

Annex

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Manager

M&E staff (project or partners)

Consultants

IFAD and Cooperating Institution staff

Glossary of M&E Concepts and Terms



Managing for Impact in Rural Development
A Guide for Project M&E



This Annex contains a list of terms and their definitions, as used within IFAD-supported projects and in this Guide.

This Annex is useful for:

managers, M&E staff, consultants and IFAD and cooperating institution staff to ensure there is common understanding of key M&E concepts.

Term	Definition used in this Guide
Accountability	Obligation of government, public services or funding agencies to demonstrate to citizens that contracted work has been conducted in compliance with agreed rules and standards or to report fairly and accurately on performance results vis-à-vis mandated roles and/or plans. This may require a careful, even legally defensible, demonstration that the work is consistent with the contract terms. Projects commonly focus on upward accountability to the funding agency, while downward accountability involves making accounts and plans transparent to the primary stakeholders. Ensuring accountability is one part of the function of monitoring and evaluation (learning and management are the other two).
Activity	Actions taken or work performed in a project to produce specific outputs by using inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources.
Adaptive management	A process that integrates project design, management and monitoring to provide a framework for testing assumptions, adaptation and learning.
Annual review	See "Review".
Annual work plan and budget (AWPB)	The annual commitment of the project towards the communities, the Government and IFAD, and of which implementation progress will be measured. It details the operational aspects of a project, based on the strategic plan and the situation on the ground. It is the basis for the detailed scheduling of activities and specific assignments in monthly management meetings. It is also the foundation for monitoring progress at the activity level and regarding resource use/allocation. Importantly, in the more demand-driven projects, the AWPB is also the formal (and legal) expression of the consolidated set of projects and initiatives of the primary stakeholders that will be supported over the coming year.
Appraisal	Assessment, in accordance with established decision criteria, of the feasibility and acceptability of a project or programme prior to a funding commitment. Criteria commonly include relevance and sustainability. An appraisal may also relate to the examination of opinions as part of the process for selecting which project to fund.
Appraisal report	The document that results from the appraisal mission and serves as the basis for project operational planning and annual planning. It is the overall framework (but not a blueprint) for the project strategy.
Approach	A specific and chosen way of advancing or proceeding.
Assessment	A process (which may or may not be systematic) of gathering information, analysing it, then making a judgement on the basis of the information.
Assumption	External factors (i.e. events, conditions or decisions) that could affect the progress or success of a project or programme. They are necessary to achieve the project objectives, but are largely or completely beyond the control of the project management. They are worded as positive conditions. <i>Initial assumptions</i> are those conditions perceived to be essential for the success of a project or programme. <i>Critical (or "killer") assumptions</i> are those conditions perceived to threaten the implementation of a project or programme.
Attribution	The causal link of one thing to another; e.g. the extent to which observed (or expected to be observed) changes can be linked to a specific intervention in view of the effects of other interventions or confounding factors.

Audit	Verification of the legality and regularity of the implementation of resources, carried out by independent auditors. An audit determines whether, and to what extent, the activities and organisational procedures conform to norms and criteria set out in advance. An audit helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and government processes. In an <i>internal audit</i> the auditors report to the organisation being audited, while in an <i>external audit</i> the auditors report to either those who own the organisation (for example the board) or fund it.
Baseline information	Information – usually consisting of facts and figures collected at the initial stages of a project – that provides a basis for measuring progress in achieving project objectives and outputs.
Baseline survey/study	An analysis describing the situation in a project area – including data on individual primary stakeholders – prior to a development intervention. Progress (results and accomplishments) can be assessed and comparisons made against it. It also serves as an important reference for the completion evaluation.
Benchmark	Reference point or standard against which performance or achievements can be compared. A benchmark might refer to what has been achieved in the past, by other comparable organisations, or what could reasonably have been achieved under the circumstances.
Beneficiaries	The individuals, groups or organisations who, in their own view and whether targeted or not, benefit directly or indirectly from the development intervention. In this guide, they are referred to as the primary stakeholders of a project.
Budget plan schedule	Plan assigning the quarterly cost to be incurred by the different activities as well as subdividing these costs on the basis of the source of finance.
Budget plan summary	Summary of the budget information according to output, project component, district and facilitation units, and national and overall project level.
Capacity	The ability of individuals and organisations to perform functions effectively, efficiently and in a sustainable manner.
Capacity-building	The processes through which capacity is created. This is an increasingly key crosscutting issue in poverty alleviation projects.
Causal relationship	A logical connection or cause-and-effect linkage existing in the achievement of related, interdependent results. Generally the term refers to plausible linkages, not statistically accurate relationships.
Causality analysis	The study of cause-and-effect relations that link an intervention to its impacts.
Community	A group of people living in the same locality and sharing some common characteristics.
Community participation	Generally considered to be the active participation of community members in local development activities. In practice, however, the term refers to a wide range of degrees of local involvement in external development interventions, from token and passive involvement to more empowerment-oriented forms of local decision-making.
Completion	The final phase in the project cycle, when a project completion report is produced. “Lessons learned” are identified and the various project completion activities take place. It can include an end-of-project evaluation.
Completion evaluation	An external evaluation that occurs after project completion.

<i>Completion report</i>	See "Project completion report".
<i>Conceptual model</i>	A diagram of a set of relationships between factors that are believed to impact or lead to a target condition. It is the foundation of project design, management and monitoring; and it is the first part of a complete project plan.
<i>Control group</i>	A specially selected subgroup of people who purposefully do not receive the same treatment, input or training, etc. as the target group. Thus, differences between the control group and the target group can be measured and evaluated.
<i>Cooperating institution</i>	The organisation that, in a loan agreement, is responsible for the loan administration and the project supervision on behalf of IFAD.
<i>Cost-benefit analysis</i>	The comparison of investment and operating costs with the direct benefits or impact generated by the investment in a given intervention. It uses a variety of methods and means of expressing results.
<i>Cost effectiveness</i>	Comparison of the relative costs of achieving a given result or output by different means (employed where benefits are difficult to determine).
<i>Country programme evaluation</i>	Evaluation of one or more donors' or agencies' portfolio of development interventions in a partner country and the assistance strategy behind the interventions.
<i>Country/COSOP strategy</i>	A framework of objectives and priorities for a country drawn up and used to steer investments.
<i>Critical assumption</i>	An important factor, outside of aid itself, that influences the success of the activity, but over which the manager has no influence. Initial assumptions constitute perceived conditions for the success of a project. See "Assumptions".
<i>Critical reflection</i>	Questioning and analysing experiences, observations, theories, beliefs and/or assumptions.
<i>Downward accountability</i>	The process by which development organisations are accountable to their partners and poor and marginalised groups. It entails greater participation and transparency in organisations' work.
<i>Effect</i>	Intended or unintended change resulting directly or indirectly from a development intervention.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	A measure of the extent to which a project attains its objectives at the goal or purpose level; i.e. the extent to which a development intervention has attained, or is expected to attain, its relevant objectives efficiently and in a sustainable way.
<i>Efficacy</i>	The extent to which the project's objectives were achieved or expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.
<i>Efficiency</i>	A measure of how economically inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into outputs.
<i>Evaluability</i>	The extent to which an activity or project can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion.
<i>Evaluation</i>	A systematic (and as objective as possible) examination of a planned, ongoing or completed project. It aims to answer specific management questions and to judge the overall value of an endeavour and supply lessons learned to improve future actions, planning and decision-making. Evaluations commonly seek to determine the efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and the relevance of the project or organisation's objectives. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, offering concrete lessons learned to help partners and funding agencies make decisions.
<i>External evaluation</i>	Evaluation of a project carried out by IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Studies and implementing partners.

Facilitator	A person who helps members of a group conduct a meeting in an efficient and effective way but who does not dictate what will happen.
Feedback	The transmission of evaluation findings to parties for whom it is relevant and useful so as to facilitate learning. This may involve the collection and dissemination of findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from experience. Specifically in the context of evaluation, to return and share the evaluation results with those who participated in the evaluation.
Formative evaluation	Evaluation conducted during implementation to improve performance. It is intended for managers and direct supporters of a project.
Goal	The higher-order programme or sector objective to which a development intervention, such as a project, is intended to contribute. Thus it is a statement of intent.
Grassroots organisations	The organisations based in communities that (may) represent the primary stakeholders vis-à-vis the project and can be implementing partners.
Horizontal logic	A summary of the project approach whose objective in a logframe is to define how objectives specified in the project description will be measured and the means by which the measurement will be verified. In this Guide, it is a summary of the M&E matrix.
Impact	The changes in the lives of rural people, as perceived by them and their partners at the time of evaluation, plus sustainability-enhancing change in their environment to which the project has contributed. Changes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended. In the logframe terminology these “perceived changes in the lives of the people” may correspond either to the purpose level or to the goal level of a project intervention.
Impact assessment	The process of assessing the impact of a programme in an intervention area.
Implementing partners	Those organisations either sub-contracted by the Project Management Unit or those organisations officially identified in the loan agreement as responsible for implementing a defined aspect of the project. Also known as “co-implementing partners”.
Independent evaluation	See “External evaluation”. An evaluation carried out by entities and persons free of control by those responsible for the design and implementation of the development intervention.
Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable basis for assessing achievement, change or performance. A unit of information measured over time that can help show changes in a specific condition. A given goal or objective can have multiple indicators.
Indirect effects	The unplanned changes brought about as a result of the intervention.
Information management system	A system of inputting, collating and organising data that should provide selective data and reports to the management, to assist in monitoring and controlling the project organisation, resources, activities and results.
Input	The financial, human and material resources necessary to produce the intended outputs of a project.
Intervention logic	See “Objective hierarchy”.
Interim evaluation	A project evaluation undertaken by IFAD’s Office of Evaluation and Studies toward the end of the project implementation period (about one year before the loan closing date) when IFAD is considering a request to finance a second phase or a new project in the same area. An interim evaluation is a key opportunity for IFAD, the government, implementing partners and primary stakeholders to learn together from experience before embarking on the design of a follow-up project.

Joint evaluation	An evaluation to which different institutions and/or partners contribute.
Learning	Reflecting on experience to identify how a situation or future actions could be improved and then using this knowledge to make actual improvements. This can be individual or group-based. Learning involves applying lessons learned to future actions, which provides the basis for another cycle of learning.
Lessons learned	Knowledge generated by reflecting on experience that has the potential to improve future actions. A lesson learned summarises knowledge at a point in time, while learning is an ongoing process.
Loan agreement	An agreement spelling out the project's goal, area, main components and budget by expenditure category. It contains formal conditions that must be complied with, primarily relating to procurement, reporting and financial management.
Logical framework approach (LFA)	An analytical, presentational and management tool that involves problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, developing a hierarchy of objectives and selecting a preferred implementation strategy. It helps to identify strategic elements (inputs, outputs, purpose, goal) and their causal relationships, as well as the external assumptions (risks) that may influence success and failure. It thus facilitates planning, execution and evaluation of a project.
Logical framework matrix	Also known as "logframe" or "logframe matrix". A table, usually consisting of four rows and four columns, that summarises what the project intends to do and how (necessary inputs, outputs, purpose, objectives), what the key assumptions are, and how outputs and outcomes will be monitored and evaluated.
Managing for impact model	The process of guiding the overall project strategy, creating a learning environment, and ensuring effective project operations by developing and using an effective M&E system.
Management information system	See "Information management system".
Means of verification	The expected source(s) of information that can help answer the performance question or indicators. This is found in the third column of the standard logframe. It is detailed further in the M&E matrix.
Mid-term evaluation	An external evaluation performed towards the middle of the period of implementation of the project, whose principal goal is to draw conclusions for reorienting the project strategy.
Mid-term review (MTR)	An elaborate version of a supervision mission, with the same actors, that sometimes questions the design of the project. There is no standardised format and so can range from a supervision mission to a full-scale mid-term evaluation-like exercise.
Monitoring	The regular collection and analysis of information to assist timely decision-making, ensure accountability and provide the basis for evaluation and learning. It is a continuing function that uses methodical collection of data to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing project or programme with early indications of progress and achievement of objectives.
Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)	The combination of monitoring and evaluation which together provide the knowledge required for: a) effective project management and b) reporting and accountability responsibilities.
M&E framework	An overview of the M&E system developed during the design phase of a project and included in the project appraisal report.
M&E matrix	A table describing the performance questions, information gathering requirements (including indicators), reflection and review events with stakeholders, and resources and activities required to implement a functional M&E system. This matrix lists how data will be collected, when, by whom and where.

<i>M&E (learning) plan</i>	An overall framework of performance and learning questions, information gathering requirements (including indicators), reflection and review events with stakeholders, and resources and activities required to implement a functional M&E system.
<i>M&E (learning) system</i>	The set of planning, information gathering and synthesis, and reflection and reporting processes, along with the necessary supporting conditions and capacities required for the M&E outputs to make a valuable contribution to project decision-making and learning.
<i>M&E unit</i>	The generic title used for units at both the project and sectoral levels responsible for M&E.
<i>Narrative summary</i>	The first column of the logframe matrix in which the inputs, outputs, purpose and goal are formulated. See "Objective Hierarchy".
<i>Objective</i>	A specific statement detailing the desired accomplishments or outcomes of a project at different levels (short to long term). A good objective meets the criteria of being impact oriented, measurable, time limited, specific and practical. Objectives can be arranged in a hierarchy of two or more levels (see "Objective hierarchy").
<i>Objective hierarchy</i>	The different levels of objectives, from activities up to goal, as specified in the first column of the logframe. If the project is designed well, realisation of each level of objectives in the hierarchy should lead to fulfilment of the project goal.
<i>Objectively verifiable indicators</i>	A group of criteria (not necessarily measurable) used to verify the degree of accomplishment (foreseen or actual) of the sectoral purpose, the objective, and the inputs and outputs of a project. They can be quantitative, and therefore both verifiable and measurable, or qualitative, and therefore only verifiable.
<i>Operational plan</i>	See "Annual work plan and budget".
<i>Outcome</i>	The results achieved at the level of "purpose" in the objective hierarchy. In IFAD's terminology, outcome is part of impact (result at purpose and goal level).
<i>Outputs</i>	The tangible (easily measurable, practical), immediate and intended results to be produced through sound management of the agreed inputs. Examples of outputs include goods, services or infrastructure produced by a project and meant to help realise its purpose. These may also include changes, resulting from the intervention, that are needed to achieve the outcomes at the purpose level.
<i>Output indicators</i>	Indicator at the output level of the objective hierarchy, usually the quantity and quality of outputs and the timing of their delivery.
<i>Participation</i>	One or more processes in which an individual (or group) takes part in specific decision-making and action, and over which s/he may exercise specific controls. It is often used to refer specifically to processes in which primary stakeholders take an active part in planning and decision-making, implementation, learning and evaluation. This often has the intention of sharing control over the resources generated and responsibility for their future use.
<i>Participatory evaluation</i>	A broad term for the involvement of primary and other stakeholders in evaluation. The primary focus may be the information needs of stakeholders rather than the donor.
<i>Participatory impact monitoring</i>	A continual immediate assessment of the impact, used to control and steer purposes. It is characterised by the way actors at various levels attempt to collaborate in order to reflect on the impacts.
<i>Partner</i>	The organisation in the project country with which the funding agency collaborates to achieve mutually agreed upon objectives. Partners may include host country governments, local and international NGOs, universities, professional and business associations, private businesses, etc.

Performance	The degree to which a development intervention or a development partner operates according to specific criteria/standards/guidelines or achieves results in accordance with stated goals or plans.
Performance question	A question that helps guide the information seeking and analysis process, to help understand whether the project is performing as planned or, if not, why not.
Planning system	A system including the following main aspects: strategic planning, annual planning and budgeting, and monthly activity scheduling.
Precondition	Condition that must be fulfilled before a project can become effective (when disbursement against the loan becomes possible).
Primary stakeholders	The main intended beneficiaries of a project.
Process evaluation	An evaluation aimed at describing and understanding the internal dynamics and relationships of a project, programme or institution.
Process monitoring	The activities of consciously selecting processes, selectively and systematically observing them to compare them with others, and communicating about what has been observed to learn how to steer and shape the processes.
Project	An intervention that consists of a set of planned, interrelated activities designed to achieve defined objectives within a given budget and a specified period of time.
Project completion report	The report that describes the situation at the end of a development intervention, including lessons learned. The project completion report (PCR) is the responsibility of the borrower (i.e. the government).
Project cycle management	A tool for understanding the tasks and management functions to be performed in the course of a project or programme's lifetime. This commonly includes the stages of identification, preparation, appraisal, implementation/supervision, evaluation, completion and lesson learning.
Project evaluation	Evaluation of an individually planned development intervention designed to achieve specific objectives within a given budget and time period.
Project impacts	The changes in a situation that arise from the combined effects of project activities, or the extent to which the goal or highest-level project objectives are achieved. Impact also refers to any unintended positive or negative changes that result from a project. Impact sometimes means anything achieved by the project beyond direct outputs.
Project implementation manual	A project-specific document that sets out the project strategy, operational activities, steps and procedures, and responsibilities of key stakeholders. This often includes a detailed M&E operational plan.
Project management	The process of leading, planning, organising, staffing and controlling activities, people and other resources in order to achieve particular objectives.
Project performance	The overall quality of a project in terms of its impact, value to beneficiaries, implementation effectiveness, and efficiency and sustainability.
Project strategy	An overall framework of what a project will achieve and how it will be implemented.
Proxy indicator	An appropriate indicator that is used to represent a less easily measurable one.
Purpose	The positive improved situation that a project or programme is accountable for achieving.

Qualitative	Something that is not summarised in numerical form, such as minutes from community meetings and general notes from observations. Qualitative data normally describe people's knowledge, attitudes or behaviours.
Quantitative	Something measured or measurable by, or concerned with, quantity and expressed in numbers or quantities.
Reach	The beneficiaries and other stakeholders of a development intervention, whether sectors, groups of people or geographic areas of the country or region.
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a project are consistent with the target group's priorities and the recipient and donors' policies.
Reliability	Consistency or dependability of data and evaluation judgements, with reference to the quality of the instruments, procedures and analyses used to collect and interpret evaluation data. Information is reliable when repeated observations using the same instrument under identical conditions produce similar results.
Resources	Items that a project has or needs in order to operate, such as staff time, managerial time, local knowledge, money, equipment, trained personnel and socio-political opportunities.
Result	The measurable output, outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of a development intervention.
Review	An assessment of the performance of a project or programme, periodically or on an as-needed basis. A review is more extensive than monitoring, but less so than evaluation.
Risk	Possible negative external factors, i.e. events, conditions or decisions, which are expected to seriously delay or prevent the achievement of the project objectives and outputs (and which are normally largely or completely beyond the control of the project management).
Sample	The selection of a representative part of a population in order to determine parameters or characteristics of the whole population.
Self- evaluation	An evaluation by those who are administering or participating in a programme or project in the field and/or by those who are entrusted with the design and delivery of (part of) a development intervention. As with any evaluation, a self-evaluation focuses on overall impact and performance, or specific aspects thereof.
Situation analysis	The process of understanding the status, condition, trends and key issues affecting people, ecosystems and institutions in a given geographic context at any level (local, national, regional, international).
Stakeholders	An agency, organisation, group or individual who has a direct or indirect interest in the project/programme, or who affects or is affected positively or negatively by the implementation and outcome of it. In this Guide, <i>primary stakeholders</i> is the term used for the main intended beneficiaries of a project.
Stakeholder participation	Active involvement by stakeholders in the design, management and monitoring of the project. Full participation means all representatives of key stakeholder groups at the project site become involved in mutually agreed, appropriate ways.

Strategic planning	A broad description of the activities that would normally be carried out as part of project development, from start to finish, and the milestones that would generally be achieved along the way, such as implementation agreements, registration, etc. The plan should also explain the different aspects that need to be addressed as part of project development, and illustrate basic principles that are to be followed. The sequence of and relationship between main activities and milestones should also be described. The appraisal report should be used as a starting point for refinement of the strategic plan as well as detailed operational planning.
Supervision	A process in which the legally responsible organisation (cooperating institution or IFAD itself) administers the loan, periodically reviews progress towards objectives, identifies key obstacles, helps find workable solutions and makes strategic changes, as required.
Sustainability	The likelihood that the positive effects of a project (such as assets, skills, facilities or improved services) will persist for an extended period after the external assistance ends.
Target	A specified objective that indicates the number, timing and location of that which is to be realised.
Target group	The specific group for whose benefit the project or programme is undertaken, closely related to impact and relevance.
Triangulation	Use of a variety of sources, methods or field team members to cross check and validate data and information to limit biases.
Validity	The extent to which something is reliable and actually measures up to or makes a correct claim. This includes data collection strategies and instruments.
Validation	The process of cross-checking to ensure that the data obtained from one monitoring method are confirmed by the data obtained from a different method.
Vertical logic	A summary of the project that spells out the causal relationships between, on the one hand, each level of the objective hierarchy (inputs-outputs, outputs-purpose, purpose-goal) and, on the other, the critical assumptions and uncertainties that affect these linkages and lie outside the project manager's control.
Work plan	A detailed document stating which activities are going to be carried out in a given time period, how the activities will be carried out and how the activities relate to the common objectives and vision. The work plan is designed according to the logical framework and contains a description in each cell of the work plan table of each activity and output, its verifiable indicators, the means of verification and its assumptions.

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