

# 5 Monitoring,<sup>1</sup> evaluation, learning and feedback

## **By the end of this chapter you will:**

- understand how to monitor, evaluate, learn from and get feedback on your efforts to realise children's rights
- know how to use the five Dimensions of Change to ensure your programme plans include monitoring and evaluation (M&E), learning and feedback
- be aware of a range of M&E, learning and feedback tools.

*This chapter builds on and requires an understanding of the core CRP principles, tools and processes given in Chapter 2.*

This chapter shows you how to put children at the heart of your monitoring, evaluation, learning and feedback systems. You need to know if and how you are making a real difference. Monitoring, evaluation, learning and feedback will help you to assess and make any necessary changes to your work in order to improve your effectiveness. They will also ensure that you are accountable for your actions and will help you to hold others to account for theirs. Together, they are key elements of any successful rights-based programme.

The chapter links closely to the previous chapter on planning. Identifying your goals, change objectives and indicators is an essential part of setting up effective monitoring and evaluation systems. The five dimensions of change (Chapter 2) will help you to monitor and evaluate your progress and the impact of your work.

## What are monitoring and evaluation (M&E), learning and feedback?

### Some definitions

**Monitoring** is the ongoing collection of relevant data. It helps you to know whether your programme is ‘on track’ or not.

**Evaluation** can take place at certain times throughout the programme cycle, but not as often as monitoring. Evaluations use the data you collected during monitoring to compare how things are now with how they were when you began, and so to what extent you have achieved your objectives. **Process evaluation** tells you if your programme is running as intended. **Impact evaluation** tells you how far you have come in achieving your objectives.

**Impact assessment** generally happens less frequently than evaluations. You can use the information collected during monitoring and the analysis done through evaluations to look at the bigger picture in the longer term. An impact assessment will tell you what lasting and significant changes your programme has brought about and how. It looks at any unexpected or negative changes, as well as planned changes.

**Learning** is the process of reflecting on and drawing conclusions from the information you have gathered about your work and its impact. The knowledge gained can then help inform your future choices and decisions. Your organisation needs to be committed to developing a learning culture if this does not already exist. Learning takes time and resources. It requires a willingness to acknowledge mistakes, and a readiness to change if need be.

**Feedback** is the process of communicating the results and learning from your work to the various stakeholders within and outside of your organisation. It is a key way to demonstrate your accountability. Feedback can stimulate changes that will improve the way in which you work and your effectiveness. It can provide examples of good practice to be shared with others, and can inform your national and international advocacy work.

## How to do monitoring and evaluation, learning and feedback

There are many learning and feedback frameworks, such as M&E systems, action-research projects, impact assessments, reviews and reports. Whatever system you use, make sure it has a clear purpose, a plan for collecting data, time to analyse the results and ways to communicate them to stakeholders. You may need to change your existing M&E system to make sure it provides the information you need on how your activities are affecting children.

You will have the baseline information you need for M&E in the CRSA. Your programme plans – including your change objectives developed using the Dimensions of Change and your activities/expected outputs mapped against the Three Pillars – become the starting point for further developing your monitoring and evaluation systems, including the development of process and impact indicators. Be ready to document and share the results of your monitoring, evaluation, learning and feedback with other stakeholders, including the children and communities you work with, your donors, and other partners, such as local government. The reporting format should be relevant and accessible to your intended audience. Communicate with each group in the way you feel is most appropriate (a group of children will not want the same lengthy written report you submit to donors).

### Case study

In **Ethiopia**, poor rains (mainly the *belg* rains) between 1998 and 2002 led to widespread drought and loss of assets among vulnerable households in parts of the Amhara region. Save the Children used Household Economy Assessments (HEAs) to understand how different households were getting food and money in relatively normal years. We then carried out monitoring assessments to see how the drought was affecting people's ability to make a living. The assessments led to a food aid programme to support the poorest families in 2002/03.

*continued overleaf*

## Learning systems, tools and outputs

Learning systems	Tools (how to get your information)	Outputs (your end product)
Regular field reports	Dimensions of Change	Publications
Monitoring systems	Secondary sources	Reports (internal, donor, evaluation, impact assessments, government-led, etc)
Evaluation systems	Budget analysis	Donor proposals
Participatory research	Direct observation	Strategy documents
Surveys	Questionnaires	Press releases; briefings
Rapid assessment	Semi-structured interviews	Marketing and fundraising material
Impact assessment	Individual interviews	Multi-media documentation (film, photo, theatre, sound recording, posters, etc)
CRSA	Key informant interviews	Sharing results: meetings, conferences, workshops
Case studies	Group interviews and discussions	
Household Economy Approach	Focus group discussions	
	Oral history	
	Ranking and scoring	
	Construction of diagrams and maps	
	Timelines	
	Historical profiles	
	Songs	
	Theatre for development	
	Games and role-play	

### **Case studies** *continued*

In 2004, we evaluated the food aid programme using a modified version of HEAs that placed the emphasis on understanding how children's food security and livelihoods had been affected. We talked to children and their parents. The assessments found that children were heavily involved in work both at home and for money, even when there was no drought. But their workloads increased in years of stress, as they increasingly worked in the homes of better-off families, or migrated to towns to look for casual work. This led to more children dropping out of school, and also put children at greater risk of abuse. The assessment showed that providing relief would not only help children to get enough food, but could have other important benefits in terms of preventing harm.

**Research projects and evaluations** increasingly involve children and young people in the design, research, analysis and dissemination of findings.

### **Case studies**

In **Sialkot, Pakistan**, 40 young people (20 girls and 20 boys), most of whom were school or university students, carried out research on child labour. Many of them actually came from the Sialkot project area. Two local NGOs were involved, and a consultant carried out statistical analysis. The report was written by a representative team and edited by the research adviser. Each member of the team contributed one section. The whole team agreed the conclusions and recommendations.

*continued opposite*

### Case studies *continued*

One year into a partnership with a local NGO in **Bangladesh**, Save the Children undertook some action research to improve our own programme and persuade others to adopt best practice. The results were documented using children's voices as well as photos. For example:

*“Normally I beg for food in the park, or I pick rags, but I never sleep in the park. Now I sleep in the centre, or near a tea stall or in front of a bakery. It is safer than Kumlapur. In Kumlapur the men always call for massages, and once a policeman tried with me. I hit him with a brick.”*

11-year-old boy quoted in *Safe Nights – for Life: A guide for supporting sexually exploited street boys*, Save the Children Denmark, 2006

**Feedback mechanisms** can also actively involve children and young people.

### Case studies

In **Zimbabwe**, Save the Children set up children's committees to monitor food aid distributions and what impact they were having on children (including any negative impacts). We reviewed and adjusted our distribution systems as a result of children's feedback.

In **India**, we trained children in participatory rural appraisal to help inform our response to floods. We wanted to know the number of families affected, and children's needs. The information the children gathered was then used to develop further activities. For example, the children found that the size of rations was wrong, as standard amounts were distributed per family rather than on the basis of family size, thus causing considerable hardship for larger families.

### **Your M&E, learning and feedback system should:**

- be informed by your CRSA
- be included at every stage of the programme cycle
- use the five Dimensions of Change to help you measure progress
- make sure information is disaggregated by age, gender and other relevant categories
- include both quantitative (objective) and qualitative (subjective) information
- find out how things happened as well as what happened (process learning)
- recognise unexpected changes as a result of your activities
- involve children in drawing up questions, monitoring systems, collecting and analysing data (but consider carefully ethical issues and ensure children's best interests and protection at all times)
- involve a range of stakeholders, taking into account issues of power, discrimination and access
- use multiple sources of information to draw conclusions (triangulation)
- say what impact you have had and why
- disseminate your results strategically.

## **The tools**

Before we present some tools to use, here are some top tips for your M&E, learning and feedback system.

### **Top tips**

- Always think about your learning system and approaches from the very beginning. Review and adapt them regularly.
- Be clear about what you want to find out, and why.
- Consult with children and encourage them to participate by involving them at all stages.
- Be consistent – ask the same basic questions throughout the life of the programme.
- Be interested in what hasn't worked as well as what has, and why.
- Consider the impact of your actions on different groups of children (girls, boys, those in certain age groups, etc).

- Learn as you go – don't wait until the end. Change takes time. Measure the incremental steps as well as the final impact.
- Make sure the findings are made easily available to all your stakeholders.
- Build the capacity of teams, partners, children and communities through the process.
- Recognise that becoming a learning organisation takes time and resources.

Here are three areas to consider when making children's rights integral to your M&E, learning and feedback systems:

1. **Setting indicators**
2. **Monitoring and evaluation systems**
3. **Measuring levels of participation**

### 1. Setting indicators

Indicators are things you can use to measure or assess progress. They may be expressed as numbers (quantitative, or objective) or words (qualitative, or subjective). They may be internationally or locally defined and can be used to measure your activities at different levels – for example, processes/activities and outcomes/impacts (Save the Children, 2003).

You can use the five Dimensions of Change (see Chapter 2) to identify relevant indicators for your programme, based on your change objectives. To help you, each dimension can be expressed as a question.

**Direct benefits** – have you brought about any major changes in the lives of children and young people, or other stakeholders such as community members? How?

*Examples of indicators:*

- Increased use of health services disaggregated by gender, age and type of service
- Increased % of children under one year fully immunised

**Wider impact** – have you brought about any changes in legislation, structures, mechanisms, policies, practices and beliefs in relation to children's rights? How?

*Examples of indicators:*

- Effective staff training and retention policies implemented
- Increased state budget allocation for maternal and child health services

**Enhanced participation** – have you helped children participate more, not just in spaces specifically set up for them but in arenas that are traditionally the preserve of adults? To what extent? How?

*Examples of indicators:*

- Increased involvement of children in the setting of priorities for health services
- Involvement of children in community health committees

**Reduced discrimination** – have you brought about a reduction in the discrimination faced by marginalised groups of children and young people (with specific reference to gender, disability and ethnicity)? How?

*Examples of indicators:*

- Increased access by marginalised populations to health services
- Health services made more acceptable and affordable for adolescents

**Collaborative working** – have you brought about improved partnership and collaborative working? How?

*Examples of indicators:*

- Number/type/success of local and national civil society organisations actively campaigning for increased investment in health systems
- Funding secured to support the participation and training of national civil society groups

It is important to be realistic about whether it is possible to obtain reliable information when setting indicators. This is especially relevant for qualitative indicators on sensitive issues such as discrimination.

Here are some examples of indicators you might use to measure the impact of your programme. They are grouped by sector.

**Food security and livelihoods** – the impact of cash transfers could be measured by changes in:

- household assets (indicator for household socio-economic status) – primary impact group is the household
- diversity of children's diet (an indicator of food intake) – ultimate impact group
- anthropometric indices (weight-for-age, length/height-for-age, and weight-for-length/height) – (indicators of nutritional status) – ultimate impact group
- national targeting policies

- community-based organisations' (CBOs) involvement in monitoring cash transfers
- household-level decision-making processes.

**Education** – the impact of your education support could be measured by changes in:

- net enrolment rates, gender disaggregated – ultimate impact group
- drop-out rates, disaggregated by key groups – ultimate impact group
- teachers using child-friendly methods – ultimate impact group
- children's contribution to designing child-friendly approaches
- survival, retention and completion rates, disaggregated by key groups
- national and provincial education budgets
- effectiveness and parent participation in parent-teacher associations
- national legislation and educational policies.

**Child protection** – the impact of your child protection activities could be measured by:

- the number of separated children or ex-child combatants who have been successfully reintegrated with their families and/or communities, disaggregated by age and gender – ultimate impact group
- the number of cases where child abuse or exploitation has been successfully dealt with by community protection networks – ultimate impact group
- children's clubs being active and informing community protection networks
- having a national fostering policy in place
- co-ordination within government structures
- changes in national legislation and protection policies
- the number of cases of abuse or exploitation that have been dealt with by an independent office protecting children's rights.

**Health** – your activities to improve children's health could be measured by:

- changes in child morbidity rates from measles, diarrhoea and/or fever – ultimate impact group
- changes in prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among adolescents reporting to clinics for treatment – ultimate impact group
- changes in number of children with disabilities accessing healthcare
- changes in reproductive health awareness through peer education groups
- changes in traditional birth attendants' practice
- changes in the use of government health fees
- changes in the co-ordination mechanisms of national health actors.

## Monitoring and evaluation systems

Integrating a child rights perspective into monitoring and evaluation systems requires:

- clear planning processes
- corresponding indicators
- mechanisms for regular monitoring

### Child rights-based Logical Framework<sup>2</sup>

	<b>Narrative summary</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Goal (fulfilment of children's rights)</b>	Which children's rights are being met? (informed by CRSA and framed as overall changes for children)	What indicators tell you whether children's rights have been met?
<b>Objectives (contribution to goal)</b>	What is your contribution to the goal, framed in terms of all the Dimensions of Change and SMART?	What indicators tell you whether the changes have taken place and how?
<b>Process</b>	How does the process encourage participation, develop capacity, accountability and equity? How does it empower people? How does it affect equity and gender disparity? Is it sustainable?	What indicators (or other evidence) will you use to measure participation, improved capacity accountability and empowerment?
<b>Outputs/impact</b>	What outputs/impact will your programme produce that lead to fulfilment of rights?	What outputs/impact will you produce and when?
<b>Activities</b>	Did you identify and target underlying causes? What activities must duty-bearers undertake? Which ones and when?	<i>Inputs:</i> What responsibilities and authorities are accepted and what resources are required by duty-bearers over the period?

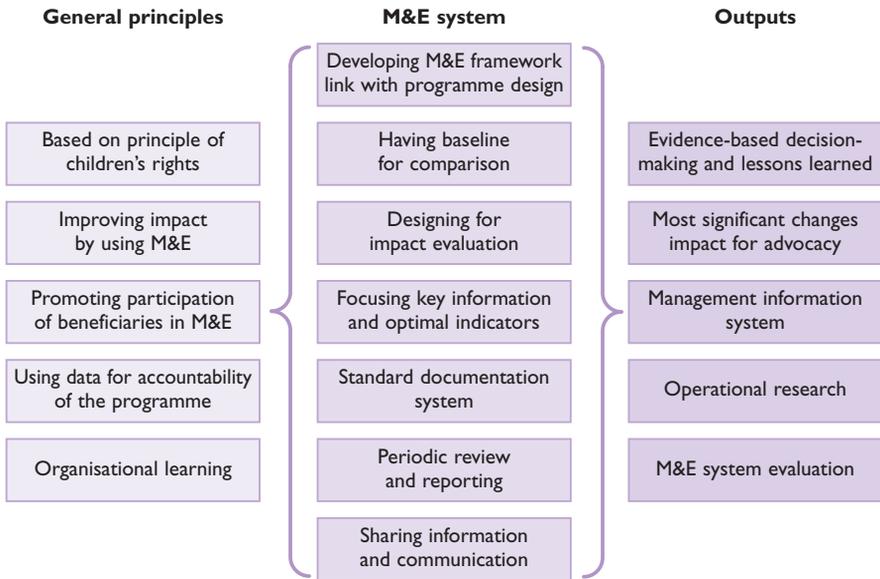
- capacity within your teams
- an understanding of children and their rights, both within your teams and by your donors.

The M&E framework most commonly used by development practitioners and donors is the Logical Framework. Below, we have adapted the Logical Framework to include a rights-based approach.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Underlying assumptions</b>
What information do you have? What additional information do you need? How will you get it?	<i>Goal to vision:</i> is the achievement sustainable? Were underlying causes resolved?
What information do you have? What additional information do you need? How will you get it?	<i>Objectives to goal:</i> will the sum of your objectives achieve your goal? What are the barriers?
What information do you have? What additional information do you need? How will you get it?	<i>Participation to goal:</i> if the project process improves participation, and produces the desired results, what external factors are needed to reach your goal?
What information do you have? What additional information do you need? How will you get it?	<i>Output to goal:</i> if the programme achieves participation and produces its outputs, what external factors are needed to reach the goal? <i>Output to objectives:</i> will the success of your outputs achieve your objectives?
What information do you have? What additional information do you need? How will you get it?	<i>Activity to output:</i> what external factors must be realised to produce the planned outputs on time?

In **Myanmar**, with multiple donor requirements and agency approaches, Save the Children tried to establish a common M&E framework. Comparing the various reporting formats, we arrived at a commonly agreed set of principles and approaches that could be expanded to the whole of our learning programme. It is summarised below.

**Monitoring and evaluation framework – Myanmar**



**Measuring children’s participation<sup>3</sup>**

You need to recognise that children are competent actors in their own development and that they have the potential to play a constructive role in the development of their communities. To involve children meaningfully, you need to analyse and understand how they already participate in their communities. Meet children where they are and where they meet – don’t just invite them to participate and fit in to *your* programmes.

You can use scales of participation to see how far children are taking part in your activities. You can also use them to set performance targets or to compare projects.

In **Cuba**, Save the Children assessed the levels and quality of children’s participation in project activities, using the tool opposite.

**Assessing children's participation**

Children and young people's involvement in:	Level of child and youth participation			
	Not involved	Receive information and services	Provide input	Responsible for planning and action
Planning the service or project				
Recruiting staff				
Selecting leaders and volunteers				
Delivering the service				
Reviewing and evaluating the service				
Training and peer education				
Policy advocacy work				

**Remember!**

You need to put children at the centre of your M&E activities to improve:

- **your learning** – setting your objectives and monitoring whether you are achieving them helps you understand the relationship between your work and changes in children's lives. You can share your successes and help others avoid failure in future
- **your accountability** – measuring the impact of your work and involving those you are working for ensures that you are held to account for your actions and provides a good example to other duty-bearers you may be trying to influence
- **your decision-making** – you need to know what you are doing well, and what you are doing less well, to make changes to improve your effectiveness and impact on children's lives.

Yes, but...

**“ Our donor imposes a monitoring and evaluation system and associated reporting requirements. ”**

Most donors welcome reporting that shows the impact your activities are having on children's lives. Stick to their format. But if you have set out your goals, objectives and indicators, and can show the extent to which you are meeting them, this should fit well with donors' reporting requirements. They will want evidence that your activities are having a positive impact for children, and that their money is being well spent.

**“ The programme staff, even if they have some of the skills to carry out some participative monitoring and research, have very limited written skills. ”**

So use this as an opportunity to invest in your staff! Help and encourage them to learn new skills. This will take time and money, so you must have the support of senior managers. But you are building staff capacity for the longer-term benefit of your organisation and the children and communities you work with.

**“ Even if we had all this documentation how would we know what to do with it? ”**

Make it useful from the start! Your learning programme must be part of your overall strategy. Plan and design on the basis of what you want to achieve.

**“ How can we carry out such complete and in-depth information gathering and recording in an emergency situation, where time is short and resources are scarce? ”**

Be prepared. Having an up-to-date CRSA and including ways of gathering information in difficult situations in your emergency preparedness plans will help you plan for the necessary resources. You will then be better able to demonstrate impact, good practice and effective advocacy and be well positioned to make the case for further resources.

**“ Do we need an M&E officer if we're going to succeed in carrying out all of this? ”**

Be careful if you decide to create a 'learning officer' post. This is not an excuse to hand over responsibility for learning to one person or even one unit! Staff at all levels of your organisation need to adopt a learning approach.

**“We already have a raft of reports to write, internal and external. This is just adding to the load and taking staff away from doing their real jobs.”**

You need to ask the right questions, record the answers, analyse them and use the information effectively to make a real difference to children's lives. You may need to make some changes as you go along, which requires leadership and financial investment. But if yours is a learning organisation, this should be integral to the way you work rather than additional to it.

## Where to go for more information

*Research for Development: A practical guide*, Laws S, Save the Children UK/Sage Publications, 2003

You can use this book as a quick reference manual. It has two sections – managing research for development and doing research for development. It outlines the role and purpose of research, highlights issues specific to development research and demonstrates how to evaluate and secure the best results from research.

*Toolkits: A practical guide to planning, monitoring, evaluation and assessment*, Save the Children, 2003

Use this book as you would use a real ‘toolkit’. Select the tools you need (in this case, approaches or techniques) to deal with a specific problem. It has three parts: read part one when you are planning, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating your impact. Part two looks in more detail at the processes of planning, monitoring, review, evaluation and impact assessment. Part three describes the different tools and techniques available.

*The Sphere Project: Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response*, The Sphere Project, 2004

This manual offers a set of minimum standards and key indicators that inform different aspects of humanitarian action, from initial assessment through to co-ordination and advocacy. [www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

*Children and Participation: Research, monitoring and evaluation with children and young people*, Save the Children UK, 2001

This tells you how to involve children and young people in gathering information. It will guide you to other sources of information rather than provide detailed descriptions. It also includes information on good practice, ethics, methods and tools.

*Introduction to learning and impact assessment*, Save the Children UK, 2006

*Global Impact Monitoring Guidelines*, Save the Children UK, 2004 and *Global Impact Monitoring Format*, Save the Children UK, 2004

*Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The good enough guide*, the Emergency Capacity Building Project, 2007

## Recommended websites

**www.oneworldtrust.org** for information on international accountability and monitoring on international targets and pledges through the Global Accountability Project.

**www.alnap.org** dedicated to improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian action by sharing lessons, identifying common problems and, where appropriate, building consensus on approaches.

**www.hapinternational.org** The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership is committed to making their work more accountable to disaster survivors. It includes a set of principles, and auditable benchmarks that assure accountability to beneficiaries.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is not to be confused with the monitoring and reporting process of the UNCRC itself which offers an excellent source of data as a contribution to CRSA, opportunities for engagement and advocacy as part of programme activity, and a framework for monitoring the rights climate in any context and the extent of realisation of children's rights. Engaging with the UNCRC monitoring and reporting process should be a key element of any CRP approach. It is fully explored in *Reporting to the UNCRC – a Starter Pack for Country Programmes*, Save the Children UK, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Patel M *Human Rights as an Emerging Development Paradigm and some implications for programme planning, monitoring and evaluation*, UNICEF, Nairobi, 2001

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Theis J *Promoting Rights Based Approaches*, Save the Children Sweden, 2004