

Starting  
shortly

Please  
wait!

# ActivityInfo

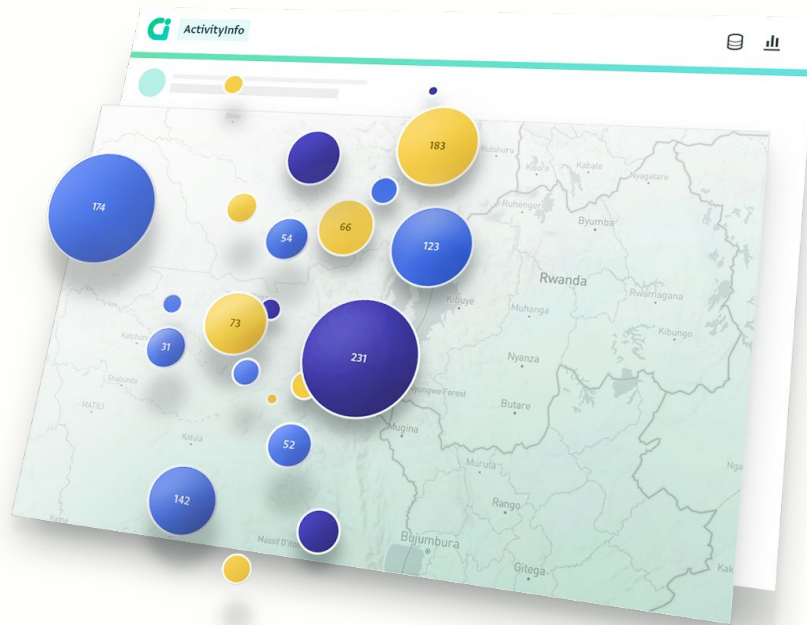
Best Practices for use of evidence

For M&E professionals and Program Managers

# Presented by the ActivityInfo Team

## Software for Monitoring & Evaluation

- Track activities, outcomes
- Beneficiary management
- Surveys
- Work offline/online



# Evidence based decision making



## Incentive for this webinar series:

- *The fundamental key is to raise awareness upon evidence and the quality of evidence*
- *Raise awareness on the available tools and best practices that enable us to use evidence*
- *There exist significant improvements towards evidence based decision making, but there is room for improvement.*

# Today's session objective

- **Pathway from data collection to data use and learning and how this is associated with the project life implementation cycle?**
  - What is the role of MEAL system design in evidence based decision making?
- **The importance of planning for data use: the enabling factor at the project design and launch phase**
  - How the MEAL plan (or PMP), the learning questions development and the establishment of Feedback, Complaint, Response, Mechanism (FCRM), the stakeholders communication plan and the evaluation planning contributes to this end?
- **Project implementation: best practices and tools that improve evidence-based adaptive management, project decision-making and learning**
  - The importance of data interpretation workshops and projects review meetings
  - The importance of a data analysis plan and light monitoring techniques
  - The importance of technology

# Presentation outline

## Overview

- Quality and use of evidence: key messages
- The project life implementation cycle and the pathway from data collection to data use and learning
- The importance of planning for data use: best practices and tools
- Project implementation: best practices and tools
- QandA

# Quality and use of evidence: Key messages

# Quality and use of evidence

## Key messages

The **nature** of humanitarian and development sector action means that we are often dealing with **subjective 'realities'**, and as a result should be open to considering **many different types of information as evidence.**

- The failure to **generate and use evidence** makes humanitarian and development action less effective, less ethical and less accountable.
- The **quality of evidence reflects** the extent to which information that relates to a specific proposition **can be trusted**, and **thus used.**
- Both the **data**, and the **methods** used to analyze this data, should be **measured** against specific quality criteria.
- Mitigation of threats to quality does not guarantee the use of evidence.
- Evidence has to be **accessible** when the decision is being made!!!

# Quality and use of evidence

Key messages: five guiding principles for evidence-based decision making

Use robust methodologies for analysis  
and collection

Ensure that investments in evidence match  
the importance of the questions addressed

Increased collaboration internally in an  
organization and externally

Thinking of the longer term

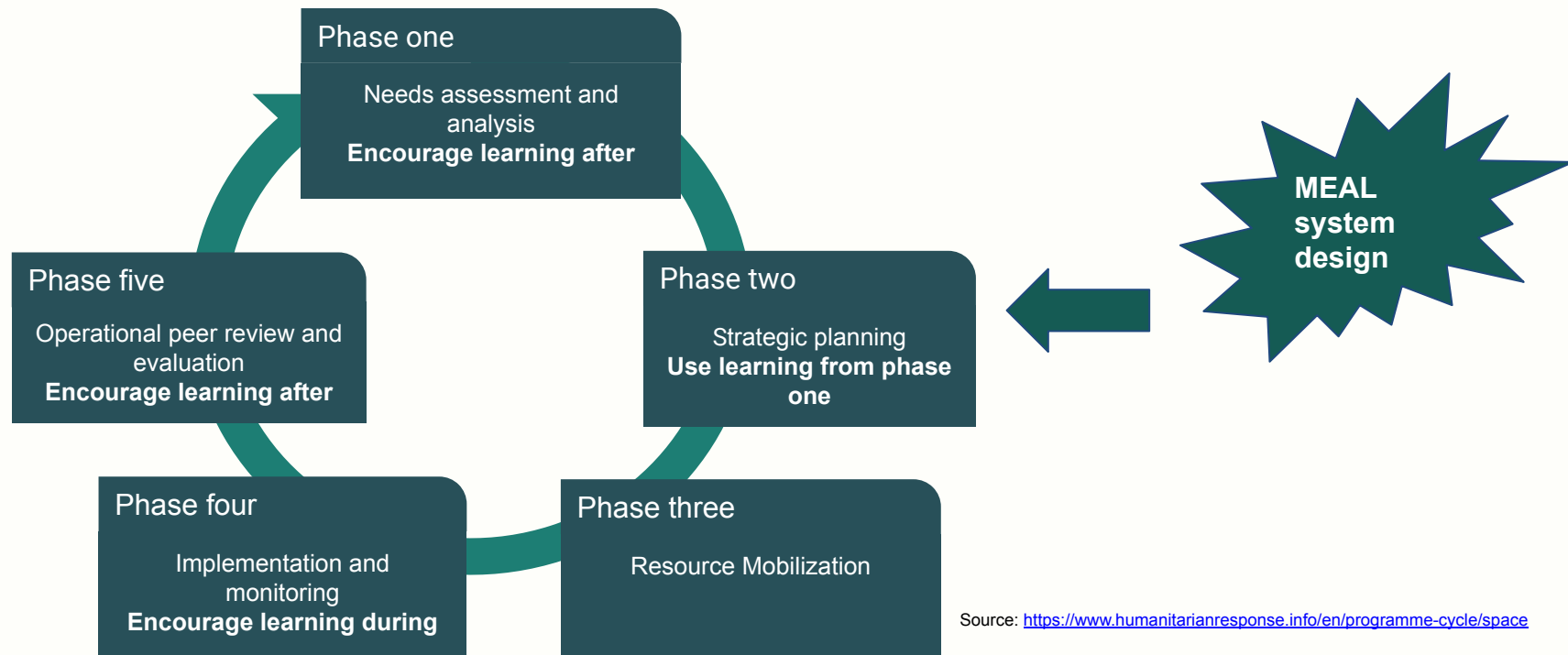
Include the knowledge of people affected



The project life implementation cycle  
and the pathway from data collection  
to data use and learning

# The project life implementation cycle and the pathway from data collection to data use and learning

## Project life implementation cycle



Source: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space>

# The project life implementation cycle and the pathway from data collection to data use and learning

## Pathway from data collection to ACTION

Step 1

**Quantitative data:** Data cleaning and calculations as per data analysis and MEAL plan

**Qualitative data:** Data cleaning coding as per data analysis plan

Step 2

Quantitative data analysis and visualization

Qualitative data analysis

Step 3

### Data Interpretation

- Bring quantitative and qualitative data together
- Validate findings
- Attach meaning
- Draw conclusions

Step 4

### Action:

problem solving, adaptive management, reporting and documenting lessons learnt

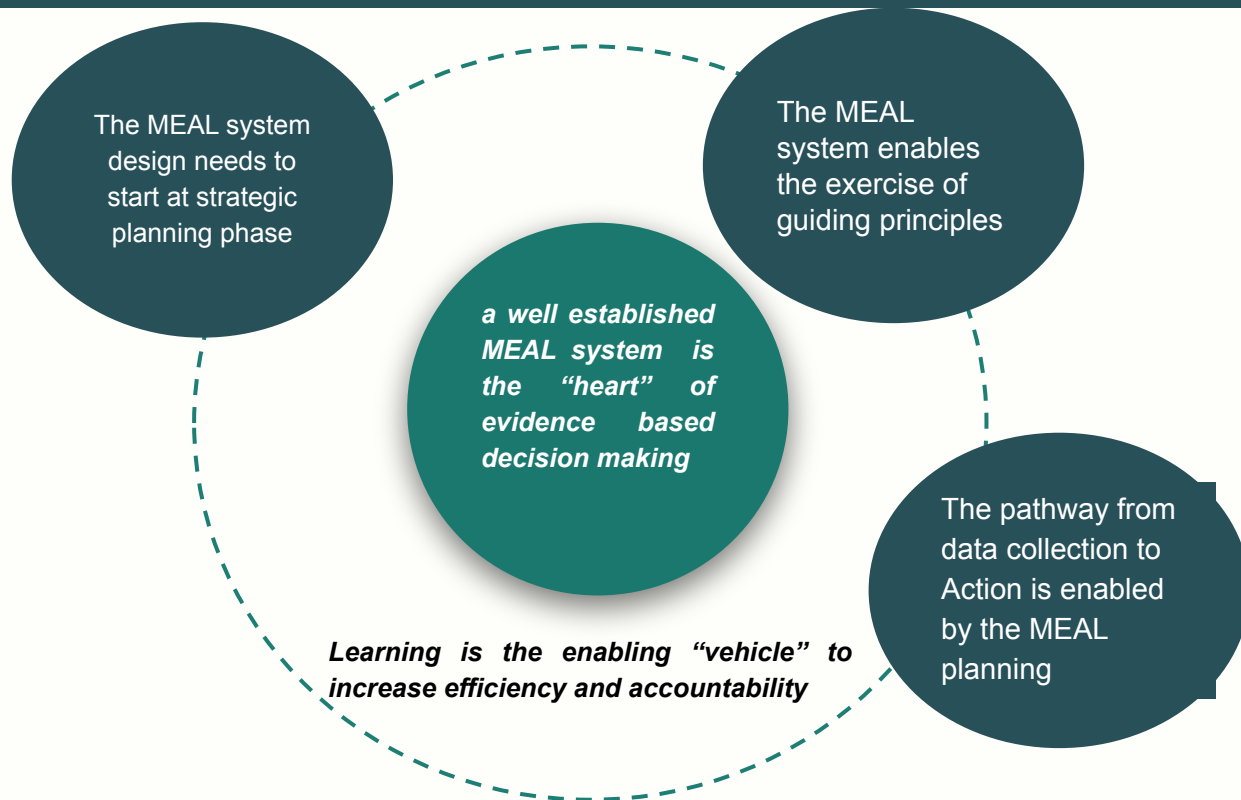
GENERATE EVIDENCE

USE EVIDENCE

LEARNING

# The project life implementation cycle and the pathway from data collection to data use and learning

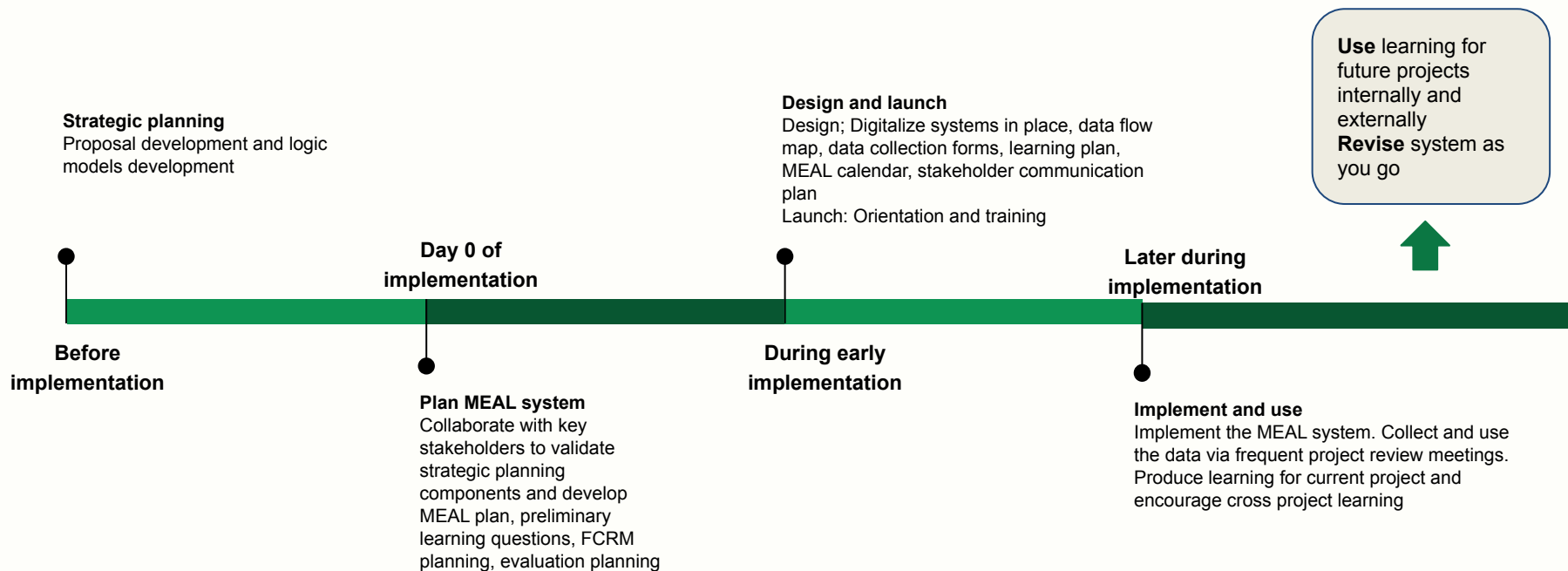
## How everything fits in together?



# The importance of planning for data use

# The importance of planning for data use

## When do we start to plan?



# The importance of planning for data use

The MEAL enabling tools for evidence-based decision making

Project life cycle phase	MEAL system design tools
Strategic planning	<i>Logic Models Design:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Theory of Change</i></li><li>- <i>Results Framework</i></li><li>- <i>Logical Framework</i></li></ul>

# The importance of planning for data use

## Strategic planning: the importance of logic models

### Theory of change

- long term change
- pathways of change

### Results Framework

- project hierarchy
- causal logic of the model

### Logical Framework

- indicators
- means of verification
- assumptions

source:  
<https://www.pm4ngos.org/meal-dpro-guide/>



# The importance of planning for data use

## Theory change: Best practices

01

### Theory of Change

- Consider the assessment data.
- Use a tested conceptual framework.
- Include relevant stakeholders with programming team to play the core role.
- Treat ToC as living document.
- Consider blind spots and prevailing myths. The importance of bias!

# The importance of planning for data use

## Results Framework: Best practices

02

### Results Framework

- Crucial to acknowledge the role of programming teams to identify the components that are direct responsibility of the team.
- Builds upon the assessment data.
- Crucial to consider needs prioritization.
- Crucial to consider appropriateness of the intervention – affects the relevance of data collected.
- Crucial to balance out resources; financial and capacity.

This is the starting point where we consider the type of information we need

# The importance of planning for data use

## LogFrame: Best practices

03

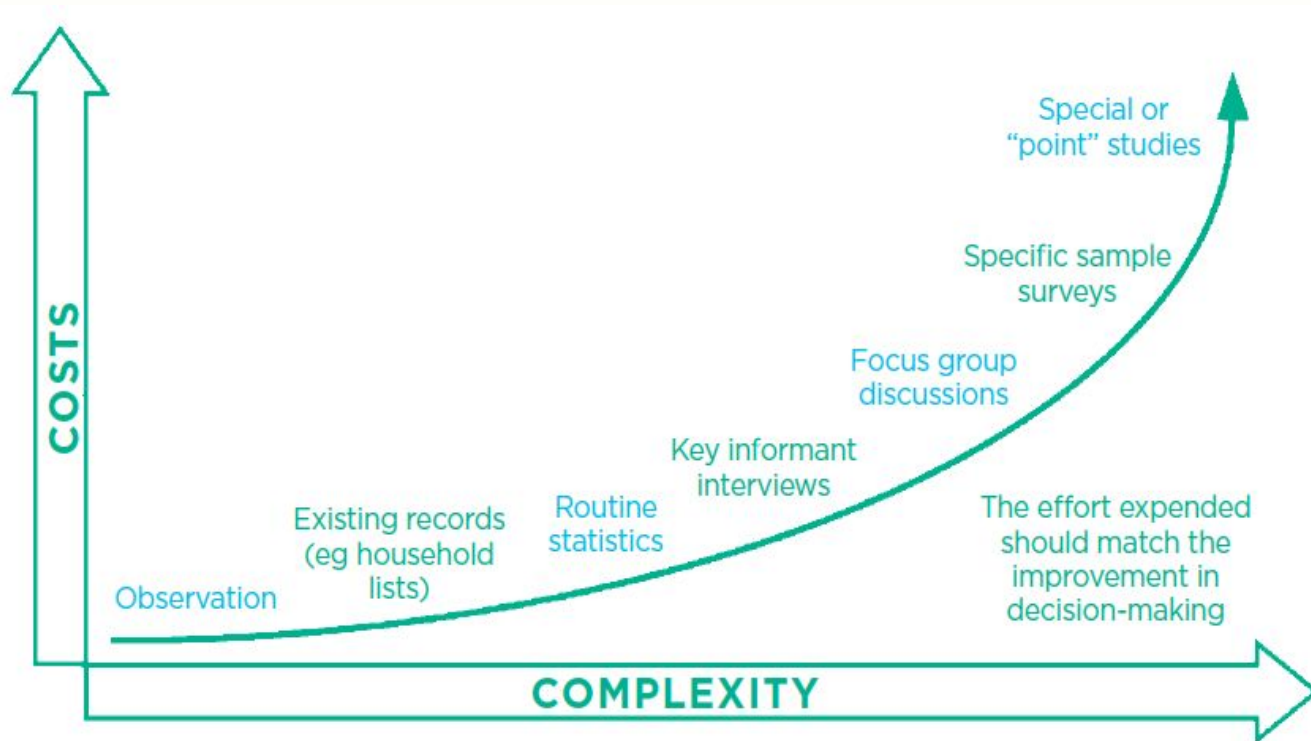
LogFrame

- Indicators: start thinking early in the process the type of information that **you need**.
- **Avoid** nice to know information: How many indicators?
- **SMART** indicators only – direct or indirect.
- Consider light monitoring techniques.
- Identify opportunities to use secondary data sources.
- Consider Measurement methods early enough. Balance out available resources.

Now it is time to think on how you plan to use information.  
This will affect: type of indicators, data collection modality and frequency under the MEAL plan

# The importance of planning for data use

## LogFrame: Best practices



source:

<https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/propack-i-crs-project-package>

# The importance of planning for data use

## The MEAL enabling tools for evidence-based decision making

Project life cycle phase	MEAL system design tools
During early implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>MEAL plan (or PMP)</i></li><li>- <i>Learning questions development</i></li><li>- <i>Feedback Complaint and Response Mechanism</i></li><li>- <i>Stakeholder communication plan</i></li><li>- <i>Evaluation planning</i></li></ul>

# The importance of planning for data use

During early implementation: MEAL plan

PMP								
OBJECTIVES STATEMENTS	INDICATORS	DATA COLLECTION				MEANS OF ANALYSIS		USE OF INFORMATION
		METHOD	FREQUENCY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	RESPONDENTS	TYPE OF ANALYSIS	COMPARISON GROUPS	
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1								
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2								
INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1.1								
INTERMEDIATE RESULT 2.1								
OUTPUT 1.1.1								
OUTPUT 1.1.2								
KEY ASSUMPTIONS								
ASSUMPTION 1								
ASSUMPTION 2								

source

<https://mealdprostarter.org/performance/ancemanagementplan/>

# The importance of planning for data use

During early implementation: MEAL plan (or PMP)

01

MEAL plan

- Establish clear target and baseline.
- Consider the relevant disaggregation –needs assessment as information source.
- Balance out resources in the data use and consider the data flow.
- Complete the MEAL plan related information –this will guarantee that indicators are SMART.

# The importance of planning for data use

During early implementation: Learning questions

Important for adaptive management and organization learning

02

Learning questions

- Consider how we can best use information included already in MEAL plan. There is not always the need for additional data collection.
- Discussions focused on the reflection on action planning based on pre-established learning question can be included as part of the project activities.



# The importance of planning for data use

During early implementation: Feedback Complaint and Response Mechanism (FCRM)



source:

<https://www.pm4ngos.org/meal-dpr-o-guide/>

# The importance of planning for data use

During early implementation: Feedback Complaint and Response Mechanism (FCRM)

03

## Feedback Complaint and Response Mechanism

- This complements the data collection needed on top of MEAL and learning plan.
- Do not forget the participatory assessment prior to FCRM.
- Do not forget that also these data play an important role in adaptive management: analyze, visualize and interpret!

# The importance of planning for data use

During early implementation: Stakeholder communication plan

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Information needs</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Means of communication</b>	<b>Materials needed</b>	<b>Responsible</b>

# The importance of planning for data use

During early implementation: Stakeholder communication plan

04

Stakeholder  
communication plan

- Consider all stakeholders and their information needs.
- This will support the MEAL plan data use.
- Don't assume that a single communication method will work for all stakeholders.

# The importance of planning for data use

## Evaluation planning: Best practices

**All projects** should include some sort of evaluation activity.

Projects **that do not include** a formal evaluation should, at minimum, **plan for an after action review**.

05

### Evaluation planning

- Evaluations are associated with a large cost, thus planning early is the key to incorporate them in the process.
- The type of evaluation you do and the timing of your evaluation(s) will be dictated by your information needs and the related evaluation questions you identify.
- The MEAL plan can support in reducing evaluation data collection costs.

# The importance of planning for data use

## Key messages

- MEAL plan design process is the core of planning for data use.
- Include key stakeholders –programming teams have a key role in the design phase!
- Think realistically: always consider resources (time and budget).
- Tools mentioned: Logic models, MEAL plan, learning questions, stakeholders communication plan, FCRM, evaluation planning.

# Project implementation: best practices and tools

# Project implementation: best practices and tools

Tools and processes which enable evidence based decision making during implementation

Data interpretation  
meetings

Project review  
meetings

Data analysis plan

Light monitoring

Use of technology



# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## Importance of data interpretation meetings

- A great opportunity to address bias by triangulation of stakeholders' perspectives.
- Key questions for data interpretation meetings:
  - What do data tell us?
  - What factors explain the findings?
  - What factors affect difference across comparison groups?
  - What information do we miss to conclude regarding the topic of interest?

# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## Importance of project review meetings

- Crucial for adaptive management.
- A project review meeting broadly addresses the following topics:
  - What has worked well in the project.
  - What has not worked well and how to improve - action planning.
  - What has and hasn't worked well in the MEAL system in place –action planning.
- Consider frequency and modality:
  - Incorporate meeting into already established project meetings and consider when a focused project review meeting is needed.
  - Incorporate project meeting into MEAL plan and MEAL calendar.

# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## Formal Monitoring: importance of light monitoring

**Formal monitoring:** Tracking progress against project activities and indicators.

### Light monitoring



Provides timely feedback on new activities and checks for early signs that progress is being made and that assumptions are holding true while there is still ample time to make adjustments if necessary

### Rigorous monitoring

Collects representative data for evidence-based project management, reporting and learning, not just at midterm but throughout project implementation

source:

<https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/monitoring-problem-solving-adaptive-management-reporting-and>

# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## Importance of data analysis plan

Data analysis plan describes the data collection process. Key components are:

- the sampling frame and methodology
- data collection timing and mode
- data analysis methods and quality checks
- roles and responsibilities

KEY to quality of data collection and analysis



Data analysis plan

- Builds upon the MEAL plan.
- Crucial for extra data collection activities, especially for evaluation activities.
- Facilitates data analysis and generation of quality of evidence.

# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## The use of technology

Use of technology



- Real time data
- Easier data analysis
- Easier data sharing with relevant stakeholders

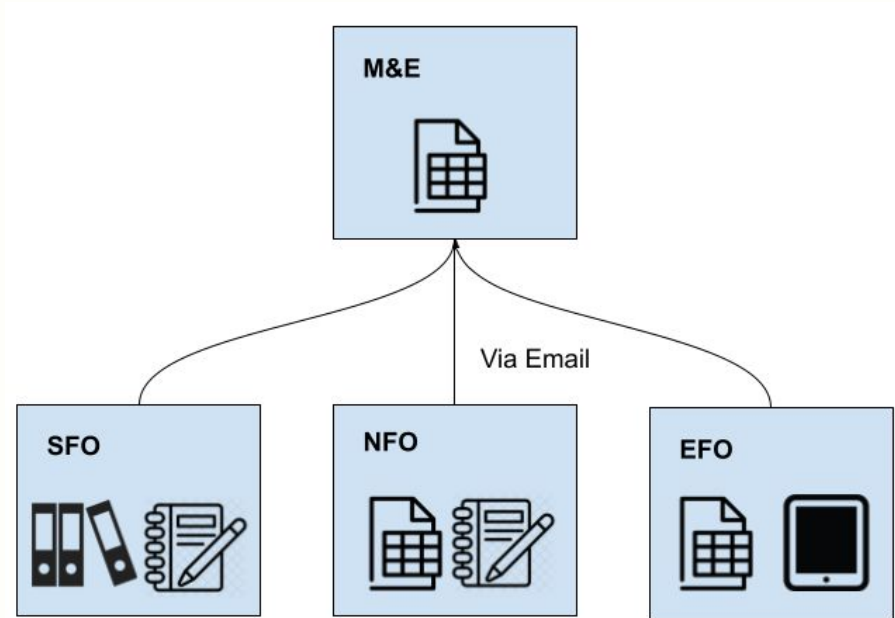
which is the most common **threat** to this pathway?

The existence of parallel systems!!!

# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## The use of technology: Parallel systems

What is a “parallel system”?



# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## Use of technology: an example that illustrates how technology supported real-time data

### **ActivityInfo Case study**

Multi-partner reporting with UNOCHA Iraq: from standardized forms to an innovative dynamic dashboard (Dashboard 2020)

*“The most important thing for us as in OCHA Iraq is that ActivityInfo is suitable for partner-based reporting. If you look at other tools, they are all for high-level reporting. They start from the cluster that is reporting. The cluster needs to collect data from the partners, then compile it and then put it in the system. In ActivityInfo it starts from the partner. So that is why we insist on using ActivityInfo, because we are getting the data in real-time. (...),”* UNOCHA Iraq Information Management Officer

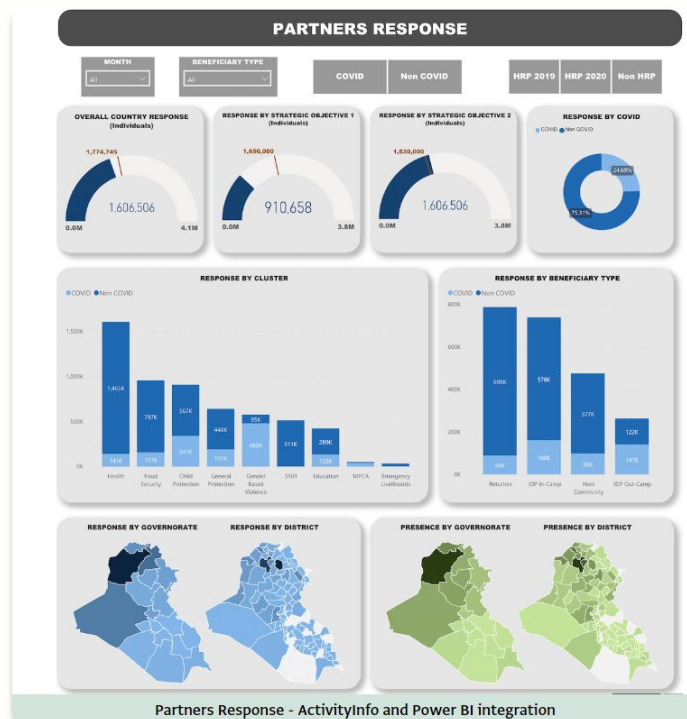
Source: <https://www.activityinfo.org/blog/posts/2020-10-26-multi-partner-reporting-with-UNOCHA-Iraq.html>



# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## Importance of using one integrated system for data collection

Multi-partner reporting with UNOCHA Iraq: from standardized forms to an innovative dynamic dashboard





# Project implementation: best practices and tools

## Key messages

- Bring the relevant stakeholders in one common room! Reflection upon information gathered is a core component of the process of data use!
- Incorporate light techniques when you have limited time.
- Data analysis plan can improve quality of data collection and analysis.
- Use technology to your advantage.

Time for Q&A!

Thank you!