

Rough Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation in Oxfam GB



1. What is Monitoring and Evaluation?

Monitoring is the systematic assessment of a programme's performance over time. It involves the ongoing collection and review of data to provide programme managers and other stakeholders with indications of progress against programme plans and towards programme objectives.

Evaluations complement ongoing monitoring activities by providing more in-depth, objective assessments of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of programmes at a particular point in time.

2. Why do we monitor and evaluate our programmes?

Monitoring and evaluation is part of everyday programme management and is critical to the success of our programmes. It helps us to **learn** what does and doesn't work towards overcoming poverty and suffering and to adapt our programmes in the light of our findings. This, in turn, helps us to maximise the effectiveness of our interventions. The processes and products of monitoring and evaluation also help us to be **accountable** to our wide range of stakeholders by providing opportunities to give an account for our decisions and actions and opportunities to take account of the views and opinions of others.

3. How do we monitor and evaluate our programmes in Oxfam GB?

Monitoring and evaluation happens throughout the programme cycle and should be considered from programme design through to exit and reporting.

(a) Programme design

Programme logic: In order to do good quality monitoring and evaluation, we need to design coherent programmes with strong internal logic in which it is clear: what we want to achieve, how we expect to achieve it, what assumptions we are making and what evidence we need to show we are making a difference. Developing a clear programme logic model together with partners and other key stakeholders can help to build a joint vision of how we expect change to happen and the role each party will play in bringing about this change. It can also help to make explicit the assumptions we are making about the relationship between the individual project activities and the overall change we hope to see from the programme.

Indicators: Strong programme logic can also help us to identify the evidence required to show whether or not the programme has been successful and the indicators we can use to measure this. Two types of indicators are commonly used for monitoring: outcome indicators and process or activity indicators. Process indicators are used to measure the progress of activities against work plans while outcome indicators are used to measure progress towards the changes we hope to achieve. Good indicators are essential for a good monitoring system as they drive subsequent data collection and analysis.

Monitoring & evaluation plan: At the stage of programme design, it's important to identify the key outcome indicators that we will track throughout the life of the programme, together with a plan for doing so. This plan should be developed and agreed with partners, and included in the PIP in OPAL.



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Questions to consider when developing a monitoring and evaluation plan:

- What information will be collected, when and by whom?
- Will a baseline study be undertaken, and if so, when?
- When will Monitoring Reviews be carried out?
- Will a mid-term and final evaluation be undertaken, and if so, when?
- What resources are required to carry out these activities?

"We want to measure how effective we are, not how busy we are!"

"What's the cost of not knowing whether a programme works?"

"If we aren't rewarding success, we are probably rewarding failure!"

(b) Programme implementation

Baseline study: Ideally a baseline will be undertaken prior to the start of the programme so that change can be measured against it.

Collecting data: Programme decisions should be based on a sound knowledge of what is and isn't working towards the intended change. This means that reliable monitoring information about the programme's progress against work plans and indicators of change must be collected during field visits and used to inform programme discussions and decisions.

Reviewing data: Monitoring Reviews are regular learning events for programme staff and partners to reflect upon information gathered through monitoring activities, to analyse what it is saying about the programme and the context in which it operates, and to decide what that means for future work. All programmes must hold at least two Monitoring Reviews per year and all Monitoring Reviews must cover 8 questions identified in the mandatory requirements.

Mid-term evaluations: Mid-term evaluations may be carried out at an appropriate moment in the life of a programme to check whether we are on track to achieve the intended impact and to learn what is and isn't working.

(c) Programme evaluation

More in-depth programme evaluations are carried out at the end of the programme in accordance with Oxfam's Evaluation Policy. By critically assessing the factors that led to a programme's success or failure, evaluations help us to build our institutional knowledge about what does and doesn't work towards overcoming poverty. This then enables us to make more informed programme and policy decisions, be accountable to our wide range of stakeholders and increase our aid effectiveness. All evaluation reports, together with their management response, must be attached to the relevant PIP in OPAL and sent to the Programme Resource Centre for wider dissemination. When appropriate, findings from programme evaluations also feed into key evidence-based learning events such as Country Learning Reviews, Regional Learning Reviews and Oxfam Reflects.