
Understanding monitoring and evaluation

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M&E, including data collection, analysis and learning, is key to helping implementers and other stakeholders understand the outcomes reintegration programmes have on returnees, communities and countries of origin. They can support the improvement of reintegration programmes and their outcomes.

M&E is part of a results-based management (RBM)⁴⁰ system. RBM is based on clearly defined and measurable results, and uses various processes, methodologies and tools to achieve those results. Results-based M&E moves from focusing on outputs to emphasizing outcomes and impact. In this way, M&E helps to:

- Demonstrate results as part of accountability to beneficiaries and donors;
- Put in place the right mechanisms for principled and evidence-based approaches;
- Identify possible gaps and improve reintegration programming through evidence-based learning;
- Provide evidence on the challenges and opportunities of reintegration for governments and non-governmental partners, migrants and non-migrants;
- Ensure availability of reliable data for analysis and research purposes.

M&E can be viewed as a tool to enable results-based management – a management tool to help decision makers track progress and show an intervention’s impact. M&E should therefore be incorporated throughout a programme’s life cycle.

Figure 5.1: Planning, monitoring and evaluation cycle⁴¹

What is monitoring? ⁴² Monitoring is a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specific indicators to provide management and stakeholders of an ongoing development initiative with information on the extent to which progress towards programme objectives has been made.

Why monitor? Monitoring generates information for timely decision-making. In this way it helps decision makers be proactive, rather than reactive, in situations where it is too late to control damage. Monitoring helps determine whether:

- Planned activities are actually taking place;
- There are gaps in their implementation;
- Resources are being used efficiently;
- The programme's operating context has changed.

What is evaluation? Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of the design, implementation and results of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy. It differs from monitoring in that it involves a judgement of the value of the activity and its results.⁴³

Why evaluate? Monitoring asks the questions “what has been done? How has it been done? When has it been done?”. Evaluation also answers these questions, and in addition helps answer the questions “why and how well it was done?”. Evaluation allows for critical examination of interventions. Some evaluations also help answer why one intervention worked better than another.

Evaluations are the main pathway towards discussing causality. Monitoring shows whether indicators have changed, but it is limited in explaining in detail why this change occurred. Evaluations **complement** monitoring by investigating why changes did or did not occur and drawing conclusions about why this did (or did not) happen. Evaluations contribute not only to accountability, but to creating space for reflection, learning and sharing findings. They are a source of reliable information to help improve assistance to direct beneficiaries, partners and donors.

? **Monitoring versus evaluation**

Although often grouped together, monitoring and evaluation are two distinct but related functions. The main differences between them are their focus on assessment and their timing in terms of the programme cycle.

Monitoring helps identify immediate patterns and trends that are useful for managing programme implementation. Monitoring focuses more on immediate and intermediate results. Measuring longer-term results such as progress towards long-term outcomes or objectives requires a longer time frame and more focused assessment. This is provided by evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation are complementary – as well as mutually beneficial – functions.

5.1.1 Ethical considerations for M&E

When carrying out M&E activities, it is important to adhere to specific norms and standards. For evaluation, adhering to UNEG's Norms and Standards for Evaluation is recommended.⁴⁴ IOM also developed a monitoring policy and an evaluation policy in 2018⁴⁵ and as part of this laid out monitoring principles: credibility, utility, ethics, impartiality, transparency, disclosure and participation. M&E practitioners should be careful to follow all ethical principles. Below is a list of ethical considerations that are based on the IOM monitoring policy.

Table 5.1: Ethical considerations for M&E

Ethical considerations

Personal and professional integrity

- Be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environments in which migrants work
- Address issues of discrimination and gender inequality.

No personal or sectoral interests

- Avoid twisting the truth and producing positive findings because of a conflict of interest or other payoffs or penalties.
- Do not allow unsubstantiated opinions to influence the monitoring and or evaluation activities because of sloppy, unreliable or unprofessional evaluation or monitoring practices.

Respect the right of institutions and beneficiaries

- It needs to be explained to respondents why and how information will be collected, stored, used and shared; assure them of the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time from participation without any consequence. Hence, withdrawing should not impact a service or delivery of goods due to be provided to the participants.
- Include informed consent forms in all data collection tools.
- Train data collectors on informed consent practice.
- Do not make promises to beneficiaries or participants that cannot be kept in order to induce them to cooperate.

Ethical considerations

Ensure privacy, data protection and confidentiality

- Understand how benefits or the expectation of benefits, may incentivize or influence respondent answers and participation.
- Honour commitments made.
- Take care that those involved in M&E have a chance to examine statements made.
- Use data sharing agreements with all partners if data is to be shared, inform beneficiaries when asking for consent.
- Conduct a risk-benefit and a sensitivity assessment prior to collecting any personal data and prior to any other processing.
- Assure respondents that gathered data is used anonymously without bridging individual's privacy.
- Separate personal data (personally identifying information) from the response. To protect confidentiality, use an ID number for all beneficiaries and attach it to the database and files used to collect information, for data analysis and data sharing.
- Establish a secure filing system for hard-copy documents and encrypted (password-protected) electronic files with all personal data, especially highly sensitive ones.
- Personal data of returnees is only shared based on free and informed consent of the returnee.

⁴⁰ UNDG, [Results-based Management Handbook](#) (New York, 2011).

⁴¹ UNDP, *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results* (2009).

⁴² IOM, *Monitoring Policy* (Geneva, 2018).

⁴³ OECD/DAC, *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management* (Paris, 2002).

⁴⁴ UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (New York, 2016).

⁴⁵ IOM Monitoring Policy (Geneva, 2018).

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