ActivityInfo

From Theory of Change to Database Design for evidence-based decision making: How to develop a MEAL plan
Presented by the ActivityInfo Team

Software for Monitoring & Evaluation

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

- **26/1**: Theory of Change
- **2/02**: Results Framework and logFrame
- **9/02**: Indicators
- **16/02**: Measurement Methods
- **23/02**: How to develop a MEAL plan
Today’s session outline

● Recap
  ○ Indicators and measurement methods: Key messages

● MEAL Plan Development (PMP: Performance management plan)
  ○ What is the MEAL plan
  ○ Why do we use the MEAL plan
  ○ What are the components of use MEAL plan

● How we use ICT4D to enable the operationalization of the MEAL Plan?
  ○ Examples using ActivityInfo

● QandAs
What did we mention in the previous webinar?
The importance of indicators and measurement methods

Indicators ensure evidence-based decision making, support adaptive management, learning and accountability.

Measurement methods enable the data collection process for the indicators.

Strongly associated with the purpose of the MEAL system design which enables project success.

How?

Via the following:

- The continual and systematic collection of data to provide information about project progress (Monitoring).
- The systematic assessment of the design, implementation and results of an ongoing or completed project (Evaluation).
- The response to the needs of relevant stakeholders (Accountability).
- Intentional reflection on project results to enable efficient decisions (Learning).
Indicators

Key messages

- Qualitative or quantitative?
  - **Quantitative indicators** help us understand **how much** of something is happening while we know or hypothesize from TOC what that something is.
  - **Qualitative indicators** help us investigate the “why” and the “how” - for those instances that we are not sure what to expect
  - Few donors require qualitative indicators
- How to determine indicator quality?
  - **SMART**: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound
  - Is the indicator sufficiently defined so it is clear what is being measured?
  - Can data be collected and analyzed in a timely manner?
  - Is the nature of the change measured through the indicator achievable, given the duration and resources of the project?
  - Is selected indicator the most appropriate measure of progress toward output, IR and/or SO?
  - Does the indicator include information on when the target change is anticipated to take place?
Measurement methods

Key messages

Qualitative or quantitative?

- **Quantitative methods** collect data that can be counted and subjected to statistical analysis. Enable comparisons and clear measurement.
- **Qualitative methods** capture participants’ experiences using words, pictures and stories. They trigger reflection, ideas and discussion and are analyzed by identifying themes, topics and keywords. Track changes in participants’ attitudes and perceptions. Identify why and how change is happening, and are analyzed by organizing emerging themes.

- **The Use of mixed methods**: Using both quantitative and qualitative measurement methods offers the potential to answer very different questions about the same indicator. The use of mixed methods enables triangulation by collecting data using a mix of methods. This allows teams to crosscheck and reinforce results.

ICT4D are powerful tools!

Consider your secondary data sources!

Consider context! purpose of data collection! resources!
MEAL Plan development

When do we start the development?

### Case Study

- **Before implementation**
  - Strategic planning
    - Proposal development and logic models development

- **Day 0 of implementation**
  - Development of Theory of Change, Results Framework and Logical Framework

- **During early implementation**
  - Plan MEAL system

- **Later during implementation**
  - MEAL system design and launch

- **Later during implementation**
  - MEAL system implement and use
MEAL Plan
MEAL Plan

MEAL Planning Tools

“How will we collect, analyze, interpret, use and communicate MEAL information through the life of the project?

- The use of MEAL planning tools facilitate the answer to this question.
- MEAL planning tools help your project meet the information needs of all project stakeholders, including project team members, community members, project participants and donors

The primary planning tool, also known as Monitoring and evaluation plan or performance management plan (PMP)

Examples of other planning Tools:
- Indicator performance tracking table (IPTT)
- Feedback and response mechanism flowchart
- Stakeholders communication plan
- Learning plan
MEAL Plan

What?

- How are the indicators defined?
- How indicators are collected?
- When will MEAL activities take place?
- Who is responsible for MEAL activities?
- How will data be analyzed?
- How will data be used?
## MEAL Plan

### Example

**Figure 30: Performance management plan template**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Indicators (with definitions as needed)</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
<th>Means of analysis</th>
<th>Use of information for communication and decision making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives statements</strong></td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Person who will collect data</td>
<td>Respondents (who to talk to)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic objective 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic objective 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate result 1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate result 2.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 2.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key assumptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption 1...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption 2...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A guide to the MEAL DPro

https://mealdpro.org/
Country: Homeland

Context: Homeland received suddenly an influx of refugees from a neighbouring country. There were thousands of refugees crossing the borders each day for the first two years. Currently, we are on the third year of this humanitarian crisis. The priorities have changed. Incoming refugees wish to build in their future in Homeland and NGOs in collaboration with the Government need to identify the pathways that lead to integration and through appropriate interventions to facilitate this pathway.

What: We are working as part of the MEAL team for the following month, we will support the MEAL system design to facilitate the programming teams operating on the ground.

Timing: The programming team submitted the proposal and we got the approval!! So we are in the process of recapping, since activities started the previous week! we start developing our MEAL system, by using our planning tools and the PM asks us to start thinking about information use and sharing!
## Logical Framework

### Our example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results Framework level</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Measurement methods/MoVs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Objective</strong></td>
<td>Refugees engage to legal livelihood opportunities</td>
<td>% of refugees employed at least one during project implementation</td>
<td>Project team monitoring records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate result 1</strong></td>
<td>Vulnerable refugees are enabled to meet their urgent needs</td>
<td>% of refugees who agree or strongly agree with the statement “referrals conducted by field team enabled me to access public medical services”</td>
<td>Non anonymous survey including open ended question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.1</strong></td>
<td>Refugees have access to medical referrals</td>
<td>% of medical referrals conducted within a day of the request</td>
<td>Project team monitoring records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate result 2</strong></td>
<td>Refugees have increased skills and knowledge</td>
<td>% of refugees who agree or strongly agree with the statement “vocational trainings enabled me to acquire a skill that I can use in my work”</td>
<td>anonymous survey Non anonymous survey including open ended question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 2.1</strong></td>
<td>Refugees participate in vocational trainings</td>
<td># of refugees who participate in vocational trainings</td>
<td>Attendance lists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MEAL Plan

In detail

Objectives statements and indicators

Example: % of refugees who agree or strongly agree with the statement "referrals conducted by field team enabled me to access public medical services":
- Are referrals clearly defined?
- Medical services? which are those?
- Access: what does this mean?

- Objective statements from Logical Framework
- Goal and Activities usually are not included.
  - Goal: long term - not achieved during project implementation
  - Activities are monitored usually via the Detailed Implementation Plan
- Indicators validation:
  - Are indicators clearly defined?
MEAL Plan

In detail

Data collection: Methods, frequency, responsibility and respondents

- **Methods**: as those identified as in the logical framework
- **Frequency**
  - What are the decision making needs?
  - Which are the donor requirements?
  - When I expect to identify change?
  - Do I have the resources?
  - Is there contextual factor that affects frequency?
- **Who is responsible for data collection?**
- **Who are the respondents?** (Head of household? Women?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Frequency/Who collects/Who responds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of refugees who agree or strongly agree with the statement &quot;referrals conducted by field team enabled me to access public medical services&quot;</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>biannually/ MEAL officers/ Adults who accessed the service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MEAL Plan

In detail

**Means of analysis**

- **Type of analysis:**
  - Do we need statistical analysis? Cumulative number? average?
  - Do we need qualitative analysis?
- **Subgroups:**
  - Do we need to compare? amongst which groups?
  - Between which groups do we need to identify differences? trends? patterns?
  - Do you have the resources? Can you reach the respondents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Sub groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of refugees who agree or strongly agree with the statement “referrals conducted by field team enabled me to access public medical services”</td>
<td>Representative sample</td>
<td>Nationality/gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**MEAL Plan**

**In detail**

**Data use**

- How the data will be used?
  - which are the donor requirements?
  - which information is needed for decision making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Data use</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of refugees who agree or strongly agree with the statement “referrals conducted by field team enabled me to access public medical services”</td>
<td>Biannual reflection, donor monitoring report</td>
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MEAL Plan

In detail: Data use

Data flow maps

- Illustrate the flow of data from each data collection form to the corresponding report.
- Identify gaps in your system; places where you may need to create a new form or report.

Figure 33: UNITAS data flow map

A guide to the MEAL DPro
https://mealdpro.org/
Using ICT4D
## How to implement efficiently the measurement methods?

### Example: Secondary Data collection

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How to implement efficiently the measurement methods?

Example: Secondary Data collection

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We wish to track indicators for internal use
## How to implement efficiently the measurement methods?

### Example: Primary Data collection

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How to implement efficiently the measurement methods?

First Example: Primary Data collection

Beneficiary registration

Employment monitoring

Vocational training monitoring

Referrals monitoring

Non anonymous satisfaction survey

Anonymous satisfaction survey

Implementing partners use one integrated data collection system
How to implement efficiently the measurement methods?

Example: Primary Data collection

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We wish to create a monitoring report for internal and external use
The MEAL plan is the most important planning tool!!!!
The MEAL plan enables actively the evidence based approach through the “data use”!
The MEAL plan is a living document - Revise as needed!
Having an ICT4D tool in place, such as ActivityInfo supports MEAL plan operationalization! Thus using actively the data captured!!!!
Measurement methods

Resources

A guide to the MEAL DPro
https://mealdpro.org/

Practical Guidance on Developing Indicators

IndiKit: Rapid Guide to Designing SMART indicators
https://www.indikit.net/userfiles/files/IndiKit/Rapid%20Guide%20to%20Designing%20SMART%20Indicators%20FINAL.pdf

BHA: Indicator Handbook II

Project/programme monitoring and evaluation guide

ProPack I: The CRS Project Package
Time for Q&A!
Thank you!