



How to create an M&E plan

*Four key elements of monitoring,
how and what to check, types of
evaluation, 10 steps of evaluation*

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How to create an M&E plan (Four key elements of monitoring, how and what to check, types of evaluation, 10 steps of evaluation)

Creating a robust monitoring and evaluation plan allows you to ensure the effectiveness of your initiative, continually apply lessons learned to improve your efforts, and establish evidence through which you can generate support for your work. Here's how:

Monitoring simply means keeping a careful eye on your activities as they are happening and assessing what you see against what you planned. The three main questions of monitoring are:

- 1) Are we doing the right things?
- 2) Are we doing them properly?
- 3) Are we making a difference?

In order to be effective, you will need to plan when and how you will monitor your intervention and incorporate that into your timeline and allocation of resources from the beginning. From the outset, plan on monitoring the four key elements of your initiative:

MONITOR the 4 KEY ELEMENTS

- Implementation schedules
- Media outreach
- Community engagement (IPC, local information distribution channels)
- How you're doing along the way.

There are several different methods by which you can monitor – from periodic reviews of your program documents (work plans, monthly and quarterly reports) to regular audits of your communication 'product' (for example, finding out the quantities of materials used, their purpose, comments/reactions to them, etc.) to spot checks in public places with members of your target audience, to intercept interviews, regular field trips, and observations at service points or in training sessions.

The key to monitoring is having a good set of questions to ask as you review each of the key elements of your initiative and establish from the outset how you will check each one. For example:

For implementation schedules, ask:

Is what you planned happening on time/according to the set schedule? If not, why not?
Are materials being distributed and used as planned?

How to check:

Regular progress reports from the field
Regular audits of materials
Observation/supervision visits

For radio, TV, and print, ask:

Is what you planned happening on time/according to the set schedule? If not, why not?
Have other related messages/materials been broadcast or published as a result?

How to check:

Assigning a team member or volunteer to listen to all important radio/TV emissions + collect

press cuttings

Dividing the work amongst multiple team members (NB: this can get tricky/hard to manage given individuals' schedules and other responsibilities)

Hiring a media monitoring company to monitor, collect, and analyze things for you (NB: this is by far the most reliable method as well as the most costly)

In addition to these 'products,' it's also critical to monitor the 'process' - how well you are engaging with the community and how well you are getting your messages across in your day-to-day interactions.

For IPC, ask:

Is what you planned happening on time/according to the set schedule? If not, why not?

How is the quality of IPC between participants/clients and staff? Is the interaction a good one/are they satisfied?

Are clients/participants receiving the key information according to plan?

How is the quality of IPC between trainers and trainees?

How to check:

Observation at immunization points and home visits

Exit interviews at immunization centers

Group discussions with different stakeholders

For local/traditional and community information channels, ask:

Is what you planned happening on time/according to the set schedule? If not, why not?

How many groups are involved in disseminating information? What types of groups? What areas do they serve? How are they managed? How are they viewed and received by the community?

How to check:

Visits/field trips to observe group meetings

Small group discussion

Intercept interviews post-meeting

Discussion with other program facilitators

Finally, you will want to monitor **how well your initiative is doing along the way**. Some questions to think about include:

What do people think about the messages they are receiving? Do they understand them?

Accept them? Reject them?

How feasible do they find implementing the proposed behavior change? If they don't perceive it as feasible, what change might be made to spur action?

Are there changes happening in knowledge, attitude, or behavior? If so, what?

How to check:

Observation

Focus group discussions

Intercept interviews

For an example of a monitoring and evaluation framework in use in the field in Nigeria, click here: [\[INSERT link to m&e excel from Nigeria\]](#). Be sure to contact the Nigeria team's Noah Mataruse to understand the larger context.

Evaluation

So now that you have a sense of how and what to monitor, how should you plan to

evaluate?

If you think back to the how-to on indicators, we divided things up into background indicators, process indicators, impact indicators, and outcome indicators. We did so because now at the evaluation stage, we will use these same indicators to measure how we did.

| Process evaluation | Impact evaluation | Outcome evaluation |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Provides feedback on the activities you carried out and the processes by which you carried them out. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-The extent and quality of the activities-The efficiency of the administration and work processes-Reactions to the programmatic activities-Staff performance and competence-Program procedures and processes-Consequences of program activities-Why and how program changes were achieved-Interaction between program interventions and other factors in the environment-Interaction between various stakeholders and how the interaction affects program achievements <p>How to: Document/record review Focus group discussions Observation</p> | <p>Studies short and/or medium-term achievements and effects of the program. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Is there change? (in knowledge, attitudes, or behavior?)-Was it the intervention that caused the change? <p>How to: Impact evaluation starts by quantitatively comparing background indicators (i.e. what existed before the intervention) with what exists after.</p> | <p>Studies long-term effects of a program such as change in mortality and morbidity, health status, quality of life, existence of polio, etc.</p> <p>How to: Similarly to impact evaluation, it compares what existed before to what exists post-intervention.</p> |

Plan your evaluation in advance. Start with the indicators you established. Based on these indicators, the first step is developing evaluation objectives. Think about:

- ✓ How do you want to use the findings of your evaluation?
- ✓ What decisions do you want the information gathered to help you make?
- ✓ How (and what) should you measure to get the information you need?
- ✓ What do you want to evaluate and to what end you want it done?
- ✓ What kind of resources do you have (both human and financial) to conduct the evaluation?

Your answers to the above questions will help you choose your research methods, collect, apply, and analyze your data, and allow you to continuously improve your activities. Indeed,

you can think about the process in ten steps, as follows: (taken from CIVICUS' Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation p. 39)

TEN STEPS OF M&E

Step 1 Plan properly – know what you are trying to achieve and how you intend to achieve it

Step 2 Implement

Step 3 Monitor and evaluate

Step 4 Analyse the information you get from monitoring and evaluation and work out what it is telling you

Step 5 Look at the potential consequences to your plans of what you have learned from the analysis of your monitoring and evaluation data.

Step 6 Draw up a list of options for action.

Step 7 Get consensus on what you should do and a mandate to take action.

Step 8 Share adjustments and plans with the rest of your team and, if necessary, your donors and beneficiaries

Step 9 Implement.

Step 10 Monitor and evaluate

For a great resource which goes through each of these steps in detail, see CIVICUS' Monitoring and Evaluation guide

(<http://www.civicus.org/new/media/Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation.pdf>)

Useful tip: As you begin structuring your evaluation, think through the elements of an evaluation report (this will help you ensure that you've included all necessary elements). These are taken from CIVICUS' excellent monitoring and evaluation guide:

*Background: This is background to the project or organisation, something about the problem identified, what you do, how long you have existed, why you have decided to do an evaluation.

*Purpose: Here you would say what it is the organisation or project wants the evaluation to achieve.

*Key evaluation questions: What the central questions are that the evaluation must address.

*Specific objectives: What specific areas, internal and/or external, you want the evaluation to address. So, for example, you might want the evaluation to include a review of finances, or to include certain specific programme sites.

*Methodology: here you might give broad parameters of the kind of approach you favour in evaluation. You might also suggest the kinds of techniques you would like the evaluation team to use.

*Logistical issues: These would include timing, costing, requirements of team composition and so on.

For a great resource on planning and writing evaluation reports, click here:

(http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadv117.pdf)