
22 May 2014

Dear Friends,

Last week's newsflash focused on Mobile M&E technology. This week, the resources provided unpack the terminology of Monitoring and Evaluation and the benefits they can provide to organizations and to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families.

Firelight seeks to ensure that information is not merely “reported up” by our Grantee-partners to be used for accountability, but rather is used for organizations themselves as a means of learning and reflection. Ultimately, M&E that is done well can lead to improved impact, programming, advocacy, and mobilization of resources.

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

(Article) Beyond Accountability: Harnessing the Power of M&E to Improve OVC Programming
(Resource) Simplifying the language of Project Design Monitoring & Evaluation (DM&E)
(School Business Competition) The School Enterprise Challenge: An Opportunity for Students and Teachers to Win Cash Prizes

(Article) Beyond Accountability: Harnessing the Power of M&E to Improve OVC Programming

by Linda Sussman, Jennifer Lentfer, and Jane Chege

"Recognition of the importance of M&E in the context of OVC programming is widely accepted. Increasing the effectiveness of programming is a shared goal among donors, government, and national and local civil society organizations in order to maximize the support provided to children and their families. At the same time, donors require grantees to collect data on inputs and outputs in order to monitor the use of the funds they receive. However, there remains confusion about the use of data to also improve programs. The authors “unpack” the catchall acronym of “M&E” and describe the basic purposes of monitoring and evaluation systems that are implemented within OVC programming. These purposes include: accountability, increasing the size of the response, improved programming, and advocacy. Failure to match the purpose of M&E with appropriate methods can result in undermining the overarching goal of improving the well-being of children. Examples are provided whereby M&E that has been implemented for the purpose of accountability fails to result in improved programming and, in some cases, undermines the effectiveness of the

interventions. The importance of implementing M&E efforts that improve programming in addition to providing the data that is necessary for accountability is stressed. Emphasis is placed on the design and implementation of M&E that results in increased effectiveness of programs in order to optimize the use of scarce resources in supporting vulnerable children, their families, and their communities."

Accountability

Ensures resources are being expended as planned.

Answers the following questions:

1. Are resources being utilized according to initial agreements and the planned use of the funds?
2. Are the objectives of the interventions being met?

Increasing the Size of the Response

Provides data to inform planning for policy and programming, including initial planning and progress toward achieving increased coverage and identification of existing gaps. Monitors what is being done, relative to what is needed.

Answers the following questions:

1. Where are we going?
2. Where did we come from?
3. How far to go?

Improved programming

Maximizes impact (effectiveness) and maximizes use of limited resources (efficiency).

Answers the following questions:

1. What is the best way to get to where we want to go?
2. Are we accomplishing what we set out to achieve?
3. How can we adapt our activities to better serve beneficiaries?

Advocacy

Raises visibility; commitment to the response; and garners additional support and funding.

To view the full article, visit: <http://bit.ly/1luHE1F>

(Resource) *Simplifying the language of Project Design Monitoring & Evaluation (DM&E)*

from the Oak Foundation, June 2010

"...the language and process of project design, monitoring and evaluation varies and can be confusing as funders and implementers alike use the same words to mean different things. This mystification of DM&E can obscure rather than clarify the answers to three fundamental questions:

- * What is the problem?
- * What are we going to do to address it?
- * How will we track progress?"

This resource explains the terminology used in project design, monitoring and evaluation and gives guidance on how to develop an effective M&E framework for your program. Here are a few of the terms described:

Baseline

The baseline is information about key variables at the start of the project.

The baseline provides a clear starting point. It differs from the assessment which gives the broad overview and helps determine the project focus. The baseline looks at those variables that have been selected as indicators to measure change as a result of the project activities. Collecting baseline information at the start of a project allows a comparison of the situation (as reflected by the chosen variables) before and after an organisation intervenes, to track change over time.

The tools and methods used to gather data will vary depending on the variable that is being measured. They might include observation (using an observation tool to get consistent results), meetings, formal records (such as school records), interviews and focus groups (e.g. with beneficiaries, staff or other community members).

Indicator

An indicator is what an organisation will measure to show progress.

Indicators are the variables⁴ that will be measured or monitored over the course of the project; they specify what will be measured (e.g. number of girls enrolled in grade 6), not what will be achieved (e.g. 50% in girls' enrolment). To be useful, an indicator must reflect what the project wants to influence (e.g. If a project aims to increase access to services for trafficked girls and women in a specific location, then you the numbers using the services must be measured, not the number of services being offered). When you want to measure something that is particularly sensitive, it may be necessary to find a proxy or substitute indicator, one that indirectly measures it.

It should be relatively easy to collect information consistently on the chosen indicator, without requiring too much additional work. In some programme areas, it is important to gather information other than numbers. If the project aims to support child friendly teaching methods, structured observation of teaching practice or focus groups with children to find out about their experience of learning are useful ways to gather data that can be compared over time. It is helpful for projects to specify their sources of information (the means of verification).

Target

Targets tell you specifically how much change you plan to achieve in key indicators, at specific points in the life of the project.

Targets are the specific measurement (qualitative and quantitative) of an indicator that

shows the extent of change you aim to achieve during the life of the project.

Monitoring

Monitoring is regularly collecting data, reviewing data, reporting the results and using the data to make corrections in project implementation, so that the expected targets are achieved. Monitoring allows project staff to see the expected and the unexpected, the good and the not so good outcomes of project activities and to adjust or refine the initial design accordingly.

While failing to monitor is a major mistake, so is trying to monitor too many indicators. Indicators are selected to provide useful information about the key elements of the project and to help in communicating results. Monitoring should not distract from implementation or use a disproportionate amount of project resources. A project should focus on just a few indicators that look at all of the levels of change and not just at the level of the outputs (e.g. number of trainings held).

Monitoring is important – it allows projects, organisations and funders to review progress and make adjustments during the life of the project so that it delivers the changes that are needed. Planning for Monitoring and Evaluation takes place at the Project Design phase, to ensure adequate time and resources are included in the budget and workplan. Coupled with good design, good monitoring (including acting on the information gathered), is probably the biggest single contributor to improving programming.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a retrospective review of one or more aspects of a project, examining its design, implementation and/or the results it delivered.

Evaluation differs from monitoring but complements and uses the information generated through monitoring. It is generally a discrete event that happens midway through a project and/or at the end.

Designing a good evaluation is like designing a good project. Evaluations should not be just an account of “what happened” and what outputs were produced; they should be part of the ongoing learning about effective programming or policy making. Often evaluations are most useful in the context of innovative approaches or with new partners or partnerships.

To view the complete document, visit: <http://bit.ly/1nOFSPd>

(International Business Competition) The School Enterprise Challenge: An Opportunity for Students and Teachers to Win Cash Prizes

Students and their teachers around the world are invited to register in the School Enterprise Challenge. The School Enterprise Challenge is a unique international business competition for school students, aiming to identify and reward the social entrepreneurs of tomorrow. It is an opportunity to win fantastic prizes, start generating income for your school, and gain access to a range of educational resources that will help the students become the

business leaders of the future.

Benefits

- Help the students to become the business leaders of the future, increase their employability and support their university and college applications.
- Win up to USD \$2000 as part of Inspirational Teacher Awards.
- Establish a new source of income for the school. On average, each school participating in the School Enterprise Challenge generates USD \$1,000 per year through their enterprise.
- Gain access to full suite of educational resources and use the school-based enterprise to enhance teaching and learning in a variety of curriculum areas.
- Get international recognition as a leading entrepreneurial school and find an international partner school.
- Apply for a Business Mentor and get personalized 1-2-1 support for the school business.
- Win great prizes for your school, from cash prizes ranging between USD \$500 and \$5000 to sponsored places at annual Teach A Man To Fish conference.
- Join hundreds of other schools from all over the world in our School Enterprise Challenge Community by building own profile and chat to other schools and join discussions in the online forum.
- Students could win a laptop as part of the Enterprising Student Award.

Steps

- Register Online & download full suite of education materials
- Create a business idea within four weeks of registration
- Connect with other schools by filling out the profile and find a perfect partner
- Apply for a School Business Mentor- get personalized 1-1 feedback and encouragement from the business mentor
- Write a business plan- within six weeks
- Launch own business and start generating income
- Submit the final report and share the achievement. Deadlines for final reports is December 2014.

Prizes

- Three \$500 Cash Prize among the schools that submit business ideas.
- Eight Awesome Cash Prize among the schools that submit business plans. Categories: Top Global Winner (\$2,000), Regional Prize Winners- Africa, North America and the Caribbean, Asia Pacific, Europe and Middle East, Latin America (\$1,000 each); and Primary School Prize and Business Development Prizes- \$500 each.
- Eleven Prizes among the schools that submit final report by 3 December 2014. Categories: Top Global Winner (\$5,000); People Award, Profit Award, Planet Award

(\$2,000 each); Regional Prizes- Africa, North America and the the Caribbean, Asia Pacific, Europe and Middle East, Latin America (\$2,000 each); Business Development and Primary School Prize (\$1,000 each); Inspirational Teacher Winner (\$2,000) and Two Runners Up (\$1,000 each); and Enterprising Student Winner (\$2,000) and Two runners up (\$1,000 each).

For More Information: <http://bit.ly/1k5ozX5>

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website:

<http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash>

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org

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