore, as a vehicle of Q&A standards, ACT PME is concerned not only with the generic M&E approach of tracking programme indicators but to do so in a manner that establish the status of commitments⁸ against the ACT accountability framework and HAP principles generally. In effect, the existence, functionality and effectiveness of members PME systems are, in themselves, an indication of an important aspect of accountability mechanism. Box 1 below shows the key relationship between PME and accountability in ACT Alliance.

1.4.4 Focus on outcomes and impact

It has been observed that, at both programme and institutional levels, organizations seek to monitor whether what was planned is being done and evaluate its effectiveness. But the most fundamental question remains: what is the impact of all this, what difference is being made to people's lives? (Building Bridges in PME, ICCO, pg 50)

The measurement of outcomes is focused on intermediate rather than ultimate longer term change, and as such, measuring outcome is more realistically attributable to the project. Therefore, impact evaluations of ACT programs will be based on outcomes and from these impacts are directly deduced. Outcomes become the closest approximation to impacts. This will reinforce stronger relationship between ACT evaluations and accountability as outcomes do realistically attribute to project interventions. The impact assessment initiative of ACT Alliance, through its "Guide to assessing our contribution to change" helps provide a useful set of tools for assessing impact based on project outcomes.

The focus on outcomes helps us to ensure stronger accountability of project implementation with emphasis on intermediate change in the lives of target population.

Output information about training conducted, food distribution or units of toilets constructed are vitally important for programme management. However, they do not provide sufficient information on the performance of the programme. Therefore, there is increasing demand for information about the outcomes of programmes while it is well acknowledged that the selection and tracking of outcomes indicators poses serious challenge to programme staff. To some extent, the logical framework mandates the identification of indicators at the outcome and impact levels, making it an ideal shared framework for programme design and M&E. Results-based management demands programmes must be managed and measured against expected outcomes i.e. to establish whether implementation is serving the project purpose.

Information on outputs is a necessary but not sufficient condition for project management and progress reporting. The interest of various stakeholders including donors is to gain a sense of understanding about the change that is being brought about due to implementation of projects. Over-focus on outputs has left many stakeholders frustrated with process-oriented progress reports. In recognition of this, the attention of ACT Alliance is to capture short-term as well as the emerging longer term change that is occurring in the lives of targeted population as a result of implementation. These may be changes that are not entirely but only attributable to implementation of a particular project/appeal. The key issue is to have clear and somewhat realistic intervention logic that demonstrates a consistent link between implementation and expected outcomes.

Outputs (what the project has delivered) only show the processes undertaken and how busy staff has been, but the most important issue is to relate these process-results with the reasons (objectives) why these outputs are important. Reports that demonstrate progress/achievements against objectives are written

⁸ The extent to which our regular programme work, management styles and organizational behaviors are shaped by the ACT accountability framework and HAP principles

with a focus on outcomes and only supported by showing outputs. While number of people trained may be a good indicator to show actions being taken towards the realization of a certain objective, a closer measure of achievements towards such an objective would, for example, be the number of trained people who have started demonstrating (or who have demonstrated) the use of new farming practice in their gardens. In terms of project management, while field staff and volunteers keep focus on the deliverables (training), project managers should be more concerned about the outcomes (change in behaviours) to be able to steer project implementation towards impact. Reporting on outcomes means ensuring committed attention to second-level results beyond outputs, to identify how communities are translating outputs into a practice that characterize a positive change in behaviour.

Often, the concepts of outcomes and impact are only better understood by managers and other key staff but these need to be articulated with all project staff as a starting point to focusing on outcomes. The focus on outcomes has implications on how we set indicators. If indicators are not defined to ensure collecting information on outcomes, collecting outcomes information will not happen by accident, and the lack of outcomes measurement may lead to less focus on outcomes (real results) – what gets measured gets done. Evidence-based reporting requires us to make regular check to ensure that information being collected will produce the required body of information for reporting purposes.

The focus on outcomes sets the path to results monitoring (inspired by changes in the lives of people as attributed to the project) and a departure from the traditional implementation monitoring (limited to changes in project deliverables).

1.4.5 M&E in Humanitarian and Development contexts

Humanitarian situations are often dynamic and programmes should be capable to respond to radical changes. This implies that humanitarian conditions should be continually monitored and analyzed to ensure that programmes remain relevant to the evolving situations. A key challenge to quality implementation of emergency interventions is that key information is not often readily available to users of such information. Humanitarian situations are often dynamic and it is crucial that projects should be able to respond to changing conditions to ensure that projects remain relevant to the context. This can only be possible with functional monitoring and evaluation systems in place to ensure continuous monitoring, analysis and documentation. The supply of reliable data supports taking project decisions based on evidence and allowing for timely remedial actions to improve the quality of humanitarian work.

There is a need to take into consideration the contextual factors that affect the agency's response ability. The rapid changing humanitarian conditions imply flexible and adaptable application of monitoring and evaluation systems that is continuously reviewed and modified in light of the changing conditions. The major aspects of flexible and adaptable M&E systems include the logframe with emphasis on indicators, M&E plan, data collection tools and the databases for managing M&E data. A change in one major part of M&E systems, for example the logframe, will mean a review of other sub-components that build up the M&E systems. The inflexibility and lack of adaptable use of ME systems in humanitarian emergency conditions is often responsible for the data inaccuracies or non-functionality of M&E systems generally.

Systematic documentation of dynamic humanitarian conditions call for functional monitoring and evaluation systems that are capable of updating managers on the basis of correct data, identifying actions that are working smoothly as well as those that are not working and the underlying factors. On the basis of this regular collection of information and situational analysis, informed decisions are likely to be taken to help ensure timely remedial actions are taken and improving overall quality of implementation.

In humanitarian emergency response, we just cannot work with blue-print approaches to planning and management. Though the difference we want to make (impact) needs to be clear, we are often in need of more flexible, adaptive and process-oriented approaches that guide a course of action in navigating complexity and moving forward in making that difference. Therefore, while planning for M&E, we recognize the need for learning-orientated M&E systems that support managers on an on-going basis in dealing with a complex and changing context humanitarian conditions. Further, the increasing demand for accountability and transparency necessitate effective Planning and M&E systems and processes that guide towards and inform about the progress and impact of development projects and programmes. These programming implications must play in the background in our determination to set functioning M&E systems in humanitarian response.

Often monitoring systems do not, however, provide the information required for routine management decisions to be made. There are a number of reasons for such weaknesses: a lack of time in the early stages of a response to either design an adequate monitoring system or to collect data; a lack of priority to collect data and a lack of PME capacity of field staff on issues of what data to collect, how to collect and analyze data. The situation of most humanitarian emergencies makes it very difficult for systematic M&E to take place due to restricted access in some cases and the pressure to meet the overwhelming needs of affected population. Attention to systems, studies, evaluations and the general focus on quality is generally weak as priority goes to immediate delivery of

quantities of aid to save life. Because of these, it is difficult to show cases of very successful Monitoring and Evaluation Lack of limited cases of demonstrable value of monitoring and evaluation in humanitarian emergencies, due to these constraining factors, has further affected organization's commitment to M&E.

Addressing these problems will require concerted action throughout the humanitarian system to ensure that implementing agencies improve their monitoring systems and use data collection systems that facilitate short-term program decisions as well as support evaluations. By integrating M&E as a part of programme design, involving staff in clarifying indicators and means of collecting data, putting more attention to minimum capacity for all concerned with different elements of M&E functions and providing expert advice to help keep the process in action and on track, it is evident that M&E supports high performance, leads to achieving high quality results and a front player in promoting humanitarian accountability.

1.4.6 ACT PME and Gender

Humanitarian responses are more effective when they are managed based on an understanding of the different needs, vulnerabilities, interests, capabilities and coping strategies of women, men, girls and boys of all ages and the differing impacts of disaster or conflict upon them. The understanding of these differences, as well as inequalities of women's and men's roles and workloads, access to and control over resources, decision-making power and opportunities for skills development, is achieved through gender analysis⁹. It is a quality and impact concern that humanitarian assistance must meet the distinct needs of women, girls, boys and men to generate positive and sustainable outcomes yet, often, evaluations of humanitarian effectiveness show that gender equality is weak.

In ACT, gender mainstreaming and equity is both an approach and a programmatic intervention and therefore PME for gender will follow suit. The main gender-based outcomes of ACT programmes are:

⁹ The Sphere Project : Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, page 15

- Gender equity gaps and measures for addressing them identified
- Relevant mechanisms, tools, frameworks and guidelines are reviewed from gender perspective and made gender responsive
- Entry points for gender mainstreaming and gender-equity identified and appropriate gender-responsive strategies developed
- Specifically, M&E data is gender-disaggregated and progress reporting addresses issues of gender

This implies that ACT programmes but be design, implemented as well as monitored and evaluated through a gender perspective, both at process and results levels.

Gender and Project Cycle Management

M&E for gender issues refers to assessing specific project actions aimed at promoting gender throughout the design, implementation and M&E of the project. On the other hand, Gender-sensitive M&E systems is concerned with the process of monitoring and evaluating gender-based outcomes of programmes designed and implemented in a gender-sensitive manner. The table below demonstrates gender-sensitive programming for gender-based PME throughout the PCM.

Gender in ACT programmes

Gender sensitive programming is a tool to promote human dignity and to ensure fair access to aid. All programming should ensure that humanitarian assistance benefits women and men equally. Gender sensitive programming is based on gender analysis, an appreciative inquiry into the strengths and weaknesses of the current practices of programme implementation to ensure equal participation of all, women or men, girls or boys. Gender and age disaggregated data gives important information about who – women, men, young and old – are affected and who are most at risk. Such data should be part of all standard assessments of ACT Alliance. The minimum breakdown is by F-M, under 18 and over 18; the preferred breakdown for emergencies is F-M, by age group 0<6, 6<18, 18<65 and 65+.

From Gender Policy, ACT Alliance (Revised, April 2010)

Table 2: Programme dimensions and Gender

Assessment & Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments and baseline studies are gender sensitive • Gender analysis is conducted to identify gender-related vulnerabilities and the potential negative impacts of project intervention on women and men • Gender-related goals are developed • Organizational capacity conducted for implementing engendered projects
Project Design & Appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender is integrated into goals, objectives and set targets • Plan developed to build capacity for addressing gender issues throughout implementation, monitoring and evaluation • Develop M&E systems that reflect gender-sensitive indicators, results and M&E methods (emphasizing disaggregation of gender & age data)
Implementation & monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building conducted to integrate gender issues in project management and monitoring and evaluating

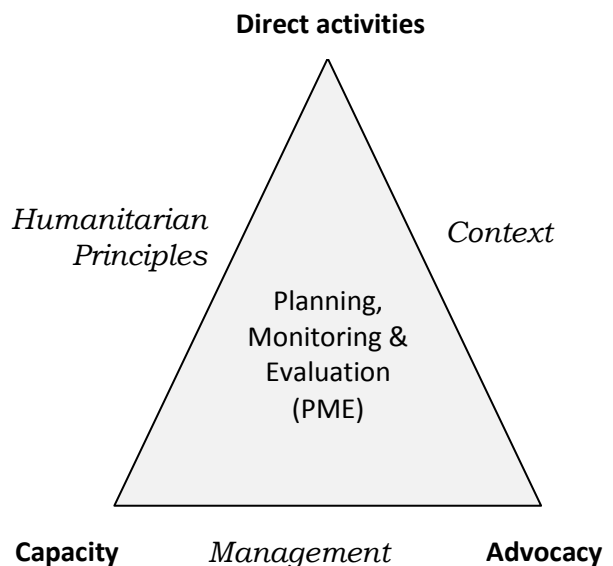
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-sensitive data are collected, analysed and reported based gender-sensitive indicators
<p>Evaluation and Learning</p> <p>(Gender related outcomes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes and impact of gender integration are assessed in relation to the overall project implementation • Outcomes and impact of project interventions on men and women are assessed • Lessons on gender-focused implementation & results are documented and shared to influence further implementation and future actions • Process of gender-based programming assessed and improvements advised to aspire for robust gender-based outcomes

The approach to ensure effective gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation system is to ensure that gender is integrated into the whole project management cycle (PMC) with clear gender-based approach or activities. ACT gender policy advocates using gender sensitive programming tools for needs assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

2.0 SCOPE OF ACT PME

There are three main programme elements that characterize ACT response to emergencies and sustainable development, namely; direct programme activities, advocacy and capacity building. All these work together in delivering programme results and they set the cornerstones for planning and implementing PME activities.

M&E data collection as well as specific ACT evaluations must cover all these programme aspects with clear indicators for measuring progress in each of the programme elements. A relatively high performance in all elements reflects appropriate design, well-managed and results-focused implementation. On the other hand, imbalanced or unsatisfactory performance in one of the programme components shows a design or implementation shortfall of programmes. Linked to these three programming elements are the three related programme conditions (humanitarian/development principles, management issues and wider humanitarian context) that contour ACT programmes. It is therefore helpful to see an ACT programme as the integration between direct activities and related aspects (capacity and advocacy) that collectively enhance quality and impact within certain direct and indirect conditions, namely; programme management, humanitarian standards and principles as well as the wider humanitarian context. These are explained below.



2.1 Direct activities

Direct activities are linked to the delivery of project outputs and outcomes aimed at producing lasting impact in the lives of affected communities. The delivery of sector activities, the strategies involved and processes undertaken constitute the core of ACT's programming. ACT PME is concerned with planning and measuring the indicators at various results levels, mainly outputs and outcomes. However, this core pillar of ACT programme is supported by the other 2 pillars that address related capacity concerns and advocacy needs for long-term solutions.

2.2 Advocacy and PME

It is not always easy to deliver advocacy results within a short span of time along with direct project results. Hence advocacy monitoring in humanitarian emergencies emphasizes collecting data in relation to development of advocacy issues and processes, rather than the realization of advocacy objectives which should be the focus of evaluations. Advocacy indicators are more qualitative and relate to the following:

Identification and clear statement of advocacy outcomes (both short-term and long-term)

- change in policy conditions (advocacy outcomes) including:
 - change in profile of advocacy issue
 - change in opinion of key advocacy targets
 - changed public and private rhetoric towards advocacy positions
 - change in written publications or policy about the issue or changes

Coordination and capacity to deliver expected advocacy results

- Coordination effectiveness of multi-actor advocacy processes
- change in capacity of advocacy actors as measured by their consistent and informed actions in addressing priority advocacy issues identified

Design of effective advocacy programmes that are feasible (given local contexts) to realize advocacy results

- relevance and appropriateness of advocacy issues identified and strategies in addressing changing conditions in light of long-term advocacy goals
- feasibility/effectiveness of advocacy channels identified/targeted at project design
- relevance and effectiveness of advocacy materials and tools used to aid advocacy
- change in the local conditions and critical assumptions that determine advocacy success
- indication of prospects (signal of change) of anticipated advocacy outcomes

Communications and Information Management Resource Centre (CIMRC), in its 'advocacy impact assessment guidelines' (M. Laney, 2003), proposes the following five broad dimensions, each with a set of indicators, for measuring advocacy work:

- i) Policy change
- ii) A stronger civil society
- iii) General public change
- iv) Enlarging democratic space
(i.e. the space in which civil society groups can effectively operate in society)
- v) Supporting people-centered policy making

Data on advocacy is not often available in quantifiable form. Regular collection and analysis of advocacy data is based on qualitative information generated through stakeholders' regular (e.g. monthly or quarterly) monitoring and reflection meetings, documenting information on unfolding events, coupled with targeted

interviews. Information collected are collated according to regular advocacy M&E plan and progress reported in relation to specific aspects of project implementation that are directly or indirectly influenced by advocacy.

Given the qualitative and descriptive nature of advocacy information, collecting advocacy M&E data requires standardised documentation (including stories) of short-term progress and outcomes of advocacy activities. Initial documentation may provide a baseline level against which progress is measured, provided standard indicators and documentation methodology remains consistent.

There is a crucial M&E inter-phase between data on direct implementation and data on advocacy specific activities. M&E data on regular project implementation can be used to inform both the review and reporting on advocacy targeting and focus. Proven data provides strong and respectable basis for credible advocacy stances since data demonstrate facts and not perceptions. In evidence-based programming, M&E data provides strong evidence upon which advocacy issues can be refined, revisited or advocacy statements developed. Data speaks louder; it is a representation of the status quo. M&E results on direct implementation can also be used to substantiate progress in advocacy activities i.e. to demonstrate whether or not advocacy action has helped to change perceptions, positions or even reduce unjust practices. However, such a causality relationship (whether advocacy action is the cause of the positive change realized) can only be demonstrated through impact evaluation. There is need for evidence of causality.

2.3 Capacity Development and PME

The main capacity question for ACT PME is: *To what extent have ACT programmes enhanced the capacities of staff, local institutions and beneficiaries through deliberate capacity building actions?* While implementing programmes, ACT strives to develop and retain capacities of programme staff, affected population (beneficiaries) and local institutions.

ACT programmes and capacity building are managed in an integrated way as they both seen as serving a common purpose. Simultaneous approach to project implementation and capacity building recognizes that effective programmes are only delivered with effective staff and programmes can only leave sustainable results and impact if staff, beneficiaries and local institutions are empowered to play their respective roles.

ACT PME is concerned with measuring the extent to which ACT programmes have created sustainable capacities among staff to deliver quality services, beneficiaries to be able to benefit from project opportunities and retain benefits, and local institutions to sustain local capacities created. The focus, outcomes, sample indicators, possible measurement methods and the use of capacity M&E results/ data for ACT capacity dimensions (staff, beneficiaries and local institutions) are demonstrated in the table 3.

Once capacity gaps have been identified, these need to be addressed promptly and effectively. It is not enough to develop training tailored to meet specific capacity need of staff, these needs to be done well and in time. The quality concerns in capacity building in such a case would be whether the training was well targeted, well conducted in a manner that can impart skills and whether the training was conducted in time when it's application was still relevant to the project in question. With regards to training, it is important to note that training in itself is not capacity building but a pre-condition for capacity to develop i.e. conducting training is not enough for one to develop skills unless there is opportunity to translate these learnt skills into practice either through follow-on technical support or through self-initiative to apply learnt skills.

Taking action to address capacity shortfalls/gaps identified involves developing specific capacity building support tailored to capacity gaps/existing needs yet with due consideration to resources (time, money and trainers) available. Capacity building activities include: tailored training, coaching, mentoring, performance management support, job swap, Job shadow, exposure visits, etc. In terms of measuring improvements, these capacity building actions will need to be measured at two levels, namely: (i) process quality built to effectively deliver the capacity building activity (ii) the level to which they have helped to address capacity gaps identified. In both cases, there is learning from action to make better capacity building approaches.

Table 3: Planning M&E for capacity building

Focus (Capacity for who)	Expected capacity outcomes	capacity indicators	Measurement methods	Use of capacity M&E results/ data
Staff	<p><i>Increased staff skills and knowledge to deliver services appropriately</i></p> <p>Staff capacities = effectiveness & efficiency of service delivery</p>			
Affected population	<p><i>The human capital of affected population to better take charge of their own lives enhanced.</i></p> <p>Beneficiary capacities = effective programme participation in a manner that increases the chances for Q&A and impact of ACT humanitarian interventions.</p>			
Local institutions	<p><i>Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local institutions which act as conduit for effectiveness and improved results of ACT humanitarian interventions.</i></p> <p>Capacities of local institutions = developed and functional organizational systems and matching skills that support sustainable delivery of services to communities.</p>			

2.4 Other conditions for ACT PME

Besides the core pillars of ACT programmes (direct activities, advocacy and capacity), ACT PME takes consideration of some specific internal and external conditions that also affect programme performance, quality and impact.

(i) Wider humanitarian context

The dynamic situations that often characterize humanitarian response imply that programmes should be able to respond to radical changes and continuously. This implies that humanitarian conditions should be continually monitored and analyzed to ensure that programmes remain relevant to the evolving situations. However, the specific context for each humanitarian emergency makes each ACT response to bear some uniqueness due to the specific factors such as local cultures, institutions, humanitarian access, dimensions of vulnerability, remoteness, etc, and how these affect strategies for implementation. Further each humanitarian situation may relate to specific issues of vulnerability and protection, and the implications of the immediate external environment as articulated within critical assumptions. All these have implications on what and how to monitor and evaluate.

Given their influence on the ability and impact of organization's humanitarian response, there is need to take such contextual factors into consideration during project design, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation. The rapid changing humanitarian conditions imply flexible and adaptable application of monitoring and evaluation systems that is continuously reviewed and modified in light of the changing conditions. It might be inevitable to change what to monitor (indicators) and how to monitor (methods) due to changing humanitarian conditions and priorities. Standard evaluation practices will need to be adapted to reflect the specific realities of each humanitarian situation. While from a project design point of view, specific operating conditions must inform the design and re-design of projects hence the project feasibility and potential for impact.

(ii) Humanitarian principles and guidelines

Standards and principles available for quality, impact-oriented, accountable implementation of humanitarian and development work must be put into practice. The PME identifies that translating commitments to such standards /principles into practice plays an important role in enhancing accountability. Therefore, the point is to observe that the implementation of ACT appeals and related ACT coordinated projects are done in a manner that demonstrate close adherence to ACT policies and priority humanitarian/development principles and guidelines that ACT subscribes to.

Within the broader humanitarian and development practices, ACT PME shall relate to SPHERE standards (quality), HAP principles (accountability) and NGO Code of Conduct (ethics). Other principles including Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) and the eight Istanbul CSO principles for effectiveness development will be considered throughout PME, specifically during evaluations, as these importantly relate to sustainability and impact.

The consistent use of ACT policies and specific guidelines is an important internal issue for accountability and quality assurance. It is expected that the implementation of ACT programmes will ensure consistence with ACT policies and relevant principles among which the ACT Code of Conduct is key.

(iii) Management

Management is an important function in effective delivery of humanitarian aid and this is underscored by its contribution in personnel management (including recruitment and people’s management), logistics management and control, stewardship of finances, coordination, strategic programme or organizational decisions, among others. ACT believes that programme performance is closely linked to key management functions like timely procurement, informed coordination, clear strategy, timely recruitment and supportive management of staff, and most importantly, good stewardship of available resources. This is even more crucial in humanitarian response where speed and decisions make a big difference in realizing effective response.

ACT recognizes management as an important contributor to the Q&A of programme interventions. The focus though remains on basic management functions other than complete management systems.

The central evaluation question for assessing the effectiveness of management in ACT humanitarian or development work is whether the management processes (key functions mentioned above) and the strategic focus have supported or constrained the quality and impact of programmes as well as the sense of accountability.

There are many tools that can be used to assess financial environments, personnel capacity, administrative functions, procurement system, etc. The following tools are important and accessible for this purpose.

Table 4: Management-related assessment tools	
Resource Management Audit tool	<p>This is a tool developed by ICCO and Kerkinactie and commonly used by ACT members along formal audits. Resource Management Audits (RMA) tool helps organizations or projects/ programmes in assessing various management functions including the management of finance, goods, personnel, assets, means of transport, and other resources. “The outline of this type of audit can be adapted to the set-up of the organisation's administration and of its standard operational procedures (SOP). An RMA is a type of Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) audits and therefore is not a standard financial audit. Meanwhile, the standard financial audit with an opinion can be easily integrated into the RMA”¹⁰</p> <p>This is a tool developed by ICCO & Kerk in Actie and it is being used by many ACT members alongside financial audits. RMA can be used in a flexible and adapted manner to suit specific needs of different organizations – small and large.</p>
<i>ACT OCA Tool</i>	<p>Provides ACT members and Forums with a set of assessment guides that can be applied across various organizational functions, including management, upon which capacity building activities can be planned and supported.</p> <p>http://www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/capacity-development</p>

¹⁰ Terms of Reference, Resource Management Audit (RMA), ICCO and/or Kerkinactie, Template, Version 2009

<u>Mango's Health Check</u>	Mango's Health Check is a self assessment tool, comprising a set of statements of good practice that helps to assess the health of an organization's financial management. Like most self-assessment tools, Mango Health Check is conducted more than once to establish progress in financial management – normally the first assessment is followed by a re-run in the 2 nd or 3 rd year. "It is designed as a self assessment tool so that you can identify the areas where you need to improve and it is a set of statements of good practice" (Mango, 2009). http://www.mango.org.uk/Guide/HealthCheck

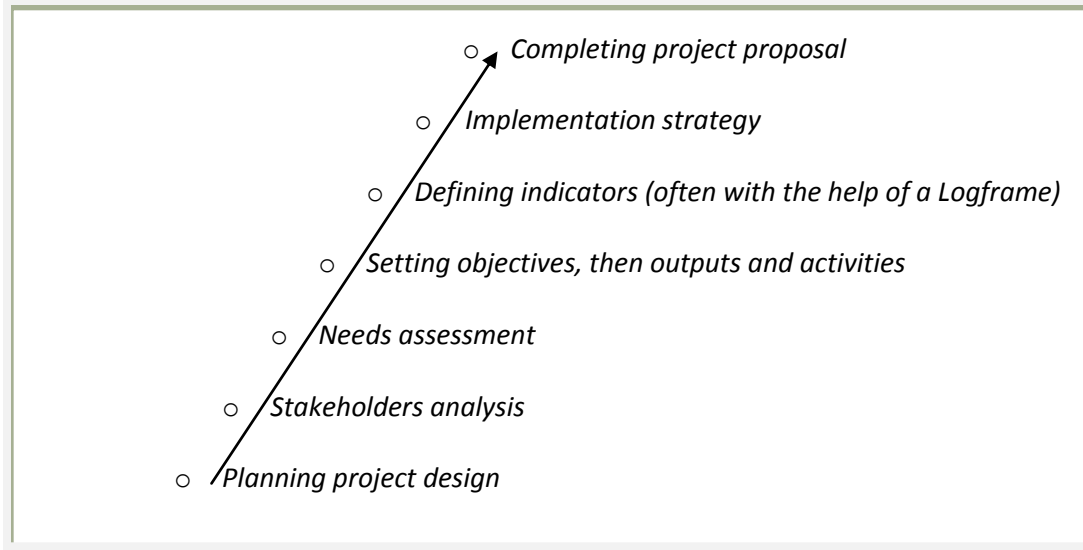
3.0 PROJECT DESIGN (PLANNING)

Project design involves developing clear objectives and choosing strategies that are not only implementable but also measurable. The question of measurability of implementation strategies calls for attention to M&E at the project design stage as a way of setting a good pre-condition for a thriving M&E. Project design is a systematic process of using available information, with the help of specific planning tools familiar to staff, to develop a coherent time-bound project that has:

- o Clear goal that sets the purpose
- o SMART objectives
- o clear outcomes
- o clear expected outputs
- o realistic targets
- o activities that are linked to and can deliver expected results
- o feasible implementation strategies
- o objectively verifiable indicators (often articulated in a logframe)
- o identified critical assumptions (often articulated in a logframe)
- o well-completed work plan
- o M&E plan
- o realistic budget

The above are the conventional components of a well designed project if these components themselves are well-articulated, aligned and clearly stated. Each of these elements is linked to one another resulting into a coherent project design capable of delivering expected results, given good project management and if key assumptions continue to hold true. The development of a well-designed project is a process that can be described using the following major procedures outlined in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Steps in project design



3.1 Planning for project design

The strength of a project design partly determines whether or not implementation shall realize the expected impact. The starting point for planning is to plan the planning – figure out the team, resources and exposure needed to inform opinions. Part of pre-planning activities include constituting the planning team (usually the core project staff), making a familiarization visit to the communities by the planning team, identifying any external support needed (based on any technical requirement), scheduling appropriate time (date and time) for planning and making any other necessary pre-planning arrangements, including logistics and stationary. Being well prepared to plan contributes to good planning. Poor preparations including late invitation/ information to participating staff, logistics and stationary, facilitation and inadequate references to vital information all work together to reduce the quality of planning.

3.2 Assessment and Analysis

Assessment and analysis of needs lead to better understanding of the field situation and informed planning. A thorough assessment and deeper analysis are important part of project design that deals with collecting and analysing project information and leading to strong project design based on real needs and specific contexts. Needs assessments are often capped with supplementary analysis tools such as stakeholder and SWOT analysis.

3.2.1 Stakeholder analysis

A comprehensive stakeholder analysis encourages active participation, involvement and helps develop good relationships required for the success of the programme.

Stakeholders are persons, groups or institutions with interests in a particular programme or project. Primary stakeholders are immediate communities of interest and secondary stakeholders are the intermediaries in the process, and may include government agencies and other institutional bodies who do not necessarily have direct stake or interest in the programme

Stakeholder analysis is the identification of a project's key stakeholders, an assessment of their interests, and the ways in which those interests affect project riskiness and viability. It contributes to project design by identifying the goals and roles of different groups, and by helping to formulate appropriate forms of engagement with these groups.

In the analysis we look at the stakeholder, and the relationship. The purpose for conducting a stakeholder analysis is to identify and assess potential impact of key stakeholders on the programme and then plan strategies related only to those specific stakeholders that warrant attention.

Stakeholder analysis helps to:

- identify and define the characteristics of key stakeholders that have relationships with the programme
- determine the interests of these stakeholders in relation to the problems that the programme is seeking to address
- assess the appropriate type of participation by different stakeholders, various stages of the programme

Ultimately, stakeholder analysis will ensure that the programme is built be (i) creating and enhancing the right relations, and (ii) engaging different stakeholders at appropriate levels of programme development and management. Critical conditions that are seen to be inhibiting these success conditions are analyzed and addressed.

Conducting stakeholder analysis

The most critical initial stage in project design is to decide how the project will involve the stakeholders whose participation and contribution forms part of the project's success conditions. In determining the rights relationships and enhancing the value of these relationships to leverage the impact of the project, a stakeholder analysis is conducted. The following three major steps help explain the process of conducting a stakeholder analysis.

Step One: Define clear purpose of stakeholder analysis

Before conducting a stakeholder analysis, it must be clear the specific programme or policy on which the stakeholder analysis will be focused. It is important to define the purpose of the analysis and specify how the results will be used right at the outset so that the process is continuously informed by the sense of purpose.

Step Two: Identifying major stakeholder groups

Working in a small mixed group of staff and partners, identify and list all stakeholders as a starting point. Stakeholders can be individuals, groups, communities, organisations, or other institutions like the church, and stakeholders reflect the diversity of project environment with various relationship possibilities including beneficiaries, suppliers, promoters, etc. It is helpful to group stakeholders into smaller units (e.g. men and women, location, organisational departments) to ensure focused analysis and to avoid overlooking some stakeholders and the common pitfall of identifying only generic and common entities. The decision for stakeholder selection must be based on how the stakeholder may impact the organization differently. It is important to note that the mix of key stakeholders and their roles may change at different stages of the project.

Step Three: Determining interests, influence and Relationships

With a full list of stakeholders at hand, a more comprehensive analysis of the stakeholders is done using a stakeholder table that helps to specifically assess interests, influence and relationships as identified in the stakeholder assessment table below. Next, assess the influence and importance of each stakeholder on the project. Not all identified stakeholders will be useful for the project, so a preliminary short-listing of the stakeholders, based on their obvious role and significance, will help focus analysis. The rule of thumb for identifying key stakeholders in this process is to question ‘whose support or lack of it might significantly influence the success of the programme?’ If ‘important’ stakeholders are not involved or assisted, then the project cannot be called a success.

Table 5: Stakeholder analysis table

Stakeholders	Dimensions of analysis			Importance ¹¹ [(-) or (+)]
	<i>Interest</i>	<i>Influence</i>	<i>Relationships with stakeholders</i>	
A. DIRECT				
B. INDIRECT				

Step Four: Establishing strategies for involvement

With stakeholders already identified and their significance to the project determined, the next step would be to ask: *now that I have identified all of these stakeholders, what do I do with the list? At this stage, it is As mentioned already, not all identified stakeholders will be useful to the project so a further screening to reduce stakeholders to only a few but important ones would help in determining concrete partnership and collaboration decisions and strategies. This stage is meant to help identify strategies for approaching and involving each person or group. How to do this will usually depend on the results of the previous analysis, drawing on the specific strengths identified according to the ‘significance/importance ratings. Relationship strategies with each stakeholder will depend on the appropriate type and level of the stakeholder’s participation. It is worth noting that stakeholders may change their level of involvement as implementation continues and sometimes new ones are identified along the process, so there is need to consider stakeholders analysis for flexible and dynamic partnerships.*

3.2.2 Needs assessments vs. baseline surveys

Assessment (needs assessment) is an important pre-project activity leading to project design. It provides helpful information for determining needs, targeting beneficiaries as well as determining project objectives and implementation strategies.

¹¹ Single, double or triple (-) or (+) shows the stakeholder’s significance (level of importance) to the project

ACT Alliance emergency assessments guidelines provide steps in conducting both rapid and detailed emergency assessments as well as reporting on data collected. In the event of on-set emergencies, ACT's rapid emergency assessment procedure is recommended to collect basic information to help inform targeting and putting together a request for immediate response through the preliminary appeal or RRF. This is later followed by a more detailed emergency assessment that can lead to better planning, monitoring and evaluation for appeals. ACT emergency assessment checklist emphasizes the collection of specific types of data about population characteristics, sector needs and major coordination and capacity requirements, and provides the format for emergency assessment reporting.

Normally, baseline surveys are undertaken after the project has been designed and before implementation starts. Assessments collect information for designing projects while baseline surveys collect information about indicators for the purpose of performance comparison.

In emergency setting, it is often difficult to find adequate time to systematically conduct a pre-project assessments including and a baseline survey at project start. In this situation, critical baseline information is therefore collected within the emergency assessments and adequate efforts made to update data at the early phase of implementation. Rapid assessments are very important in project design but this is only true if data collected are accurate based on careful assessment planning and process. Inaccurate data can mislead project design and implementation and this may in turn have adverse effect on the population.

3.3 Developing project objectives

Objectives setting is a process of using the information collected in the needs assessment to develop a project structure that addresses critical needs. A common way of approaching this is by constructing a problem tree around a carefully identified problem statement that describes the core problem. *A weak core problem misleads analysis of the problem situation and misdirects the project intervention.* It is therefore important to commit time in exploring and identifying the core problem and have a strong description of the core problem in a manner that best reflect the crucial dimension of the problem situation.

Problem tree analysis

Using the metaphor of a tree with the problem statement at the trunk while the branches and the roots illustrating effects and root causes, the problem tree analysis is an important visual representation of reality and it is a highly participatory tool for project design. During a problem tree analysis, participants are asked a series of questions that help them identify the causes and root causes of the core problem identified (centred at the tree trunk for this analysis) as well as the associated effects and secondary effects. The root causes and effects are probed layer after layer based on concrete reality of the problem situation and justified by the available information collected during needs assessment or emergency assessment in case of humanitarian response.

Causes are underlying factors that have contributed to bringing about the core problem. Root causes are causes-of-causes that drive the immediate causes to collectively contribute to the core problem. Effects are negative conditions that result from the problem.

Setting Objectives

Having utilized the needs assessment results to construct a problem tree analysis, it is anticipated that the results of the problem tree analysis will reflect the core problem, root causes and effects of the problem.

The negative statements of effects are then transformed into project objectives (by turning negative statements into positive statements) and the core problem transformed into overall goal. The problem tree also helps in identification of outputs and core activities.

When stating SMART objectives, make sure that the objectives are action-oriented, reflect accomplishments rather than hopes, anticipate a particular change and direct efforts to specific category (ies) of the population. Specifically, objective statements should:

- Reflect as future completed actions or desired outcomes.
- Use strong action verbs that indicate accomplishments e.g. developed, constructed, reduced, etc.
- Be specific about the type of change anticipated (attitude, knowledge, behaviour, state of situation, or a particular condition)
- Specify the population group being targeted e.g. poor families, vulnerable youths, etc.

The logframe

Once the goal, objectives and activities (with outputs) are identified and agreed-upon, the next stage would be to identify the indicators and often this is done by using the Logframe so that identification of indicators are linked to appraising the feasibilities of selected indicators by asking how the indicators will be collected (methods) and who will collect the information (responsibility). The logical framework is an important instrument for designing sound monitoring and evaluation systems and supports results-oriented project implementation. The procedure for developing a logframe is detailed in section 4.4.1.

Contrary to popular opinion that the logframe is developed after the project design phase, the development of a logframe is part of the project design itself and is developed before writing the proposal.

3.4 Completing design: Proposal Writing

Writing a proposal is the last part of project development process based on key elements already in place, including assessment report, stakeholder analysis, detailed analysis, project structure (goal and objectives) as well as the logframe. Writing a project proposal is about connecting these elements to fit together and completing the body of the proposal in a manner that is coherent to best describe the problem situation and how the planned intervention would reduce the problem. Presentation of clear results at various results levels and identifying means of measuring results are a design strength of projects.

The emphasis of implementation monitoring is on regular data collection of inputs and outputs to help identify gaps, know performance status and take appropriate remedial actions. The sequence described in Figure 1 explains that: the project first mobilizes a set of *inputs* (human and financial resources, equipment, etc), which it transmits through various *processes/activities* (training sessions, infrastructure building) to generate *outputs* (e.g. number of people trained; kilometres of road built, units of houses constructed).

Outputs in turn translate into *outcomes* (e.g. increased knowledge; improved practices) which may be at the beneficiary level or outcomes may spread to the rest of the population, resulting in population-level *impacts* (reduced malnutrition; improved incomes; improved food security; etc).

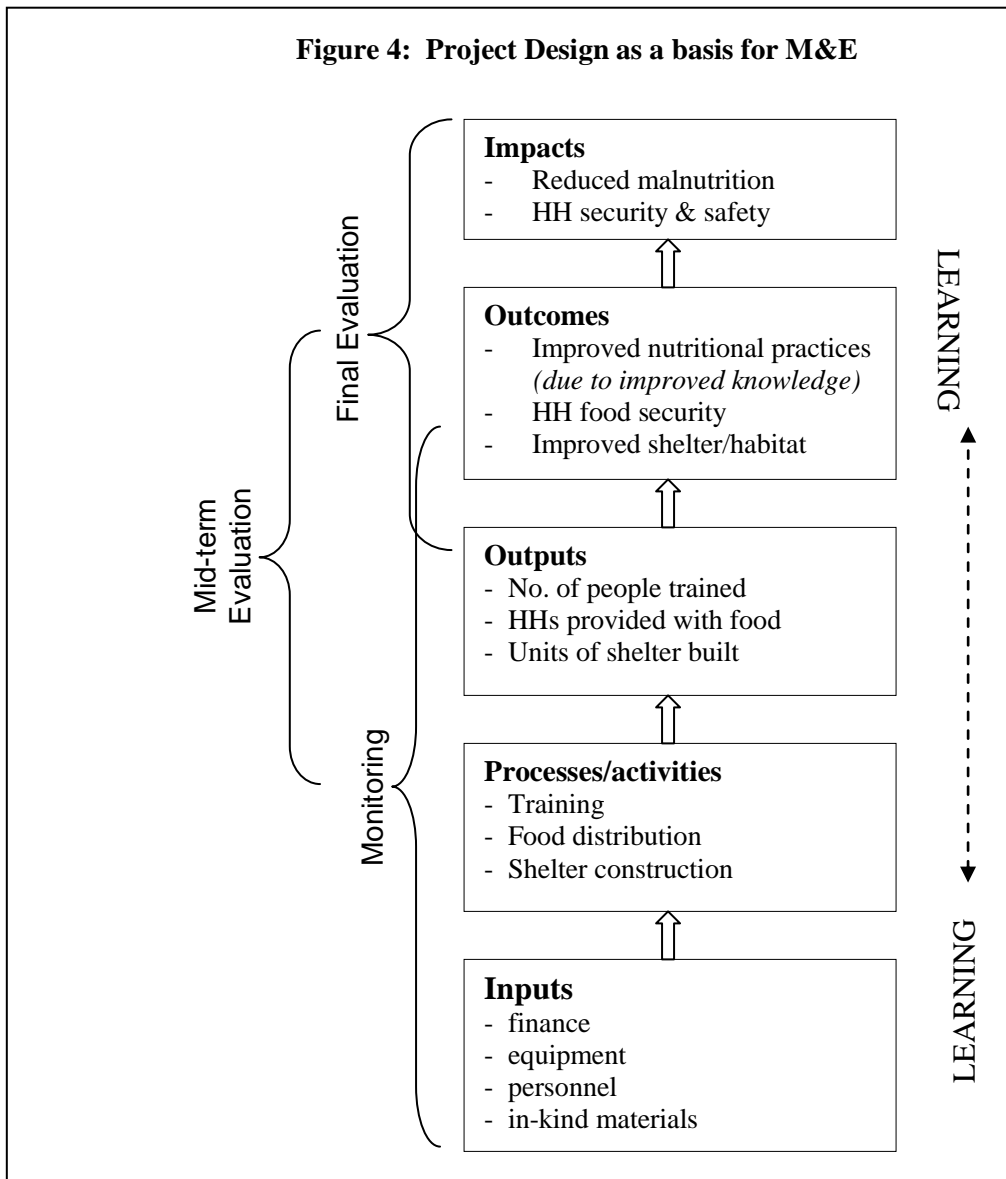
It is important to link the different levels of monitoring with each other in the same way as the planning levels are linked, i.e. to reflect on how the findings and results of one level contribute to the results of the subsequent ones. This is expected to improve the coherence of the field operations. The main responsibility for monitoring would always be primarily with the implementing level:

- *community level*: responsibility with community members
- *project level*: responsibility with project staff
- *programme level*: responsibility with senior management
- *strategy level*: responsibility with the stakeholder team

.....with established reporting lines between the levels so that the correct (relevant) information is filtered through in both directions.

Source: PME framework for DWS, LWF

The design of M&E systems must reflect the process-output-outcomes-impact project typology with appropriate indicators and M&E methods for each level. In addition, the M&E systems should track external factors such as rainfall, policies and market prices in order to warn against, and mitigate the possible negative influence of such factors on prevailing project conditions. Having data on such external data will also help put the project into context when explaining results.



Good design of projects supports development of functional monitoring and evaluation which enables ACT Alliance to:

- Respond effectively to the needs of disaster affected population, the poor and vulnerable worldwide
- Measure/ count project achievements, and celebrate those achievements
- Document and share lessons learned to ensure continuous improvement in project quality
- Communicate accurately to donors and stakeholders

Box 2: Assessing the planning/design strength for an ACT appeal

Project objectives are measurable and implementation strategies coherent

- Project objectives are clearly stated and SMART
- Implementation strategies closely reflect the reality of context and seek to maximize impact

Relevant literature/ lessons and assessment reports are optimally used at planning

- Previous relevant ACT evaluation and/or learning reports from other ACT appeals/projects have been used during project planning
- Reports of assessments conducted have been used for better targeting and planning

Activities, outputs, objectives and goals demonstrate plausible causal relationships

- The expected outcomes for an ACT appeal must be clearly identified and stated at the outset
- Selected activities would yield desired outputs and contribute to outcomes
- Inputs (including funds and required personnel) are adequate for producing planned outputs

Monitoring and Evaluation integrated at project planning stage

- M&E plan developed with key components including performance indicators and the methods, period and responsibility for data collection indicated
- Critical assumptions with implications for impact are identified and articulated

Capacity building and cross-cutting themes are addressed

- Clear ways of integrating gender and protection are part of project design
- Implementation capacity status assessed and plan provided to fill identified capacity gaps

4.0 PLANNING FOR M&E SYSTEMS

Most M&E suffers the habit of over attention to the implementation M&E system with little focus on the inevitable ground-levelling activities and setting the necessary preconditions for PME to thrive. The systematic nature of monitoring and evaluation requires that as much attention should be directed to careful planning of as it is the focus on the functioning of M&E system. There is no one M&E system for a particular project that is good enough to be wholly applied in another project, notwithstanding the caution against re-inventing the wheel. There is no excuse for doing little or no planning for project-specific PME because ready-made tools and resources do need adapting in the unique context of the project. All project designs are unique and other associated necessary elements for design and implementation of a project's PME (including implementation strategy, critical assumptions, capacity and the institutional set-up) also vary by organization, project location and local context. Besides, articulating PME processes for each project is important for integration within implementation process.

4.1 M&E timeline

There are different but inter-related M&E activities/processes that must happen to ensure the development and well-functioning of M&E systems. These include putting in place the Logframe that articulates the indicators in relation to sources of data, developing the M&E plan to operationalise the M&E, providing suitable M&E tools, sharing lessons from M&E results beyond programme use and reviewing the M&E system itself to keep it relevant to the dynamic programme conditions. The M&E calendar helps to map these key M&E tasks and indicates key dates for these tasks. The M&E calendar is an important tool for M&E managers who should know when to accomplish each M&E task, both during design and implementation of an M&E system. As illustrated in Table 5, the M&E calendar is a timeline of main M&E events that must be followed and implemented by the M&E staff.

Table 6: Sample M&E Calendar

Key M&E Activities	Appeal Period (1 June 2011 – 31 May 2012)												
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	
Develop M&E strategy or guidelines													
Develop and share M&E frameworks													
Develop M&E tools													
Pre-test and revise M&E tools													
M&E training for staff													
Real-Time Evaluation													
Provide monthly performance updates													
Conduct quarterly M&E program reflection sessions													
Mid-term report													
Final Evaluation													
Lesson sharing workshop													
Dissemination of final evaluation report													

4.2 Selecting and defining indicators

Indicators are specific characteristics used to measure/ show whether or not proposed changes have occurred. Identification and definition of indicators involve critical reflection on which particular indicators would be suitable for each statement of project objectives and how identified indicators should be stated in order to capture specific data needs. Indicators demonstrate performance and are the basis of planning for monitoring and evaluation.

Example: For an intervention seeking to increase the use of modern farming techniques through training and demonstration plots, one indicator to measure progress would be ‘# of farming households that are using skills gained on new farming practices in their gardens’. If more people are using modern farming methods introduced then this signals a progress in project implementation, while critical assumptions keep relatively positive.

Indicators are sometimes referred to as “performance indicators” to indicate their key role of informing management as to whether an implementation is going on as planned and achieving the desired results.

There is need to explain the quality attributes that uniquely identifies the indicator so that measurement is objectively based on standard definitions that do not vary according perspectives. The specific attributes of indicators are explained using the SMART criteria; specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and timeliness. Appraising indicators using these criteria help strengthen the indicators as they are the most defining notion in monitoring and evaluation hence setting a practical basis for functional M&E systems. Besides making SMART indicators, the time-lag between output delivery and the expected change in outcome and impact indicators must also be reflected in the indicators that are chosen.

Some indicators lead to collecting information that is only nice to know but not necessarily important for making programme decisions. Few indicators make PME process not burdensome. As a principle, it is essential to select only few indicators that are important for measuring change in important aspects of implementation. To know whether implementation is on track or not, or to gauge the level of outcomes, one does not require so many indicators. Selecting too many indicators is often the cause for dysfunctional, non-utilization of M&E results and the frustration associated with the unclear relevance of PME in such a situation. The emphasis on the need for only few indicators is summarized by the PME axiom ‘less is more’ as few indicators lead to better and timely analysis, linking data to specific use without data redundancy and generally a manageable PME process.

When defining an indicator, state important factors by which data on the indicator must be disaggregated e.g. trained farmers by gender and location, children school attendance by grade and gender. An indicator may be disaggregated by a number of factors, example: gender (male and female), age (below 5, below 18, 18-55, above 55), urban and rural, pre-existing and newly formed groups, dry & wet seasons, etc. Decision for data disaggregation is made at the stage of defining the indicators not during analysis.

4.2.1 Types of Indicators

(a) Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators

An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement or to reflect the changes in project activities. Quantitative indicators are associated with numbers and can be analyzed numerically. Units of measurements for quantitative indicators are numerically expressed. However, quantifying indicators are often not possible in certain situations when the features or status of the indicators can only be adequately expressed through descriptions/explanations. In this case qualitative indicators are selected and adequately defined to allow objective measurements, even by different persons, over time.

(b) Direct and Indirect/ Proxy Indicators

Collecting data on some indicators present major problems in terms of the skills or resources required. Information on household income and expenditure, for instance, can be both difficult and expensive to collect, given the challenge related to household ability to track expenditure, definition of income, confidentiality syndrome around income, etc. In such cases, data is often sought from alternative indicators on which data collection is both feasible both in terms of skills and resources. Such alternative/indirect indicators are called proxy indicators as they only provide approximate alternative to measuring a difficult indicator.

4.2.2 Qualities of Indicators

The selection of indicators is an important PME activity during the project design stage. Usually the strengths and clarity of indicators are articulated in the 2nd column of the logical framework matrix. Indicators are the most central issue on PME and their selection must be carefully done to set good basis for PME.

a) Indicators must be measurable, accurate and realistic*Measurable*

An appropriate indicator is measurable and clearly defines the measurement such that 2 people would measure it in the same way. For quantitative proportions or percentages this means that both the numerator and the denominator must be clearly defined. For quantitative whole numbers and qualitative data it means defining each term within the indicator such that there can be no misunderstanding as to the meaning of that indicator. This is critical for ensuring that the data collected by different people at different times are consistent and comparable. Examples of indicators that are not measurable include the percentage of households that are food-secure (“food-secure” is not defined precisely) and the percentage of women with increased access to health services (“access” is not defined precisely). The critical means of ensuring that indicators are measurable is to define all the terms within the indicator, even those for which a general agreement about meaning may be shared among staff members.

Accurate

The main concern in choosing indicators is that indicators must be accurate in measuring what they have been chosen to measure. Not all indicators can measure at the same level of accuracy; some indicators are more accurate measures than others.

For example, measuring the weight for-height of children under 5 years of age will yield a more accurate figure for the percentage of acutely malnourished (wasted) children than will measuring the mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC). During indicator selection it is necessary to first list all candidate indicators and then prioritize those that promise the most accurate measurement. Clear statement or definition of indicators also increases their accuracy as a well defined indicator is more ‘sharp’ in terms of its ability to accurately measure specific units.

Realistic

The indicators selected must be realistic in terms of their ability to collect the data with the available resources. Some indicators present major problems for data collection owing to the cost or skills required (e.g. anthropometric surveys, large-scale sample surveys). Being realistic in planning what information can be collected ensures that it compromises on other criteria.

b) Indicators must be objectively verifiable

Performance indicators should be framed and in as definite terms as possible so that they are not susceptible to ambiguous and varied interpretations. Particularly in the case of qualitative indicators, clear and comprehensive definitions are crucially necessary to ensure a reasonable level of objectivity and comparability over time. Where terms used are necessarily ambiguous, not specific and therefore signifying varying meanings, a further refinement of indicators would be required. Indicator Reference Sheet (IRS) is a tool that helps to clarify such ambiguous terms necessarily used to define indicators e.g. number of with “improved” sanitation, number of “quality” housing units built. In these examples, the terms “improved” and “quality” are not neither specific nor measurable, therefore their interpretations may vary according to differences in views. Such indicators must be articulated in the IRS, to avoid cluttering the logframe with long definitions. Objectivity of performance indicators is an inevitable quality standard required for collecting objective and comparable data over time. If indicators are not clearly and consistently defined, the data collected are unlikely to permit a useful assessment of progress.

Similarly, multidimensional indicators (e.g. quantity and quality of cereals harvested) are difficult to measure using single indicators because they contain multiple *units of analysis*¹². To allow for easy analysis and interpretation of data, each indicator must have a single unit of analysis and specific ways of aggregation or disaggregation as necessary.

There is need to explicitly clarify on the quality attributes that uniquely identifies qualitative indicators so that measurements is objectively based on standard definition. If quality attributes are not qualified and standardized, different persons are likely to supply different standpoints of interpretations, hence affecting objectivity and standardization principles of monitoring

In as much as possible the emphasis on objectively verifiable indicators (OVI) is such that indicators must be stated in clear, simple and straightforward manner that allows for single interpretation of meanings irrespective of who uses the indicator and the time the indicator is used. Lack of participation in selecting and defining indicators, change of staff with key PM&E responsibilities as well as the use of external consultants are common ways that often brings about varied interpretation of same indicators if they are not well defined.

c) Indicators must be few key indicators – less is more

There is a tendency to ask for too much information, assuming that more information available is essential for project management. Attempting to collect too much information often results into information overload. Information needs must be related directly to decision-making for designated levels of management. Field managers require more detailed information, while aggregated and summarised data are used at higher levels. The selection of indicators should reflect this through the specification of a minimum set of information. There is high cost and time normally required to collect and analyse huge amount of data, which can be avoided by keeping focus to the minimum set of information actually needed for decision making.

¹² The *unit of analysis* is the major entity that is being studied during data analysis

d) Indicators are neutral**i) Direction of Indicators**

An indicator is simply a measurement and, as such, it should be neutral or non-directional (i.e. neither positive nor negative). Indicators do not measure increase only but also decrease and no change. It is a bias to think of indicators as measures of increase because sometimes implementation may not cause a change or even results into negative change – contrary to our expectation of the direction of change.

If a urban project is supporting social reintegration of street children, an indicator ‘%age reduction in the number of street children’ may instead realize an increase in the number of street children as many could see social integration support as an incentive to come to the street. In this case, it’s obvious that the assumption that indicator would only measure a ‘reduction’ would be wrong. Positivism in the direction of change is often motivated by our desire to create results (as per the purpose of implementation), but it is indicators should measure change (whatever the direction) and not based our assumption or expectation of the direction of the change.

ii) Targets vs. Indicators

Indicators are meant to simply measure changes and these changes are sometimes not necessarily positive or desirable. Therefore, it is not necessary to state indicators to carry targets or as desired conditions. Indicators must be neutral or non-directional (i.e. neither positive nor negative). Targets should be included in the statement of objectives, outputs and activities. Targets specify the mark of achievements or desired results within any timeframe during a project lifetime. E.g. 30% of mothers practicing improved child-feeding system within 1 year of project implementation. On the other hand, indicators should measure progress towards achieving the target. Therefore, indicators and targets are different in purpose but there is certainly a strong functional relationship between indicators and targets. There is confusion whether indicators should carry targets or not and, on this, there is one principle.

There is no harm in making indicators carry targets because there is a target associated with every indicator, however to be discrete on what’s actually being measured, it’s good to ensure statement of indicators begin with ‘number’ or ‘percentage of’ instead of the targets. It is logical that these are kept as ‘numbers’ or ‘percentages’ yet to be determined (given their changing levels at different stages of implementation). Rather, targets should be part of SMART objectives statements or clear output statements. The required ‘measurability’ of objectives, outputs and activities (as per the SMART criteria) is partly a call to indicate clear targets in the statement of objectives/ outputs or activities. In terms of logframe planning, therefore, targets should be part of the project structure (objectives, outputs and activities) in the first column of the logical framework - as this described the project's internal logic. Sometimes, project managers also develop a separate table for targets against which analysis of performance indicators are regularly conducted to establish performance of each indicator against the associated target.

Table 7: Indicator with and without target

<i>Indicator without target</i>	<i>Indicator with target</i>
# of families exclusively using fuel efficient (energy-saving) cooking stoves	20% of families are exclusively using fuel efficient (energy-saving) cooking stoves 1 year from project start.
% change in school enrolment in the lower primary grades	15% increase in school enrolment in the lower primary grades over 2 years

Determining targets is not a linear process because this is a projection done amidst lack of sufficient information and clear basis for determination. Determination of targets can be based on past experience, expert knowledge, donor requirements or information from the assessments conducted. Therefore, project managers find it easier to establish targets after the baseline assessment has been done. For example, if you have not yet gathered baseline data and you do not know current enrolment levels, it can be difficult to set a target for an increase in enrolment.

Assessing the quality of the Indicators

- **DIRECT:** Does the indicator measure the result as closely as possible? Is the indicator based on a single unit of analysis (i.e. non-dimensional)?
- **OBJECTIVE:** does the indicator possess a single definition or translation of meaning to different people? Does the analysis provide a straight forward and commonly understandable translation
- **FEASIBLE:** Is it possible to collect data on the indicator on a timely basis? Is the cost of collecting the data on indicator realistic? Is it possible to collect the data conveniently?
- **USEFUL:** Is it clear how the result of the indicator will be used for making improvements? Is the result of the indicator available at the time needed for decision making? Is the necessary disaggregation taken into consideration? Is the disaggregation considered necessary?

Table 8: Measuring change on indicators

Indicator	Unit	Expected change	Method of data collection	Focus of measurement
<u>Effect indicator</u> % school inspector visits follow standard inspection protocol	School inspector visits	School inspection visits conducted appropriately	Recording of inspection visits <u>Based on criteria:</u> Checklist of school inspection protocol	<i>Whether or not inspection visits are conducted correctly</i> <i>Counting number of correct inspection visits (NOT total inspection visit) conducted</i>
<u>Output indicator</u> % targeted mothers who have completed (satisfactorily) the training in child nutrition practices	Mothers of children (0-5 years)	Completion of nutrition training	Recording from participants training list <u>Based on criteria:</u> - Only children 0-5 yrs - completed all training sessions - those within target locations	Number of mothers who have attended nutrition training

4.3 Towards Common ACT Global Indicators

It is not always practical to prescribe a generic set of indicators to be used in different implementation conditions because indicators must be developed specifically for each programme's design and implementation context. However, common sector indicators have developed over time and these are being used in many programmes as a handy reference frame.

The drive towards common ACT global indicators will create opportunity to monitor and report on the overall performance and demonstrate the impact of ACT humanitarian response, particularly through the ACT appeal system. This will also increase members' attention to the issue of collective accountability as well as to demonstrate the results of the joint efforts of churches and church-related organizations working and achieving together under the cooperate arrangement of ACT Alliance.

Promoting common ACT Global Indicators above will serve the following objectives:

- i) Provide the minimum sector indicators that will support strategic decisions and continuous improvement of ACT humanitarian response
- ii) Inform the review of ACT policies based on better understanding of trends and impact around specific ACT global indicators
- iii) Encourage comparison of key data on ACT humanitarian response and communicating impact over time
- iv) Promote evidence-based programme decisions and increased utilization of PME results for increased quality of ACT humanitarian response

The ACT global indicators are a set of minimum performance indicators of main programme sectors. The indicators are important for demonstrating to total worth and impact of all ACT appeals implemented in any given year. Linked to the purpose that brings ACT members to work together, ACT M&E systems should help demonstrate the overall results and accountability for joint and coordinated work of ACT members.

The status of each main/core sector indicator is a collective contribution of subsidiary or contributory indicators associated with that indicator. Reporting on ACT global indicators shall be based on only 10 core sector indicators but programmes will need to detail their indicators at field level to include both the subsidiary/contributory indicators to be able to cover all the necessary data dimensions and other performance indicators required to support field-level programme decisions. Reporting on the 10 ACT global indicators shall form part of the regular progress reports for appeals and RRFs.

Data on ACT global indicators related to different appeals/RRFs shall be submitted to ACT Secretariat (through regular progress reporting arrangements) where they will be entered into the standard ACT appeal/RRF database by the respective Regional Programme Officers.

Box 3: Ten ACT Global Indicators**1.0 HEALTH (2 indicators)****1.1 # of persons (male, female) having access to health services due to ACT programmes**

- 1.1.1 # people provided with drugs and treatment in health facility run mainly due to a ACT programme
- 1.1.2 # people with physical impairment who have had access to rehabilitation services directly supported by ACT programmes

1.2 # health facilities supported through construction and/or rehabilitation by ACT programmes

- 1.2.1 # hospitals supported through new construction and/ or rehabilitation
- 1.2.2 # community health centres/ clinics supported through new construction and/or rehabilitation

2.0 WATER AND SANITATION (2 indicators)**2.1 # people who have access to safe drinking water provided through ACT programmes****2.2 # people having access to sanitation facilities**

- 2.2.1 # people using functioning latrine provided through ACT programmes
- 2.2.2 # people using functioning shower/ bathing space constructed through ACT programmes
- 2.2.3 # people practising basic household sanitation and hygiene practices (e.g. wash) with support of ACT programme

3.0 FOOD & NUTRITION (3 indicators)**3.1 # malnourished children participating in a ACT feeding program**

- 3.1.1 # (acutely & moderately) malnourished children admitted into the appropriate selective feeding centre
- 3.1.2 # children 6-59 months and pregnant and lactating women who received blanket supplementary feeding products.
- 3.1.3 # primary school-aged children in school having received assistance through school feeding programmes

3.2 # children and pregnant women supported with supplementary feeding products

- 3.2.1 # children 6-59 months receive vitamin A capsules during the vaccination campaigns
- 3.2.2 # children 6-59 months and pregnant and lactating women who receive micronutrients

3.3 # malnourished adults having received food assistance**4.0 LIVELIHOODS (1 indicator)****4.1 # households that benefit from livelihood activities**

- 4.1.1 # target people who received income/food through Cash for Work and/or Food for Work
- 4.1.2 # people provided with skill training for increased employability and facilitation of micro/small businesses
- 4.1.3 # people provided with credit or grants for micro-businesses
- 4.1.4 # people provided with seeds, farming equipment and oxen

5.0 SHELTER (1 indicator)**5.1 # of people who have access to shelter provided/supported through ACT programmes**

- 5.1.1 # of people (in the families) whose houses have been cleared of rubble/debris
- 5.1.2 # people (in families served) who used tents, tarpaulins & other shelter toolkits provided through ACT programmes
- 5.1.3 # of people (in families served) whose houses have been rehabilitated/repared or constructed directly through ACT programme

6.0 EDUCATION (1 indicator)**6.1 # children benefiting from activities focused on education**

- 6.1.1 # children who resumed school after damaged or destroyed schools were cleared of

- debris (through ACT programmes)
- 6.1.2 # school children studying in the school tents procured and installed through ACT programmes
- 6.1.3 # school children receiving lessons from teachers trained, retrained or provided with child-education refresher through ACT programme
- 6.1.4 # children benefiting from provision of basic learning materials
- 6.1.5 # school children who benefitted from psycho-social support provided with support of ACT programme
- 6.1.6 # school children benefiting from early childhood development (ECD) services provided through ACT programme

Note:

- ii. *Depending on the extent of programme integration, contributory indicators may result into double counting. Where this is likely, appropriate method of subtraction or exclusion will be necessary in order to keep M&E data authentic and accurate.*
- iii. *SPHERE standards must be used to quality the meaning and understand minimum standards associated with each main sector indicators. Refer to the section of Core Standards of SPHERE handbook for minimum standards associated with sector indicators.*

Summary analysis of ACT Global Indicators, along with other aggregate information on total budget and expenditure trends, shall be utilized for the following purposes:

- to provide information for ACT annual report
- to provide strategic information on ACT Appeals/RRFs to the board and ExCom
- posted on ACT Alliance website to demonstrate overall ACT accountability
- to inform ACT policy review

4.4 M&E Frameworks**4.4.1 Developing the logframe**

The logical framework is an important instrument for designing sound monitoring and evaluation systems and supports results-oriented project implementation. *The Logical framework* links program objectives with program components and their respective inputs, activities and outputs at different stages of implementation. The concept of a logframe is based on the causal relationships between goals, objectives, outputs, and inputs. Each level of project structure” is measured by indicators: on the level of inputs, you don’t need indicators because you have “hard facts” about human and financial resources. The same applies to activities. The need for indicators starts at the level of outputs

A logframe provides the foundation for a good project design and, as oppose to common perception, the logframe is developed before writing the details of a project proposal (but after needs assessment and strategy tree). As a framework, the design of a logframe is based on the intervention logic which forms the art of the logframe. A logframe is only useful to the extent that it has been developed in a correct way.

The purpose of logframe is to clarify project logic with (not to) the project team, a framework to weigh in alternative strategies and options, and sets a sound basis for M&E. Presentation of a completed logframe is not the primary purpose for the logframe!

A logframe is a project planning tool that;

- i) Clarifies project intervention and logic
- ii) Sets a sound basis for M&E
- iii) Communicates the strengths of project design to stakeholders and donors

Therefore, beyond filling-in the matrix and presenting a completed version, the logframe is used as a framework with a purpose of clarifying project intervention logic and related design issues with the project team and sets the basis for a functional M&E. Whereas a good process and product of the logframe is a motivation for developing good M&E systems, the laxity in the design process and inadequacy in quality of its content are a demotivation for developing sound M&E systems.

The main Contents of the Logical Framework Matrix

Each of the 4 columns in the Logical Framework is associated with important aspects for project design and identification of indicators. The first and fourth columns articulate programme design and assumptions, while the second and third columns outline the M&E performance measurement indicators and the means for testing whether or not the hypothesis articulated in the programme design holds true.

Constructing a logframe

Before constructing the logframe, it is important to decide on who should be involved in the constructing the logframe. The logframe construction is a process that involves exploring, discussing and contesting issues before they are agreed upon and included into the logframe. This consensus building around project issues makes logframe necessarily a participatory planning tool. Participation¹³ in developing a project logframe should involve the project team, representatives of beneficiaries and key stakeholders.

There is no single expert hand that can deliver a useful logframe since the essence of participation, dialogue and establishing common grounds around the project logic, assumptions, indicators and means to very them constitute the larger part of the purpose for a logframe than a well completed logframe.

Working the logframe in a participatory manner to harness and establish common views is the rationale for using the logframe as a framework to support joint planning and bring perspectives together in building a more robust project structure other than seeking to fill the logframe boxes and regarding a completed logframe as an end in itself. Therefore, we don't develop a logframe so that it should exist, but rather we use it as a framework for contributing and sieving ideas – a means to a sound project design and strong basis for M&E.

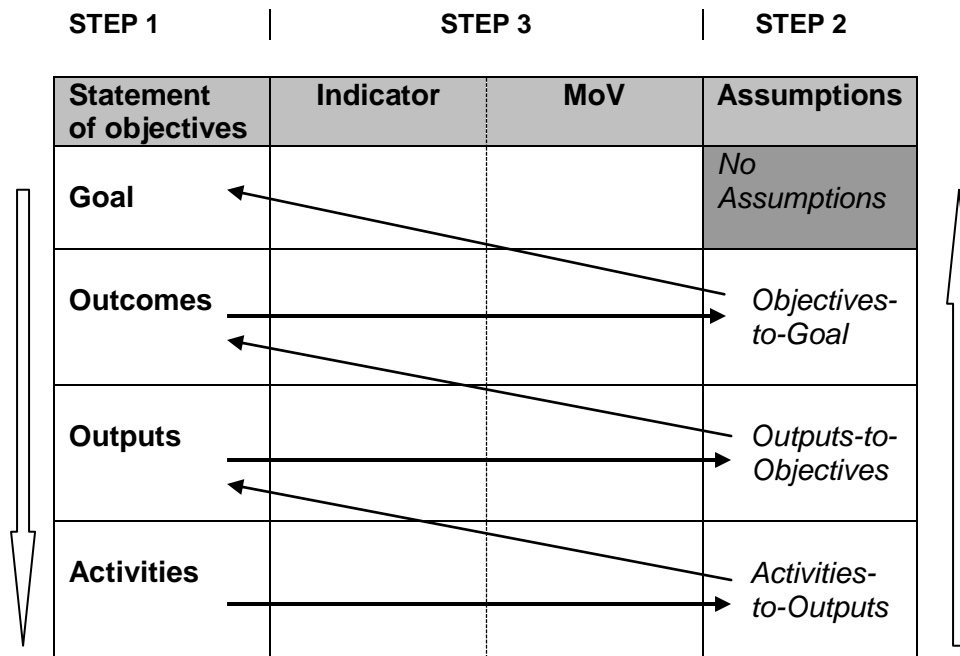
As a framework, the design of a logframe is based on some pattern of logic (sequence) which forms the art of the logframe. Unless the construction of the logframe is done according to the sequence expected, the result will not be robust and this does not only reduce the value of logframe as a basis for M&E but also its legitimacy among project team.

Steps in constructing a Logical framework (logframe):

Developing of a logframe is a 3-step process that can be illustrated using by demonstrating how the different components of the logframe fit (logic) together as in the figure below.

¹³ Participation of beneficiaries needs not be literate in order to merit active participation in project design and M&E activities. Pro-poor projects strongly recognize and work with the fact that communities are poor or vulnerable without discounting the value of their contribution through participation.

Figure 5: Constructing logframe elements



Step 1: Column 1 (internal logic, causal relationship)

This column outlines the design or internal logic of the programme. It incorporates a hierarchy of what the programme will do (inputs, activities and outputs) and what it will seek to achieve (purpose and goal). Completing the column involves the following steps:

Step 2: Column 4 (external logic)

This column outlines the external assumptions and risks related to each level of the internal design logic that is necessary for the next level up to occur. It determines the critical assumptions (conditions) that must remain true to ensure the realization of each project component defined in column 1. This involves working column 4 in respect to corresponding elements in column 1. i.e. Column 4 sets the reality conditions for Column 1 and it is important to test this external reality before working the indicators on the basis of these intervention logic in column 1. Testing the external logic involves determining assumptions in relation to each corresponding project component identified in column 1, starting from the bottom and move upwards (Thinking Upward). This establishes the vertical logic of the Logframe through the *IF-THEN* relationship. Should the external logic prove to be less viable, the project structure (in column 1) can be modified before working the indicators.

Therefore, assumptions (Column 4) provide important conditions that are necessary to ensure that: (i) planned activities will produce expected results; (ii) the cause effect relationship between the different levels of programme results will occur as expected.

Achieving results, to some extent, depends on whether or not the assumptions made prove to be true. Incorrect assumptions at any stage of the results chain can become an obstacle to achieving the expected

results, hence the importance of the assumptions not only for strengthening the project logic but also to allow for monitoring of external conditions that determine the project success.

Box 4: Programme design Logic and the Logical Framework

The design strength of a project is well reflected and tested in the Logframe. To establish the design logic of the logical framework, we test the internal and external logic (i.e. columns 1 and 4, respectively) and review the Logframe to establish the feasibility of the programme’s logical framework. The process of testing the logic begins with inputs and then moving upwards towards the goal using an “if” (internal logic) “and” (external logic) “then” (internal logic at the next level) logic test. Should the logic indicate any implementation challenge, this will require adjusting the logical framework to overcome logic flaws or unfeasible/unlikely relationships among various levels of the logical framework hierarchy.

The logic test in the Logical framework designs is done by checking whether the following design conditions hold:

- *Inputs are sufficient for delivery of identified activities*
- *Activities are suitable and sufficient to deliver the outputs (deliverables) with desired level of quality and quantity*
- *Outputs, together with corresponding assumptions, are sufficient to realize the objectives (outcomes)*

Step 3: Columns 2 & 3 simultaneously

Column 2 outlines how the design will be monitored and evaluated by providing the indicators used to measure whether or not various elements of the programme’s design have occurred as planned. Column 3 specifies the source(s) of information or the means of verification for assessing the indicators. The working of these columns are done simultaneously to ensure immediate feasibility checks for any indicator chosen before moving forward with the rest of the design. The indicators in column 2 are selected on the basis of the project design elements in column 1 and the MoV in column 3 are identified on the basis of the indicators identified in column 2. The process of filling in the 2 columns starts from top to bottom by identifying the most suitable indicators for each level of project objectives and this is done simultaneously with identification of the means through which the indicators will be objectively verified.

Box 5: Summary steps in constructing a Logframe

Column 1

- Define the overall goal
- Define the objective(s) as SMARTly as possible
- Define the outputs for achieving the objective(s)
- Define the activities for achieving each output
- Verify the ‘vertical logic’ with the ‘if ... then ...’ test (working upwards)

Column 4

- Define the key assumptions at each level (working upwards).
- Check that the vertical logic still holds given these assumptions -‘if ... and ... then ...’

Column 2 & column 3

- Define indicators for the objectives, then for the outputs then for the goal
- Define the means of assessment at goal, objective and output levels.
- Check the ‘horizontal logic’ across each row

Inputs

- Indicate the inputs and costs to the main activities in the bottom row i.e. the budget summary

Review the Logframe

The Logframe illuminates the project thinking at a particular time and, therefore, the content of the Logframe should necessarily change with changing contexts. The Logframe is not a static document, it is critical to review the Logframe to keep it relevant to the project situation.

In the case of an Appeal the revision of the Logframe is more crucial given the dynamic and changing humanitarian context. If a Logframe is not reviewed to respond to a significant change in the humanitarian conditions, the rigid use of the same Logframe which doesn't reflect the reality of the change can lead to distorted monitoring data and failure to sufficiently capture the results of the project.

However, while it is important to review the logframe, this should not be done too frequently based on minor change and when a review is deemed necessary, it should involved a complete review of the entire logframe. Given its basis of logic, a change in one project component may mean a change in another component.

Specifically, the review of the logframe helps to establish that:

- The objectives (and resulting outcomes), together plus assumptions at the outcome level are necessary and sufficient to achieve the impact.
- The objectives and outputs statements are not simply restatements, summaries or aggregations of each other, but rather reflect the resulting joint outcome of 1level plus the assumptions at that same level.
- The objectives, outputs, activities, inputs and assumptions are clearly and are measurable. The assumptions are stated desired positive conditions, rather than as risks, and their high probability of coming true defines the feasibility of the project, given the external conditions.

Box 6: Advantages and limitations of logframesAdvantages

- Allows the feasibility of a project to be checked by setting out explicitly the internal coherence and the external plausibility of what is planned.
- Provides a focussed summary by forcing tight use of language.
- Facilitates communication about the project among stakeholders.
- Promotes objective-led rather than activity-led planning.
- Facilitates linkage between micro-planning and macro-planning.
- Highlights the limits of control, predictability and therefore responsibility by specifying key assumptions.
- Forces negotiation of consensus among planners by seeking simple statements of a limited number of objectives.
- Facilitates management of diverse activities unified by common objectives.
- Forces those involved to be explicit about the implications of carrying out planned activities, in terms of resources, assumptions and risks.
- Forces planners to think from the outset about how they will monitor and evaluate a project.

Limitations

- Over-attachment to a logframe can turn it into an inflexible blueprint.
- The logframe assumes hierarchical cause-effect logic. It cannot cope with mutual causation.
- The logframe is neutral in relation to gender and environment issues and may allow planners to ignore them.
- The logframe emphasises assessment of effects rather than understanding the process of change.
- With participatory approaches to logframe construction, the inexperience and broad base of participants may lead to the setting of unrealistic targets or to valuable activities being overlooked.
- The logframe only seeks indicators for planned/ expected effects and ignores evidence of unexpected effects or of events or processes that may threaten the success of the project.

Source: ICCO (2004). Building bridges in PME, pg 65

4.4.2 M&E Plan

The M&E plan is a main M&E operational document that links the uses the indicators articulated in the Logframe with the procedure for collecting and managing data for those indicators. With the same indicators in the Logframe, the M&E plan takes the issue of data collection into a final planning stage where the sources of data collection are specified, method of collecting the data are determined, the schedules for collecting all required data are indicated, and the specific responsibility for collecting different data are also specified.

M&E plan is a key element of a monitoring and evaluation system and functions as a main M&E reference tool for managing and documenting the data collection process. In order for an M&E system to function, there must be an M&E plan that clearly answers the 4 key planning questions i.e. what?, how?, when?, and who?

At minimum, your M&E plan should cover :

WHAT	(Indicators):	What data will be collected to be able to monitor indicators?
HOW	(Methods & tools):	How will the data be collected?
WHEN	(frequency):	When will each set of required data be collected?
WHO	(Responsibility):	Who is responsible for collecting which data and who will perform the analysis?

An extension of M&E plan may show include the aspects for analysis of M&E data, particularly by identifying the most appropriate analysis required for each set of data and indicating when reporting on analysis results will be done. The reporting schedule for M&E results is based on the times when specific M&E results will be best used, depending on the programme cycle, key planning events, advocacy activities or a learning opportunity singled out. Therefore, the schedules for making available M&E results must be reviewed in light of these events and opportunities to leverage the use of M&E results.

Some M&E plans are comprehensive and include also other aspects like how M&E results would be used to adjust programming. When data collection is the role of a group of people or a team, it is important to indicate responsibility to be the most responsible person among the group of responsible persons or team. If a group or team is indicated as a block unit responsible for data collection, it might result into non-compliance due to lack of accountability or the required sense of individual responsibility. Appendix 2 illustrates a simple format for an M&E plan developed to manage data collection process as well as the analysis and reporting of M&E results.

M&E plan in ACT appeals

All ACT appeals are required to have an M&E plan that is shared and understood by staff involved in the implementation of M&E activities. The M&E plan ensures planned implementation of M&E systems as the M&E systems cannot not function without careful attention to their planning.

There may be single or multiple M&E plan(s) for ACT appeals/RRFs depending on the model under which the appeals/RRFs are implemented i.e. whether it is by individual implementing members or jointly. Under a typical joint ACT appeal/RRF system with clear joint planning and coordinated M&E arrangements, a comprehensive joint M&E plan will be developed with shared roles among implementing agencies to collect and analyze specific data that relates to individual agency's implementation. Each member's M&E plan would contribute to the joint master M&E plan managed by the lead agency and against which the analysis and evaluation of overall appeal/RRF is based.

Whereas the typical joint ACT appeal/RRF system is vitally encouraged as promoting the value of ACT Alliance through joint planning and action, sometimes this is understandably not practical e.g. due to extensive geographical distance between implementing members. In such situations where individual member's planning is inevitable for a cooperating model of ACT appeal/RRF implementation, each member's section of the appeal/RRF will have its own M&E plan.

M&E plan must be revised to ensure continuous relevance with the implementation conditions, a review of M&E plan also affects the M&E tools and database. In reviewing the M&E plan, consider the following questions:

- *Are the indicators working as envisaged?*
- *Are we getting the information that we need?*
- *How can we improve the M&E plan?*

4.5 M&E methods and tools

4.5.1 Quantitative and Qualitative methods

Quantitative methods are those that generally rely on *structured or standardized approaches* to collect and analyze numerical data. Almost any evaluation or research question can be investigated using quantitative methods, because most phenomena can be measured numerically. Some common quantitative methods include the population census, population based surveys, and standard components of health facility surveys, including the facility census, provider interviews, provider-client observations, and client exit interviews.

Qualitative methods are those that generally rely on a variety of *semi-structured or open-ended methods* to produce in-depth, descriptive information. Common qualitative methods include *focus group discussions* and *in-depth interviews*.

Quantitative methods and qualitative methods can be used in *complementary* fashion to investigate the same phenomenon.

- One might use open-ended, exploratory (qualitative) methods to investigate what issues are most important and the language to use in a structured questionnaire.

- Alternatively, one might implement a survey and find unusual results that cannot be explained by the survey, but that might be better explained through open-ended focus group discussions or in-depth interviews of a subgroup of survey respondents.
- In addition, one might implement qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously to gain both numeric and descriptive information about the same topic.

One way of transforming qualitative data into a quantitative data for regular analysis is using the *Linkert Scales* that provides for rating levels e.g. 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good and 5 = excellent.

The principle is that M&E data must be measurable and the process must be systematic. As such, qualitative data must be numerically quantifiable and measured just like any quantitative data. However, qualitative data might be collected to provide the necessary perspectives to quantitative data, so in this case quantitative data provides the basis for measurement while qualitative information basis for interpreting the data, hence the need for complementary use of quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. E.g. besides using a matrix to record specific information, staff may observe and record some issues that can support better translation of analysis of data extracted from the matrix.

Common qualitative data collection methods

- Observation
- Focused Group Discussion
- Semi-structured interviews
- PRA methods

4.5.2 Type of M&E Tools

The tools for M&E data collection purpose takes various standard types developed for collecting specific information and these tools are used to collect either quantitative or qualitative data.

Tools are central to quantitative data collection because quantitative methods rely on structured, standardized instruments such as questionnaires, forms, tables and check-lists. Whereas tools are often used in collecting quantitative M&E data, information gathered using qualitative tools for M&E purposes requires that qualitative information be transformed into sub-categorical unites of information and quantified to allow for objective and consistent collection of the same nature of information. This would eliminate the subjective biases that would otherwise reduce the objectivity and comparative value of M&E data collected using qualitative information.

Major quantitative data collection and recording tools

- Matrix
- Table (e.g. PITT)
- Form
- Coded questionnaires
- Check-list

4.5.3 Choice of M&E Tools and Methods

There is nothing as useless as inaccurate data, hence the maxim ‘methods matter’! In as far as the issue of data collection methods or tools is concerned, two conditions are important, namely:

- what kind of methods or tools you choose for data collection (basis for choosing data collection tools)
- how you use any chosen data collection tools

Both of these have implications on the accuracy and reliability of M&E data. The main issue of concern about M&E data collection tools is not the lack of tools but rather the appropriate choice and use of the tools. Often, staff is half conversant with the use of data collections tools. As a result, the inappropriate use of M&E tools – not the lack of tools – is often the cause of inaccuracies of M&E data. A key question for the choice of data collection method is whether to opt for

of M&E methods.....

- *Methods matter*
- *Less is more*

methods that promise high quality results irrespective of the existing capacity to manage such methods, or to settle for methods that are possible to manage given the present capacity of staff. Whereas the quality concern of M&E results tends to drive decisions on the choice of methods to be used, it may not be easy to use methods that staff is not familiar with, otherwise, this may delay M&E process from taking off or even affect the overall functioning of an M&E system. It is therefore more adaptable to use M&E methods for which capacity already exists as this helps in moving the M&E systems forward to practice. If the choice of perceived better M&E methods is based on the expectation for increased staff capacity, such ambitions and expectations often fail to yield true in the short run, hence the implications on M&E take-off.

Data collection tools are developed by project staff or adapted from similar type available. Once developed, it is important to pre-test the tools before actual use and modify the tools as necessary. The rule of the game is to ensure efficient tools that work for you or your project, not necessarily tools that have worked for others. Given the necessity to familiarize with data collecting tools prior to using them, design of new tools should be done in a participatory fashion so as to involve the staff who will use the tools in the design of the tools. It is more useful to engage staff in designing the tools that they will be required to use than to explain to them the use of developed/ready-made tools.

However, if for some unavoidable reasons, staff is not involved in designing the data collection tools, a thorough orientation or training should be provided to program staff on the use of the data collection tools. Besides involvement in design of tools or in the training or orientation for correct use of data collection tools, it is also important to explain to program staff the reasons for collecting particular data, so that they understand the need for data collection and are able to communicate the importance of collecting the data to beneficiaries and participants involved. Staff and program participants will not make genuine and appropriate use of data collection tools if they do not know the reasons and importance for collecting such data, especially in relation to their role as staff and their needs as communities.

Appropriate use of M&E data collection instruments

Ensure that the data collection tool is:

1. standardized to collect specific quantifiable information
2. accurate and contains no design errors
3. used in a systematic manner – same nature of data collected at defined frequency
4. used by those trained in using the tools in the right way
5. approved (signed off) by management and cannot be changed anytime without systematic review and management consent
6. marked as “used” soon after data entry to avoid a likely possibility to cause double entry.

To be able to serve the purpose for which they are design, data collections tools should be;

- Simple to use by persons concerned with data collection
- Concise to collect only the information that is necessary (according to M&E plan) and will be used
- Cost-effective does not require too much time or too many respondents than it is reasonably possible
- Efficient serves the intended purpose and allows for data quality
- Pre-tested to ensure that they are user-friendly for the person who will administer the tool

Table 9: Recommended minimum M&E frameworks and tools for ACT Appeals/RRFs

M&E design	logframe	The logframe is an important M&E tool that supports results-oriented project implementation and helps to clarify project logic with (not to) the project team. Specifically, the purpose of the logframe is to (i) clarify the project intervention and logic (ii) set a sound basis for M&E (iii) communicate the strengths of project design to stakeholders and donors. The logframes are (optionally) developed for all ACT appeals along the implementation plan. (See Appendix 1)
	M&E Plan	The M&E plan is a main M&E operational document that links the indicators articulated in the logframe with the procedure for collecting and managing data for those indicators. With the same indicators in the logframe, the M&E plan takes the issue of data collection into a final planning stage where the sources, methods, schedules and specific responsibility for collecting different data are specified. M&E plan is a key element of a monitoring and evaluation system and functions as a main M&E reference tool for managing data collection process. In order for an M&E system to function, there must be an M&E plan that clearly and adequately answers the 4 key planning questions i.e. what?, how?, when?, and who? The M&E plans for ACT appeals are developed along with the implementation plan and used to guide M&E data collection and analysis throughout implementation. (See Appendix 2)
Recording and reporting M&E data	PITT	Performance Indicator Tracking Table (PITT) is a reporting tool that helps to track performance of all key indicators against planned targets. In a single table, the PITT is used to input actual results achieved in the quarter, for each key indicator, and allows quarterly comparisons with the targets and baseline (if available). A shortfall of results against the targets signify that implementation is not on track and this will draw attention of managers to the reasons for the shortfall, hence decisions for improvement in the next quarter. As a reporting matrix, PITT only handles consolidated data i.e. after data collection and aggregation have been done. (See Appendix 3)
	Beneficiary Counting Table	This is a tool used to help count the beneficiaries reached through various interventions aimed at providing basic emergency needs and the utilization of services put in place. The beneficiary counting table emphasizes counting of our beneficiaries and demonstrating accountability, impact and resource efficiency and stewardship. The key issues of concern for using this tool are to ensure that only eligible ¹⁴ beneficiaries are counted and double counting are avoided. (See Appendix 4)

¹⁴ Eligible beneficiary is one that has received a full package of emergency pack, utilizing the services provided or is adequately engaged in the rebuilding of his/her life and the immediate family as planned by the project.

4.6 Setting M&E databases

Databases are designed immediately after data collection tools are developed and before actual data collection starts. This will give opportunity for testing and reviewing data capturing mechanism and generally optimizing data. Setting database after data collection may be challenged if it proved difficult to handle certain data sets after spending time and resources in data collection. The rule is to have in place a tested database before starting to collect data so that the agreement between data collection and data entry and analysis methods are guaranteed. Often, staff is held back with data that cannot be analyzed as planned because the analysis was only assumed not tested. Hence, a trial run is an important step is synchronizing data entry/analysis and data collection procedures as a difficulty realized at data entry/analysis may advice a change in data collection methods in time without affecting the M&E system.

For the quantity of M&E information collected to be manageable, the plan for analysis should exist and be pre-tested even before actual analysis starts. It is important to use a simple M&E database to store, analyze and data accessible to others as and whenever needed. Proper documentation is a key element for effective M&E systems.

When filled-in M&E data collection forms are not serialized, this can easily cause double entry errors and if the filled-in M&E data collection forms are not well stored in a safe a place or have taken long without having the data entered into the computer, this can also lead to loss of data.

Box 7: 10 steps in setting up a simple M&E database

1. Using the indicators as guide, define what you want to store in the information system and for what purpose.
2. Plan the data entry and analysis based on the M&E plan (if available) to clarify on what, when, how, who for data entry and analysis. The emphasis for technical consideration would be on the method (how) for data analysis
3. Do database planning and design, for data entry and analysis
4. Determine the database structure, normally with the help of an IT person, based on a chosen type of database that is familiar to the staff.
5. Ensure there is established institutional linkage for M&E data flow:
 - (i) staff are collecting data as scheduled to allow planned data entry/analysis schedules
 - (ii) data entry/analysis is performed as scheduled to allow timely presentation of M&E results for various uses as planned
6. Determine different methods/styles for presentation of M&E results that could be suitable for different users of M&E results.
7. Provide user training on the system, otherwise it might never get used optimally.
8. Undertake a more focused and scheduled data analysis
9. Present analysis results in suitable forms for different users of M&E data
10. Adjust the system regularly by evaluating its use with the users

Storage of impact-related information helps to guide the project strategy and, on the other hand, progress-related information helps to track implementation. To store this range of information, from survey data to copies of contracts and correspondence, will probably require different information storage systems. Computers can make a critical contribution to tracking data but are no panacea. Achieving impact certainly

does not depend on computerising data. Information that needs to be shared can also be photocopied and circulated, with each recipient using a common filing system.

Databases can be pre-designed with restricted conditions to minimize data entry errors. Putting in place simple data quality checks as part of a functioning of M&E system is an important culture that can help in reducing errors in M&E data. When using MS Access for database, a number of control functions can help design user-friendly and error-sensitive data entry screens as follows:

- i. Using database forms for entering data which gets stored into protected tables and therefore preventing direct data alteration is an excellent way of reducing instances of altering stored data by mistake.
- ii. You can use the “*Input Message*” tab to type in a message that can guide the data entrant in making correct data entry in appropriate cells e.g. if, upon selecting a cell, a data entrant can see the a message such as “1= male”, “2= female”, he/she is bound to enter correct codes.
- iii. You can use the “*Error Alert*” tab to type a message that the data entrant will see if he/she type a value that falls outside the valid range prescribed for a particular cell e.g. the cell on “age” can prompt an “*Error Alert*” that “valid age between 18-54 years”. When an incorrect entry is made, the data entrant receives an error alert with a guide.
- iv. Creating a list of definite entries allowable can help restrict entries to specific values for particular cells. When entries are clearly pre-defined (e.g. primary, secondary, college and University in the “education” column), it is helpful to create a list from which the data entry person can choose, hence reducing data entry errors by limiting data entry to only relevant categories for specific cells.

Table 10: Common data analysis computer programmes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MS Excel - MS Access 	<p>These are the most commonly used databases for storing M&E data. Though the use of MS Access requires more training, the programme provides better options for analysis, programming and suitable for handling large volume of data.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SPSS - EpiData - Epiinfo 	<p>Epiinfo is software made freely available (downloadable on internet) through the CDC’s epidemiology project designed for easy questionnaire and database construction, data entry and analysis with epidemiologic statistics, graphs, and maps. It is used widely outside epidemiology research and generally suitable for questionnaire-based data as data entry screens can be designed similar to the questionnaire. SPSS may require investment in the software.</p>

The use of internet-based data systems like SQL, for example, provides access to web-based basic socio-demographic data of a particular country. This includes data on the size of population, GDP, geographical coverage as well as some broad global ratings that can also be used along with M&E results to connect programmes analysis with the broader country issues.

4.7 Pre-testing M&E procedures

Like with any research tools and methods, all M&E tools and methods must be subject to pre-testing and necessary modification. This includes pre-testing data collection tools and performing a trial run with database for data entry and analysis, etc, before engaging with the full-scale process of data collection and analysis. This will ensure harmony between methods for data collection and data analysis as a design strength for M&E, enhance data quality and promote legitimacy in M&E systems.

Pre-testing is an important step in design for which ensures that quality checks are in-built into the design process. Any design flaws identified are dealt with at the design stage, ensuring development is based on tested assumptions and coherent choice of methods and tools. As pre-testing is only based on limited trial grounds, a review after a period of actual use, benefitting from a wide spectrum of experience with different elements of the system and involving different persons, is recommended.

5.0 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

It is important that data collection must be consistent to the purpose of use and hence the need to keep to limited information that is important measuring established indicators. The key principle is that information will not be obviously used is not worth collecting it as this will reflect a waste of time and resources. Collecting M&E information is different from collecting other project information in that the former is, by definition, systematic and dedicated to specific kind of information. Therefore, M&E data collection must be done in a systematic and consistently manner according to the schedules in the M&E plan and the process also adequately supervised. This will ensure the measurability of data as data collection presents the second level of data quality following design.

5.1 Data collection process

5.1.1 Preparations for data collection

Instructions/guides for M&E tools

For most data collection tools including interview questions, checklist, form or questionnaire, there is need for clear instructions to guide the correct use of the tools or method. Proper instructions ensure common way of approaching and understanding the interview questions, regardless of when the field visit is conducted or who conducts it. M&E process should not rely on individuals' perspectives, but rather on the system so that variations in M&E data are due to what happened and not how data was collected. The systematic and objective nature of M&E systems require that the methods and questions used in monitoring are consistent across:

- time (when they are applied),
- place (where it is conducted)
- people (who conducts it)

When using qualitative methods, there is a possibility of the need to get deeper into an issue. Therefore, it may be good not to limit yourself to the topics listed in the interview guides but to keep the list of topics or discussion points only to remind you of key issues to bring up.

Translation into language of interviews

Data collection tools must be translated into the language in which the interviews, discussions or meetings will be held. It is difficult to translate the questions or discussion issues in the field during interviews; therefore tools must be developed or translated into the language of the interviews. Inconsistent translation often leads to inconsistent responses and inaccurate data.

Familiarizing and engaging with M&E tools

The people applying the tool in the field must be familiar with that tool prior to using it with real respondents. This is critical for ensuring that the tool does not become a burden or disruption to the rapport established with respondents. Data collection tools can only yield accurate and reliable data if they are used according to the ethics and principles that guard their correct use. Reading interview questions straight from a sheet of paper or placing too much attention to recording statements by inexperienced interviewers are often associated with a formal process that is seen to demand formal response and being sensitive to whatever is discussed. Interviewers must do adequate preparations by reviewing interview questions, check-lists or discussion points prior to meeting with respondents and then glances over them once more at the end of the session in order to ensure that no key points have been missed. Even when reference is made to the interview questions, check-lists or discussion points, it's really a glance or quick reference to rekindle memory of the subject. Questions should be asked in accordance with the subject matter and how they are understood but not in the way they are written in a sheet of paper.

Deciding on respondents

The total number of respondents and the respondent selection criteria (who shall be interviewed) should be determined prior to actual data collection. The decision on respondents should be based on who is in the best position to answer the M&E questions or topics e.g. about issues of child malnutrition, it is common to ask mothers while on issues of pre-marital sex, the youth are the 'closest' to such data. The decision on respondents is also determined by a deliberate balance in major characteristics of the respondents, including, gender, age or any specific categories identified (example child-headed household, youth in peri-urban and rural areas, etc). If respondents are mainly men, data analysis and results will be skewed towards the views held predominantly by men, and vice versa. A mix of different categories that identify major characteristics of the respondents will yield more representative data.

5.1.2 Sampling

A sample is part of the whole population/ group in which you are interested. If you want to measure the wellbeing of all formerly abducted youth in a particular location but cannot observe all of them, you will choose only a sample X (i.e. some of them) to monitor, and then draw conclusions that are deemed representative of the whole population of formerly abducted youth.

For reason of costs and capacity constraints, it is not often possible to collect information across all activities in all programme locations. Therefore, the use of representative samples would be the most efficient and effective way of collecting only small unit of information to give understanding of the situation of the wider programme. Samples are often used in situations when collecting total data is time-consuming, expensive or poses some practical challenges.

(a) Sampling design

The most common sampling designs are simple random sampling, purposive sampling and systematic as explained below:

1. Simple random Sampling

This is a random selection of individual respondents or participants in group discussions is often a good technique to use when everyone wants to participate and your method or time constraints demand limited participation. Can be done in many different ways and has less selection bias than purposive selection if done properly. If the random selection method is explained to all potential respondents in a group, most individuals readily accept the fact that they have or have not been chosen for participation.

2. Purposive Sampling

This is intentional selection of individuals because you think they are in the best position to provide you with accurate data, is used in qualitative and rapid data collection methods. This is especially true for key informant interviews where specific individuals (e.g. women head of households, adolescent girls, community leaders, traditional healers, etc.) may be in a better position to discuss topics or answer questions than the average respondent.

3. Systematic random sampling

In this approach, the process of selecting sample members from a larger population according to a random starting point and a fixed, periodic interval. Therefore, every "nth" member is selected from the total population for inclusion in the sample population. Since the periodic interval is determined before hand and the starting point is randomly selected, the systematic sampling is still thought of as being random sampling method. A common way of selecting a sample population using systematic sampling is simply to divide the total number of units in the general population by the desired number of units for the sample. The result of the division serves as the marker for selecting sample units from within the general population. For example, if you wanted to select a random group of 1,000 households from a population of 50,000 using systematic sampling, you would simply select every 50th household, since $50,000/1,000 = 50$, as long as the first household is randomly selected.

(b) Determining sample size

Sample size must be large enough to adequately represent the population it seeks to represent but also small enough to achieve efficiency amidst resource and capacity constraints. The higher the sample size the higher the precision at which the sample can estimate the population characteristics. At the same time, samples selected must bear close characteristics of the population. For simple random sample, the determination of sample size is done by using the simple equation below:

$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$	<p>Where,</p> <p>n - required sample size N - population size (known) e - desired level of precision (e.g. e = 0.05 at 95% confidence level)</p>
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The principle for simple random sampling is to interview all the elements selected in the sample (n) and inference is made on their analysis to draw conclusions for the entire population (N).

5.1.3 Building rapport and maintaining confidentiality

An informal interaction and exchange of ideas is a pleasant way of getting to real business during interviews and help create human contact with respondents. Interviewers are encouraged to ask not command respondents' time, introduce the purpose of the interview and clarify any pre-interview questions that the respondents may have (which could affect his/her response, if any). These have become a standard preamble for surveys and they affect the objectivity and reasonableness at which the respondents supply their views. In sensitive cases like sexual issues, corruption and income, or social/health problems associated with stigma, building a very good rapport (trust) is very crucial and requires patience and time. Building confidence and trust at the start and throughout the interview period requires some degree of

context and cultural sensitivity especially the knowledge of local language to ensure good communication and better understanding of culturally sensitive issues for a specific community.

Confidentiality is an ethical issue in research which requires that data, in as much as possible, data should be collected in an anonymous way that does not make it possible to identify the respondent after the interviews. Issues of access to food distributed and the method used in the distribution, for example, can only be provided with objectivity if the beneficiaries know this will not be used against them. It is important to assure the respondent at the very start of the interviews about the norms for this interview and particularly clarify on issues of confidentiality.

5.1.4 Conducting interviews and recording data

Interviews techniques are only effective when they are applied in a prudent and ethical manner with due attention to the technical considerations demanded by each interview technique. Ethical issues for conducting research also applies in M&E interviews. Therefore, data collectors must be sensitive to cultural issues (including acceptable dressing code), length of time for holding interviewees, dealing with sensitive questions, reading body language and doing good listening, among others.

Using data recording tools such as tables, M&E forms or simple listing of respondents' views must be done correctly and accurately. This will require training of data collectors before the start of data collection, providing in-field clarifications where needed, immediate cross-checking of field data for possible errors or inconsistencies, strict supervision of data collection, etc.

5.2 Data entry and Analysis

You don't have to first collect data and only discover later that analysis of data (given the monitoring tools used and database developed) is not possible. This will suffocate the M&E process and also makes it difficult to correct the flaw in the system. Once data collection tools and databases are designed (at PME design stage), it is crucial to make a trial run of the M&E processes, including data collection, entry and analysis processes to check the methodological consistency and process-flow in the M&E system.

“Like our training evaluation forms, no one can ever tell where our project monitoring forms disappear!”

Once collected, data entry must be done as quickly as possible and used data forms must be marked (as “Done”, “Entered”, or just a bold tick “v”) preferably in red to avoid a double entry scenario). Whether with quantitative or qualitative data, it is important that data is entered in a logical format that can be easily understood and analyzed. For quantitative data, it is easy to enter data based on pre-determined fields included in the questionnaire or any interview tool.

In the case of qualitative data, it is also important to categorize information into specific themes e.g. reasons for “the project was not successful” by gender and age. In such a case, observing emerging patterns helps suggest common positions or views among different categories of respondents. Qualitative data analysis involves the identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns and themes in descriptive data.

Besides design of tools and actual data collection, data entry is very susceptible to errors. Controlling transcription errors is a vital quality check for the M&E system at data entry stage. When data is entered, there is need clean the data and make it ready for analysis. Data cleaning involves identifying and examining suspicious data which lies outside the common range (also called ‘outliers’) as well as ensuring

completeness of data. Before data analysis, identifiable errors must be dealt with and missing values also identified and fixed so that the data set is sufficiently prepared for good analysis.

There is no obvious ways that can guarantee effectively identification of all missing values and/or 'outliers' and it is certainly not possible to examine each data especially in a large database. One way to help in examining data is by scanning through the data to check for missing values and/or 'outliers'. The most common and effective way of identifying 'outliers' and/or missing values is by running frequency tables for each variable to show the total number of cases associated with each range of data entered and the commutative results. Missing values and/or 'outliers' identified must be fixed by making reference to the particular source/original/paper M&E form containing that specific value identified as missing or outlier. Sometimes findings from original M&E form indicate that a wrong value was entered or the value was skipped due to transcription errors committed during data entry. However, this could also be a result of poor recording in the original M&E form during data collection.

When an error is committed during data entry, the error can be fixed by identifying the cause of the error and by identifying the specific original M&E form. Tracing original M&E forms to help clean data entered in the database is only possible if the M&E forms are serialized and data entered on that basis. When errors are committed during data collection it means even original data form will contain the errors and it is therefore only possible that the person who collected the data, either through memory or by re-establishing contact with the particular respondent, can correct the error. Details of dealing with errors can be found in section 5.5.

Data entry must be supervised through random checking of entered data against the original M&E forms especially when less experienced data entrants are used. After data is entered, the original M&E forms must be kept at least for three quarters before throwing they are discarded e.g. M&E forms from which data is entered in quarter Oct-Dec period should be destroyed in October after the quarter July-Sept. Any concerns that require reference to original source forms can be done within the 3 quarters.

5.2.1 Analysis of quantitative data

Monitoring is more associated with collection and analysis of quantitative data while evaluation is concerned mainly with qualitative information required for in-depth analysis. For quantitative method, data collected through regular M&E systems to track the status of key performance indicators, analysis starts with developing an analysis plan and performing trial analysis. The analysis plan indicates, for each level of results, the indicators for which analysis is required, the unit¹⁵ of analysis to be used, any data disaggregation necessary, the analysis method to be performed (e.g. running frequencies, performing Cross-Tabs, calculating percentages of averages, etc), and the suitable method of presentation of M&E results.

¹⁵ Unit of analysis is often different from unit of observation e.g. parents asked about school attendance of their children represent the unit of observation but children are the unit of analysis for answering performance questions which relate to children themselves, not parents who responded to some of the questions.

Table 11: Analysis plan

Results	Indicator	Unit of analysis	Disaggregation	Analysis method	Presentation of M&E results
Outcome A	# trained persons who have adopted new farming practices	Trained individuals who have adopted new practices	Male Female	%age of adoption	Results table
Output A1	# households provided with seeds and farming tools	Households	Rural Peri-urban	Frequency	Pie-chart
Output A2	# persons trained in new farming practices	Groups	Pre-existing Created	Frequency Cross-tab with adoption rate	Simple bar chart Cross-tab table

5.2.2 Analysis of qualitative data

As with all data, analysis and interpretation are required to bring order and understanding to qualitative data and this requires a systematic approach for analysis. The most commonly-used qualitative data collection methods are: Open-ended questionnaires, Individual interviews, Focused Group Discussion and Observations. The ways of doing analysis of qualitative data relates to the methods used in collecting the data as different methods arrange raw data differently.

To do analysis of qualitative data, it is important to consider a “*funnel*” procedure of managing large information through a process of focused categorization and narrowing down to smaller units of information. It is not possible to manage large unit of information for analysis hence the need for making patterns that can reduce the units of information through groupings and categorization. Without suggesting to be linear with the procedure for qualitative data analysis, the following are the steps for analysis of qualitative data.

Steps in qualitative data analysis

(i) *Familiarity with the body of information*

The analysis process for qualitative data starts with being familiar with the data as analysis will involve relating different aspects of information. The more acquainted you are with the content of the information; the better you are placed to relate the perspectives contained therein. Being acquainted with information also helps to check on the quality of data before analysis takes place.

(ii) *Focusing the analysis*

The analysis of qualitative data must relate to the M&E questions that must be answered or the purpose for which the data was collected. This involved ordering responses by the question or topics used in data collection, or by nature of respondents – whether individuals or groups.

(iii) Categorization and sub-categorization

Within each major data groups identified, it is helpful to narrow down the scope of information by categorizing the information into categories and sub-categories that relate to common or important features or themes of the information. This implies being very familiar with the raw data by reading and re-reading the information and identifying key words and ‘loose’ titles for main/common ideas that form the body of the information being analyzed. Categorization and sub-categorization is the most crucial process of qualitative data analysis where data is narrowed from a general body of information to specific groups and sub-groups, and emerging issues are identified.

(iv) Compare and relate issues within and across categories

With some fairly distinctive categories and sub-categories of information layered out, the next step is to draw some relationships between these categories to establish how different the key issues relate to different levels of respondents, places, time, etc. This is the time to identify any similarities, differences or contradictions, some of which might need further analysis to be able to put meanings to these relationships. Recurrent issues are often considered to be of relatively high importance and vice-versa visa. Since analysis of qualitative information is not as linear as analysis of quantitative information, there is need to remain open to emerging issues outside your categorization and keeping sensitive to striking or extreme cases. These will enhance the capturing of the nuances in complex settings and avoid generalization that often gets promoted through the methodological arrangement and re-arrangement of qualitative data. With distilled information available at hand, it becomes possible to do interpretation and draw conclusions. Details of interpretation of analysis results are contained in section 5.3.

5.2.3 Dimensions of data analysis*Analysis for a single result*

For each result, analysis is performed to establish the achievements against targets and the quality. Specifically, the analysis for a single result is performed in the following dimensions of analysis:

- Targets: To establish actual achievements (performance) against pre-set targets and communicate on the progress of the project
- Baselines: To compare current performance status to the baseline level and determine whether implementation is has made any difference in relation to the original situation
- Trends: To establish the variations in performance over time i.e. comparing current performance against performance in previous periods e.g. months, quarters, years.

Besides the above dimensions of analysis for a single result, there are other specific qualitative measurements that should be performed to help establish whether each main result is being delivered to acceptable standard or not. Of particular interest is the *timeliness of results*. Analysis for a single result should help establish whether, despite meeting targets or showing general progress, results were delivered in time when they were most relevant to the beneficiaries. Timeliness is an important factor in measuring the efficiency of humanitarian programmes where saving lives has to do not only with providing immediate needs but also whether the relief items were provided at the right time. Timeliness is associated with all programme aspects that have time implications e.g. distributing seeds in time for season planting, providing food before hunger results into death, etc.

Analysis of data across results areas

Lateral comparison across results helps in deepening the understanding of wider performance issues that affect different pillars of results. Analysis of data across results areas is about understanding the performance variations between different result areas i.e. analysis of high performing against low performing results. If managers have knowledge of the reasons why performance in a particular result area is low relative to others results, they gain insights of performance of the programme as a whole.

5.3 Interpretation of analysis

Analysis of M&E data is not an end of data processing since data in itself does not make sense of the situation it attempts to represent. Data analysts are often victims of none use of M&E data by supplying analysis without sufficient or focused interpretations. Analysis must be interpreted to show relationships between actual achievements and the baseline, variations in performance over time, etc, and these must help in answering the performance questions or demonstrate progress. However, it may not often be possible for M&E staff at the main office or HQs to do such interpretations of M&E data due to their lack of sufficient knowledge of the reasons for identified gaps or relationships. It is wrong to assume that M&E staff performing computer analysis of M&E data should always be able to give plausible reasons or interpretation of the reasons – “whys” and “hows” to explain M&E data analysis.

5.3.1 Enhancing data interpretation

Interpretation of data often requires interface between the M&E and field staff if the data analysis is performed by an M&E staff and not the regular programme staff. Even regular programme staff may need to consult with the community and volunteers to give credible answers (without assuming) to explain variances in M&E data, so ‘participation¹⁶’ in analysis is strongly encouraged. Participation of the community and field staff and volunteers in performing the analysis of M&E data is often ignored because of lack of clarity of the role of these primary stakeholders in performing analysis. Community leaders will need to be asked to substantiate on the relationships or variances identified in data analysis e.g. why are newly formed groups less effective compared to groups that existed for at least 2 years?” He who performs data analysis must interface with those who have the explanations required for such analysis. Placing attention to evidence is good but what explains such a trend needs local knowledge to establish causality or the intervention logic so staff performing data analysis needs to involve the local communities and field staff and volunteers but not use of general knowledge.

¹⁶ Most genuine and robust interpretation of M&E data is only possible with people who are closest to the source of data and this is the essence of participatory M&E.

Box 8: Cases of wrong interpretation of M&E data

Right M&E data and analysis + wrong interpretation = wrong programme decisions

Case A: Timeliness not group dynamics

Newly formed groups have done so poorly in their harvests compared to old/pre-existing groups in the programme. An office-based M&E staff performing the analysis used his common knowledge to give an interpretation that newly formed groups are less organized. However, during evaluation, newly formed groups complained that they received seeds and training late for the planting season because the organization prioritizes services to old/existing groups in recognition of its long-term partnership with old/pre-existing groups

Case B: Equipment not adoption

In a programme fighting malnutrition, analysis indicates that only 10% of targeted mothers have adopted the new home-based child feeding system. In contributing to a progress report, a staff attributes this to slow adoption of new practices due to cultural barriers while indicating that the number of mothers adopting the new practice will continue to increase as they overcome the cultural barriers. However, during evaluation, mothers explain that they do not have the 3mls spoon recommended for measuring specific quantities of baby's feeds.

He who is closest to the data source is well placed to interpret M&E results. Even with very strong analysis, errors can still be committed in the interpretation if those performing computer analyses of M&E data assumed the reasons/interpretations for the M&E results.

5.3.2 Issues for interpreting M&E results

M&E results are translated as high, average or low performance compared to targets, baselines, perceived quality or timeliness - all which constitute different aspects of effectiveness and efficiency. These results are translated based on other factors including:

i) Explore competing reasons

There are often alternative reasons to be explored to provide suitable explanations for not meeting, exceeding or simply for being able to meet targets during any reporting period. Therefore, M&E results must involve critical examination of alternative reasons that could also play in causing the same variations registered in performance targets.

ii) Considering context factors

To understand the M&E results within the specific context of the programme, it is important to use information on trends of critical assumptions. Appraising results on the basis of the critical assumptions emphasises the need to take into consideration the changing context for correct interpretation of data and this is the main reason for regular collection and analysis of information related to critical assumptions, besides data on programme's results.

5.3.3 M&E results and programme performance

The focus for analysis is to respond to the requirements of performance indicators therefore analysis must not be complicated, hence the emphasis of “*methods matter*”. Similarly, interpretation of analysis results must be done to help answer key performance questions.

Table 12: M&E results and programme performance	
<p><i>Process:</i> Are the activities on track, are activities being implemented as planned (tracking progress against the work plan and timeliness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are performance targets met, exceeded or fell short? – How does performance in this period compare with performance in the last period (e.g. quarter or year)?
<p><i>Outputs:</i> Are outputs being produced in to expected level of quantity? Is the quality of the activities and outputs desirable?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How does performance in this period compare with baseline status (data)? Do the trends provide sufficient indication that targets would be met by end of project?
<p><i>Outcomes:</i> Are expected outcomes being realized or outputs being translated towards the realization of outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are there any positive or negative trends developing since the start of implementation? Do these trends relate to any known factors within implementation or outside project control (critical assumptions)?

5.4 Presentation of M&E results

M&E reporting is about providing routine data analyzed to serve various interests as articulated in the purpose for M&E results (i.e. use and users of various M&E results). The manner in which these results are presented should be guided by the purpose they seek to serve. Therefore, no particular presentation styles can be prescribed but rather a review of various presentation options should help in addressing more specific needs for M&E results.

Due to their visual impact, charts and graphs are popular ways of presenting M&E results as data-driven charts allow the audience to perceive your message at a glance rather than puzzling over a list or table of M&E data. Although charts also have many disadvantages including false impression and demanding accurate explanation, it is easier (and more persuasive) for the audience to see trends and comparisons in charts, rather than to calculate them from the raw data. Most common charts are:

- i. *Simple bar graph:* - Used for presenting percentages or frequencies of a single result. It is a linear and straightforward presentation
- ii. *Pie charts:* - Used to represent fractions, to visualize part of a whole or to understand how different parts form a whole
- iii. *Cluster bar chart:* - Used to compare several groups of items, as illustrated in the figure below.

5.5 Managing errors associated with M&E data

M&E data are susceptible to errors. Recognizing this reality is the first step in sustaining the commitments to reducing instances of invalidity caused by errors associated with data collection, entry and analysis. To ensure that data are valid, we must pay attention to a number of possible sources of measurement error.

A common form of non-sampling error is transcription error which is committed *when transcribing data from one document (electronic or paper) to another or from one database to another. Transcription errors greatly occur under the following situations:*

- a) *when data entrants are not well trained so they commit many data entry errors*
- b) *when there is poor storage of paper forms used to collect*
- c) *when there is substantial delay before data collected is entered into computer*
- d) *when wrong data are entered into the computer mistakenly*

(a) Sampling error

For reason of costs and capacity constraints, it is not sometimes possible to collect information across all activities in all programme locations. Therefore, the use of representative samples would be the most efficient and effective way of collecting only small unit of information to give understanding on the situation of the wider programme. Samples are often used in situations when collecting total data is time-consuming, expensive or poses some practical challenges. Since sampling is only about representativeness, it is subject to errors that must be controlled. The problem arises if the samples drawn are not proportionate to the population size or they do not possess the characteristics of the population as closely as possible, hence the population is not well represented by the sample. Samples must be large enough to adequately represent the population it seeks to represent but also small enough to achieve efficiency amidst resource and capacity constraints. The higher the sample size the higher the precision at which the sample can estimate the population characteristics. At the same time, samples selected must bear close characteristics of the population.

(b) Data collection errors

These are errors resulting from other data collection procedures, including interviewer's negligence and those associated with the use of inappropriate data collection methods. It includes poor design of the data-collection instrument, poorly trained or partisan enumerators, the use of questions (due to sensitive subjects) that elicit incomplete or untruthful answers from respondents or errors committed during data entry.

(c) Data entry errors

After information has been collected from the field, entering this data into the computer is usually associated with some data entry errors which can be minimized. Recording of M&E data in data collection forms and the flow of data from paper source to computer entry are usually associated with many common sources of errors. Therefore, these main stages of M&E data should be subjected to data quality checks. The following are common errors in M&E data:

- *Poor recording:* if M&E data are poorly recorded due to poor handwriting, the errors get through data collection and analysis without detection. This is common when staff/participants using M&E forms do not record information clearly.

- *Transcription errors*: often copying data from data forms into the computer requires attention to secure accuracy e.g. typing 10 instead of 01, or 21 instead of 12 as recorded in the form. Transcription errors are caused by typing mistakes and can be easily avoided by careful cross-checking of data against the original source.
- *Consistency errors*: This is where two or more responses on the same questionnaire or data collection forms are contradictory, example, inconsistency between age and date of birth. It is caused during original recording.
- *Out-of-range or outliers*: is when particular data are lies outside the probable range, hence crossing the unfamiliar boundary of extremes. Whereas outliers or extreme values that lie outside normal range are sometimes legitimate, they often reveal errors attributing to wrong recording. Such outliers must be subjected to questioning and verification.

Once common errors are identified, the nature of the errors would suggest the source of errors and this would be the gateway for addressing the errors. For errors that arise due to typing mistakes or inconsistent coding, such errors can be verified and resolved right from the office. Otherwise, most common data errors found in the original data collection forms or questionnaires, due to missing data, extreme values, ambiguous data, etc, would require field verification to establish the required correction. Regardless of the source, if too much error is introduced into the data collection process, the resulting data will be invalid and the use of invalid data in programs is not only misleading but can also be catastrophic as this can lead to wrong decisions that negatively impact on the lives of beneficiaries.

“Monitoring number of women raped doesn’t help prevent rape if no actions are taken based on this monitoring data”

By European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid & Crises Response, during ICVA Conference, 2011

In order to minimize bias, data should be triangulated from multiple sources during analysis, before conclusions are drawn. Triangulation is a mixed-method approach to collecting and analyzing data to measure overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched understanding to ensure the validity of qualitative data. Local perceptions are also included in the analysis of, to avoid a humanitarian response based solely on outside perceptions and priorities.¹⁷ Additionally, providing thorough orientation to those involved in data collection and analysis is important way of ensuring correct use of M&E tools and methods.

6.0 USE AND USERS OF M&E RESULTS

Information not used is not worth collecting in the first place! Without efforts to use M&E results, there is absolutely no reason for wasting resources (time, personal and funds) in the process. The potential use of M&E results must be clarified at the outset of M&E systems design and the clarity on “who needs what data or data for what” motivates the M&E process to secure credible data to serve the purpose identified. Michael Quinn Patton (2005), in his ‘Utilization-Focused Evaluation’ emphasized the need to – at all stages of evaluation design and management- bear in mind the “intended use by intended users” of M&E data. Similarly, the design and implementation of M&E systems must be grounded on the *ultimate use of M&E results* i.e. the specified use of M&E results by specified stakeholders.

The primary purpose of M&E data is to help make project decisions at various stages of implementation. The regular use of M&E results is subject to the following conditions:

¹⁷ INEE: Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction, Page 22

- i) M&E results must be regarded as accurate and valid and this has implications for design strength of and capacity to manage M&E systems.
- ii) M&E results are made available to reach the people who need them in time when they are still most relevant
- iii) There must exist strong leadership support be able to institutionalize M&E and making it a regular programme/organizational practice
- iv) M&E results are presented in a clear and simple manner, and communicated to respective stakeholders through structured arrangements

It is not enough to develop and follows a system for systematic monitoring if the data collected is not used to inform implementation and get better results and quality.

- i) *Reporting results*: timely sharing of M&E results that explain progress of KPIs
- ii) *Program improvement & accountability*: making remedial changes based on M&E results
- iii) *Evidence-based advocacy*: supporting evidence-based advocacy
- iv) *Strategy review*: deciding on long-term strategy
- v) *Monitoring for evaluation*: providing necessary data to evaluators

6.1 Evidence-based decisions

When M&E is an integrated part of a programme, M&E results are likely to be used regularly to keep staff in the “learning mode” by reflecting on programme performance – to gain understanding of what is working well, what is not working, why and how can improvements be made. However, M&E results are only utilized if they are perceived as credible and reflecting the reality of the programme situation. The M&E results must also be made available in a timely manner to those who need them, presented in the best usable form, and communicated through a structured process supported by the management.

A number of programme improvement decisions can be taken based on M&E results to influence implementation at all levels. Changes advised based on M&E data demonstrate how evidence drive decisions i.e. data speaks louder. Table 12 below illustrates some of the decisions points that can be influenced using evidence generated from M&E data.

Table 13: Programme level improvement decisions

Project strategy & approaches	Change style of service delivery
Activities	Substitute, remove and modify some activities
Indicators	Refine indicators to meet real data expectations
Targets	Review targeting criteria e.g. from child headed household to vulnerable child-headed household

Sometimes, organizations identify few core indicators, otherwise known as Key Performance Indicators, for which specific data is collected, analyzed and made available (reported on) to help provide crucial information needed for understanding the status and direction of programmes as well as for management decisions. Project managers need such information to stay in control of project direction and focus on intended results as illustrated below.

“4 key indicator is a mechanism which makes it easy for PO and for the partner to keep each other informed about the progress of the programme, important changes, budget etc. Discuss with the

*partner which key elements are most important and relevant for the **concerning** (PME DPR. ICCO, pg 7)”*

M&E data trends can help in clarifying successful strategies or particular program components that can increase outreach and impact through replication or scaling-up best performing activities. This is how to identify weaknesses of a program that needs to be improved or phased out. By showing whether program targets are being reached or not, PME responds to the intended purpose of the programme and the overall sense of accountability. Stakeholders analysis conducted at project design indicates the kind of M&E data that is pertinent for different stakeholders. To enhance usability, it is important to clarify the particular period when it is most useful to avail data to each main user e.g. a summary table of programme performance would be very useful to programme managers during quarterly planning meeting, summary of documented cases would aid local policy advocacy to influence governments and CSOs

Table 14: Users and use of M&E results

Data users	Example of use	
Program managers	Programme modification e.g. more funding to scale up implementation. Programme managers particularly keep attention to few key performance indicators that show main progress, important changes and budget implications	Program Improvement & accountability
Project staff	Modification of project implementation strategies e.g. involve more men in HIV awareness campaign, refine a general criteria for single-headed households to ‘vulnerable’ single headed households	
Affected communities	Lessons on important community practices deemed responsive to addressing vulnerability	
Community leaders	What has worked and what has worked e.g. success in working with existing vs. newly-created community groups	Learning & replication
Government officials	Policy change	
Donors	Funding decisions based on impact realized and level of accountability enhanced	Advocacy - policy change
Media	Policy advocacy	

6.2 Evidence-based reporting

A report is an opportunity for project implementers to inform themselves & others (stakeholders, partners, donors, etc.) on the progress, problems, difficulties encountered, successes & lessons learned during implementation of programs & activities. Evidence-based reporting emphasizes results (outcomes) and, therefore, statements made about progress are supported by verifiable information. M&E systems must strive to produce these evidences or authentic and verifiable information to be used in writing progress reports. Indicating outputs (e.g. no. of people trained) is necessary but it does not provide sufficient information for a progress report that satisfy stakeholders interests, including the donors.

ACT reporting progress reporting on appeals/RRFs is based on Key Performance Indicators agreed-upon. Each ACT appeal and RRF will have a logframe that articulates the outputs as outcomes indicators from which KPIs are identified and upon which progressed reports are based. Reporting shall provide insights on expected and non-expected outcomes, levels of achievements against targets with explanations for variances realized between these achievements and targets, challenges, lessons learnt and summary ways of addressing some challenges. The rationale is to provide an all-round picture of progress and related information for readers to clearly get a sense of progress and constraints of implementation.

Focusing reports primarily on outputs (what the project has delivered) only show the processes undertaken and how busy staff have been. Reports that demonstrate progress/achievements against objectives are written with a focus on outcomes and supported by showing outputs. While number of people trained may be a good indicator to show actions being taken towards the realization of a certain objective, a closer measure of achievements towards such an objective would, for example, be the number of trained people who have started demonstrating (or who have demonstrated) the use of new farming practice in their gardens. In terms of project management, while field staff and volunteers keep focus on the deliverables (training), project managers should be more concerned about the outcomes (change in behaviours) to be able to steer project implementation towards impact. Reporting on outcomes means ensuring committed attention to second-level results beyond outputs, to identify how communities are translating outputs into a practice that characterize a positive change in behaviour.

Often, the concepts of outcomes and impact are only better understood by managers but these need to be articulated by all project staff as a starting point to focusing on outcomes. The focus on outcomes has implications on how we set indicators. If indicators are not defined to ensure collecting information on outcomes, it will not happen by accident – what gets measured gets done! Evidence-based reporting requires us to make regular checks to ensure that information being collected will produce the required body of information for reporting progress on results.

Box 9: ACT progress report: Feedback & improvements

The need for feedback is to celebrate well written reports or support improvements in those that need quality of reporting. The programme staff at ACT Secretariat are the focal points for reporting and they shall provide feedback on progress reports received for each appeal/RRF. This can be further enhanced by conducting telephone discussions to level up issues of reporting quality and agree on improvement standard for next reporting. Besides the use of ACT reporting format, a sample report shall be made available to implementing members who need them. A sample report helps to illustrate the flavour of the reporting content and this can take further the compliance with the ACT reporting format.

Writing a progress report

Use of M&E data to explain key achievements, challenges and gaps – evidence speaks louder!

(i) *Clarify the interest of the users*

ACT progress reports are essential tools for tracking progress, so if the writers do not write in relation to the expectation of donors and other users then the reports won't serve the purpose. What ACT donors and other key stakeholders expect to know in a progress reports include:

- what has been accomplished against targets (data)
- is the project on track with deadlines and targets
- which key decisions have been made
- what's going on now and which issues are in play
- what are the emerging outcomes attributed to the implementation (demonstrating evidence)
- how challenges in previous progress reports have been dealt with
- current challenges and ways for addressing them

(ii) *Focus on the Essentials and outcomes*

Greater attention to what donors and key stakeholders want in progress reports is important, e.g. ACT donors would like to see:

- complementary use of quantitative and qualitative information
- disaggregation of data by gender, key target groups or location
- demonstration of results (quantity and quality) at all levels – both outputs and outcomes, and clear explanation on how outputs have yielded those outcomes
- explanation on major variances between achievements and targets
- evidence of stated outcomes and impact

(iii) *Keep it Simple*

It is difficult to wade through a lengthy progress report with cluttered information, so the emphasis is to keep ACT reports short and concise with key information that address the needs of users. Reports written with clear simple language is more helpful to users.

(iv) *Fine-tune to best suit targeted audience*

The main parameter is to provide reporting information while keeping the interests of ACT report users in mind. Knowing what the users would like to know in the report and attention to clarity are important issues that will help in fine-tuning the report.

(v) *Timeliness of reports matters*

Reports are only reliable and useful if submitted in time yet to required level of quality.

(vi) *Consistently use ACT reporting format and guidelines*

The ACT reports must adhere to ACT reporting guidelines. Reports should be informed by evidence generated through M&E data. The section on results/achievements are linked to accountability and this must be based on good documentation of progress and the section on lessons learnt must be innovative and based on strong evidence of causal relationships (i.e. showing how method or activity X causes or does not cause result Y to happen).

6.3 Evidence-based Advocacy

There is a crucial M&E inter-phase between data on direct implementation and data on advocacy specific activities. M&E data on regular project implementation can be used to inform both the review and reporting on advocacy targeting and focus. Proven data provides strong and respectable basis for credible advocacy stances since data demonstrate facts and not perceptions. In evidence-based programming, M&E data provides strong evidence upon which advocacy issues can be refined, revisited or advocacy statements developed. Data speaks louder; it is a representation of the status quo. M&E results on direct implementation can also be used to substantiate progress in advocacy activities i.e. to demonstrate whether or not advocacy action has helped to change perceptions, positions or even reduce unjust practices. However, such a causality relationship (whether advocacy action is the cause of the positive change realized) can only be demonstrated through impact evaluation. There is need for evidence of causality.

7.0 M&E AND LEARNING

M&E is an important function for documenting and communicating lessons based on experiences gained during humanitarian interventions. For a network of humanitarian agencies like in ACT Alliance, it is particularly important to learn from its humanitarian system to cause continuous improvements in humanitarian practices. M&E supplies data for analysing and understanding how the processes, approaches and strategies helped in the realization of project objectives. Critical lessons needs to be documented and shared broadly to inform future actions. This involves a process of reflecting on actions undertaken, identifying lessons with potential for replication, utilizing documented lessons and informing practice through application of new knowledge or replication of proven lessons and reviewing of this process.

High quality is one of the pillars for the ACT Alliance to achieve its vision, mission, aims and goals. Key elements of high quality include how the member organizations deal with issues related to management, work approaches, program, reporting, and relationships in an accountable and transparent manner. ACT understands high quality as a learning and peer process, which allows its members to learn from each other and to make them accountable to each other and to affected populations. High quality means ACT members effectively implementing ACT Code of Good Practice, ACT policies, guidelines, and procedures, and key related principles (e.g. Code of Conduct, Principles of Partnership), and the minimum standards required of such policies¹⁸.

7.1 Good practice and learning

What to learn:

Knowing “what did not work and why” is in the heart of PME the basis for learning best practices. Like identification and promoting successful strategy is an essential way of increasing impact, learning and avoiding unsuccessful implementation strategy is a crucial way of reducing project deficiencies, and in another way contributing to improved impact too. Issues for learning are not based on the information accidentally found to be useful but through a systematic identification of the critical issues that are considered as bearing the *‘improved seed’* to multiply and improve the ways of doing things. Not all lessons documented are important for learning so a further identification of most useful learning issues will prove

Founding Document, ACT Alliance (February 27, 2009), Approved by Joint Executive Committee meeting, page 14
18

that learning is worthwhile. A useful lesson to learn must have the potential for widespread replication; ability to change traditional practice towards realizing better results; and relevance to the organization(s) system or business e.g. humanitarian response. Whereas demand for specific lessons results into the supply of such nature of lessons, in many cases supply of lessons determine the demand to learn the lessons.

Whose learning:

The targets for learning are the persons or institutions whose actions and decisions can be influenced by new knowledge systems to cause improvement from traditional practices to more responsive practices that promise better results and impact. In ACT Alliance, the aspiration is to ensure that learning is produced within various ACT institutional groups and clusters including ACT forums, working groups and communities of practice as well as through specialized learning activities like evaluations, learning events, specific studies and documentation and sharing of best practices.

Learning for what (Why):

Learning is motivated by their perceived value and how different people relate this value to immediate or future improvements. In other words, there must be a reason to put attention to learning and this reason may vary from person to person or organization to organization. In order for learning to take place, the intrinsic value of the lessons must be clearly understood and considered relevant if applied in other areas. The value of a lesson is attributed not only to the nature of specific learning issue/idea but also the manner in which the lesson is presented.

How we learn:

The learning process (how we learn) needs as much attention as the learning products (what we learn) if the learning purpose (learning outcomes) should be realized. Learning is sometimes driven by changes in the environment or by differences between what we plan to do and what we achieve. This is called adaptive learning and, indeed, more often we learn through the circumstances we find ourselves in. An implementing organization may experience a situation that requires reflection and adaptation to change strategy or implementation approach based on learning from a practice that isn't working well or borrowing notes from situations where similar conditions were overcome. This may not be an institutionalized learning but a necessary process of responding to a performance gap

On the other hand, learning can be intentional, proactive or strategic. This learning occurs when we take a longer term view of learning cycle and improvement by way of making learning as a system or into an organizational learning process. This means not only will the learning issues form the learning agenda but also the learning process itself (double-loop feedback and learning about learning).

The choice of learning approach also determines whether learning takes place or not. Sometimes, people draw attention to a 'less' learning issue due to the power of presentation than a 'big' learning case poorly presented, hence learning methods matter. Different people learn different things in different ways, hence learning support activities should be varied and tailored to different learning audiences and their circumstances. Learning channels and learning activities depend on the basic characteristics of the respondents e.g. location, main interest, best method of communication and the required (tolerable) level of details of the learning content. The question of "how do I convey the lesson?" is as important as the question "what lesson is learnt?"

The learning process needs to be refined regularly. “A crucial element is the eliciting of feedback on the learning activity itself – not just what people are learning but how they are learning” (Lambert, 2008). Feedback is an important process issue for effective learning as it provides the rationale for *learning about learning*.

ACT shall promote various learning mechanisms resulting from documentation of programme lessons, ACT evaluations and other forms of programme reviews conducted. Different learning mechanisms help identify and target different learning targets/audiences or each main learning opportunity. Box 10 identifies **five** main learning mechanisms that can be explored to convey lessons and good practice:

Box 10: Learning mechanisms

After action reviews
 Shared learning workshops, linked to ACT evaluations or not.
 Identifying and tapping lessons from beacons of good practice
 Electronic libraries
 Community of ACT PME practice
 Key learning documents shared using CD Rom.

Adapted from: Unlocking the potential within (2004), pg 126

7.2 Reviewing and learning from ACT appeals and RRFs

Learning from ACT appeals/RRFs also takes various levels depending on different categories that identify our appeals/RRFs as indicated in Box 11 below. Extracting institutional lessons from various dimensions of ACT appeals/RRFs is a helpful way of capturing and learning from the diverse implementation scenarios that can be utilization across the board through major decisions to improve ACT humanitarian practices.

Box 11: Dimensions for reviewing & learning from multiple ACT appeals/ RRFs

1. Region of response/emergency
2. New vs. follow-on appeals
3. Number of participating members
4. Size/Scale of intervention or funding level
5. Experience of implementing agencies in managing ACT appeals
6. Working with partners or any important implementation arrangement
7. Types of disaster¹⁹ (emphasis on predominant disaster type)
 - *Refugee operation*
 - *Conflict and IDP operations*
 - *Earthquake relief and rehabilitation*
 - *Volcanic eruption relief and rehabilitation*
 - *Draught/food security crises*
 - *Flood relief and recovery operations*
 - *Conflict and Draught*
 - *Cyclone relief and rehabilitation*
 - *Post conflict rehabilitation*

¹⁹ Adapted from “A Snapshot of ACT emergency appeals”; *Unlocking the potential within (2004), pg 64-65*

8.0 MANAGING M&E SYSTEMS

Development of M&E systems is a journey of design, process-support, capturing data and learning lessons to make improvements based on sound evidence. Once all the M&E frameworks are in place, including the Logframe and M&E plan, the M&E tools and databases developed and pre-tested, the routine data collection and analysis concerning project performance (monitoring) and the systematic analysis of impact (evaluation) become the M&E processes to be managed. These processes are like a living organism with different aspects being coordinated from a central position but linked back-ward to data collection processes and back-wards to communication on M&E results and decision making based on these results.

Box 12: Managing M&E systems - Good practice

- | | | |
|-------|--|---|
| i) | Clearly stated and SMART project objectives – coherent project design | |
| ii) | Indicators are well selected and clearly stated | |
| iii) | Data collection forms are adequate, accurate, simple to use, pre-tested (refined) and are in the language that users are familiar with. | <i>Incorporate data quality checks at all stages of PME process</i> |
| iv) | Staff, partners and key community members involved in collecting and/or analyzing M&E data are trained in the correct use of M&E instruments and the process they are involved in. | |
| v) | M&E data collection forms are being filled out correctly and consistently to satisfy the necessary M&E condition of systematic process. | <i>Check data quality regularly</i> |
| vi) | Plan for data collection and analysis is well linked to data collection cycle | |
| vii) | M&E databases are developed, pre-tested and up-dated to meet specific M&E demands | <i>Take steps to address identified errors</i> |
| viii) | Data is promptly entered into the M&E database and analysis performed as per M&E analysis plan | |
| ix) | Conscious efforts are made to minimize the effect of transcription errors on data entry | |
| x) | M&E analysis/results are well presented and communicated in a timely manner for different uses including, but not limited to, use in planning meetings, writing progress reports, review of appeals, informing managers' implementation decisions and to lend a strong basis for strengthening evaluation findings | <i>Improve data collection system and document changes made</i> |
| xi) | M&E systems are reviewed at critical program phases | |

8.1 Quality of M&E data

This section discusses key criteria for assessing the quality of performance data validity, reliability, and timeliness. Data collected are meaningful only if they are of the highest possible quality and this suggests routine monitoring of the monitoring system itself. Monitoring data quality is part of “monitoring the

monitoring” i.e. checking the systems’ health and data validity at every main stage of data collection process and management.

Quality of M&E data, to a very large extent, depends on the reliability of data. Reliability refers to the stability of a measurement process. That is, assuming there was no real change in the variable being measured, would the same measurement process provide the same results or findings if the procedure were repeated over and over? This is the defining feature of M&E i.e. systematic and standardized process with results (data) not being irregularly affected by a changing M&E process itself. There are many ways to ensure data quality and most of these measures rely on good planning and supervision.

8.2 Ethics and Integrity of ACT PME

If the M&E data indicates a low level of performance, this may not necessarily reflect poor performance or project failure. Often there are operational challenges that explain the ‘low performance level’ and this varies from project to project. The dynamic social conditions that are external to the project often pose challenges to implementation; hence the status of achievements should be interpreted in the context of these conditions. Internal monitoring is particularly susceptible to M&E integrity dilemma if transparency and a culture of good practice built into the management of .

Donors and headquarter staff do appreciate these challenges, most of which are beyond management control. This is the reason why certain projects are approved as ‘successful’ even if implementation did not realize the objectives. However, the recognition of gaps identified through the M&E system provides the opportunity for taking remedial action towards realizing the objectives.

Therefore, there is no reason for implementing organizations not to promote transparency, honesty and integrity in the handling and reporting M&E data. Data integrity and honesty is an ethical issue in ACT Alliance. Compromising M&E ethics is against the ACT code of good practice

When M&E data reflect serious variances between implementation status and targets, this should be regarded as an indication of an implementation challenge but also as an incentive to make improvements. Managers need to create this positivism and better understanding of the role of M&E among staff, especially in relation to external evaluation. This will enhance staff ethics and integrity in handling M&E data. Data integrity is an important good practice in the management of M&E systems. Attention to data integrity contributes greatly to the strength of the M&E system itself as well as the quality and reliability of data generated through the system.

8.3 PME Roles and Responsibilities

Monitoring is a day-to-day activity done during project implementation. It is an essential part of results-based management and not an added task to be managed by an M&E officer or unit. This is why project manager job descriptions should include M&E responsibilities such as supporting the establishment of M&E systems; finding ways to encourage and support community’s own monitoring efforts; making sure monitoring is undertaken during field visits; facilitating exchanges for learning lessons; and encouraging the use of M&E data in decision-making.

Each programme is associated with distributed M&E roles across the programme staff and beneficiary representatives, mainly in terms of different persons collecting different nature of data in their respective locations. The distinctive role of an M&E officer or designated staff is to support the overall process of systems design, data collection and specifically manage M&E data to yield usable analysis.

Project/Field staff - regular M&E data collection

Project/field staff are a primary contact in the M&E data collection process. Once M&E tools are systematized, the project/field staff becomes the main vehicle for collecting data from communities M&E designated role.

Communities/beneficiaries - community level M& data

Being not only passive recipients of aid, programme beneficiaries also play critical role in collecting and storing community level data (e.g. records of community meetings or children/teacher school attendance, water users record by water user committee). M&E data collected and stored at community levels by committees, schools or groups often becomes the primary data source for programme staff who transmits data from community to the programme office. Therefore, the role of communities in collecting M&E data cannot be disputed. However, community-based M&E systems and the quality of data collected depend on thorough orientation of concerned community structures on their expected M&E roles and clear understanding of the purpose for which accurate and reliable M&E data is required.

M&E officer or staff with M&E designated role - overall M&E oversight

To ensure objectivity, data quality and supporting systems, monitoring should not depend on only one person. Ideally, data collection is not the primary role of M&E officers as data collection should be done by people closest and best placed to a particular data source. M&E officers ensure coordinated process to development and management of M&E systems, provide technical support to M&E processes and consolidate and communicate M&E results according to the M&E plan.

9.0 NECESSARY CONDITIONS AND CAPACITIES FOR ACT PME

Various PME challenges, whether due to technical capacity, complexity of programs, rapidly changing or insecure conditions, will require adaptable PME tools, doing by trial in some cases and sustained commitment. Regular monitoring of M&E system itself, based on key characteristics of a well-functioning M&E system, will provide information on its status of development and use as well as show the gaps and loopholes that needs to be addressed to improve the M&E system.

Sound monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies is critical for demonstrating progress in achieving outcomes. As the implementation of **effective involves** active participation of all implementing staff, this requires nothing less than team work and interdepartmental/inter-sectoral cooperation to make the system function successfully.

To enhance conditions that support the development and practice of ACT PME, the following three processes are envisaged:

- i. Support capacities for quality implementation of ACT humanitarian response in relation to key organizational functions including PME
- ii. Conduct periodic review of critical PME capacities
- iii. Encourage member-to-member ACT PME peer support system

9.1 Critical capacities for ACT humanitarian response

The required capacities for PME can be specific to PME and general to other organizational capacity issues that are critical for PME to thrive. Both of these need to be supported so that there are sufficient conditions working together for effective PME.

9.1.1 Organizational capacities

The functioning of M&E systems is based on the functioning of other organizational systems which includes systems for assessment, planning, finance, personnel, procurement and management. Besides PME, focus on management and broader organizational systems is crucial for ensuring effective ACT humanitarian response. Programme quality and results are not only dependent on how well a programme is managed but also the role played by various management functions, both programme and organizational aspects of effectiveness.

Most agencies use Standard Operating Procedures or administrative manual to detail the way they carry out day-to-day operations. The SOP strengthens systematization upon which M&E systems thrive. Table 14 highlights key systems and tools needed for building emergency response capacity during crises phase.

<u>Systems and tools</u>	<u>Other systems development needs</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum Response Coordination • Financial Management Systems • M&E Systems • Administrative Systems and Skills • Information Management Skills to support operation and appeals • Joint Assessment Skills • Support to develop & manage appeals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum Coordination Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Techniques • Financial Management Tool Kit, ½ Day Training • M&E Templates, Standard Indicators, ½ Day Training Module • Information Management Tools, ½ Day Training • Needs Assessment Checklist, ½ Day Joint Assessment Team Training • Rapid Capacity Assessment Tool • Appeals development & management (existing training)

Source: ACT Strategy for protecting and building capacities during humanitarian crises

M&E systems will not function well in isolation but as part of a functional organization with key policies and basic systems and procedures in place. For example, it is not feasible to ensure learning from M&E results if supporting learning environment is not the practice in the organization; documentation will not happen if there is lack of filing system; etc.

Recognizing and identifying critical organizational capacity gaps, including management functions, is an important consideration for strengthening organizational systems, stewardship of resources and supporting accountability and quality of ACT appeals. The PME interest on management and broader organization functions is based on the key consideration that effective humanitarian response is not only determined by programme effectiveness but also the management of the programme.

9.1.2 Critical PME capacities

When M&E system is not working, a common response is "poor" or "insufficient capacity". Capacity is "the ability of individuals and organisations to perform functions effectively, efficiently and in a sustainable manner"²⁰

Table 16: Key areas for PM&E Capacities

PME Capacity area	Description
○ M&E Conceptual clarity	Definitions, key concepts and purposes of doing Monitoring and Evaluation. Differences and relationship between Planning, monitoring and evaluation.
○ Project Design as basis for M&E	Appreciating the relationship between project design and M&E. Using the strategy tree to work around problem statement and draft clear project goals, objectives, outputs and activities. Develop SMART objectives and project strategy that promise results. Distinction (purpose, timing) between an assessment and baseline survey
○ Components of M&E systems	The common components that make up a whole M&E system and their inter-relationships as well as factors associated with their development and use. Steps in developing M&E systems
○ Indicators	Nature of indicators - direct and Indirect (proxy) indicators, quantitative and qualitative indicators. Levels of indicators – output, outcome and impact indicators. Developing indicators and understanding of characteristics of indicators
○ logframe development	Concept of a logframe in project planning. Systematic development of logframes and their logical application in project planning & management. Advantages and challenges in using Logframes
○ M&E Plan	Developing feasible and realistic M&E plan that relates to key performance indicators
○ Methods of data collection	Different methods for data collection including FGDs, key informant interviews, PRA methods, conducting formal surveys. Different contexts for different data collection method M&E
○ Data collection tools	The use of a range of data collection tools, including simple forms, tables for recording data, questionnaire, observation checklist, etc. Advantages and shortfalls in using particular data collection tools.

²⁰ UNDP.1998. "Capacity assessment and development in a systems and strategic management context". Management Development and Governance Division, technical advisory paper No. 3. New York, United Nations Development Program

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Data analysis 	<p>Logistical and technical preconditions/ capacity for M&E data analysis. Preparing M&E data for analysis and deciding on suitable type and level of analysis. Performing trial run and modifying analysis plan, conducting analysis and presenting and interpreting data analyzed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reporting M&E data 	<p>Communicating and utilization of M&E results – various levels of stakeholders. Implication of timeliness and project planning events on the use of M&E results</p>

9.2 Periodic review of M&E functioning – “monitoring the monitoring”

M&E systems are necessarily dynamic as they must remain sensitive to project conditions that are often changing and contribute the complexity of project management. This is especially the case in emergency response where the fluidity of the situation and unstable population statistics make M&E systems vulnerable if they are not updated to remain relevant to the changing situations.

Assessment of M&E systems helps organizations to explore opportunities for strengthening the design and functioning of their M&E systems. This is more critical for humanitarian emergency programmes where local contexts are so dynamic, hence a review of M&E systems would keep relevance to changing situations.

A functional and effective PME for ACT appeals/ RRFs shall aim to realize the three expected PME outcomes as measured by a set of 7 PME effectiveness/performance indicators in Table 16 below. Information on all these indicators shall be collected using a specific tool ‘ performance review table’. The linkage between the PME outcomes, effectiveness/performance indicators and the performance review table is demonstrated in the diagram bellow.

Weak M&E systems can be detrimental to implementation as they can supply wrong data and lead to making wrong decisions hence negatively impacting the lives of targeted beneficiaries. When M&E systems are not monitored, they may not be done (what gets measured gets done) or it might generate wrong information and lead to wrong decisions i.e. the axiom ‘garbage-in garbage-out’. Therefore, a functional M&E system must be regularly monitored from a systems point of view and improvement actions taken.

ACT for appeals/RRFs aims to produce 3 outcomes that (i) emphasize the linkage between assessments and good project planning (ii) identify minimum conditions for functional for implementation of ACT appeals/RRFs, and (iii) highlight the need for consistent implementation of standard and the structured ways to utilize PME results and make continuous improvements.

These three expected PME outcomes shall be tracked using 7 PME effectiveness/performance indicators provided in the table below.

Table 17: Assessing the functioning of PME in ACT appeals/RRFs		
PME functions	PME outcomes	Indicators
Assessments and Planning for quality appeals/RRFs	Emergency assessment conducted according to procedures and ethics, timely, with active participation of communities and results (both qualitative and quantitative) evidently used to inform beneficiaries targeting and coherent design of ACT appeals/RRFs as well as setting up baseline information	1) % emergency needs assessments conducted following ACT assessment procedures leading to timely, TOR-focused, sufficient assessment information with simple analysis that disaggregated data by gender and identified vulnerable groups
		2) % appeals & RRFs developed in a manner that demonstrate consistent and adequate use of assessment information available for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>setting SMART objectives</i> b) <i>appropriate targeting of beneficiaries by gender & vulnerable groups</i> c) <i>articulating most appropriate implementation strategies</i> d) <i>selecting SMART indicators</i> e) <i>developing result-oriented and practical implementation plan</i>
Development of sound	Minimum PME frameworks, including Logframe and M&E plan with clearly stated indicators, as well as data collection tools and computer-based M&E databases are developed and articulated by implementing staff	3) % appeals/RRFs having measurable outputs and outcome indicators that are suitable for demonstrating project progress and are well articulated by staff
		4) % appeals/RRFs that have M&E plans developed, well articulated by staff and used as a main M&E reference tool
		5) % appeals/RRFs for which appropriate and sufficient monitoring tools have been developed and tested for collecting quality M&E data
Data collection, analysis and utilization of results	Standard M&E procedures for collecting, analyzing and using M&E data, based on approved monitoring tools, are regularized, institutionalized and routinely reviewed for improvement.	6) % appeals/RRFs that have demonstrated appropriate use of approved M&E tools for collecting and analyzing data according to M&E plan
		7) % appeals/RRFs that ensured utilization of M&E data by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <i>timely sharing of M&E results that against KPIs</i> ii) <i>making remedial changes</i> iii) <i>informing project planning</i> iv) <i>providing necessary data to evaluators</i>

The performance review will be conducted by ACT Secretariat staff and ACT joint monitoring teams during their scheduled monitoring visits, hence this shall form part of their respective ToR. It can also be used by some of the individual funding agencies visiting the implementation under a coordinated arrangement by the Secretariat. The performance review can be conducted for a single or multiple implementing agencies and the tabular results provided as an attachment to the joint mission report. The review can only be realistically conducted at least 6 months after implementation starts. The implementing members are

responsible for implementing the recommendations while the Secretariat is responsible for making follow-up to ensure that the recommended actions are implemented to improve **the**.

Appendix 5 provides the performance review table with a list of questions that can help to rate the development and functioning of the key aspects of M&E systems.

9.3 ACT PME Peer Support system

As emphasized in the ACT Alliance evaluation report “*Unlocking the potential within*” (Eriksson & Borton, 2004), ACT members with lower capacities should be able to get technical support from ACT members with higher capacities. From this background, an ACT PME peer support system shall promote the transfer of PME capacities from ACT members with these capacities to those lacking. Without being limited to one particular approach, the ACT PME peer support system shall seek best ways to promote:

- (i) Sharing of technical resources and knowledge on contemporary PME practices through ACT PME community of practice.
- (ii) Encouraging cross-organizational technical support and transfer of knowledge in developing and managing functional M&E systems.

Through member-to-member technical collaboration within ACT Alliance, there will be greater focus on results management approach, increased level of accountability to results and improved impact of ACT humanitarian and development work.

10.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: The logframe (format)

Objectives hierarchy	Indicators	MoV	Assumptions
Goal			<i>No Assumptions</i>
Outcomes			<i>Outcomes-to-Goal assumptions</i>
Outputs			<i>Outputs-to-Outcomes assumptions</i>
Activities	<u>List of Key inputs</u>		<i>Activities-to-Outputs assumptions</i>

APPENDIX 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Hierarchy of objectives (Project structure)	Indicators	Data collection				Analysis & Reporting	
		Method	Source of data	Frequency	Person Responsible	Method of Analysis	Reporting deadline
Goal							
Objective 1.0							
Output 1.1							
Output 1.2							
Output 1.3							
Objective 2.0							
Output 2.1							
Output 2.2							
Objective 3.0							
Output 3.1							
Output 3.2							
Output 3.1							
Etc							

APPENDIX 3: Performance Tracking Table (PTT)

Indicator	Start of Project		Project Progress								End of Project	
	Baseline	EoP Target	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		EoP Target (revised)	EoP Actual
			Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual		
Outcome 1 (outcomes)												
Output 1.1												
Output 1.2												
Output 1.3												
Outcome 2												
Output 2.1												
Output 2.2												
Outcome 3 (outcomes)												
Output 3.1												
Output 3.2												
Output 3.3												

APPENDIX 5: M&E systems performance monitoring table**Key**

- 1 = Not at all
 2 = Somewhat, Very minimal
 3 = Average
 4 = Adequately

Main areas	M&E systems Performance questions	1	2	3	4
		<i>(tick appropriately)</i>			
1 = Not at all	2 = Somewhat, very minimal	3 = Average	4 = Adequately	Rating	
i) <i>Planning</i>	The project/appeal has clearly started purpose/goal and the objectives are SMART and measurable				
	The indicators and M&E plan developed during project planning?				
	Is data collection part of regular project implementation?				
	Has information from detailed needs assessment used to determine targets and set baselines?				
	Is ACT PME handbook or any other specific M&E guide being used?				
ii) <i>Existence of M&E frameworks</i>	Is there a completed Logframe with defined process/activity, output and outcome indicators?				
	Was the Logframe developed with full participation of project staff?				
	Does the M&E plan exist with key attributes of what, how, when and who developed?				
	Are the key attributes of the M&E plan (i.e. what, how, when and who) appropriate and practical?				
iii) <i>M&E budgeting</i>	Are major M&E requirements (including capacity building and appropriate staffing) provided for in the project/ budget?				
	Is the budget for evaluation planned for at project planning stage?				
	Is the evaluation budget estimate based on decisions on evaluation days, consultancy market rate and number of interviewees and any translation needs?				
iv) <i>Availability of appropriate M&E tools</i>	Are tools for collecting all monitoring data developed?				
	Are developed tools being used to collect information?				
	Are M&E databases developed to store collected data?				
v) <i>Data collection and analysis</i>	Is M&E data collection actually taking place according to plan?				
	Is data entered into the database regularly				
	Is data analyzed according to M&E plan using a specific data analysis program (excel, access, Epi or SPSS)?				
	Is data disaggregated by gender, age, vulnerability group and location?				
	Are M&E analysis summary results communicated to (shared with) project staff and manager(s)?				
vi) <i>Utilization of M&E results</i>	M&E results used by staff during planning sessions?				
	M&E results used by staff in making corrective changes				
	M&E results used by manager(s) for writing progress reports				
	M&E results used by managers for making other important organization decisions				
	Are M&E results easily accessible to staff and stakeholders once requested?				
	Other (specify).....				
vii) <i>Responsibility for M&E systems</i>	Is the role for management of M&E systems clear and is this the case in practice?				
	Are staff roles in data collection and usage of M&E results clear and are these the case in practice?				

APPENDIX 6: PM&E Glossary

<i>Activities</i>	Actions or series of actions undertaken, using inputs, to produce planned outputs.
<i>Assumptions</i>	An event which must take place, or a condition which must exist, if a project is to succeed, but over which the project management has little or no control.
<i>Baseline</i>	The situation or conditions before an intervention starts. Baseline data can be compared with the findings of a later study of the situation/conditions to see what has changed, and can be used as part of a monitoring system.
<i>Beneficiaries</i>	The people whose situation the project proposes to improve. It is often useful to distinguish between direct beneficiaries (those directly assisted by a project) and indirect beneficiaries (those who indirectly benefit from a project)
<i>Benefits</i>	The positive outcomes of the project in the personal, material, economic or social development of the beneficiaries or in the increased capacity of the target group, wider community or implementing partner
Case studies	A data collection technique involving the examination of a limited number of specific cases or projects which the evaluator anticipates will be revealing about the programme as a whole. Case studies tend to be appropriate where it is extremely difficult to choose a sample large enough to be statistically generalisable to the population as a whole; where generalization is not important; where in-depth, usually descriptive data is required; and where the cases or projects to be studied are likely to be quite complex. See also case study designs, data collection
<i>Cost-effectiveness</i>	Simply, 'value for money'; or, the degree to which the project will benefit the largest number of people at the lowest reasonable cost. Thus cost-per-beneficiary measure: the total cost of the project divided by the number of direct beneficiaries. At its simplest, cost-effectiveness means being able to achieve objectives at a reasonable cost if not the lowest possible cost
Effectiveness	To what extent have the intervention's impacts contributed to achieving its specific and general objectives? See also cost-effectiveness analysis, general objectives, impacts, intervention logic, objectives, outcomes, results, specific objectives.
<i>Effects:</i>	Intermediate changes that a project may bring about, during the project period or soon after, usually at the level of its specific objectives
Efficiency	How economically have an intervention's inputs been converted into outputs and results?
<i>Evaluation</i>	A systematic process to identify project outcomes, qualifying and/ or quantifying them, and to compare the outcomes to those intended in the project objective(s). Evaluation may be done continuously or periodically during the implementation of the project or specifically at its conclusion
<i>Goal:</i>	Long-term development objective to which the project makes a contribution
<i>Impact</i>	Lasting and significant changes in people's lives - including unintended changes, whether positive or negative - to which the project contributes, directly or indirectly. ⁽³⁾

<i>Impact assessment</i>	Systematic identification and analysis of impact, including consideration of how well it fits the goal.
<i>Indicators</i>	Quantitative or qualitative evidence used to assess the extent to which intended changes are achieved. ⁽⁵⁾
<i>Intervention logic</i>	<p>Strategy for achieving the project purpose, consisting of results, activities and means, and contributing to overall objectives</p> <p>The conceptual link from an intervention’s inputs to the production of its outputs and, subsequently, to its impacts on society in terms of results and outcomes.</p> <p>The examination of the programme’s intervention logic will be of central importance in most evaluations. The evaluator needs to ask how the programme achieves its specific objectives, and how do the specific objectives contribute to the attainment of the general objectives? The terms “theory of action”, “programme logic” and “programme theory” are sometimes used to mean more or less the same thing.</p>
<i>Inputs</i>	The resources (financial, equipment, technical and material) necessary to carry out project activities.
<i>Logframe (Logical Framework)</i>	<p>A tool to reflect on programme/project goal, objectives and activities and the connections between them. In its most simple form it is a matrix with four rows and four columns.</p> <p>Method for analysing and presenting the most important elements of a project and their interrelationships</p>
<i>Milestones</i>	Milestones are intermediary targets or benchmarks. That means that if your target for the entire project is to increase utilization of STI services by 40% over 2 years, you might plan to have achieved a 10% increase by the end of year 1. Comparing progress by end of year 1 against the set milestones tells whether you are on the right path towards achieving your target.
<i>Monitoring</i>	Systematic and continuous assessment of the progress of the project in relation to its planned inputs, activities and outputs.
<i>Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs)</i>	This emphasize the objectivity of indicators and states that indicators must be defined in clear, simple and straightforward manner that allows for single interpretation of meanings irrespective of who uses the indicator and the time the indicator is used.
<i>Objectives</i>	What the project is intended to achieve. Objectives are expressed as statements that describe in concrete terms the intended or hoped-for effects to be achieved among the target population, within the project period or soon after it. The term specific objective is sometimes used here, to stress the distinction from ‘general objective’ (see under ‘goal’, above, for which this is an alternative term)
<i>Outcomes</i>	Changes resulting from the use of outputs, during the project period or soon after, including unintended changes
<i>Outputs</i>	Products or services, tangible or intangible, resulting directly from the implementation of activities.
<i>Participation</i>	Involvement of staff and of people affected by a project in planning and carrying out the activities of a project or in monitoring, reviewing or evaluating the project
<i>Participatory</i>	A way of planning where the initiative is driven by the beneficiaries, and in which external

<i>planning</i>	facilitators participate
<i>Performance monitoring</i>	Performance monitoring of changes in performance indicators reveals whether desired results are occurring and whether implementation is on track
<i>Project Precondition</i>	Condition that must be fulfilled before a project can start up
<i>Programme</i>	A collection of projects that are executed or supported by an organisation - usually identified in terms of a geographical area, section of the population, or a //theme - to which a co-ordinated approach is adopted. This may also involve other activities, complementary to the projects. A programme, like a project, may involve collaboration between several organizations
<i>Project</i>	Refers to different types of development interventions, which are designed to achieve certain specific objectives within a given budget and organization, and a specific period
<i>Project cycle</i>	Model of the entire lifespan of a project
<i>Purpose</i>	The reason for or focus of the project, describing the improved situation which the project is expected to achieve
<i>Relevance</i>	To what extent are the intervention's objectives pertinent in relation to the evolving needs and priorities at both national and global level?
<i>Results</i>	Products of the activities that together achieve the project purpose. Not only physical outputs but a start to enjoyment of sustainable benefits
<i>Risk factor</i>	A risk factor refers to the possibility that an assumption will not hold
<i>Qualitative</i>	Refers to defining characteristics (e.g. indicators) which cannot be quantified. Implies use of perceptions and judgements
<i>Quantitative</i>	Refers to something measured or measurable by numbers and expressed in amounts or quantities
<i>Review</i>	The assessment at one point in time of the progress of a project or programme or of a particular aspect of a project or programme. Generally more informal than an evaluation, it is often internal and periodic
<i>Sample</i>	A set of individuals or items selected from a given population so that properties and parameters of the population may be estimated, or so that hypotheses about that population may be estimated
<i>Stakeholder</i>	Those individuals, organisations, categories or groups of people with direct or indirect interest in a project (e.g. beneficiaries, paid and voluntary workers, donors, partner and other agencies, local government). They include both those who may be affected by the project and those who will be involved in making it work
<i>Stakeholder</i>	Is an analysis of the interests and concerns of those who may be affected by a project or

<i>analysis</i>	may affect its outcome
<i>Sustainability</i>	<p>The capability of maintaining through time the benefits obtained for the target group or of continuing the generation of benefits.</p> <p>sustainability</p> <p>To what extent can the programme’s positive impacts (as measured by its utility) be expected to last after the intervention has been terminated?</p>
<i>Transcription errors</i>	<p>These are simple data entry errors made when transcribing data from one document (electronic or paper) or database to another. It is possible to avoid transcription errors and managers should aim at eliminating them. Transcription errors can be easily avoided by careful cross-checking of data against the original source.</p>
<i>Triangulation</i>	<p>The use of multiple theories, methods and/or data sources to verify and substantiate an assessment. It is used to overcome the biases that come from unitary disciplines, single observers, self interested informants and partial methods (OECD DAC, 2002: 37; Weiss, 1995).</p>
<i>Unit of analysis</i>	<p>A <i>unit of analysis</i> is the major entity that is being studied during data analysis e.g. child headed family, school, household, men, women, etc</p>
<i>Validity</i>	<p>Validity refers to the extent to which the data collection strategies and instruments measure what they purport to measure (DAC). Validity refers to the extent to which a measure actually represents what we intend to measure.</p>

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