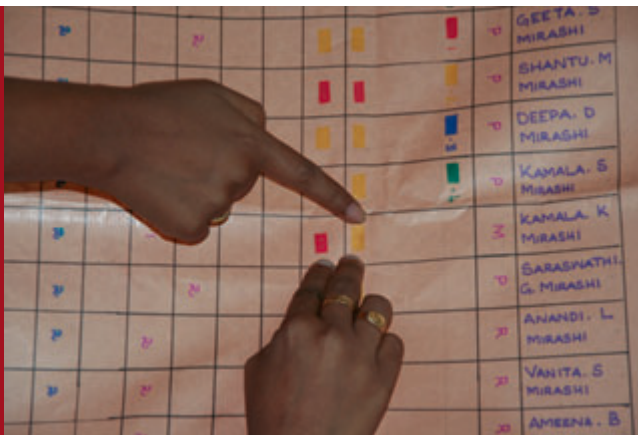


## Monitoring Self-Effectiveness

2011



**A Manual to Strengthen Outcome and  
Impact Oriented Project Management**



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### **NGO-IDEAs (NGO – Impact on Development, Empowerment and Actions)**

NGO-IDEAs is a cooperation of about 40 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from South Asia, East Africa and the Philippines and 14 German NGOs working in the field of development cooperation. It identifies and develops jointly with all partners, concepts and tools for NGOs in the areas of Outcome and Impact Assessment and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E). NGO-IDEAs is further being supported by VENRO, the umbrella organisation of development non-governmental organisations in Germany as well as PARITÄT, the legal holder of the project. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has cofinanced the project.

NGO-IDEAs is not just another study evaluating the impact of NGOs' work – it combines research & development, knowledge management, learning & training as well as advice & coaching to initiate a collective learning process for all partners involved. Additionally, NGO-IDEAs intends to create a valuable resource base for use by NGOs.

NGO-IDEAs aims at:

- Empowering community based organisations or groups and the poor among the rural communities to use and practice impact monitoring for project management
- Empowering NGOs to further improve the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of their efforts
- Making social changes more visible for implementing and funding NGOs, thus improving development practice
- Improving public recognition of NGOs and CBOs and their contribution to development.

The *NGO-IDEAs "Manual"* is meant to support organisations to design and focus their monitoring and evaluation procedures in order to increase the orientation towards outcomes and impacts. It intends to provide guidance to organisations about how to establish an outcome and impact oriented project management. NGO-IDEAs is dedicated to the common goal of creating inclusive monitoring systems, which promote the empowerment of all stakeholders involved. One basic assumption is that the awareness of the own effectiveness is motivating and empowering to initiate further action. The Manual is based on NGOs' working experience and illustrates many examples from their practice of promoting self-help in various sectors. The applicability is, however, not limited to NGOs.

This Manual introduces participatory elements to enhance (self-) effectiveness. Step by step, the organisation's management will be able to analyse whether existing elements of their monitoring system are designed in a way suitable for achieving relevant outcomes and impacts.

## Abbreviations

CBO	Community Based Organisation
MAPP	Method for Impact Assessment of Programmes and Projects
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGO-IDEAs	NGO Impact on Development, Empowerment and Actions
PAG	Performance Assessment by Groups (NGO-IDEAs tool)
PIAR	Participatory Impact Analysis and Reflection (NGO-IDEAs tool)
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
PWR	Participatory Wellbeing Ranking (PRA and NGO-IDEAs tool)
SAGE	Situational Analysis and Goal Establishment (NGO-IDEAs tool)

## A few guiding ideas to the NGO-IDEAs Manual

The *NGO-IDEAs Manual* is designed to support organisations to trim their monitoring and evaluation procedures in order to increase the orientation towards outcomes and impacts and to guide the organisation to steer an outcome and impact oriented project management. NGO-IDEAs is dedicated to the common goal of creating inclusive monitoring systems, which promote the empowerment of all stakeholders affected. One basic assumption is that the awareness of the own effectiveness is motivating and empowering to action. The Manual is based on NGOs' working experience and takes many examples from their practice of promoting self-help in various sectors. The applicability is, however, not limited to NGOs.

This Manual introduces participatory elements to enhance (self-) effectiveness. Step by step, the organisation's management will be able to analyse whether existing elements of their monitoring system are designed in a way suitable for achieving relevant outcomes and impacts.

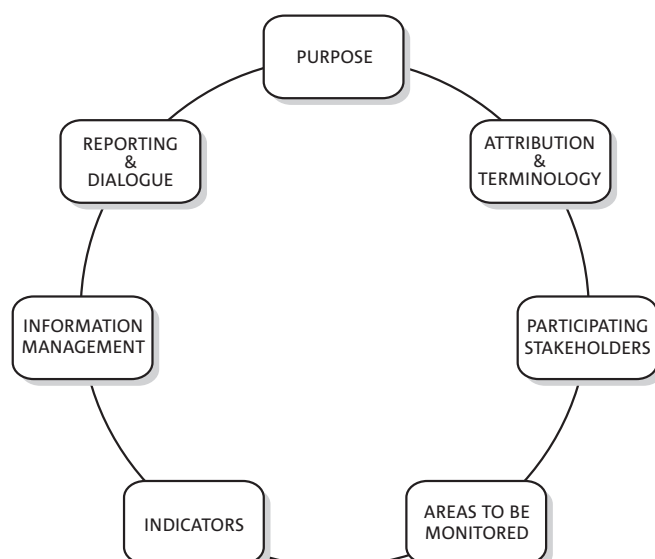
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*NGO-IDEAs promotes the orientation on outcomes and impacts*

### How to use this Manual

The "step-by-step" phrasing should not be taken too literally: as all the elements of the Manual are interlinked, it is always necessary to look forward and backward to the other elements during the whole review process. Moreover, each chapter can be used independently from the others if it is necessary to deepen particular aspects.

The following graph illustrates the seven chapters or elements of the Manual.



The graph will be taken up throughout the Manual at the beginning of each chapter to visualise links between the elements, thus enabling the reader to follow the suggested links according to his/her respective needs:

- arrows with continuous lines illustrate which other chapters are influenced by the respective element;
- dotted arrows illustrate influences of other chapters on the respective chapter/element.

Building on existing good practices, the monitoring system has to be configured according to the individual organisation's needs.

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*Readers may combine the Manual elements according to their needs*

## Focussing on monitoring rather than evaluation

There is a gradual difference between Monitoring and Evaluation.

### Monitoring is:

- more frequent
- less extensive
- mostly done by community and NGO staff

Systematic and periodical observation and reflection in order to **implement the project by adapting activities and outputs** to changing circumstances.

### Evaluation is:

- less frequent
- more extensive
- mostly done by externals – and sometimes by self-evaluation

Comprehensive and systematic analysis of the project in order to **adapt planning and strategy** to changing circumstances.

---

*NGO-IDEAs gives priority to Monitoring, rather than Evaluation*

In the context of NGO-IDEAs, the priority is given to monitoring, i.e. to systematic and periodical observation and reflection. Hence, outcome and impact oriented evaluation is not dealt with in this Manual.<sup>1</sup>

The Manual is addressed to project managers and to people who are responsible for designing and implementing monitoring and evaluation. For this purpose, it presents a choice of options for upgrading each main element of an organisation's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. The increased awareness of potential and real outcomes and impacts will also support an outcome and impact oriented planning process.

## Starting from monitoring, not from planning

But why doesn't this Manual start with the planning process? How can an orientation on outcome and impact start with the monitoring process instead? NGO-IDEAs always intends to start from the practitioners' perspective, in order to give preference to an inductive approach – which is led by experience – instead of a deductive approach – led by theory. The NGO-IDEAs Toolbox gives many examples of this approach. In this Manual, we assume that this perspective brings an added value to other publications on outcome and impact oriented development work.

---

*Monitoring should be based on practical experience and a theory of change*

## Strengthening the link between results chains and logical framework

Theory, however, shall not be neglected. Many funding agencies expect a project proposal to be more or less set up in the Logical Framework (Logframe) structure, and this shall be taken into account. But, in order to serve as helpful guidelines for outcome and impact monitoring, the plans have to be designed in a participative cooperation between monitoring specialists and grassroots practitioners. The guidelines should not mainly be oriented towards activities and outputs, but especially towards outcomes and impacts.

Desired and real outcomes and impacts may be identified first as a starting point, based on the local situation and needs; a “theory of change” or a Results Chain may be established based on this practical experience. This can help to improve the “results-based” planning and management.

Results Chains are not the only way to establish a “theory of change”, but they can serve as an essential link to the Logframe which many NGOs are familiar with. Results Chains can

---

*A participatory approach enriches our Monitoring System*

<sup>1</sup> In Annex 3, a remark on recent trends in evaluation has been added.

be the starting point to identify outcome and impact for planning and monitoring. They are mostly used for project planning and therefore only show what the project intended to achieve, and what their contributions were to reach these objectives. But Results Chains which are established for planning purposes tend to neglect other influences contributing to change; and they neglect other outputs, outcomes, and impacts which do not correspond to the planning logics. This means that they only show linear relationships between project outputs and outcomes and impacts, but effects which have not been included in the planning process may be overlooked. They are not sufficient to grasp all important changes induced by a project.

### No field work without monitoring change

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*Monitoring questions may be asked on a regular basis*

Regular monitoring of the local situation is a daily business of field workers. In their field visits they are used to ask:

- How is the present situation with regard to (the expected change)?
- What has changed with regard to (the expected change) since we met last time?
- What has contributed to this change?

The assumption of NGO-IDEAs is that if these questions become more structured and related to the project's purpose, then outcome and impact monitoring does not imply additional work, but different work, which is more systematic and reflected. Its documentation, however, implies additional work, indeed.

### Self-effectiveness and empowerment

---

*Monitoring Self-Effectiveness invites me to empower myself*

Outcome and impact monitoring is often seen as a tool to give evidence of "aid effectiveness", to justify the good use of public funds. In addition, NGOs need to demonstrate the contributions by civil society organisations ("CSO effectiveness"). The NGO-IDEAs partners strive to add the perspective of "self-effectiveness". This means: if individuals and the community are aware of their own effectiveness, of what they have been able to change, this will encourage them to further action. It will raise their self-confidence, which in turn will eventually empower them towards self-determination.

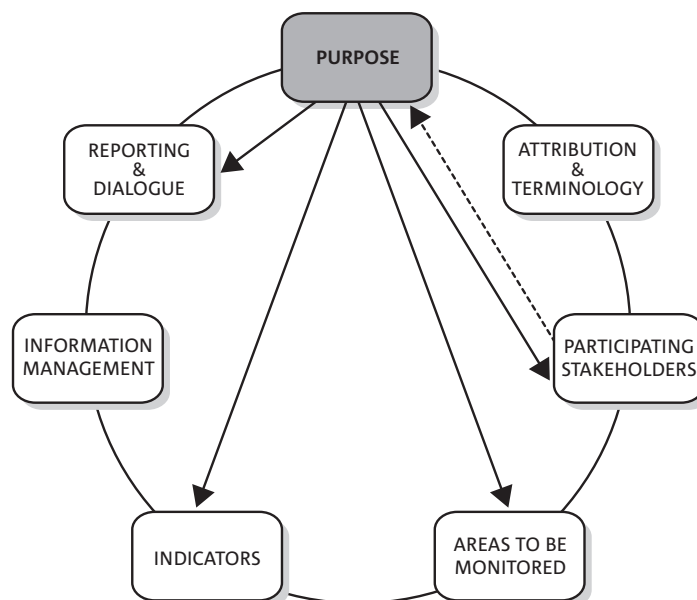
In other words: from the perspective of the community, outcome and impact monitoring can contribute to empowerment. It has to be designed in a way that it first creates people's awareness of what they are contributing to change. In the second place, the community can report to others on its experiences and achievements (e.g. to other communities, to the public and to the funding agencies) and thereby promote the repetition and adaptation of successful approaches to other contexts.



# 1 Purpose of the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system

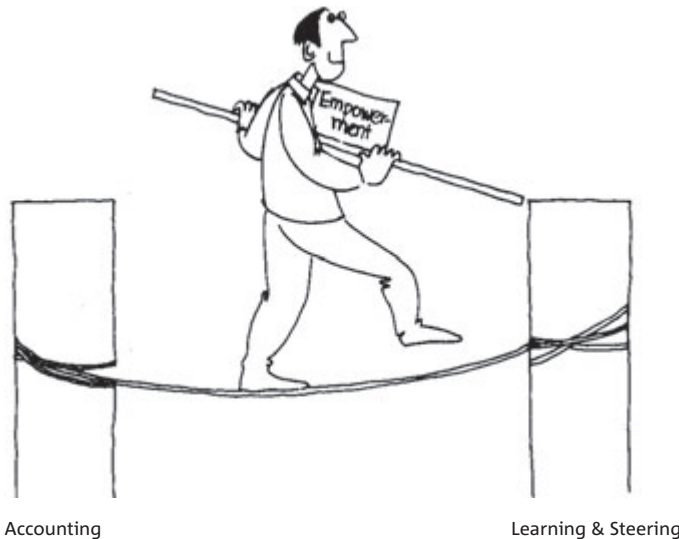
## ☐ This element serves to determine

1. the purpose of the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system
  2. the quality criteria and the spirit of the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system
- Outcome and impact monitoring serves many purposes at the same time. Its main purpose will decisively influence the whole spirit and set-up of the monitoring system: if we organise our monitoring and reporting system mainly to report to funding agencies, it will be in a different spirit and shape than if we design it primarily to learn effective project management strategies or to empower the community.



Each organisation should determine its own “monitoring philosophy”. As described in the introduction, monitoring can serve different purposes for the management of the project: proving (accountability), improving (learning and steering) and empowerment (participation). These purposes do not exclude each other; they may be complementary, but they may also be in competition with each other. Deciding on what the primary purpose is, determines the character of the monitoring system.

NGO-IDEAs primarily focuses on enhancing the learning culture, thus leading to self-awareness and **empowerment** at all levels. Priority is given to participative monitoring approaches designed mainly for “improving” and self-effectiveness. Therefore, the focus of the NGO-IDEAs partners lies on the empowerment and learning of all the stakeholders involved in order to enable them to form adequate steering decisions. “Proving” or accountability, however, is not to be excluded – but it should be shaped in the spirit of learning and cooperation. For example, self-control mechanisms can be given priority, which can periodically be cross-checked by external controls.



*The main purpose of the monitoring system is to ensure the empowerment of all stakeholders. In order to create awareness and avoid wasting resources, monitoring needs to rest on two pillars: “Accounting” and even more important “Learning and Steering”.*

Awareness creation and learning (“improving”) can be done

- to sensitise primary stakeholders about the effects of their own action, to strengthen self-help capacities and self-confidence;
- to sensitise the project staff on the effects of their work;
- to improve the project management, and/or
- for institutional learning.

With regard to accountability (“proving”) it is important to distinguish to whom it is addressed to and in which spirit and purpose it is implemented:

- to the members/the community?
- to the implementing partners?
- to the funding partners?
- to the government?

Generally, it can be stated that accountability has to work at least in two directions: for the community and for the funding agencies.

Again, these options do not exclude each other; in practice, they should be combined in a way that promotes self-effectiveness. Having clarified this duality, another dimension has to be highlighted: **outcome and impact oriented management**. One of the primary tasks of the project management is to optimise the positive outcomes and impacts of the project. This means:

- when making steering decisions, project monitoring focuses on outcomes and impacts, more than it has done in the past; the monitoring of activities and outputs is to a great portion performed by the operational level; this can help to reduce the workload of the project management who complain of too many documents and reports to read.
- a regular outcome and impact oriented monitoring system needs to be functional, including internal reporting on outcomes and impacts to all the stakeholders involved in the decision making process;
- management and steering decisions are taken on the basis of the knowledge on outcomes and impacts of the project.



Primary stakeholders, the NGO and funding partners analyse the project facts together (left side) and include the reflection on their own contributions and personal development (right side).  
The pictures could also symbolise a joint analysis for “proving” (left side) and “improving” (right side).

### Purpose of the monitoring system

“Our monitoring system shall strengthen action and reflection in order to contribute to people’s empowerment. It focuses on the change we are achieving, not on the activities we have conducted.

We share our observations in open discussions in order to find out how we can improve our own effectiveness. Personal aspects of the analysis will remain confidential. Continuous reflection on our action is an integrated part of our regular work at all levels. We encourage, and wherever feasible, enable our primary stakeholders to do the same kind of monitoring.

Information that contributes to our accountability to stakeholders and funders can be used for reporting.”



Steps to strengthen the monitoring system:

### ELEMENT 1: Purpose of the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system, and organisation’s practice

1. Check your management documents on the reporting and reflection practice and find out:
  - What is your organisation’s “monitoring philosophy”? How are the practices perceived by the staff?
  - Does your monitoring system include outcomes and impacts?
  - To what extent does your monitoring system adapt participatory approach?
2. Decide on what purposes the monitoring system should serve:
  - What shall it be used for? What shall be improved?
  - To what extent is your system designed in a way to serve the purpose of empowerment (participation), proving (accountability) or improving (learning and steering)?
  - Whose interests are mostly served by the current system? Are the monitoring needs of the primary stakeholders met adequately?



3. Draft a proposal and share and discuss it with your staff and other stakeholders (funding agency, primary stakeholders, others), if you feel the purpose and the focus of your monitoring system needs to be modified:
  - What will happen, if mistakes were disclosed?
  - To what extent will people be open minded and willing to tell the truth?
  - Which criteria for the quality of the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system have to be met?
  - Does your staff have adequate capacities for monitoring the outcome and impact?
  - How will we be able to make sure that the quality criteria are met?
  - What should the organisational culture of monitoring look like?



### "FOOD FOR MORE REFLECTION"

#### *Proving and Improving*

##### *Proving*

##### *(accountability)*

- *high priority given to reports,*
- *the perspective of the funding agency tends to dominate*
- *looking backwards, to the past*
- *evaluators participate as independent experts*

##### *Improving*

##### *(awareness creation and learning)*

- *high priority given to the process and its results,*
- *the perspective of the community tends to dominate*
- *looking forward, to the future*
- *evaluators participate as facilitators*

#### *Possible consequences*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>people tend to feel controlled externally</i></li> <li>• <i>people risk to fall into a defensive attitude</i></li> <li>• <i>mistakes tend to be hidden</i></li> <li>• <i>analysis is less transparent and improvement is difficult</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>people tend to feel encouraged to self-control</i></li> <li>• <i>people can learn to be self-critical</i></li> <li>• <i>mistakes tend to be disclosed</i></li> <li>• <i>analysis is more transparent, mistakes can be discussed and avoided in future</i></li> </ul> |
|---|--|

*These options are also relevant for the role of the persons responsible for monitoring and evaluation: do they enforce the request for accountability, or do they act as facilitators encouraging open minded reflection processes? The "monitoring philosophy" of the organisation will not only determine their role and function, but also the way they are perceived by the project staff and the participating stakeholders.*

#### *Dimensions of Monitoring*

*We have introduced different "monitoring philosophies". These lead to different approaches to monitoring, different concepts for the cause-effect-relationship. Each organisation should determine the characteristics of its approach to impact monitoring.*

**Characteristics of the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system:**

Our monitoring system should be ...



Characteristics	What does it mean?	Where are the limits?
Easy to implement	The procedure and the formats have to be understandable for field staff and primary stakeholders, and have to be easy to implement.	Training of staff and stakeholders may be necessary. Training has to be based on practical needs.
Tested	Every new monitoring tool and procedure is tested by experienced field staff <i>and</i> community representatives before it is generalised.	Three tests should normally be enough.
Flexible	If a format does not work, field staff can suggest modifications to the M+E officer.	We need information on some indicators and explorative questions regularly, in the same way.
Efficient	The relevant information on outcomes and impact is collected and documented within a short time span, avoiding additional workload.	It is acknowledged and appreciated that improved documentation and reflection takes more time than before.
Consistent	The whole system of formats and reflections is connected and avoids double entries.	Double documentation may be necessary for triangulation of information.
Precise	The collection and documentation of data tries to seize exact and true data.	"It is better to be approximately right than precisely wrong."
Participatory	The participating stakeholders are enabled to set up their autonomous monitoring systems. Regular exchange and joint reflection take place at least twice a year.	Participation does not mean influencing others' monitoring system or results, but to be in dialogue. Confidentiality has to be guaranteed.

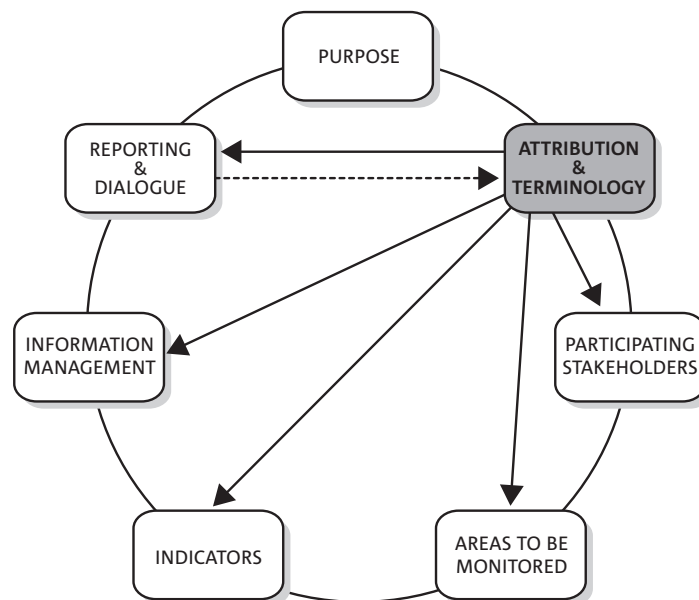
*It is important to find a balance between, on the one hand, the desire to fully understand and measure the effects and, on the other hand, the practical need to select and prioritize areas to be monitored, based on the utility for the stakeholders and on resource constraints. Once the organisation has defined its approach, it will influence the elements explained throughout the following chapters.*

## 2 Attribution and terminology around “the difference we make”

### ☐ This element serves to determine

1. the basic understanding of “the difference we make”,
2. which stakeholder may have caused or contributed to the observed changes,
3. different terms concerning impact and outcome assessment,
4. the position of the organisation in view of these options.

NGO-IDEAs intends to include all kinds of changes effected by the project, not only those which have been foreseen in planning. Several logical models for attributing change to our project activities (“development intervention”) shall be highlighted in order to make clear that different concepts exist and have their justification. The terminology we use is related to these concepts; we need to clarify it in order to avoid misunderstandings.



When talking about “the difference we make” we normally say: “effects”.

*“An effect is a change caused by an incident or an intervention.”*

*An effect includes both outcomes and impacts. An effect can be*

- *intended or unintended*
- *positive or negative,*
- *short, medium or long term*
- *sustainable or temporary*
- *directly or indirectly ascribed to the project*
- *economic, socio-cultural, institutional, environmental, technological or personal*

More specifically, in development cooperation, the following definition is used:

*“An effect is an intended or unintended change, directly or indirectly due to a project.”*



*“The change is obvious – but was it all induced by our project?”*

This means: in order to monitor the (self-)effectiveness of their action, primary stakeholders, communities, and NGOs have to assess two aspects:

**First: Changes**

- What changes have occurred?
- How much did things change, i.e. how can we measure or describe these changes?

**Second: Attribution of the observed changes to influences or interventions**

- Which factors have caused the changes? What was the project’s contribution?
- How can the logic of the “cause-effect relationship” be described?



*Throwing the stone into the water symbolises the project activities. Some effects are observable right away, such as the waves on the water. Others are hidden (e.g. the rock destroying corals at the bottom of the sea).*

*Also, there may be factors which contribute to the formation of waves (e.g. the wind).*



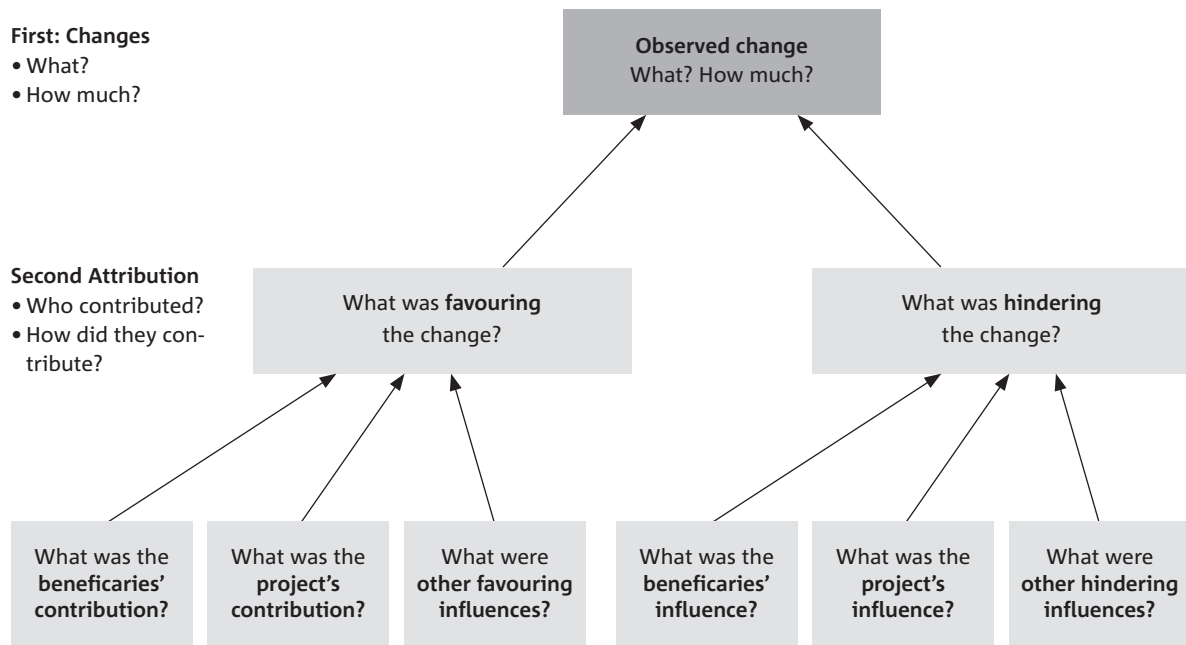
The two steps can be visualised as follows:

#### First: Changes

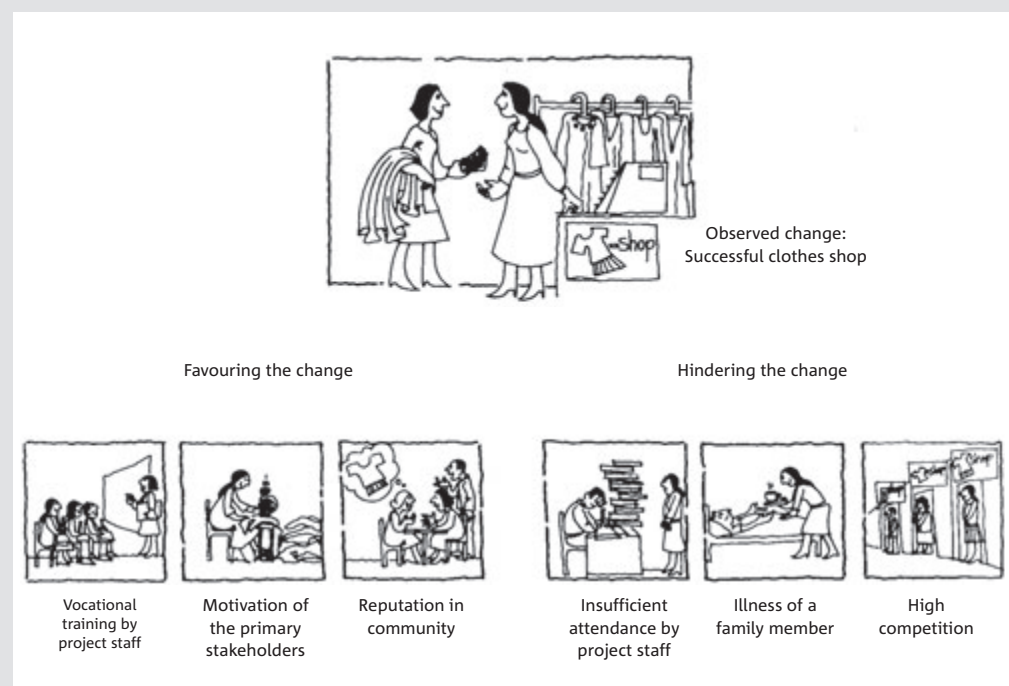
- What?
- How much?

#### Second Attribution

- Who contributed?
- How did they contribute?



#### Example for the attribution of changes:





To describe “the difference we make”, or effects, the following terms have been proposed to NGO-IDEAs partners and accepted as working definitions to be used throughout this Manual (the terms differing from the DAC definitions in *italics*; the OECD-DAC-terms not to be used by NGO-IDEAs in grey):

Term	NGO-IDEAs terminology	Effects <sup>2</sup> = “outcomes and impacts”  (in OECD-DAC definition)  Results
Impact	<i>A change in the situation of the persons the project addresses,</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>to which the outcomes have contributed</i></li> <li><i>that can only partially be attributed to the use of the project outputs or to the direct effects.</i></li> </ul>	
Outcome	<i>A change in the situation of the persons the project addresses, which can be attributed plausibly mainly to the use of the project outputs.</i>	
Use of outputs	<i>The application of the outputs (e.g. products, services or acquired knowledge or skills) by the persons the project addresses.</i>	
Output	The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention and <i>contributions</i> of the addressees; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.	
Activity	Actions taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilized to produce specific outputs.	
Input	The financial, human, and material resources used for the development intervention.	

An important line of distinction has to be drawn between “output” and “use of outputs”:

- The project management of the NGO *controls* the provision of the project inputs, project activities, and project outputs. However, it may also depend on the participation of the persons the outputs are addressed to (mostly this means: the primary stakeholders; but the project could also address teachers, health workers, journalists, ...) <sup>3</sup>.
- The project addressees are responsible for using the outputs; the project management intends to generate outputs, outcomes, and impacts in the sense of the project purpose and planning. However, reaching the outcome is a cooperative process. It has to be shared with the addressees and therefore also depends on the said addressees or external factors. If outputs are used and outcomes and impacts are achieved, this is usually a shared success by the NGO and its addressees – *the outcomes are therefore not in the control, but in the responsibility of the project management.*

2 Additionally, it shall be clarified that the term “impact” is frequently used in daily life for assigning ANY significant change induced by an event. This means: if sometimes it is not explicitly referred to a Results Chain, the term “impact” may also be used in a wider sense.

3 However, a special case is given when we mean inputs, activities and outputs of the addressees. If they are not part of the project agreement, they can be regarded as outcomes or impacts of the project intervention.



Steps to strengthen the monitoring system:

#### **ELEMENT 2: Attribution**

1. Be aware that there are different models to illustrate the relation between causes and effects. Each model has its own advantages and disadvantages. Different stakeholders may follow different logics. There is no “one size fits all” model.
2. Be aware that the Results Chain is internationally used by those organisations that also use the Logical Framework Approach. Therefore, it is relevant that the project management is familiar with it.

#### **Terminology**

1. Check your management documents and find out:
  - Is the terminology that you and your staff use consistent?
  - How do the terms you use relate to the NGO-IDEAs terminology?
  - How do other organisations in your context use this terminology?
2. Decide to what extent you need to have clearly defined terms and, if necessary, draft a glossary which compares different stakeholders’ terminology:
  - Which terms have to be clarified?
  - For what and for whom will it be helpful?
3. Decide on whether it is necessary to introduce this abstract terminology to your primary stakeholders and staffs – often, it is not necessary!
4. *(If the terms need to be clarified:)* Draft a proposal and share it with your staff and other stakeholders (funding agency, primary stakeholders, others). Adapt it, if necessary.
  - Do they understand the proposal, and do they agree with it?
  - Have the terms to be translated into the language of your staff and the primary stakeholders?



#### **“FOOD FOR MORE REFLECTION”**

##### **NGO-IDEAs terminology related to “The Difference We Make”**

*It is not easy to agree on a common terminology on outcome and impact assessment. Different languages and different understandings on how “development works” hamper a joint definition. In many countries, development organisations try to find their own understanding of the terms and to discuss this with their partners. While the discussion process is going on, NGO-IDEAs needs a working definition which is practical and has a broad common base among the participating NGOs.*

*A generally recognised terminology for monitoring is the one which is documented in the OECD-DAC Glossary.<sup>4</sup> OECD-DAC is the entity which generally sets the norms for procedures and terminology in development cooperation. The German NGOs and their partners are aware of the OECD-DAC definitions and consider them as helpful. But some of them are not fully satisfied with the definitions of “impact” and “outcome” as these are combining two sets of criteria: the cause-effect relationship between project activities and change, and the time aspect (with the need to*

4 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee: Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management; Paris 2002; Weblink: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf> (07 September 2009)

clarify whether “long-term” means “sustainable” or “emerging after a long period of time”). The parallelism of Logframe and Results Chain, however, stipulates that only the causal logics should determine the definitions.

NGO-IDEAs’ experience has shown that one feasible way of introducing the respective terminology is by referring to the Logical Framework approach which is familiar to most NGOs. It can be made clear that the Results Chain follows the same logics as the Logical Framework – but from a different perspective<sup>5</sup>:

<b>Logical Framework</b> (mainly for Planning)	<b>Typical wording in planning and monitoring:</b>	<b>Results Chain</b> (mainly for Monitoring)
<b>Goal/Overall objective</b>	<i>This contributes to ...</i>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Project objective</b>	<i>The situation of the primary stakeholders improves with regard to ...</i>	<b>Outcome</b>
	<i>The primary stakeholders make use of the outputs ...</i>	<b>Use of output</b>
<b>Output</b>	<i>The primary stakeholder are:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>able to ...</i></li> <li>• <i>aware of ...</i></li> <li>• <i>motivated to ...</i></li> </ul>	<b>Output</b>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The primary stakeholders do ....</i></li> <li>• <i>The project carries out (the activities)</i></li> </ul>	<b>Activity</b>

### **Attribution models**

If we look at the complex reality in which projects take place, we become aware that there is a conglomerate of factors that influence each other – and it can hardly be said which are the causes and which the effects. Out of many different models to approximately attribute changes to certain projects, NGO-IDEAs recommends three different perspectives, which may be complemented by other models.

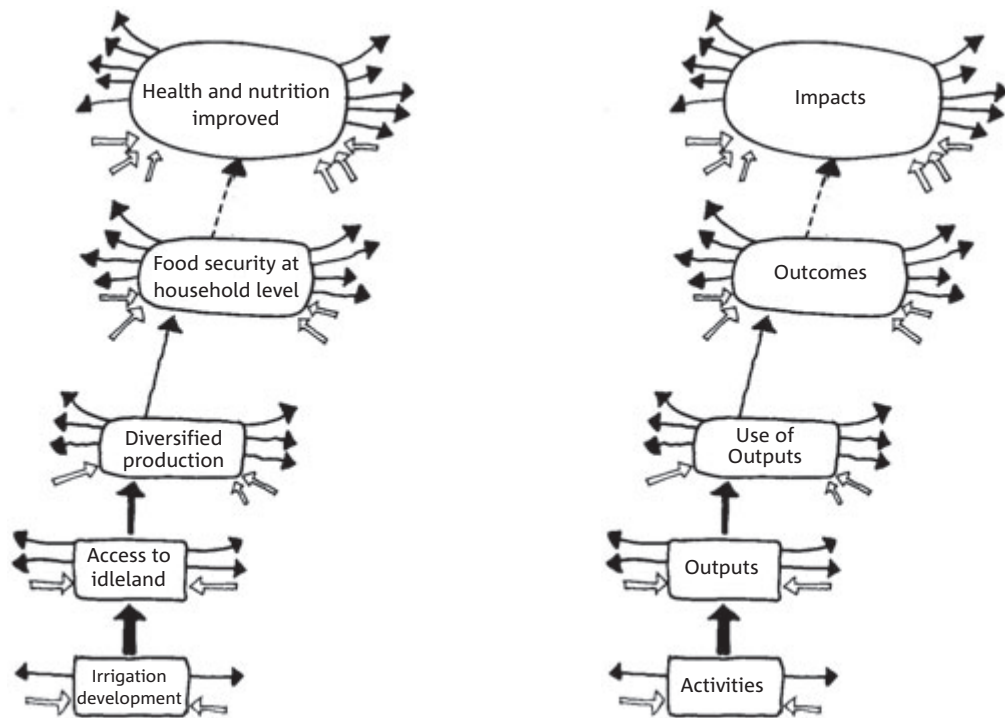
#### **Attribution model 1:**

##### **The “Results Chain”: starting the analysis from the perspective of the project planning**

One way of visualizing the relationships between project activities and outputs with effects is to develop Results Chains.

The Results Chain Approach is internationally used by those organisations that also apply the Logical Framework Approach. Therefore it is relevant that the project management is aware of this approach.

5 See Annex 1 for more details



The graph on the left shows the elements of a Results Chain. On the right side, examples are given for a sequence of activities – outputs – use of outputs – outcomes – impacts. The arrows illustrate that each of the elements is also connected to other factors. Thus, each Results Chain is merely a small section of a much more complex reality.

The Results Chain is sometimes illustrated as a line – and this may create the impression that there is a singular linear cause-effect-relationship. In reality, there are plenty of side effects and side contributions to each Results Chain.

There are two perspectives to look at the Results Chain:

- The planning perspective which starts from the top (a goal, an impact) and visualises all of the potential or actual contributions of a project to achieve it;
- The monitoring perspective which starts from the bottom (an output, activity) and visualises all of the changes caused by a certain activity or output.



the **planning perspective**  
of the Results Chain



the **monitoring perspective**  
of the Results Chain

How can we establish the Results Chain for monitoring purposes, i.e. identify outcomes and impacts?

1. What are our outputs?  
i.e. What services does our project offer to the addressees?
2. How are the outputs used by the addressees?  
i.e. To what extent do the primary stakeholders make use of the services offered? How do they use them? How many persons or households use them?
3. What are the outcomes?  
i.e. What are the direct benefits (or direct utilities) that originate from the utilisation of the services offered by the project?
4. What are the impacts?  
i.e. What are the indirect benefits (or indirect utilities) that originate from realising the direct benefits (or direct utilities), and from other influences?

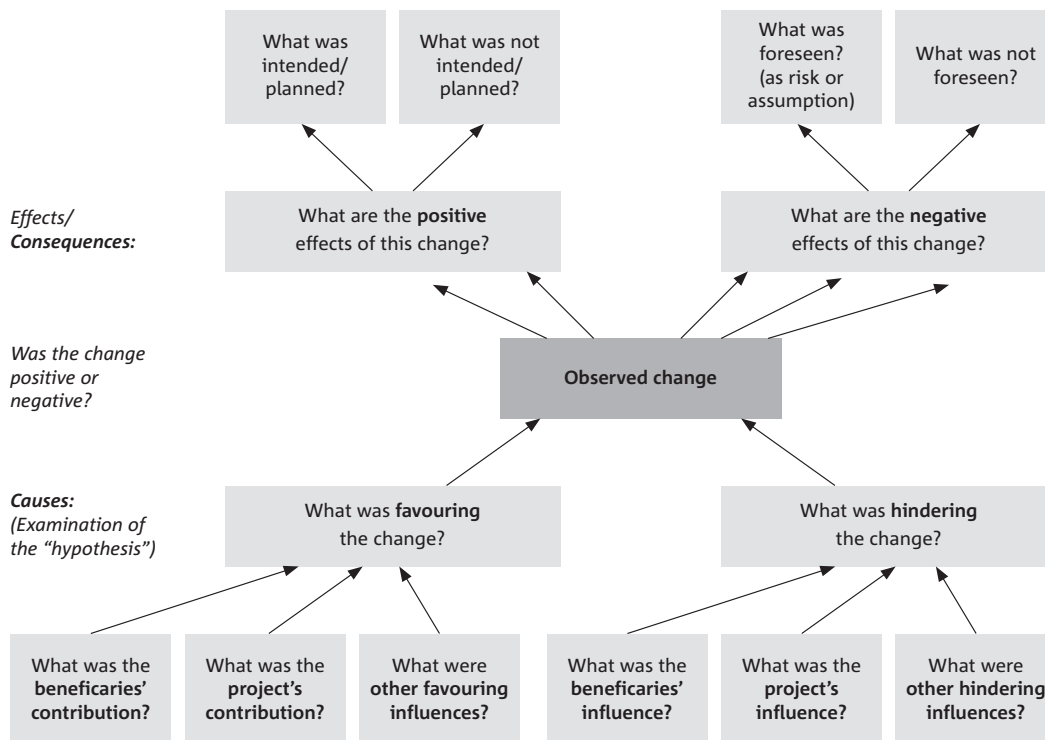
The Results Chain implies a certain terminology as explained above.

If established in the planning phase, the Results Chain is developed from the overall goals towards the detailing of activities. It is then identical with the objectives' structure in the Logical Framework.

#### Attribution model 2:

##### The “star” model: starting the analysis from an observed change

When using the “star” model, one starts the analysis **from an observed change**. One does not only look at the favourable (positive) contributions, but also at the hindering (negative) ones. And one does not only look at the project's contributions – because this may mislead to the impression that all change is produced by the “own” project. That way, one can analyse in detail what has contributed to this change and what the consequences are:



How to establish a “star model” analysis:

1. Select one of the most significant changes you have observed.
2. Analyse the causes which favoured or hindered the observed change (see the questions in the boxes).
3. Analyse who or what has contributed – favouring or hindering – to the observed change (see the questions in the boxes).
4. Analyse the consequences – positive and negative ones – from the observed change (see the questions in the boxes).
5. Identify the consequences that had been foreseen, and those not foreseen.

### Attribution model 3:

**The Influence Matrix: linking each observed change with each important project activity**

The Influence Matrix provides a possibility to present non-linear cause-effect-relationships.



Example of an influence matrix

▷ Contributing factors: ▽ Influence on:	Draught animals	Planting of trees	Literacy Programme	Hygiene measures	Organisational support	Juridical support	Passive sum (what has been influenced?)
Crop yields	•••	••	••		••		9
Family revenues	•••	•○		○	••	••	8+; 2-
Health state of children		•○	•••	•••	•		8+; 1-
Access to resources	•	•	•••		•••	•••	11
Gender equality		•	•••	•••	•••	••	12
Political participation		•	•••		•••	•	8
Human rights			•••	•	•••	•••	10
Sustainable environment	••	•••	•	•••	••		11
Active sum (what has had influence?)	9	10+ 2-	18	10+ 1-	19	11	

The example shows that the analysed activities most strongly influenced the gender equality. Organisational support was the main influence, followed by the literacy programme. Some factors had negative influences, too.

The dots in each box illustrate the level of influence each factor has on each change, ranging e.g. from 0=no influence to 3=strong influence. Positive changes are symbolized by filled dots (•••), negative changes by hollow dots (○•○). Positive and negative dots are added up separately.

*How to establish an Influence Matrix:*

1. *Make a list of all the changes observed in the context of the project. They are noted down on the first column of the matrix. If necessary, prioritise and select.*
2. *Make a list of the important factors that were able to contribute to the changes, both within and outside of the projects. They are noted down on the first row of the matrix. If necessary, prioritise and select. This can be done in focus group discussions with the community.*
3. *For each box, assess the level of influence each factor has on each change, ranging e.g. from 0=no influence to 3=strong influence.*
4. *In the last column (on the right side), calculate the total sum of the row; a high number means that the change has been strongly influenced.*
5. *In the last row (at the bottom) calculate the total sum of the column; a high number means that the factor has strongly influenced the changes.*
6. *Even if the numbers are important: it is still more important to understand the reasons why the community would consider an influence as positive or negative, as strong or weak.*
7. *In order to motivate reflection you can finally also reduce the table: you can analyse the matrix with the project’s outputs only, or analyse external influences or the counterfactual: what would have changed without the project? In these reflections, interdependencies have to be considered.*

*When the debate on outcome and impact assessment started, emphasis was frequently set on the identification and measurement of change. Recent discussions concentrate more on the difficulty of attributing the observed changes to its causes, particularly to the project. It is hence useful to know the attribution model before identifying areas to be monitored (see chapter 4) and indicators which serve to measure the change (see chapter 5). Therefore, it is important to weigh the advantages and differences of the three logical models for attributing change to a development intervention. The following chart may be of help.*

## Advantages and disadvantages of various attribution models

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Results Chain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the linear logic combines well with strategic and project planning</li> <li>by including project activities and outputs it links the project with its effects</li> <li>this logic is already introduced in planning ("logical framework"!)</li> <li>the simplified presentation makes it possible to visualise the logic of "cause-effect relationship" in a simple and comprehensible way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the fact that the Results Chain makes use of similar (but not identical) terms as the Logical Framework can lead to confusion;</li> <li>the linear perspective (which is often theoretical) does not reflect reality as reciprocal and mutually reinforcing effects and unintended side effects are not taken into account;</li> <li>the simplification implies the risk of ignoring other important effects;</li> <li>using the Results Chain requires a certain practice</li> </ul>
<b>"Star" Model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it starts from observed changes, i.e. from people's experiences</li> <li>it can be used intuitively; one does not need specific theoretical knowledge about the distinction between outcome and impact</li> <li>it is easy to apply in the field</li> <li>it focuses on the stakeholders' (favouring and hindering) contributions, it includes their behaviour, therefore it is action-oriented</li> <li>the perspective is holistic, not linear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it does not refer to the Logframe approach</li> <li>the "star" model does not distinguish between outcome and impact; if such a distinction is needed, this has to be added</li> </ul>
<b>Influence Matrix</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It combines observed changes with important causes in a balanced procedure</li> <li>it can be used intuitively; one does not need specific theoretical knowledge about the distinction between outcome and impact</li> <li>it is easy to apply in the field (and it is suggested as one of the Tiny Tools)</li> <li>it allows to distinguish the contributions of different stakeholders and of other external influences, and to compare the strengths of the project's and other influences</li> <li>the perspective is holistic, not linear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it does not refer to the Logframe approach</li> <li>the "Influence Matrix" does not distinguish between outcome and impact; if such a distinction is needed, it has to be added</li> <li>if no prioritisation is made, then the matrix could be too big and the analysis can be too tedious</li> </ul>



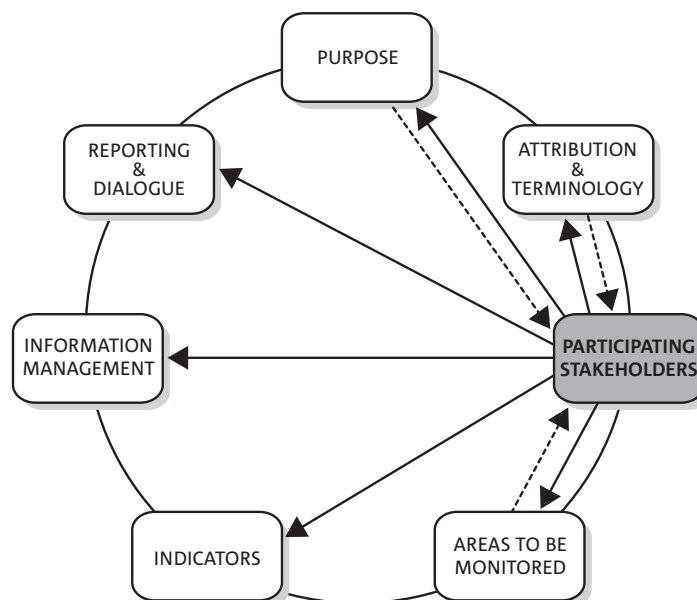
### 3 Participating stakeholders

**➤ This element serves to determine**

1. the stakeholders to be included in the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system,
2. their potential contributions and needs for information and dialogue, and
3. their role in the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system.

Different stakeholders should be invited to participate in a coordinated monitoring of the project results which takes into account their needs for information on outcomes and impacts.

Participatory monitoring does not necessarily mean that stakeholders agree on common procedures. It should rather invite the stakeholders to strengthen their autonomous monitoring systems, to share their findings and reflections.



The following groups of stakeholders do generally participate in implementing a project and should also be included in the monitoring efforts:

- primary stakeholders = intended beneficiaries
- community based organisations (CBOs)
- implementing organisations (e.g. development NGOs)
- funding agencies (or technical and financial partners)
- other stakeholders in the context of the project

Via the project agreement, these stakeholders come together with some common concerns and objectives. Apart from this, the stakeholders differ in

- their knowledge about the situation and the needs of the primary stakeholders,
- their perception and analysis of the situation and context,
- their personal and institutional objectives,
- their roles and the functions of their organisations, and therefore
- their appreciation of the effects of a project.



The picture shows the primary stakeholders (top), a funding partner (left), and a member of the project staff (right). Each stakeholder involved in monitoring has his/her own background, reality and knowledge (symbolized by the three circles in the drawing). If one includes the different backgrounds and skills into project planning and monitoring, the monitoring results will be richer and more accurate.

*Different stakeholders may have different points of view, different problems as well as objectives. The perspectives and objectives of the different stakeholders may complement but also contradict each other. The picture symbolizes the different views of the stakeholders. Sharing the respective perspectives will enrich the monitoring results and allow for a more holistic assessment.*




For the purpose of empowerment and effectiveness, the stakeholders involved need to have their autonomous monitoring system. In the context of NGO-IDEAs, the primary stakeholders are enabled to set their own priorities. They should play specific roles and have particular responsibilities in the implementation and monitoring of the project. It is however crucial, that the stakeholders enter into a dialogue with each other and with external actors, in order to join the different perspectives.


### 3.1 Identification of the participating stakeholders

The organisation responsible for the implementation of the project (the “project holder”) should identify appropriate stakeholders to participate in the outcome and impact monitoring. Together with these stakeholders, the organisation should propose roles for all the actors in order to design a future impact monitoring system. It may be helpful to ask independent ob-

servers or experts for critical feedback. A matrix can be set up to visualize and clarify the main tasks of each monitoring institution<sup>6</sup>:



▷ Name of Institution ▽ Characteristics	Steering Group	Meetings with Director	Project Staff Meeting	Federation Committee	Village Committee
Who does participate?	Representatives of all stakeholders	NGO management	Project management	Federation management	Village leaders
Frequency of Meetings	Every trimester	Monthly	Weekly	Every trimester	Monthly
Responsibilities					
Principal objects of analysis					
Who prepares and sends the information?					
Decision making					



In the context of NGO projects, the partners want the **primary stakeholders** to play an active and important role in monitoring and evaluation. These are the actors who are most affected by changes and who perceive the effects of a project in the closest way. They are in the best position to observe changes and collect all the relevant information. Moreover, the involvement in and control over outcome and impact monitoring is one way to create ownership of the development process and thus empowerment for the primary stakeholders.

The **project holder** usually is the organisation responsible for the implementation of the project. This means that they also carry the main responsibility for monitoring, having to organise the gathering and analysis of all relevant information. This also implies that they come up with a proposal regarding the roles of the other actors within a monitoring system. With a participatory approach, NGO staff will play a stronger role as facilitators, trainers, advisers and avoid dominating the monitoring process.

The (co-) **funding agencies** of the projects usually only participate indirectly in impact monitoring, as they do not access any direct information on effects. Instead, they are dependent on accessing this information via the project holder. They can only offer methodological and financial support to monitor the impacts. In some rare cases they carry out “impact studies” and evaluations of a project.

<sup>6</sup> This table can only give an example. In order to apply it for an organisation, all the decision levels have to be considered and the coordination meetings with external stakeholders likewise.

Furthermore, each project has **additional stakeholders** (e.g. health, education or extension services, or small and medium enterprises) who are not always formally included in the project but who can also contribute to or be affected by the project. Therefore, they may be interested in observing the changes caused by the project; they may even try to influence the project. It is advisable to analyse which stakeholders should participate, and at what level it makes sense for them to participate in the impact monitoring.

In order to add an external perspective on the effects of a project, **external experts** may be charged with collecting information and analysing the changes caused by the project.

The project holder, in the best possible coordination with the primary stakeholders and with the funding agency, should decide on who should play which role at which particular point during the project period.

### 3.2 Identification of potential contributions and needs for information and dialogue

After the project holder has decided on who should be involved in the monitoring system, in coordination with the primary stakeholders and the funding agency, the following questions should be addressed:

- What could the potential contributions to outcome and impact oriented monitoring of each stakeholder be? = What information is usually available to them?
- What kind of information may they need from our project?
- To what extent may they be interested in communicating with the project management?

The answer can be visualised in a matrix.



Example of the matrix of an NGO working with children:

Stakeholder	Potential contributions to monitoring	Potential needs in monitoring	Potential interest in dialoguing
<b>Primary stakeholders (parents)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on children's development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback to children's development and performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can the education be improved?</li> <li>Conflict with work load</li> </ul>
<b>NGO (project holder)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect of children's rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements in the children's wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What can the stakeholders contribute to improve the children's wellbeing?</li> </ul>
<b>Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's mental development and performance in school</li> <li>Assessment and benchmarking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's work load beyond school</li> <li>Children's leisure activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can parents contribute to better school performance?</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Potential contributions to monitoring	Potential needs in monitoring	Potential interest in dialoguing
Health posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's health status</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nutrition habits in the families</li> <li>Use of clean water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can parents contribute to better nutrition and health of children?</li> </ul>
Funding Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MDG indicators,</li> <li>Benchmarks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on the concrete improvements in children's health and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What can the stakeholders contribute to improve children's well-being?</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Deciding on the role of each stakeholder in monitoring

Based on this assessment, the management should get in touch with the other stakeholders in order to explore their expressed potentials and needs, and adjust the matrix correspondingly. The capacities and skills to fulfil this role should be analysed critically, and if necessary, possibilities for capacity building have to be explored.

The adjusted matrix will be of help when involving the various project stakeholders in future activities. It may specifically help in defining

- areas to be included in the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system,
- appropriate indicators and the way of collecting the respective information,
- the set up of the monitoring information system
- the dialogue and monitoring mechanisms (including dialogue with independent observers)

The sharing of work may alleviate the burden of collecting and managing too much data.

The cooperation and dialogue in this field will additionally improve coordination of development activities.

Steps to strengthen the monitoring system:

#### ELEMENT 3: Participating stakeholders

1. Identification of the principal stakeholders of the project
2. Identification of their potential contributions and needs for information and dialogue, and capacity building required
3. Decision on the role of each stakeholder in the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system

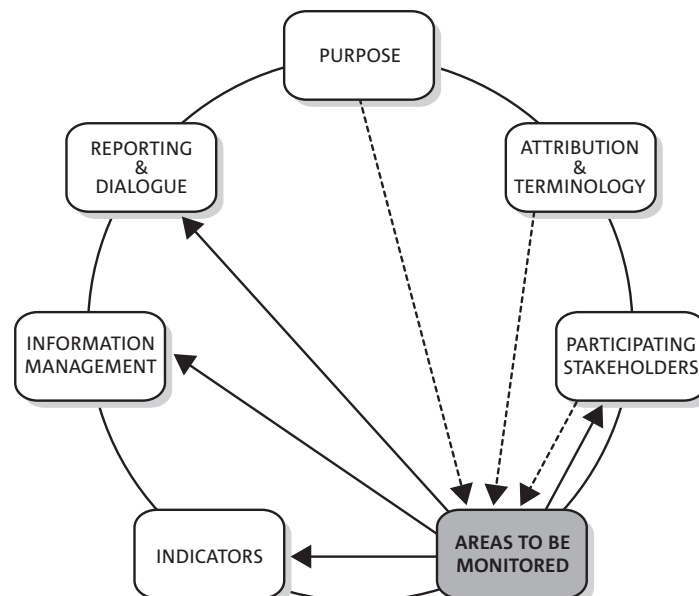


## 4 Areas to be monitored

### ☐ This element serves to determine

1. In which important areas does the organisation expect outcomes and impacts that will influence the project management?
2. Whose perspective counts? What should be prioritised?
3. Once the areas to be monitored are defined, the organisation will identify appropriate indicators and key questions for each of them (*see chapter 5*).

After having decided on the logical models for attributing observed changes to our project, and having defined which stakeholders shall participate in the monitoring of outcomes and impacts, a decision has to be made, as to which areas shall be monitored in order to measure and describe outcomes and impacts. This has to happen before we identify indicators. Only a limited number of indicators can be monitored!



In practice, each actor involved in the project has a different perspective on which effects of the project should be monitored with which methods. In order to be able to actually analyse all the information properly and to keep the costs low, it is important not to collect too much data. Therefore it is necessary to set priorities on where to look for the effects of the project.

A decision has to be made concerning the aspects, areas, or sectors to be monitored: Should the monitoring system be designed to capture the effects regarding the predetermined objectives only?

- Or do the involved actors monitor only the effects produced by certain project activities or regarding one issue area such as Human Rights?
- Or does the monitoring system focus on effects which are especially important to the primary stakeholders?
- In a complex project, it can also be useful to take all of these perspectives into account in order to achieve a broad and comprehensive picture, including soft factors and environment.

As a point of entry, NGO-IDEAs recommends to identify the areas to be monitored in two steps:

1. Expected outcome, as expressed in the project objective
  - Have a look into your project planning documents and find out what outcome your project is expected to generate, i.e. what shall be the direct benefit for the primary stakeholders when making use of the project's outputs and services. This should be spelled out at the level of the project objective, given that the planning has been properly done. If it is part of the project agreement, you are generally obliged to monitor this expected outcome.
  - Try to identify the area to be monitored, avoid focussing on indicators too early. In the next chapter it shall be described how you can identify good indicators. At the end, you should have at least one quantitative and one qualitative indicator (i.e. explorative key question, see chapter / element 5), for each area to be monitored.
2. Primary stakeholders' goals
  - Make sure that the expected outcome that has been agreed upon represents the goals of the primary stakeholders. Sometimes, project documents are too abstract to express which significant changes the primary stakeholders expect.
  - In the NGO-IDEAs Toolbox, two methods are described to identify the primary stakeholders' goals:
    - SAGE: serves to identify goals of individuals and households
    - PAG: serves to identify goals of groups and communities
  - If a big number of goals have been set, prioritise a few, e.g. three to five areas to be monitored. Some areas can be represented by more than one goal or indicator.

Avoid monitoring too many objectives and indicators!

*As NGO-IDEAs aims at primary stakeholders' empowerment and actions, this Manual intends to encourage outcome and impact monitoring from the grassroots' perspective. "Monitoring self-effectiveness" is done best if the primary stakeholders can determine autonomously the areas to be monitored, and analyse their own contribution to the observed changes.*

Steps to strengthen the monitoring system:

#### **ELEMENT 4: Areas to be monitored**

1. In accordance with the purpose and quality criteria defined for your outcome and impact oriented monitoring system, prioritise the areas to be monitored.
2. Start from the expected outcome as stipulated in your project planning, but take into account the perspectives of the primary stakeholders and see whether it constitutes an added value of the project management.
3. In order to not overburden the NGO's monitoring system, but to strengthen the participating stakeholders in their autonomous outcome and impact oriented monitoring systems, agree with them on an information exchange and joint reflections.







### “FOOD FOR MORE REFLECTION”

Generally, the different actors have a shared interest in monitoring effects which concern aspects of the project agreement, e.g. the achievement of project objectives and the usefulness of project outputs. Moreover, it seems sensible to monitor effects of project components which seem likely to have the most significant effect or about which the least is known, so far. The selection of the areas to be monitored will therefore strongly depend on the prioritised attribution model. Regarding other aspects, the actors may, however, have different priorities. Monitoring priorities and interests are not only different between and within the involved organisations, but they are also dependent on the project phase. Some information is required mainly towards the end when the project is being handed over to the primary stakeholders.

Basically, three essential areas of interests on effects may be differentiated: the strategic interests, the operational interests and the empowerment interests. These different areas of interest are interlinked and may strengthen each other. In certain circumstances, organisations may, however, choose to focus on only one or two of the areas of interest.



Different stakeholders may have different points of view, different problems as well as objectives. The perspectives and objectives of the different stakeholders may complement but also contradict each other. The picture symbolizes the different views of the stakeholders. Sharing the respective perspectives will enrich the monitoring results and allow for a more holistic assessment.

### Strategic interests (“From the Goals to the Activities”)

Every development organisation strives to promote or implement coherent programmes and projects designed to fulfil its mandate and long-term strategic objectives. Accordingly, development organisations like **funding agencies** and **implementing organisations** of the project choose their areas to be monitored according to their strategic or political objectives.

These essential long-term objectives which need to be achieved in order to promote development worldwide are included in:

- the mandate of the organisation, e.g.
  - poverty reduction;
  - justice to the poor;
- the **sector strategy**, e.g.
  - sustainable development;
  - climate change mitigation;



- **the cross-cutting goals of the organisation, e.g.**
  - eliminating gender discrimination;
  - realisation of children's rights;
  - environmental protection;
  - a dignified life for people living with HIV and Aids

Other, external sources for strategic objectives are national development priorities or internationally formulated strategies such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In order to establish a consistent goal-oriented management system, project objectives may be formulated step by step from the top (i.e. the global level) down to the bottom (i.e. the local level). This is frequently related to the Logframe approach. The strategic objectives are then reflected in (different terms are possible):

1. the overall objective, goal
2. the project objective, project's purpose

From this strategic point of view, outcome and impact assessment has to concentrate on the objectives which are agreed upon in the policies, programmes and projects. As the development organisation wants to fulfil the Project Agreement and report about it, the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system should deliver information on outcomes and impacts which are connected with the agreed objectives. For them, the main area to be monitored is the attainment of predetermined objectives.

#### **Areas to be monitored in a savings and credit programme**

- the employment situation
- income levels
- children's wellbeing
- development self-confidence of primary stakeholders
- gender equality



For a big organisation, it may be important to determine certain areas which are common to all projects. This may lead to uniform indicators to be monitored by every one of its projects, e.g. for children's wellbeing: the education status of girls and boys; the health status of girls and boys.

#### **Operative interests ("From the Activities to the Impacts")**

With this approach, the project management needs to go into further detail when designing a monitoring system than when using the strategic focus. The responsible project managers usually focus on the outcomes and impacts triggered by the project activities. It is therefore necessary to also have a model which analyses what changes are caused by the project, making it possible to find out how and to what extent the project has contributed to the observed changes.

The project managers are certainly aware of their duties defined in the system of objectives and the mandate or "vision" of the whole organisation. However, they also know that each of the project activities does not only produce outcomes and impacts concerning the agreed upon, i.e. predetermined objectives, but deploys a diverse set of additional effects, e.g. multiplier effects.

Moreover, the project activities may result in unintended or even undesirable effects: it is for example possible that self-help is discouraged or that injustices are aggravated. Hence, the stakeholders need to be aware of these "unintended" chances and risks, in order to manage the project in a fashion which allows for the desired impacts to unfold.



The **Results Chain** is one way to express the “theory of change” of a project. When it is not limited to the Logframe planning perspective only, it can also be developed from practical experiences. It is a suitable approach to combine the strategic with the operational management perspectives: the development of objectives may be illustrated “**from the goals to the activities**”, whereas the emergence of impacts may be reconstructed “**from the activities to the impact**”. It could then (contrary to the Logframe) also ask for unplanned effects at each level of the chain (see also Annex 1).



Questions to ask when drafting the “theory of change” in form of a Results Chain may be:

1. What kinds of output do we produce with our activities and what do we offer to the stakeholders?
2. How will these outputs unfold to outcomes and impacts?
3. Which mechanisms or links are at work throughout the Results Chain?
4. What are risks to the assumptions about results and links between them?
5. To what extent have these changes been caused by the project?

Answering the proposed questions helps us to understand the outcomes and impacts of the project. Also, the Results Chain is a suitable approach to combine the strategic with the operational management perspectives: the development of objectives may be illustrated “top-down”, whereas the emergence of impacts may be reconstructed “bottom-up”.



#### Example of using the results chain (savings and credit programme):

Output:	Small loans have been provided by the cooperative bank: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much?</li> <li>• To how many group members?</li> </ul>
Use of outputs:	Who made use of the loans, and for what purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many members have used the loan for productive purposes?</li> <li>• How many members have used the loan for family purposes?</li> <li>• How many members have used the loan for other purposes?</li> <li>• Who else has made use of the loans?</li> </ul>
Outcomes:	The use of the loans contributed to some changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent did the loan contribute to increase the income (= project purpose)?</li> <li>• What else changed in the situation of the group members?</li> <li>• Who or what else has changed through the use of these loans?</li> </ul>
Impact:	These outcomes contributed to some other changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what other changes or processes have these outcomes contributed?</li> </ul>

However, as outlined above, the Results Chain does only reflect a narrow segment of reality: Interactions, i.e. reciprocal effects, and unintended side effects are common features on all levels. In order to overcome these weaknesses (which are inherent to the Logframe approach), the Results Chain has to be reviewed “bottom up” or complemented by other tools, which support monitoring from the perspective of the observed changes by analysing the causes for or contributions to these changes.

### **Empowerment interests (“From Expectations and Concerns to the Impacts”)**

*In order to promote empowerment effectively, it does not suffice to limit the project to abstract objectives. If the project successfully provides incentives for empowerment, it usually triggers changes that are neither predictable nor controllable. Aside from the two afore mentioned areas of interest which are consistent with the project’s logical set-up, the empowerment perspective incorporates the perceptions of people who want to use the output of the project as the basis of their self-determined development, in other words the **primary stakeholders**. NGO-IDEAs puts emphasis on this perspective. It is inductive, based on people’s experience, and therefore completely different from the theory led perspective of the Logframe or the Results Chain.*

*As the fulfilment of their needs is the main purpose of development projects, ideally there should be a high degree of consent between the expectations and concerns of the primary stakeholders and the objectives of the project. In practice, however, the expectations of the primary stakeholders include considerably more objectives than those stated in the project agreement. The primary stakeholders act out of rather personal interests when carrying out monitoring. Their interest in participating in the project largely depends on achieving these objectives.*

*Three types of **expectations** of the primary stakeholders can be distinguished:*

- *personal objectives affecting the **individual** situation: e.g. personal development, education, professional training, health state, social participation;*
- *objectives affecting the **households** or **families**: income, food security, education of children, absence of domestic violence;*
- *objectives affecting the functioning of the **entire group** (if applicable): community development, combating violence, human rights, medical services.*

*It is the approach of the NGO-IDEAs Toolbox to identify such goals and to motivate the community or the individuals to monitor their own goals.*

*In addition to objectives that individuals or groups may have, the primary stakeholders are usually interested in avoiding or minimizing risks. Therefore, their concerns or **fears** become relevant for impact monitoring as well. Experiences with “Participatory Impact Monitoring” have revealed that the expressed expectations usually focus on technical and economic objectives. The primary stakeholders’ fears, however, uncover other objectives focussing on individual or group skills: e.g.*

- *Will we as a group be able to administer our financial means properly?*
- *Will we be able to resolve conflicts in our groups independently?*
- *Will the men accept the women’s independent activities?*

*The objectives one can derive from the fears will indicate which development conditions are necessary in order to promote self-help and create empowerment successfully. These objectives are often neglected in the project design.*

*In order to facilitate monitoring of expectations and fears of the primary stakeholders, an assessment may be conducted when starting a new project:*

- *the group’s vision regarding the situation they want their members to be in around three to five years.*
- *expectations and fears of the group members.*

*If the expectations and fears are not assessed in advance, it is also possible to ask for changes regarding group objectives when doing the monitoring or evaluation of the project.*



#### Example (savings and credit programme):

##### “What do we want to achieve in three years time?”

Regarding the individual members:

- each member can write her/his name;
- each member can access medical services;
- each member opposes domestic violence;
- each member knows methods for non-violent conflict resolution;

Regarding households (or families) of the members:

- each family can keep their property clean;
- each family has a latrine;
- each family is vaccinating all children;
- each family is sending all the children (boys and girls) to school up to the age of ...;
- each family is carrying out an economic activity not related to agriculture;

Regarding the entire group:

- the group is capable to manage a savings and credit fund;
- the group is promoting the idea of mutual support among the villagers;
- the group is capable of making proposals for the development of the village/quarter;
- the group is contributing to the resolution of conflicts.

*From the perspective of those people who experience the project impacts, it is usually easier to describe the impacts based on the observable changes. Thus, the manifold interrelations become visible. While implementing the project, primary stakeholders and intermediaries as well as the project management can add a systemic perspective by analysing causes and consequences of observed changes. The “**Star Model**” allows for a much more sophisticated illustration of the causes and consequences of every change in the situation of the primary stakeholders than the linear Results Chain. Starting from an observed change, it is useful to analyse in detail what has contributed to this change and what the consequences are.*

*The following set of questions may help to identify cause-effect-relationships, starting from the observed changes:*

1. Which changes were observed?
  2. How and to what extent did the primary stakeholders contribute to these changes?
  3. How and to what extent did the project contribute to these changes?
  4. How and to what extent did other stakeholders or influences contribute to these changes?
- The attribution models presented in chapter 2 do not exclude each other. They can be used in different contexts or may be combined.*

**What are the consequences when opting only for the ...**

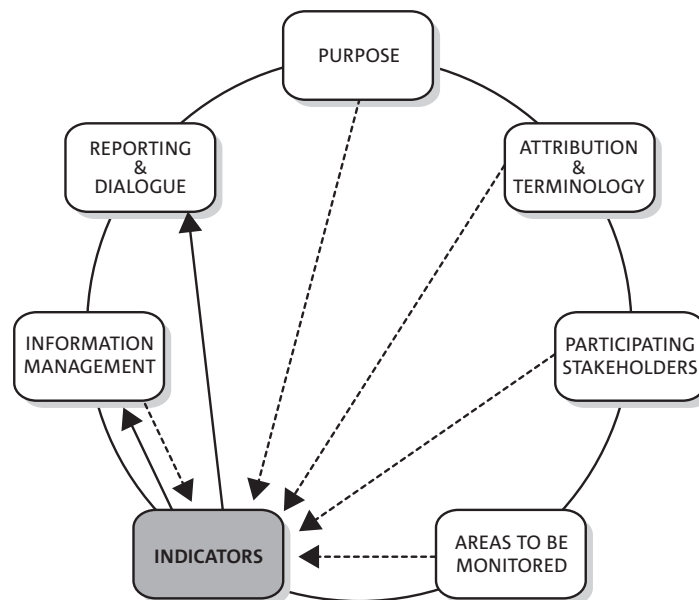
<b>...“strategic planning perspective”?</b>	<b>You may get:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a monitoring system focussing on the strategic achievements of the project</li> <li>• a monitoring system corresponding fully to the project reporting needs</li> </ul>	<b>You may not get:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a monitoring system that corresponds to the needs of the primary stakeholders, hence not contribute to ownership and empowerment</li> <li>• a monitoring system that takes into account unintended impacts...</li> </ul>
<b>...“Results Chain”?</b>	<b>You may get:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a helpful monitoring tool deepening awareness for the project staff on the logics of the project</li> <li>• a tool which makes it possible to establish indicators and a baseline</li> </ul>	<b>You may not get:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a monitoring system that gives a systemic view of the project’s outcomes and impacts</li> <li>• a tool which reflects interactions, i.e. reciprocal effects, and unintended side effects</li> </ul>
<b>...“empowerment perspective”?</b>	<b>You may get:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a monitoring system corresponding fully to the needs of the primary stakeholders</li> <li>• awareness about the motivation of the primary stakeholders to implement the project</li> <li>• the primary stakeholders may get sensitised for the effectiveness of their own activities</li> <li>• a practical approach to identify simple indicators</li> </ul>	<b>You may not get:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a monitoring system corresponding fully to the project reporting needs</li> <li>• a standardised monitoring system for the whole project or organisation</li> </ul>

## 5 Indicators and explorative questions

### ☐ This element serves to determine

- How changes can be measured and described.
- How indicators can be formulated, specifically for quantitative measurement.
- How qualitative indicators can be identified with explorative “key questions”.
- How indicators can be formulated, to assess outcomes and impacts.
- How indicators can be socially or gender differentiated.

When the areas to be monitored have been defined, indicators have to be found for each of them. The indicators have to meet some quality criteria for reporting and for analysing them continuously. It is suggested that at least one quantitative indicator and one explorative question is defined for each area to be monitored.



### 5.1 Formulating quantitative or qualitative indicators

#### **What is an indicator?**

- An indicator is a verifiable sign to describe or measure a phenomenon that is not easy to verify.
- It is a pointer which provides information on something that is not directly observable, ascertainable or measurable.
- It can reflect changes connected to a project.

#### **How can an indicator be formulated?**

Start formulating indicators by asking: “Which are the signs we easily observe when we become aware of the problem?”

---

*“Who has seen the wind? Neither you nor I. But where the trees bow down their heads, the wind is passing by.”*  
(The Wind, Christian Rosetti, 1830–1894)

An indicator usually contains 5 important elements. We can determine the 5 elements by answering the following questions:

1. **What** phenomenon do we want to assess/measure?
2. **About whom/about which group of people** do we want to collect information?
3. **For which region/where** do we want to collect information?
4. **At what moment/when** will we measure/collect the information?
5. **What** is the situation **like** at the specific moment in time? **What is the value** of our measurement?

The first three elements shall not be changed when repeating the information assessment; the last two will change with each new measurement or description.

#### Example of a savings and credit programme:

##### Fixed elements of the indicator:

... which <i>parameter</i> ?	The percentage of women who have property registered under their name;
... for which <i>subjects of change</i> ?	... all women that have participated in the savings and credit programme ...
... in which <i>region</i> ?	... in the province of M. ...

##### Changing elements of the indicator:

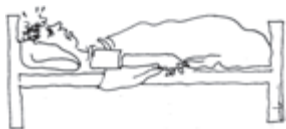
... at what <i>moment</i> ?	... which <i>value</i> ?
December 2011	5 % (before the beginning of the project)
December 2012	7 %
December 2014	20 % (at the end of the project phase = objective of the phase)

In a full sentences, the indicators is read as follows:

“The percentage of women who have property registered under their name, out of all women that have participated in the savings and credit programme in the province of M., increases from 5 % in 2011 to 20 % in 2014.”

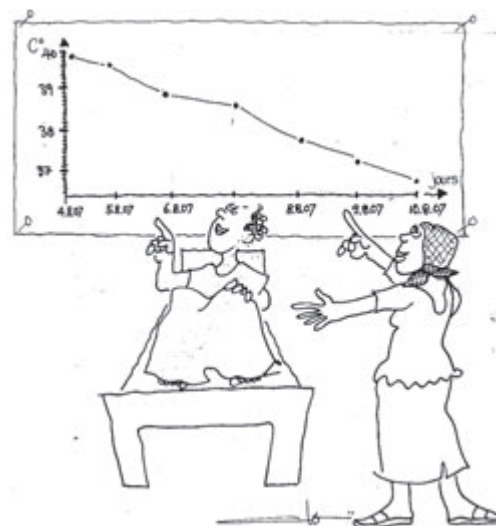
This means that it is advisable to include the “starting” value and moment and the “target” value and moment into the indicator formulation. It is, however, not necessary to formulate “milestone” values and moments for intermediate assessments like in this example.





What could indicate the reason why this man is lying in his bed at noontime?

Each indicator has a specific value at each moment in time. It does not need to be considered only at the end of the project, but can be referred to at any spot of the time axis.



### Quantitative and qualitative indicators

quantitative indicators measure	qualitative indicators measure
concrete or tangible objects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of ...</li> <li>• Frequency of ...</li> <li>• Ratio (%) of ...</li> </ul>	judgments or perceptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of ...</li> <li>• Level of ...</li> <li>• Satisfaction with ...</li> </ul>

There are at least four ways/forms of measuring or describing values of indicators. It is even possible to choose different forms of measurement or description for one indicator.

### NGO-IDEAs tools foresee all the four ways of indicator creation.

1. "Metric" measuring or counting are recommended where concrete objects can be measured or persons counted, e.g.:
  - number of members who are benefiting from the activities
  - changes in production (kg) or yields (kg/ha)
  - amount of annual investments (currency)

#### Example: Assessing the quality of Training:



**Counting:** number of participants

2. Classification is made where measuring or scoring doesn't make sense or where it is difficult, e.g.:
  - types of houses or roofs (e.g. in Wellbeing Ranking)
  - social groups (e.g. by poverty status, or by castes)
  - performance of reaching the individual or group goals by YES or NO (e.g. in SAGE)



**Classification:** exam passed?  
Yes or no



3. Scoring, scaling, or rating is recommended where there is no material change, e.g.:
- degree of reaching the individual or group goals (e.g. in SAGE or PAG)
  - quality of life (e.g. in the life line and trend analysis)
  - intensity of influence of a project output upon the observed changes (e.g. in the influence matrix)
  - ... and in many PRA tools



**Rating:** degree of satisfaction: not satisfied, somewhat satisfied, completely satisfied

4. Qualitative description is recommended where quantitative indicators do not make much sense or cannot be foreseen, e.g.:
- description of unforeseen change
  - answers to explorative questions
  - stories and experiences showing the context



**Qualitative Description:** a short story how participants are helping each other to learn

### Quality features of indicators

There are two formulas to check the quality of an indicator:

#### 1. S – M – A – R – T

Specific	The indicator describes an important attribute of the observed phenomenon, which varies to the same degree as the phenomenon. (“validity”)
Measurable	The collection of data always leads to the same results, irrespective of who makes the observation. (“reliability”)
Acceptable	The collection of data is feasible and the respondents do not feel that their privacy, their religious beliefs etc. are being impaired.
Realistic	Data collection can be managed. The costs for the collection of data stay in budget.
Terminated	The indicator relates the measurement results clearly to a moment in time. It reacts flexibly to changes of the observed phenomenon.

(Different authors have come up with different explanations for the five letters. As the SMART formula was introduced for appraising objectives, it has been modified for appraising the quality of indicators.)

## 2. S – P – I – C – E – D

Subjective	The informants have a specific position or individual experiences, which allow them to form unique opinions and insights that are very valuable for data collection.
Participatory	The Indicators should be developed together with the actors who can judge them the best. Hence, the primary stakeholders of the project have to be included, but also the project staff and other stakeholders.
Interpreted and communicable	Locally defined indicators are important, but not always self-explanatory for other stakeholders. Therefore, they need to be interpreted and communicated.
Cross-checked and compared	The validity of the assessment has to be verified, by comparing different indicators and developments and by including different informants, methods and researchers (triangulation).
Empowering	The process of defining and appraising indicators should be empowering and it should allow the groups and individuals to reflect the changing situation critically. Therefore, it is not sufficient to appraise only indicators for the level of activities and outputs.
Diverse and disaggregated	The choice of different indicators for a diversity of groups should be well-considered, especially when it comes to distinguish the situation of men and women. The information can be assessed in a way that documents the differences over a considerable period of time.

Source: Linda Mayoux

The SMART criteria are the classical quality criteria for objectives, and they can be applied to indicators, too. The SPICED criteria seem to be very much adapted to the participatory approaches of NGOs. In practice, it makes sense to use them as additional quality criteria, not as an alternative to SMART.



### How to apply these quality criteria in practice:

- Try to identify several possible indicators for each area to be monitored. This may be done by investigating the situation with the primary stakeholders, or by a brainstorming or by role plays in a workshop. Keep in mind to include indicators for outcomes and impacts, not only activities and outputs.
- Establish a list of the indicators proposed, and assess each of them with regard to each quality aspect. The rating can e.g. be between 3 = very appropriate and 0 = very inappropriate.
- At the end, sum up the score of each indicator. The one with the highest score should be the most suitable.
- In this exercise there is usually no “perfect” indicator which gets the highest score for all the quality criteria. Different indicators can complement each other.

***Making sure that the indicator corresponds to one level of the results chain***

The quality criteria mentioned above may refer to any indicator. However, when we look at the indicators for the monitoring of outcomes and impacts, we have to look at an additional criterion. It happens that indicators for measuring outcomes and impacts are located on the logical level of outputs and can therefore not give information on the expected level of the Results Chain. This means that another criterion is to verify: “Which level does the indicator measure: Impact or outcome? Use of output? Or output or activity?”

**Example of a savings and credit programme:**

Expected impact: the women have an increased income.

Possible indicator	Logical level	Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The income of the women who have participated in trainings on “business planning”.</li> <li>The percentage of women who have participated in trainings on “business planning” and who are confirming an income increase.</li> </ul>	Impact/outcome	Ideal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The percentage of women (who have participated in trainings on “business planning”) who have started new economic activities.</li> </ul>	Use of output	Possible as an equivalent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of persons trained in “business planning”.</li> <li>The number of trainings held on the issue “business planning”.</li> </ul>	Output/activity	False (= does not measure impact)



## 5.2 Using explorative questions

For outcome and impact monitoring it is necessary to

- either define one or more objectively verifiable indicator/s for each area to be monitored,
- or look for alternative ways to indicate, measure, or describe changes (wherever the definition of indicators does not make sense).

Explorative questions are open-ended questions referring to changes in an area to be monitored. They are used when it is difficult to establish an indicator beforehand.

It is more difficult to assess outcomes and impacts compared to activities or outputs. Likewise, gathering the information via explorative questions implies a much larger effort than via quantifiable indicators. But explorative question are especially useful for monitoring outcomes and impacts, which are per se difficult to foresee and measure. While an indicator refers to a very specific aspect of change (e.g. one specific plant), an explorative question opens up the perspective and encourages people to look at all the changes that have occurred in the context (e.g. the entire landscape). Explorative questions can also help with concentrating on the important changes, e.g. by asking: “What were the most significant changes you have observed?”

In contrast to indicators formulating a definite anticipation and only permitting the observation of expected changes, explorative questions make it possible to perceive unexpected changes, and changes which had not been prioritised at an earlier stage. Usually, responses refer to significant changes. In a continual process of orienting monitoring systems towards outcomes and impacts, explorative questions can and should be used as a complementary tool to indicators. Responses can be used to identify new indicators for further monitoring attempts. The Results Chain remains incomplete without the research of unexpected changes via explorative questions.



*In this picture, the man on the left monitors the situation of a store using quantitative indicators, whereas the woman can seize more aspects by asking explorative questions.*

The use of explorative questions has briefly been explained in the introduction to this chapter. The following elements are useful for formulating valuable key questions:

- use simple words and avoid using slang, sophisticated terminology etc.
- use short phrases
- use neutral language and avoid judgements
- use open questions instead of leading questions, which suggest certain answers
- refer to one issue per question only and do not link questions about two aspects with “and”
- try to refer directly to the specific living situation and environment of the interviewee
- do not overburden the interviewee and his/her knowledge

Apart from the explorative questions, it can be helpful to use photos or testimonies: these can provide important additional information, too, which is not seized by indicators.

**Example: How to assess increased self-confidence?  
(by combining a quantitative indicator with an explorative question)**

The observation of e.g. *“increased self-confidence of group members”* would be very difficult to determine and measure with a single indicator. Alternatively it would be possible to ask members an explorative question: “Do you think that your self-confidence has changed since you have been a member of this group?” – Collect (and count!) the YES and NO answers.

If there are many YES answers, continue with the next question: “Can you give some examples how it has changed?”

There are several possible responses:

- Yes: we can leave our houses to come to group meetings without having to ask for permission.
- We speak with our children’s teachers.
- We are able to go to town on our own.
- We can speak up in public.
- We meet with the authorities to speak to them about the needs of our communities.



### 5.3 Gender and social differentiation

It is often necessary to differentiate the “fixed parts” of the information that the indicators provide (the parameter, the subjects of change [e.g. primary stakeholders] and/or the location/region), particularly when wanting to gain a differentiated view on the outcomes and impacts of a project. It is especially interesting to differentiate the “subjects of change”, which means to differentiate the primary stakeholders or compare them to other groups in society. The subjects of change can be grouped according to e.g.

- gender;
- wealth/poverty criteria;
- other social characteristics (cultural, ethnic; by function, profession, age ...);
- intensity of participation in the project activities.

This differentiation is only necessary if it can generate information that is more useful for the management of the projects than information that is not differentiated.

#### **Gender differentiation**

All indicators that describe changes for individuals should differentiate the “subjects of change” by gender.

**Example of a savings and credit programme:**

<i>Unit of measurement/ parameter</i>	working hours per day	
<i>Subjects of change</i>	a) women b) men	
<i>Location/region</i>	In the project area of project N.	
<i>Moment/Duration</i>	<i>Value Women (a)</i>	<i>Value Men (b)</i>
12 – 2011:	12 hours	7 hours
12 – 2014:	10 hours	9 hours



Hence, it is possible to observe to what extent the activities of a project have different effects on women and men and whether they contribute to gender quality or not, accordingly. If necessary, the project management can react to the results and adjust the activities accordingly. For many participants of a project, such a gender differentiated monitoring system can also contribute to create awareness for gender justice.

### ***Social differentiation (wealth/poverty ranking)***

Another highly important aspect to be differentiated is the classification of the primary stakeholders by their wealth and poverty status. When applying “Participatory Wellbeing Ranking” (PWR)<sup>7</sup>, the primary stakeholders are divided into at least three income categories, of which at least two categories are below the poverty line (e.g. “poor” and “very poor”). Each indicator is therefore split up (“disaggregated”) into at least four values to be able to describe the situation for each category of wealth/poverty.



#### **Example of a savings and credit programme:**

	Indicators	<i>Average of 4 groups</i>	<i>very poor households</i>	<i>Relatively poor households</i>	<i>Relatively rich households<sup>8</sup></i>
	<b>Number of member households</b> ▷	48	35	11	2
		<b>Percentage of members (women) of 4 groups (January 2007)</b>			
	<b>Knowledge and capacities</b>				
1	Can read and write.	41 %	34 %	45 %	100 %
2	Is capable to participate in income generating activities.	24 %	26 %	18 %	0 %
3	Understands the inscriptions in its saving book.	61 %	60 %	45 %	100 %
4	Is capable to contribute independently to household and group decisions.	14 %	11 %	27 %	0 %
5	Is capable to contribute actively to conflict resolution at home and within the group.	28 %	23 %	27 %	100 %
6	Feels sufficiently assured and estimated.	10 %	6 %	27 %	0 %

7 This is a PRA method to classify families/households by their wealth poverty status.

Steps to strengthen the monitoring system:

#### ELEMENT 5: Indicators

1. Identify at least one indicator for each area to be monitored (as defined in element 4.) – try to find indicators for the outcome and/or impact level.
2. Identify at least one explorative question for each area to be monitored (as defined in element 4.) in order to get additional qualitative information.
3. Examine to what extent important indicators that refer to individuals can be differentiated according to gender.
4. Examine to what extent important indicators which refer to individuals or households can be differentiated according to social groups.



#### “FOOD FOR MORE REFLECTION”

An indicator contains five important elements (connected to the questions mentioned above). Three of the elements shall not be changed when repeating the data collection:

1. the **parameter or phenomenon** that is continually monitored (What?)
2. the **subject(s) of change** (in general the primary stakeholders) about whom the parameter is observed (About whom?)
3. the **location or region** where the changes are occurring (Where?)

Two elements of the indicator will change with each measurement or description:

1. the **time/moment** of the observation (When?)
2. the **value/description** of the situation at that specific moment (the result of the measurement) – (How much?/How?)

#### When and how to identify good indicators:

It is difficult to start identifying indicators during the planning exercise – the indicators describing the objective to be reached with the project may be very complicated and difficult to measure or describe. Such an indicator could turn out to be very theoretical.

It is much easier to start from the practice and to ask during the previous situation analysis: “Which are the signs we easily observe when we become aware of the problem?” As we have seen above: the indicator for the problem is the same as the indicator for the objective – but the measurement values are different!

#### When and how to identify the base line:

It is obvious that a project cannot be designed unless we have analysed the situation and have identified some problems to be solved, in combination with the existing potentials. This analysis gives us information and ideas for the action to be taken; it may then be formalised in a project plan or even a project proposal.

This initial analysis lays the ground for the monitoring of outcomes and impacts. Therefore, it is crucial to carefully investigate the situation and to measure or to describe as precisely as possible all the signs showing values that need to be changed. In the course of the project implementation, we can then control to what extent the situation of the stakeholders, or of the environment, is changing.



8 The category “rich” did not exist in this village.



*Sometimes, measuring the base line is difficult to do before a project is funded, because it can be labour-intensive; it can be based on a general knowledge or a small sample; the final selection of the beneficiaries may not be completed yet; and measuring may require some additional expertise not available previously. Therefore, many funding agencies support a more detailed base line study after the project has started. This may allow defining better conditions for data collection, better documentation and better analysis. Still, at the early stage of project implementation it is highly useful to establish a base line.*

*As the next chapter (6.) will show, it makes sense to involve the primary stakeholders in the data collection and analysis as early as possible, for instance as it is done with the Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) approach. Moreover, the NGO's field staff can integrate continuous situational analysis into the daily work with the beneficiaries, combined with a regular reflection on how the situation is developing. Thus, the establishment of a base line can in practice be combined with a permanent exploration of more detailed data.*

### **Quality of an indicator**

*There are two basic requirements to be kept in mind:*

- *The relationship between the indicator and the phenomenon needs to follow a logical explanation. Sometimes, the logical link between the indicator and the phenomenon it stands for is not immediately obvious and can therefore not be understood easily. Depending on different context knowledge and different cultural backgrounds, people can perceive different connections between an indicator and the phenomenon it stands for. Indicators are sometimes very site-specific and difficult to generalise. Therefore it is useful to ask for the logical link between indicator and phenomenon.*
- *An indicator can provide more than the description of a situation, if it is related to reference data for comparison. The relevance of an indicator can be assessed in a better way if we have an idea of how it has been measured in a different context.*

### **Quantitative and qualitative methods**

*Participatory monitoring methods generate both qualitative and quantitative data. The terms 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' refer to the type of data generated throughout the monitoring process. Quantitative data rather refer to tangible objects while qualitative data rather refer to judgments and descriptions. Qualitative methods include participant observation, interviews and participatory tools that are often group-based. One can use qualitative research to assess quantitative and qualitative data. By using open-ended explorative questions, qualitative methods allow complex analyses of often non-quantifiable cause-and-effect relations based on subjective perceptions. Subjective assessments may seem to be vaguer and thus less convincing than "objectively verifiable" measurements, even though they might provide the better results regarding the intention. A good thermometer measures the temperature exactly, but the subjective perception might still be more appropriate to decide on whether it is too cold or hot for a certain undertaking.*

*Quantitative and qualitative approaches can complement each other well since the quantified (or quantifiable) indicators (i.e. expressed in numbers) bear advantages in those areas in which the descriptive presentations (expressed in words) show weaknesses, and vice versa.*



<b>Quantified indicators</b>	<b>Descriptive presentations</b>
<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes can be expressed more accurately.</li> <li>• Allow for easy aggregation and comparison with strategic objectives.</li> <li>• Especially suited for assessing the magnitude of change.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes can be represented in an illustrative and comprehensive manner.</li> <li>• Allow for the capture of unpredicted changes and the formulating of new indicators for further project phases.</li> <li>• Primary stakeholders may be more familiar with them.</li> <li>• Contribute to public relations activities.</li> <li>• Assure depth of focus.</li> <li>• Suited for assessing why and how certain changes have been caused by the project or programme.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicators have to be defined in advance -&gt; they do not always capture the essential characteristics of changes.</li> <li>• Often, unpredicted changes are not accounted for.</li> <li>• Having to deal with 'indicators' may cause uncertainty among several partners.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are often inaccurate (except the photos).</li> <li>• Are more difficult to aggregate than quantifiable indicators.</li> <li>• Can create biased/subjective image.</li> </ul>

*Indicators need to be adapted and added during the process of monitoring, thus avoiding a perspective limited only to the anticipated indicators. In order to avoid neglecting unintended or negative effects, asking explorative questions may broaden the picture.*

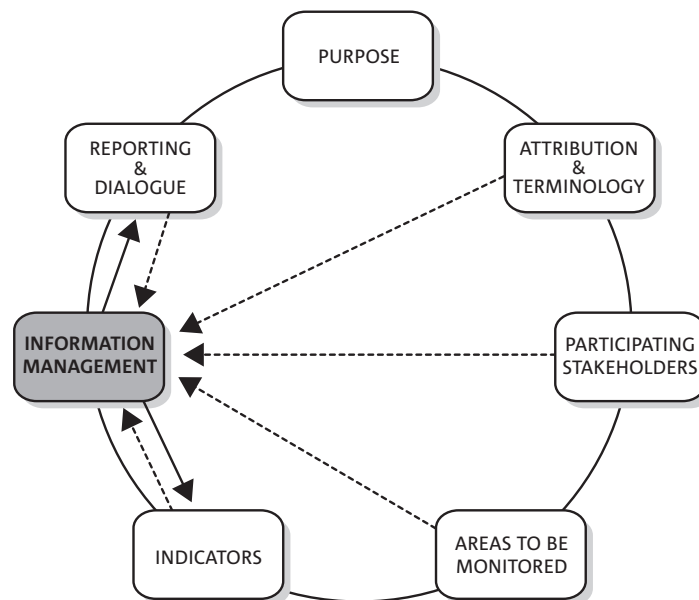
*To avoid false interpretations of results assessed with quantitative indicators, triangulation is recommended (see chapter 6.2.3), not only with qualitative indicators, but also with different perspectives. Thus, monitoring results can be verified and completed.*

## 6 Information management and data analysis

### ☐ This element serves to determine

- How to **collect** data and by whom. How often?
- How to check the quality.
- How to **document** the monitoring information.
- How to **analyse** the monitoring information.

It is necessary to determine how the information is collected, documented, and analysed. Frequently, the data collection is similar for most of the indicators. It is important to control the quality of the data.



After having defined indicators and explorative questions, the stakeholders design an entire system of data collection, documentation, analysis, and feedback. This again will determine the form of the reporting system as described in chapter 7. The purpose of the information management is to channel all the information needed in order to make an informed appraisal of the effects in a way that makes the information easily accessible.

### 6.1 Data collection

Whoever wants to assess the effects of a project needs reliable information on certain aspects and criteria. Often, these pieces of information are not directly accessible, but have to be collected from different sources and afterwards selected according to monitoring needs. The information on the effects of projects is often scattered among several sources and therefore cannot be accessed immediately. Also, much “dormant” knowledge exists that is only insufficiently communicated and needs to be detected. The way to gather information depends on the means of the responsible actors.



*The community can assign one person to observe and document what is happening.*

Data collection is a tremendous effort. It requires observation and listening skills and may take a lot of time. Several things have to be decided on the mode of data collection:

1. Is the data collection set up in an empowering way in order to create awareness on self-effectiveness ... or do we risk having a concept which is too “extractive”?
2. Who is going to collect the data? Do they have the required skills and a clear understanding how to proceed? Can the burden of data collection be shared among the stakeholders, i.e. can some stakeholders provide some information more easily and/or in better quality?
3. Can the data collection be integrated to the current work of the community or the NGO? For instance, the quantities of sold products can immediately be registered when the lorry comes; alternatively, field workers can integrate their observations into their monthly reporting forms.
4. Can the work be organised in a way which makes the data collection a central and natural part of the group or field work? For instance, into every group meeting, questions can be included as to “What has changed? – How much has it changed? – Why?”
5. Can the focuses of data collection be distributed over the year? For instance:

- January: education
- February: health
- March: agricultural yields
- April: income
- May: individual empowerment
- June: group performance
- etc.: (If there are up to six prioritised areas to be monitored, we could start here again monitoring the above mentioned areas; and adjust it to seasonality of topics.)



6. Is it appropriate to collect information on the totality of the primary stakeholders, or is it sufficient to survey only a small part of them – i.e. to investigate only a sample? If we opt for a sample: What are the selection criteria in order to make sure that the findings will be representative for all the primary stakeholders?
7. Can we use the collected data immediately for action, so that there is a utility beyond mere data collection? In a savings and credit programme, we can make the amount of savings a condition for disbursement of loans. In a project to save waste of water or electricity, we can display consumption figures for everyone to see. In agricultural extension, we can make the disbursement of seeds dependent on the application of appropriate planting techniques.

NGO-IDEAs Toolbox and Tiny Tools provide examples for participatory and simple methods of data collection which can be practised by NGO staff or even community facilitators, often in community meetings. They are mainly based on self-assessments, but they should periodically

also be combined with an independent view from outsiders. The awareness of the potentials and limits of participatory tools – for instance on the “Tiny Tools” or the whole scope of the PRA toolkit – will also determine the selection of indicators: if we know the strength of a tool, this will also influence our decision on appropriate indicators.

***Some examples of methods for data collection:***



Primary Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct observation</li> <li>• Group discussions</li> <li>• PRA tools such as social mapping, seasonal calendar, time line</li> <li>• NGO-IDEAs methods and tools such as SAGE and PAG</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>
NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory observation</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Focus group discussions</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• PRA tools: e.g. social mapping, Venn diagram, seasonal calendar, time line, transects, participatory wellbeing ranking</li> <li>• MAPP Analysis with life line, trend analysis, activity list, influence matrix</li> <li>• Further “Tiny Tools”</li> <li>• Collection of secondary data</li> <li>• External evaluations</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>

When applying these methods and tools, please refer to specialised literature on data collection methods, and especially to descriptions of PRA, MAPP and NGO-IDEAs Tiny Tools.



**Example of NGO-IDEAs Toolbox application in a savings and credit programme:**

The programme is operating on several levels that are accompanied by the NGO:

- Each savings and credit group states at which level the members reach the objectives which they have set out when joining the group. The members give mutual “feedback” to validate the achieved changes. They can compare them and draw conclusions.
- Each group keeps records including information on economic data and achievement of the group’s objectives in each family.
- The group summarises the most important outcomes and impacts and their delegate reports this summary to the federation at periodical meetings. The delegates also receive a feedback on the success of their own group and can compare it to other groups. They report back to their group, and members can draw conclusions from this feedback (possibly facilitated by the NGO).
- Furthermore, the NGO staff observes at which level the group achieves its objectives and regularly discusses their observations with the group.
- If necessary, an external person can occasionally come to give feedback on the self-perception of the group and the NGO.
- The learning process from these reflections can be reported to other partners involved, if they are accepted, e.g. to funding agencies.

The “Indicator Definition Form” (see Annex 2) shows how information management and indicator definition are interlinked. It can be helpful to organise all the details around information management of an indicator.

A monitoring plan can provide an overview, e.g. in this structure:

Indicator	Means of Verification				Use of Information		
	Data Source	Frequency of collection	Collection Method	Kind of documentation	Kind of analysis	Reporting how/when/to whom	Responsible Person

## 6.2 Documentation, consolidation and quality control

### 6.2.1 Documentation

The collected data need to be documented in order to secure the information and cluster it according to monitoring needs. The documentation of the information also depends on the responsible actor, and for whom it is documented. Moreover, qualitative and quantitative data may be documented and displayed in different ways.



*There are different ways of visualising the monitoring findings. You should test which one is understood best.*

One of the first steps is to file the information received from different sources immediately and systematically so that they can be easily found – by other team members, and especially after the next round of data collection. Agreeing on rules for the filing should clarify where it should be stored: at a place where it is safe, and where it is accessible to the stakeholders.

Some examples for documenting information are:

#### Primary Stakeholders

- Diaries
- Minutes of Discussions or Meetings
- Posters
- Tables
- Pictures
- ...

#### NGOs

- Reporting forms
- Case Studies
- Registers/files
- Photos/videos
- Posters
- EXCEL Tables
- Databases
- ...



### 6.2.2 Consolidation

The consolidation of data goes closely together with the documentation of data. It means the compilation of results. “Aggregation” is another term used for this step. Many examples of this chapter on consolidation and analysis are taken from the NGO-IDEAs Toolbox, section “Participatory Analysis and Reflection” (PIAR).

If the collected information consists only of *descriptive* data (i.e. from explorative questions) it is difficult to consolidate or aggregate them. Usually a solution to this problem is to choose the most remarkable descriptions and to count the aspects that are most frequently cited. After that, they can be analysed and valued.



#### Example of consolidation of qualitative data

Explorative question: “Since you joined this group: What has changed for you with regard to empowerment?”

Answers received	Aspect or category of change with regard to empowerment
my small business is running well and makes me self-confident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More self-confidence</li> <li>• Own income</li> </ul>
I am respected more by my family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More respect by the family</li> </ul>
I know my rights as a woman and I can defend them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More knowledge</li> <li>• More self-confidence</li> </ul>
as a group, we can reach a lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence in solidarity</li> </ul>
my husband respects me more because of my additional income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More respect by the family</li> <li>• Own income</li> </ul>
I have learnt many things and this make me more self-confident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More knowledge</li> <li>• More self-confidence</li> </ul>
I am confident to plan for my future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More self-confidence</li> </ul>
with my new knowledge and my additional income I can care for myself and for my family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More knowledge</li> <li>• Own income</li> <li>• More self-confidence</li> </ul>
it makes me feel good that I am listened before decisions are taken in my family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More respect by the family</li> <li>• More self-confidence</li> </ul>
<b>Results:</b>	6 x More self-confidence 3 x Own income 3 x More respect by the family 3 x More knowledge 1 x Confidence in solidarity

For *quantified* indicators, consolidation includes calculating sums and averages. Social sciences offer several methods of aggregation. For impact monitoring of projects, there are options that do not require specific expert knowledge. The consolidation can be made in two steps:

**Consolidation of all data: aggregation of the totality**

There are two main options for aggregating *the totality* of data:

- Each unit of analysis (e.g. each village, group) counts equally;
- Each unit of analysis (e.g. each village, group) is weighted according to the number of people it represents (especially the primary stakeholder population).

**1a. Results summary for each single indicator**

The first step of analysing the monitoring results is to summarise (compile) the results. This basic evaluation is first done indicator-wise. The answers of all group members are compiled to build the summary of the group; then the groups are summarised, too. In order to make results of groups with different sizes comparable, we usually calculate the (average) percentage of persons/households answering “yes” for each goal:

**Example from NGO-IDEAs Toolbox – SAGE:****Percentage of members achieving the goals, by groups, and average for all groups**

Goals/Indicators <sup>9</sup>	group 1	group 2	group 3	group 4	group average*
We have sufficient income to provide healthy food to all household members.	40	45	55	60	50
We have a small kitchen garden close to the house.	10	20	20	30	20
We send all the children (boys and girls) in school age to school.	100	65	55	100	80
We avoid violence, also in the domestic area.	30	25	35	30	30
We actively participate in the community activities.	55	45	35	25	40
* This means: ... % of all group members, or persons surveyed, to whom this question is applicable, have achieved this objective.					

**1b. Results summary for clusters of indicators**

If you want to group (or cluster) several indicators which have certain characteristics in common, then you can cluster any selection of indicators which might be relevant for you:

- indicators referring to similar aspects, e.g. personal, social, economic or political changes;
- indicators referring to the same Logframe objectives: e.g. to the project's goal/purpose, project objective, project result no. 1, project result no. 2, ...
- indicators referring to the same level of the Results Chain: outputs; “use of outputs”, outcomes, impacts;
- indicators referring to overarching goals (e.g. MDGs) or to cross-cutting objectives (e.g. gender justice) of your organisation.

<sup>9</sup> Note: This analysis can only be made if these groups use the same indicators.

This means that, apart from the average for each single indicator, averages can also be calculated for clusters of indicators – according to your needs:



**Example from NGO-IDEAs Toolbox – SAGE:**

**Percentage of members achieving the goals (by clusters of indicators)**

Goals/Indicators	% of members	cluster average
<i>Cluster: Food security and nutrition</i>		35
We have sufficient income to provide healthy food to all household members.	50	
We have a small kitchen garden close to the house.	20	
<i>Cluster: Personal attitudes and behaviour</i>		50
We send all the children (boys and girls) in school age to school.	80	
We avoid violence, also in the domestic area.	30	
We actively participate in the community activities.	40	

This calculation can be done for each group and for the total number of groups as well.

*In these two examples, each unit of analysis (each group) counts equally; but there is another option for aggregating the data: Each unit of analysis (e.g. each village, group) can be weighted according to the number of people it represents (especially the primary stakeholder population).*

## 2. Consolidation of selected data: disaggregation by categories

There are two main options for aggregating *only parts* of the data. We can also call it filtering as we are selecting certain aspects only:

- We can select *several units* (e.g. villages, groups) which have common characteristics:
  - identical “project history”, similar history with the project (see example below);
  - identical history;
  - identical geographical characteristics;
  - the level of accompaniment by the project;
  - responsibilities of the team;
  - funding agencies
  - project components



Different categories or clusters can be formed and compared (see the different columns):

Percentage of members achieving their goals, by “age of the group”			
Goals/Indicators <sup>10</sup>	Groups existing 3 years and more	Groups existing less than 3 years	Group average
We have sufficient income to provide healthy food to all household members.	55	45	50
We have a small kitchen garden close to the house.	20	20	20
We send all the children (boys and girls) in school age to school.	100	60	80
We avoid violence, also in the domestic area.	50	10	30
We actively participate in the community activities.	45	35	40

- *several persons or households* in all villages or groups are differentiated by certain characteristics:
  - gender (see example below)
  - income/wellbeing/poverty categories; see example below)
  - age
  - educational level
  - social/ethnic origin

Different categories or clusters can be formed and compared according to these characteristics (see the different columns).

Percentage of members achieving the goals, by wellbeing categories					
Goals/Indicators	Very poor	Poor	Medium poor	Rural rich	Group Average
We have sufficient income to provide healthy food to all household members.	40	45	55	60	50
We have a small kitchen garden close to the house.	10	20	20	30	20
<i>Cluster: Food security and nutrition (average)</i>	25	32	37	45	35
We send all the children (boys and girls) in school age to school.	40	80	85	100	80
We avoid violence, also in the domestic area.	30	25	35	30	30

<sup>10</sup> Note: This analysis can only be made if these indicators did not change over these years.

Goals/Indicators	Very poor	Poor	Medium poor	Rural rich	Group Average
We actively participate in the community activities.	55	45	35	25	40
<i>Cluster: Personal attitudes and behaviour (average)</i>	42	50	52	52	50

The differentiated analysis of men and women (“gender disaggregation”) can, however, only be made if the indicators are referring to characteristics of individual *persons* (or groups of men and women).



Percentage of members achieving the goals, by men and women			
Goals/Indicators	Men	Women	Group average*
I have learnt to read and to write.	80	50	60
I am aware of the children’s rights and respect them.	30	60	50
I actively participate in the community activities.	60	90	80
* The average is calculated for a group with 10 male and 20 female members.			

For the documentation and consolidation of data it is important to maintain the **confidentiality** of the data! Up to which level of information can the names of the respondents be disclosed? How can anonymity be ensured?

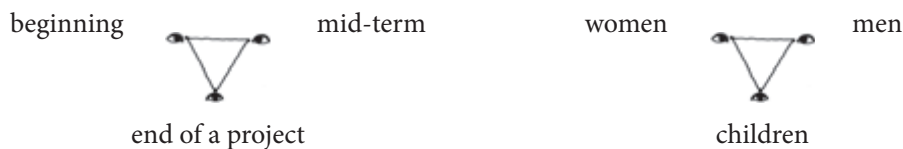
- In the case of NGO-IDEAs, the data about the households is made anonymous by giving numbers to the households. Only a “household list” (or: code list) can disclose which name is behind each number.
- Other risks to confidentiality have to be identified, and appropriate measures for data protection have to be found.

### 6.2.3 Quality control

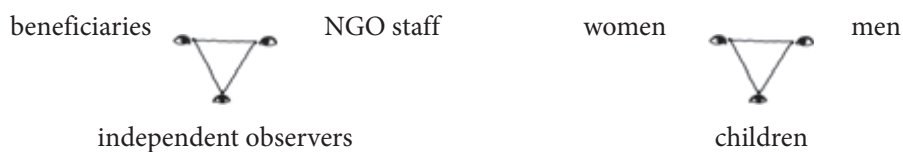
Documentation and consolidation should go along with the **control of the data quality**. Obviously, the data quality shall be continuously ensured during survey design and data collection. But the step of consolidation will give a final overview and allow comparisons to assess the **validity** of the data. To ensure validity, one should not only assess whether the monitoring approach and the assumptions are appropriate, but also whether the chosen methods and instruments are adequate.

One useful way of ensuring the validity is the **triangulation**. Different types of triangulation may be distinguished:

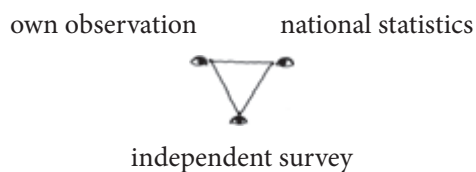
- **Data triangulation:** different indicators or types of data are compared, at *different points in time* and/or with *different units of analysis* e.g.:



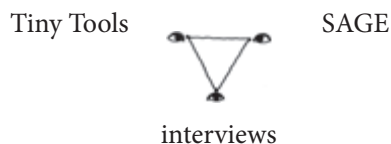
- **Stakeholder triangulation:** different perspectives from the involved stakeholders are compared e.g.:



- **Investigator triangulation:** information from different sources, observers or interviewers are compared e.g.:



- **Methodological triangulation:** different methods or tools (e.g. observation, interview, group discussion) are used and compared e.g.:




---

### “FOOD FOR MORE REFLECTION”

Main quality criteria in addition to the **validity** (see above) are the **representativeness** and the **reliability** of the data. Typical questions regarding the quality could be:

- If the persons or groups selected for this analysis are a sample: are they representative for the totality of persons or groups our NGO is working with?
- If the results seem not to reflect the reality: did everybody understand the questions well, and in the same way? Were the answers honest, have they been cross-checked and validated in the field by the stakeholders?
- If the results for one of the indicators have “worsened” after one year: is it an error? Or is it justified because the members have changed their understanding of the goals they want to reach? Has the NGO opened the members’ eyes and broadened their perspective, and therefore they feel like performing less than before? (Example: People might say they look well after the health of their family members. During the following year they learn more about health problems. A year later they do more than a year ago, but they rate themselves lower, because they have learned that they should do even more.)



*This quality control has to start at community level. Cross-checking gets more difficult the more “distant” it is from the grassroots’ level.*

*It is normal that with a critical view on the own data collection system such doubts come up. This gives an opportunity to improve the monitoring.*

*In practice, if we have only received data on a smaller sample of the primary stakeholders, it is useful to organise a strategy for the **validation** of the results. The findings of the sample survey can be presented to a group of representatives of the primary stakeholders, to a group of resource persons, or independent outsiders. In a focus group discussion they can give feedback to what extent the changes observed are representative for the totality; and at the same time, one can analyse with them which causes can be attributed to these changes.*

*Finally, we have to remember that, when monitoring self-effectiveness, we may have to accept a wider scope of data quality than in scientific research. Those who participate in the whole process generally have less or no professional knowledge in social sciences. But contrary to the social scientists, they are well-grounded in the context knowledge and able to be aware of and to interpret minor differences which the scientist might not see or understand. They need opportunities to learn social investigation, they need time – and they need support by scientists showing solidarity, not destructive criticism.*

*Perhaps, as a start, when the need for exact figures is limited, it is more important to focus on reflection and learning. Experience shows: the desire for better data quality will grow, once its use is understood. But to avoid misunderstandings: the better the facts and figures are documented and consolidated, the more accurate the analysis and learning can be.*

## 6.3 Data Analysis

### 6.3.1 Comparisons to be Made

The monitoring data, now well documented and consolidated (aggregated and disaggregated) are not self-explanatory or independent of cultural contexts. They do not make much sense unless we have a reference to compare them with. But with what? The target-performance comparison is the most common one: we may compare the findings with the intended objectives, with theoretical hypotheses or previous measurement data – but there are many more possibilities.

The results measured for the totality of the primary stakeholders or for the aggregated categories can be compared with

- past/starting values/the base line (before-after comparison)
- the expected/intended values (set-actual comparison)
- the situation of a group that has not made use of the project’s output (with-without comparison)<sup>11</sup>
- the situation of a group that has made use of another project’s output (benchmark comparison)
- the regional/national average
- international standards/norms

11 Annex 3 discusses the need of comparing “factual” and “counterfactual” change.

**Before-After-Comparison:**

2000



2010



*Can you spot the changes?  
What has contributed to these changes?*

The most important comparison in order to analyse outcomes and impacts is the “before-after” comparison as shown in the following example:

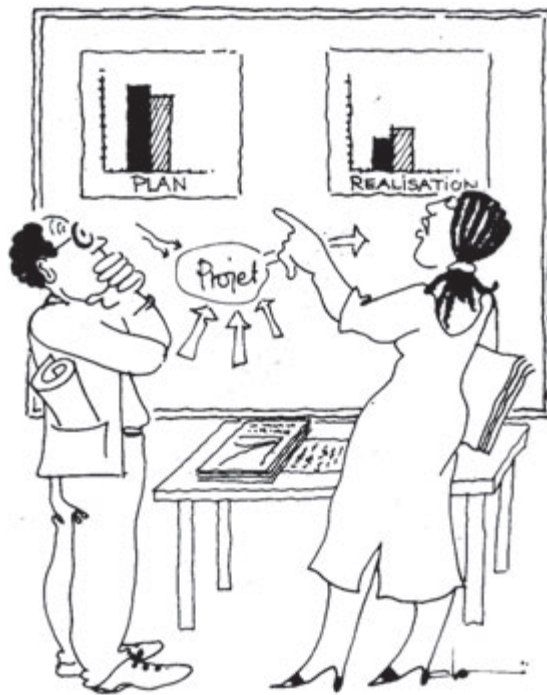
**Percentage of members achieving the goals, group average:  
progress made since base line**

Goals/Indicators	2010 (baseline)	2011 (actual)	Difference
We have sufficient income to provide healthy food to all household members.	0	50	50
We have a small kitchen garden close to the house.	0	20	20
We send all the children (boys and girls) in school age to school.	30	80	50
We avoid violence, also in the domestic area.	5	30	25
We actively participate in the community activities.	30	40	10



The measured results in the aggregated categories can moreover be compared with

- the total average
- the average differentiated by region/location
- the average differentiated by persons/social groups



*Do the achievements correspond to what we have expected?  
To what extent are they different from other reference values?*

### 6.3.2 Analytical questions to be asked

The results drawn from the comparisons (see chapter 6.3.1) need to be evaluated. The next analytical step should provide answers to the question: “*What can the participating parties (stakeholders/actors) learn from this?*” The following monitoring questions can be used to optimise the positive effects of the project:

- What has contributed to achieve results that are *above* the reference value or *above* the average?  
(= What are the *favouring* factors?)
- What has contributed to bring results that are *below* the reference value or *below* the average?  
(= What are *hindering* factors?)
- What are consequences for the future?

Further questions can refer to the *causes of the changes*: The key questions can play a useful role for analysing the causes of the changes. They make it possible to analyse whether the changes have been caused by the NGO activities (e.g. a specific project), by other actors (e.g. the state, banks, companies) or by other influences (e.g. press, TV, migration).

The analysis of the causes of changes is easiest when using the questions of the “star” model:

- “What was *favouring* the change?”
- “What was *hindering* the change?”

The analysis can be deepened by asking the following questions:

- “What were the *influences on the project*?”
- “What were the *contributions of the primary stakeholders*?”
- “Which *other influences* have played a role regarding these changes?”

In a similar way, questions can be asked regarding the consequences of these changes:

- “Which are the *positive* consequences of these changes?”
- “Which are the *negative* consequences of these changes?”

These questions will allow the participating stakeholders to analyse their own contribution to the change observed, in other words: their self-effectiveness.

Steps to strengthen the monitoring system

#### **ELEMENT 6: Information management**

1. Define how the data for each indicator shall be collected: By whom, with which method?
2. Identify which data can be obtained from other stakeholders, so that your organisation does not need to collect the information itself.
3. Determine how the data shall be documented for each indicator. Check the quality of the data.
4. Decide on which comparisons shall be made in order to analyse the monitoring results, and make sure that the relevant information can be obtained.
5. Determine which analytical questions shall be asked regularly by your staff, and propose corresponding questions to the participating stakeholders.



### **“FOOD FOR MORE REFLECTION”**

#### **Collecting data**

*Methods of data collection which focus on an external perspective may be based on some form of oral or written interview, direct observation or non-reactive measurements (such as the analysis of documents or secondary data). When interaction takes place between the information bearer and the person interested in obtaining the information, it may have an altering or falsifying effect on the information, but the interaction may also contribute to a deeper understanding or further concretion of effects. If more than one person is being interviewed at a time, the internal communication among the group may also provide a more detailed picture of the effects. Open or concealed observations may be biased by the observer's perceptions or may result in a changed behaviour of the persons being observed. Evaluators should examine whether the situation at the time of data collection is “normal”, and not distorted by any extraordinary event or other stress situation.*

*The means and methods of data collection may affect the quality of the data collected, as they all have advantages and disadvantages. The results may get distorted by using certain methods for data collection. Therefore, it is recommendable to be aware of sources of error and to use different methods which complement each other reciprocally. A poor data quality often is a constraining factor for (advanced) statistical analysis.*





### **Sources of error**

When analysing information gathered via interviews, one should be aware of certain response-errors which might result from the interview situation, such as

- *Non-Attitudes* (giving an answer without actually having an opinion on the issue),
- *Social-Desirability-Responses* (giving the answer, which the interviewee thinks is socially expected of him/her),
- *Yeah-Sayer-Effects* (agreeing with a statement, irrespective of the own opinion),
- *Sponsorship-Effects* (giving an answer, which to the interviewee seems to be consistent with the expectations of the employer, funding agency, ..., or to show his/her gratitude),
- *Interview Effects* (e.g. changing the response behaviour because of characteristics of the interviewer, formal aspects such as wording of questions or the order of questions, ...) etc.

Also, data selection is closely connected to data collection, it may become a source of error:

- *The interviewee decides which information to pass on.*
- *In addition, the interviewer or other actors (e.g. funding agencies) decide which information or source of information is to be included in the outcome and impact oriented monitoring system.*

### **Documenting data**

More difficult is the question about the form of storing them: on paper, or in the computer? The following reflections should be considered:

#### **On paper:**

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <i>Reporting forms</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The advantage is that the written reports can be filed directly in the office, it is quickly done.</i></li> <li>• <i>The disadvantage is that it is more arduous to find the relevant information because it has to be extracted from each single report.</i></li> </ul>   |
| <i>Posters</i>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The advantages may be that the information can be visualised and displayed for others, the information can be sorted immediately (also including several moments of data collection) and provide information at one glance: tables may be more difficult to read, but graphs are easier to understand. This will enhance immediate analysis, too.</i></li> <li>• <i>The disadvantage is that filing the information means more work. And where should all the posters be displayed?</i></li> </ul>   |
| <i>Diaries</i>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The advantage is that the information stays in the hands of the owner – and may contribute to self-monitoring and self-awareness. Many modes are possible: one specifically interesting option is the “pictorial diary” in which certain indicators are visualised beforehand, and in which illiterate people can also document and continuously review the changes they are undergoing.</i></li> <li>• <i>From the point of view of a centralised monitoring, it will, however, be difficult to aggregate such decentralised and personal information.</i></li> </ul> |



***In the computer:******Software***

*Every software has its advantages and disadvantages.*

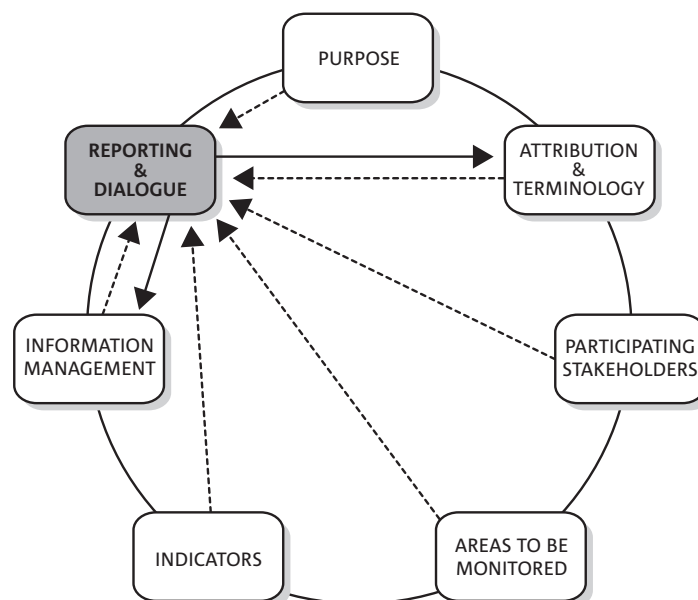
- *The current spreadsheet programmes (e.g. Excel) offer many possibilities for storing and analysing data. They are certainly very common and known by many people; it may be relatively easy to get additional support for using it. The disadvantage is that if errors are made in the formula, they are not easily discovered. If the files become too big, they can easily get confusing.*
- *Data banks (e.g. Access) seem appropriate for big amounts of data. They are less known than spreadsheet programmes. Some experts may be found that could work for the organisation.*
- *Specific statistical programmes (e.g. SPSS, GrafStat) will directly support the analysis of the data. They require more specialists' knowledge, but they also provide more potential.*

## 7 Reporting and dialogue

### ☐ This element serves to determine

- How to **report** on outcomes and impacts and when.
- How to give **feedback** on the information.
- How the monitoring information on outcomes and impacts is **used** by the project and organisation management.

Reporting has to go in at least three directions: within the organisation, to the primary stakeholders and to the funding agency. It has to be taken care that the reports contain information on outcomes and impacts. Monitoring is futile unless the monitoring information is analysed together with the relevant stakeholders, and management conclusions are drawn in dialogue with them.



In order to make decisions on the management of a project, it is not sufficient to simply collect the respective data. To draw any conclusions from the information, it needs to be analysed. Hence, in addition to designing a profound monitoring system, the development of critical analysis skills ought to be sought. An analysis of changes consists of the elements explained in the following.

### 7.1 Elements of outcome and impact oriented reports

#### 7.1.1 Internal reporting

A reporting system is required to enable all the information bearers of a project to summarise and present the different pieces of information on effects or good practices to other actors involved in a simple and unambiguous way. The reporting of data from different sources should be compiled exhaustively, well-balanced and in time. The language and the contents of oral and written reports should be suitable to the knowledge and needs of the respective audience of the report. Results should be presented in generally understandable terms. Also, the readers or lis-

teners of reports need to be able to reconstruct or follow the line of argument, especially when negative effects or points of criticism are being presented. Transparency of assessment criteria and standards is therefore vital.

Hence, for reporting adequately, it is necessary to choose an appropriate reporting format depending on who the information is addressed to. At least two levels of internal reporting should be distinguished:

- Internal reporting of the community-based organisation, including reporting to the community
- Internal reporting within the NGO, from the NGO staff working with the community to the management.

The following example (for more details see Annex 5) shows the basic structure of a report when referring to a Results Chain structure:

Level	Indicators		Typical explorative questions:	
Time	Baseline	actual	baseline	Actual
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indicators on outputs delivered</li> <li>• number of households (or persons) reached</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other (in addition to the planned) <b>outputs</b> of the activities have been observed?</li> <li>• Which activities and outputs were contributed by the stakeholders?</li> </ul>	
<b>Use of Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indicators on use of outputs</li> <li>• number of households (or persons) making use of the outputs</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what other way (in addition to as planned) did the primary stakeholders <b>use</b> the <b>outputs</b>?</li> <li>• Who else has used the outputs?</li> </ul>	
<b>Outcomes/ Project Objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indicators on outcomes</li> <li>• number of households (or persons) getting the benefit as described by the outcome indicators</li> </ul>		What other <b>outcome</b> from the use of outputs (other than planned) was observed? i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What else has changed in the situation of the primary stakeholders?</li> <li>• Who or what else has changed through the use of the outputs?</li> </ul>	
<b>Impacts/Goal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indicators on impacts (if available)</li> </ul>		To what other <b>changes/processes</b> did the project contribute?	



The monitoring unit of an NGO can motivate reporting by distributing “personalised” forms, i.e. forms which already contain the concrete details of the indicators and of their initial (baseline) and/or last measurement. Depending on the reporting and consolidation capacities, analytical questions (see 6.3.2) can be added to motivate analysis and dialogue.

For other attribution models/methods/tools, other reporting forms will be more appropriate. In the case of NGO-IDEAs’ SAGE tool, attributions to Results Chain levels is not necessary, but it is necessary to add attributions to the list of goals that the respective community has set for itself.

When designing a new PME-System, the addressees of a report should be asked about their preferences. Alternatively, different reporting formats could be tested. A clear report

structure and concrete instructions that allow project managers to access the information on effects classified according to specific issues, may be drafted.

For the NGO, it is helpful to prepare a Reporting Matrix which gives an overview on the various times, contents and forms of reporting. It could have the following structure:



**Example of a reporting matrix of an NGO (extract)**

Who reports?	To whom?	About what?	How often?	Form/Format?
Field workers	Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities</li> <li>How the community uses the project outputs</li> </ul>	monthly	Form A
Field workers	Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outputs</li> <li>Outcomes (prioritised aspects)</li> <li>Analysis of contributing and hindering factors</li> </ul>	half-yearly	Form B
Project Manager	Field workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidated outcomes</li> <li>Analysis of contributing and hindering factors</li> <li>Budget</li> </ul>	half-yearly	meeting graphs staff discussion (for validation)
Field workers	Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidated outcomes</li> <li>Analysis of contributing and hindering factors</li> </ul>	half-yearly	meeting graphs group discussion (for validation)
Project Manager	Funding Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outputs</li> <li>Consolidated and validated outcomes</li> <li>Analysis of contributing and hindering factors</li> <li>Budget</li> </ul>	yearly	narrative report graphs photos financial report

When analysing internal reporting formats, one can frequently note that the focus is on activities, outputs and financial aspects. If outcome and impact aspects are taken up, it is rarely reflected in the monthly, quarterly, or half-yearly formats. It is usually part of annual reporting. The reason is obviously that it does not make sense to monitor outcomes and impacts too frequently. Nevertheless, it may be important to get information on some outcomes or on the use of outputs more frequently.

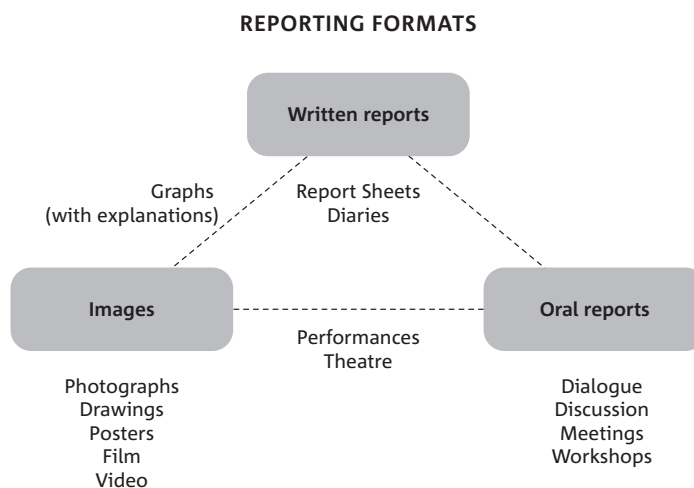


#### **“FOOD FOR MORE REFLECTION”**

*The practice to focus monitoring on activities and outputs is justified; but it should not be limited to these. If monitoring shall include outcomes and impacts, then it has to be included in continuous reporting, not only in annual reviews.*

### 7.1.2 Feedback reporting

The NGO, together with the primary stakeholders, should come up with a common concept for sharing the monitoring results. The NGO should consider what kind of information the participating parties need and how they want to utilise it. The following forms of reporting can serve as examples.



*In some exceptional cases, e.g. when broad dissemination is desired, one may think of:*

- Reportages in newspapers; on the internet; in publications;
- Statistical documents (or direct access to database);
- Electronic newsletters.

The feedback needs to be given within an acceptable time frame and should not demand too much additional effort.

The internal reporting mechanisms may be complemented by discussions with or critical reviews of other specialists and development organisations.

As mentioned above (see data quality), the feedback reporting should also be used to validate the results, i.e. to verify that the data give a true picture of the community's situation. If there are deviations, the information has to be adjusted and/or it has to be investigated how the different perceptions have occurred.



*Feedback reporting needs forms which are easily understood by the primary stakeholders.*

The feedback reporting and the validation go along with dialogue (see chapter 7.2).

### 7.1.3 Reporting to funding partners

Reporting initially takes place within an organisation and is subsequently elaborated in an internal dialogue among the involved actors. However, at least once a year, project management is usually obliged to report to the funding partners. The report to funding agencies is completed in written form, sometimes half-yearly, and always yearly and at the end of the project period. The final report should include the procedural steps, the methodological framework and the results of the monitoring process. It should also reflect the opinions and assessments of all the stakeholders.

Normally the aspects and indicators to be reported have been agreed on at the project approval. The project holder has to organise its monitoring system in such a way that the information is available on time and in good quality. With regard to impacts and outcomes, it should not only contain the results of data collection (in consolidated form only), but also include the analysis of the changes observed and the proposals for further action by each of the stakeholders. The reporting issues suggested for the internal reporting (see chapter 7.1.1 and Annex 5) will create the ground for reporting to partners.

An integral part of the communication between implementing and funding partners is, additionally to the reporting, the feedback on the report and the dialogue about its contents. From the perspective of the management orientation towards outcome and impact, the dialogue should concentrate on the change induced by the project and the factors contributing to this change. This will be elaborated in further detail in the next chapter.

## 7.2 Dialogue

The instruments for aggregating and analysing the information on changes also offer a chance for an enhanced dialogue between the actors. NGOs should not only aim at a joint analysis of the changes together with the primary stakeholders, but also in cooperation with funding partners and possibly with other participating parties.

The analytical questions (see 6.3.2) can serve as the basis for such a dialogue. Additionally, questions oriented towards actions can be explored in a dialogue between primary stakeholders and the NGO and for drawing conclusions for participatory learning.



#### Example of a savings and credit programme:

Adequate questions for starting up a dialogue depend on the specific needs and context of the participating partners. Here, some examples are given:

- Do the experienced changes correspond to the expectations?
- Are you satisfied with the changes (effects)?
- **What can each of us do to reinforce the positive effects? E.g.**
  - **What can the primary stakeholders do?**
  - **What can the NGO do?**
  - **What can other local actors do?**
  - **What can funding agencies do?**
- **What are next steps?**

These key monitoring questions should be developed in group discussions, workshops, and visits to the primary stakeholders, in order to perceive the causes and consequences of the observed changes. They can be combined with questions that help to enhance indicators and data collection.

### 7.3 Internal decision making

#### Decision making

While carrying out the project, all participating actors need to agree on how and by whom decisions on adjusting the project can and will be taken. The actors responsible for steering the project will then propose necessary adjustments in planning or agreements at project level, and also, based on the monitoring results, they propose adjustments in the common development of policies.

The following “traffic light model” is helpful if the outcome and impact monitoring results are used as a basis for decision making:

Green	The values are within the expected margins.	→ The objectives will be achieved	No need for adjustment
Amber	The values are slightly outside of the expected margins.	→ but with corrections in project implementation it is still possible to reach the objectives within the framework of agreements.	Decisions on adjustments can be made by the project management
Red	The values are clearly outside of the expected margins.	→ It will be impossible to reach the objectives within the framework of agreements.	Decisions on adjustments are beyond the authority of project management and have to be made by the organisation management (and the funding partners)

The example above refers to decision making processes in an NGO. In the case of grassroots organisations, associations or communities, the stakeholders to be included in the decision making process have to be attributed accordingly.

Steps to strengthen the monitoring system:

#### ELEMENT 7: Reporting and dialogue

1. Integrate the reporting on outcomes and impacts into the normal internal working reports of the field staff or of the organisation. As monthly reporting on outcomes generally does not make sense, shifting topics – but using the same reporting structure – can be identified.
2. Explore with the primary stakeholders how feedback reporting can be done best. Organise it in the form of dialogue, and where necessary integrate the validation of the findings from monitoring.
3. Agree on the reporting structure with the funding agencies. Make sure that the relevant data are collected, analysed and reported on time.



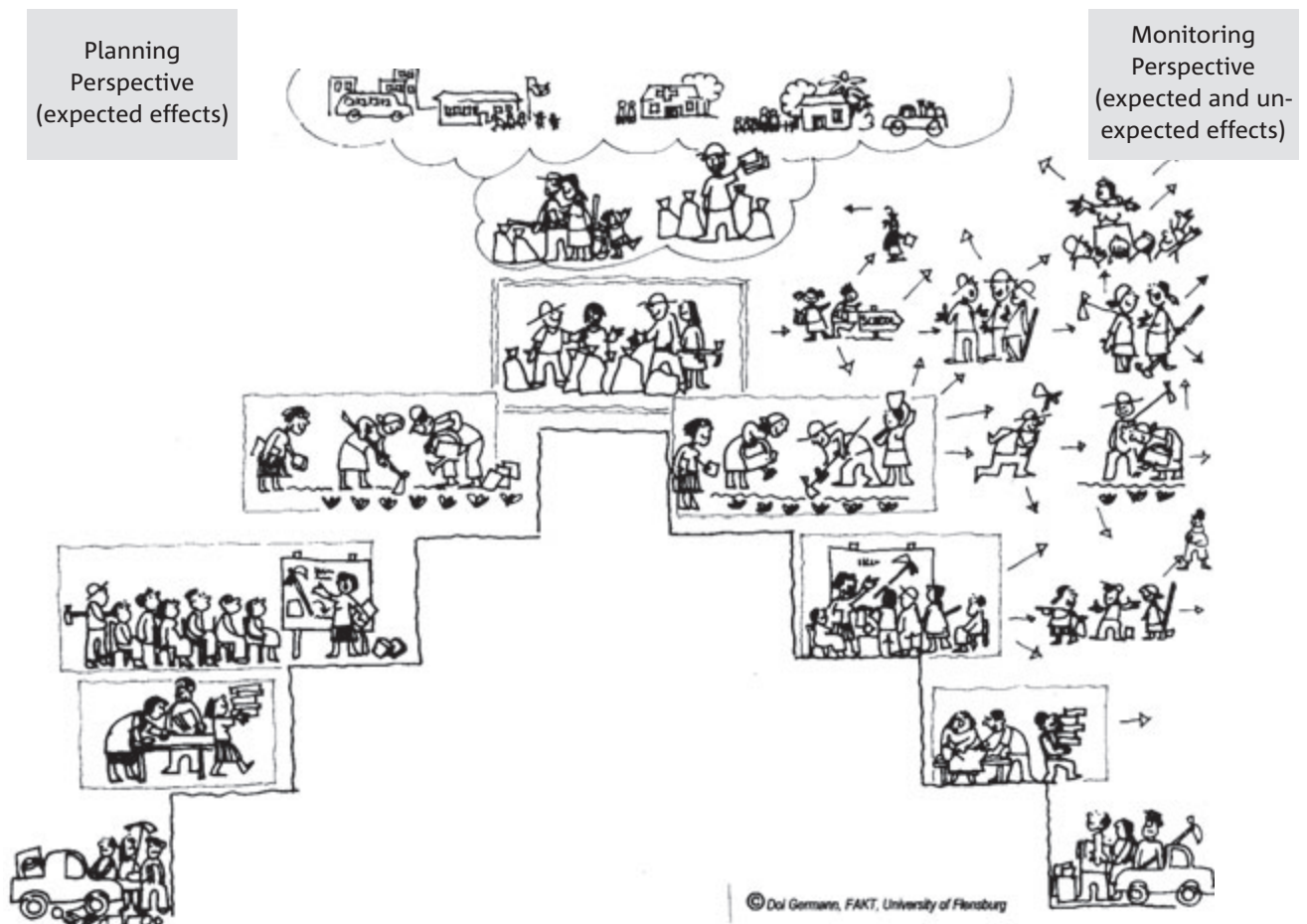
## Annex 1: How does the logical framework deal with impact and outcome?

With the following table, we want to encourage readers to be aware that the “Logical Framework” (as many NGOs are already using it now for planning, monitoring and evaluation) and the “Results Chain” (for the description of outcome and impact) can be seen as the *same approach*. So: outcome and impact orientation is nothing new!

At the same time, this table can be helpful to gear the objectives more towards outcome and impact.

Notes to understand the table:

1. For each column, at each level, we have noted some **typical formulations** which are known from planning and report writing. These are examples only, they are not binding.
2. In addition to the pure Logical Framework levels, we have introduced the “**use of outputs**”, which in the context of the discussions in Germany, has proven to be very helpful.
3. The Logframe structure and the agreed objectives, indicators etc. are valid not only for **planning** but also for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the project. However, as social processes, which are typically promoted by NGO projects, cannot be planned and controlled, we have to add a concept for perceiving **unforeseen** processes at all levels (activities, outputs, uses of outputs, outcomes, and hence impacts).





## How does the Logical Framework deal with Impact and Outcome?

Planning		M & E of Outcome and Impact		
	(“planned”)	(“actual” – changes referred to planned achievements)	(“actual” – changes referred to unforeseen achievements)	
		These <i>planned changes</i> are generally measured by indicators.	These <i>unforeseen changes</i> are generally described by explorative questions.	
Logframe terminology	Typical formulations:	Typical formulations:	Typical questions:	Results Chain terminology
Goal/Overall objective	This will contribute to ....	This has contributed to ....	To what other <b>changes / processes</b> did the project contribute?	Impact
Project Objective	The situation of the primary stakeholders will improve with regard to ...	The situation of the primary stakeholders has improved with regard to ...	What other <b>outcome</b> of the use of outputs (other than planned) was observed? i.e.: What else has changed in the situation of the primary stakeholders? Who or what else has changed through the use of the outputs?	Outcome
	The primary stakeholders will make use of ... (the outputs)	The primary stakeholders have made use of ... (the outputs)	How else (in addition to as planned) did the primary stakeholders <b>use the outputs</b> ? Who else has used the outputs?	Use of Outputs
Outputs (Results)	The primary stakeholders will be able to ...; aware of ...; motivated to ...; etc.	The primary stakeholders are able to ...; aware of ...; motivated to ...; etc.	What other (in addition to the planned) <b>outputs</b> of the activities have been observed?	Outputs
Activities	The primary stakeholders will carry out ... & The project will carry out ... (the activities)	The primary stakeholders have carried out ... & The project has carried out ... (the activities) to the following extent	Additionally to what was planned, the primary stakeholders have ... & the project has ...	Activities

## Annex 2: Indicator definition form

Area to be monitored:			
Indicator Name			
<b>Indicator Description</b>			
Unit of measurement/ parameter:			
Subjects of Change:			
Location/Region:			
Time:	(start of project/ base line)	(interim assessment)	(end of project/ target value)
Value/Description:			
<b>Data Collection</b>			
Responsible for data collection:			
Method/tool of data collection:			
Sampling size and procedure:			
Reporting form to be used:			
Frequency of data collection:			
<b>Documentation/Consolidation</b>			
Responsible for documentation			
Instructions for documentation			
Graphical presentation:			
<b>Analysis</b>			
References for comparison:			
Explorative question related			
Validity/limitations:			
Definitions:			
Comments:			

## Annex 3: Excursus on counterfactual analysis

*More than in the past, people question to what extent the change observed can be attributed to the project which is being analysed: What difference did it really make? What would have changed without that project? And to what extent did the project contribute to the change? In the context of outcome and impact assessment, this has led to a debate on “counterfactual analysis”. This debate may soon deal with the question of monitoring CSO effectiveness and self-effectiveness.*

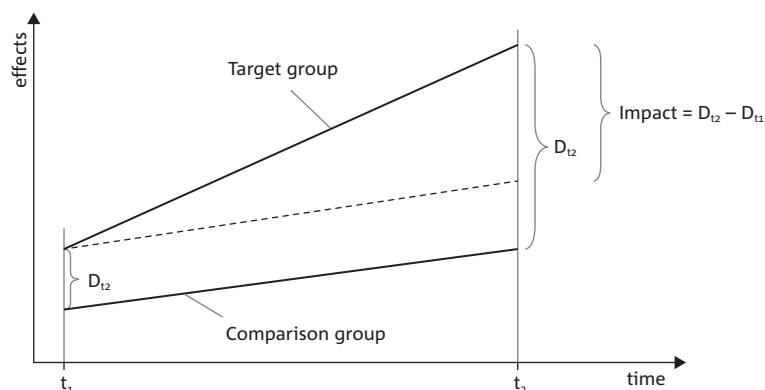
“**Before-and-after**” comparisons allow evaluators to assess facts about the situation at different points in time (e.g. before and after the project was implemented). For this purpose, generally, a baseline survey needs to be made, to state people’s situation with regard to relevant indicators before the start of the project. This is important for identifying the “factual” change. However, these **factual designs** have a limitation in assessing whether the change was caused by the project or programme, because there are usually many influences that contribute to change. Before-after comparisons cannot distinguish between results caused by other development interventions, processes or unintended events and results caused exclusively by the project.

One line of discussion claims that the external factors contributing to the overall results can best be assessed by **counterfactual designs**. Such designs examine what would have happened without the project. It is impossible to observe or measure directly what the situation without the project would have been. Therefore, counterfactual designs work with comparison groups or control groups. In this paper we describe five different approaches.

“**With and without**” comparisons compare the changes for the addressees with a control or comparison group not affected by the project activities. The comparisons are based on the assumption that the situation of both groups was identical in the beginning of the project. But this is often not the case. Therefore, project results are usually over- or underestimated.

Studies which combine “before and after” comparisons with “with and without” comparisons (**double difference method**) address the attribution problem in a more complex way. The results of a project or programme are calculated by subtracting the difference between the results of the addressees and the comparison group at the beginning of the project ( $D_{t1}$ ) from the difference between them at the end of the project ( $D_{t2}$ ).

*Graph: Comparison of changes occurring to the addressees and in a comparison group*



cf. Caspari 2009, p 194, own translation.



### Example: Counterfactual “Before-and-after” comparison between two villages

Village A (with project)

Village B (without project)



The pictures show the development of two villages over time. Village A on the left side was included in the project, whereas village B on the right side was not affected by the project activities.

The top pictures on both sides show the situation before the introduction of the project activities (2005). The bottom pictures on both sides illustrate the situation after the implementation of the project activities (2010). Looking closely at the pictures, one can detect changes, which may be interpreted as positive as well as negative effects (e.g. the new cars and roads in village A may be considered a positive effect concerning mobility and the transportation of goods produced in the village; they do however cause more noise and pollution as a negative side effect).

Changes, which are shown in the bottom picture of village A, but not in the one of village B, may very likely be effects caused or intensified by the project. Some of the changes on the left and right may, however, still have been caused by other actors or activities.

A method which claims to be very accurate bases the double-difference-method on an **experimental design**. It includes randomized controlled trials. Individuals, households, villages, and regions are divided randomly into two groups before the beginning of the project – one that will benefit from the activities and one that will be excluded from the project (the control group). Experimental designs are, however, disputed for a number of reasons:

- Ethical concerns: Can it be justified to take people's time to get information from them, although they will not benefit from the project? Time has a value, and in addition they could become frustrated. Using control groups is a common practice in the health sector, where people understand that such an evaluation leads to learning. In the end they will benefit from better health services, like improved medicine. But in many other contexts an approach with control groups is questioned. This conflict could be resolved where a project or programme is implemented in several phases (“pipeline method”). Addressees who will

participate in a later phase can be taken as the control group for the beneficiaries of an earlier phase (if both groups are chosen randomly). High drop-out rates in one of the groups, spill-over effects and unintended behavioural responses may, however, still cause attribution problems.

- Finance: Statistical validity can only be achieved with huge control groups and strict adherence to scientific standards. Experimental designs are expensive. Often, studies are implemented with insufficient resources. In this case, they are not more reliable than factual designs.
- Value for learning: Experiments can answer important questions like:
  - If water points are installed, do women spend less time fetching water?
  - Does the provision of school books lead to better results in schools?
  - Do mosquito nets reduce cases of malaria?
 But the more complex questions can hardly be answered in this manner:
  - What do women do with the time saved?
  - What style of teaching leads to better learning?
  - Why do some people not use mosquito nets?

Experimental designs can help to understand clear-cut questions. They do not address complexity, can hardly assess the many aspects of change and are limited in understanding the various causes for change.

Because of the limitations of experimental designs, **quasi-experimental designs** have been developed, which work with comparison groups and are easier to implement. Comparison groups are not formed randomly in advance. One method to form comparison groups is “**Matching on Observables**”. This method can work with smaller numbers of respondents. On the basis of interviews and documents, the monitoring team identifies relevant observed characteristics of the primary stakeholders and identifies a comparison group with similar characteristics. Unobservable differences can, however, not be taken into account and may cause biases. The method supposes that the control and comparison groups are located outside the influence zone of the project or programme in order to avoid “contamination”. Otherwise, spill-over effects and unintended behavioural responses may distort the evaluation results.

Another quasi-experimental way to identify comparison groups is the “**Regression Discontinuity Design**”: In projects where the group is selected according to certain pre-conditions (e.g. an income below 1 US Dollar a day), the comparison group can be assembled from those people who just barely fell below or exceeded the threshold or cut off point (e.g. those who earn just a little bit more than 1 US Dollar a day). The assumption underlying this selection process is that those who have almost reached the threshold are similar to those who just met the requirement. When using this method, it is critical to compare only those people close to the threshold with the comparison group and not the whole group of addressees. Thus, the scope of the design is limited, unless there is very reliable metric data that can be analysed with complicated statistical methods.

In chapter 2, we have described two main approaches for M&E which are also valid for evaluations: evaluation primarily designed for the purpose proving (“summative evaluation”) and evaluation which primarily serves horizontal learning (“formative evaluation”). Over the last years, outcome and impact evaluations have been mostly understood as summative evaluations; there is an increasing demand for evaluations to deliver evidence that the change observed has been induced by the project’s contributions. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs have been promoted under the name of **Rigorous Impact Evaluation (RIE)**. “Rigorous” in the context of M&E means first of all the strict application of evaluation standards. But, as there is no universally accepted definition of “rigorous impact evaluation”, the authors understand “rigour” in impact evaluation as working with control or comparison groups (quasi-/experimental designs) and following statistical requirements. It is increasingly said that a

combination of statistical and qualitative analysis can prove the attribution of the observed changes to the project.

More and more, “rigorous” approaches not only entail certain methods and designs, but also recommend impact evaluations to be based on a well-articulated programme theory to be tested and refined throughout the evaluation effort. “Rigour” raises high expectations on the quality of data collection and analysis. Different approaches share the ambition to improve the validity of impact evaluations. Four types of validity can be distinguished:

1. Internal validity – causal relationships between project outputs and processes of change leading to outcomes and impacts
2. Construct validity – adequate representation of underlying realities of development projects linked to processes of change
3. External validity – can findings be generalized?
4. Statistical conclusion validity – correct conclusions about the existence of a relationship between project and impact variable.

It is not easy to achieve such validity. Significant resources are needed. One limitation of all experimental and quasi-experimental designs is that the selected control or comparison group might be involved in projects of other agencies. In that case, the comparison is made with a different type of intervention as opposed to no intervention. This is not a true counterfactual analysis. As there usually are a lot of projects around, it is often not clear if the (quasi-)experimental analysis is truly counterfactual.

What can NGOs learn from the discussion on counterfactual designs?

- Simply observing change is not enough. We need to understand where the change comes from and to what extent the various project activities contributed to it.
- Quasi-experimental designs can be used in a small way to clarify specific questions:
  - Should the size of savings groups be limited to 20, as is the case in India (by law)?
  - Which kind of professional training does actually lead to more employment?
  - Should we organise parents of children with disabilities in groups?
- If we want to understand complex change, (quasi-)experimental designs are of limited usefulness. We need to look for alternatives. One alternative is the Contribution Analysis, described in annex 4. Other alternatives build on how people themselves understand change and the reasons for change. These are described in the NGO-IDEAs publications on Tiny Tools. Some of these tools, like Lifeline/Quality of Life Curve, Theory of Change and Influence Matrix are excellent tools to analyse attribution.

The NGO-IDEAs Toolbox proposes to work with “comparison groups” as one element of analysis. The approach is, however, more pragmatic: it suggests the identification of a similar group which has not used the project’s outputs. The difference between these groups is then analysed, and the added value of the project can be identified. Spill-over effects may be included in the analysis. Practice has shown that important lessons can be learnt from this comparative approach. It does not prove attribution, but it helps to understand what changed and why it changed.

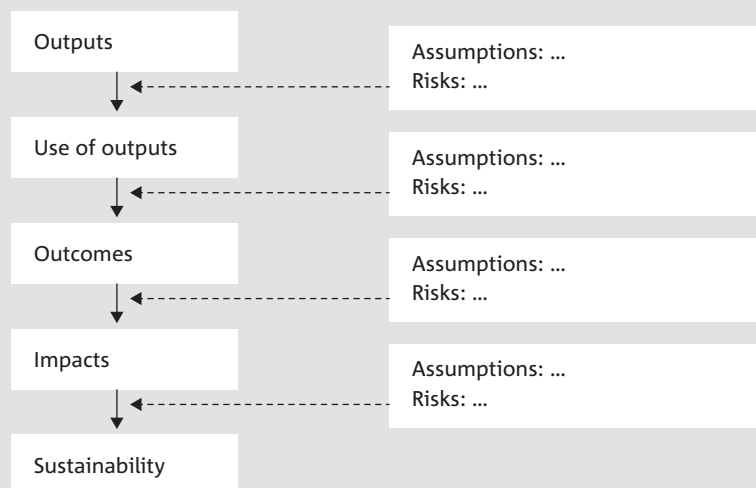
## Annex 4: Contribution analysis

The Contribution Analysis, developed by John Mayne, is a method to test and verify an assumed causal theory of change. It builds on the Results Chain rather than on statistical methods. The Contribution Analysis relies upon reasonably robust plausible arguments that are verified through a careful analysis of alternative explanations for observed impacts. It is less costly than experimental or quasi-experimental designs and can be applied to a wider variety of questions. For a Contribution Analysis, the project needs to have a programme theory built on the results chain. If that does not exist, this program theory needs to be constructed as a first step. Contribution Analysis can be used by program staff as well as by external evaluators.

In order to assess whether the causal theory is correct, answer the following questions:

1. Are the assumptions of the project or programme sound, plausible, and do at least some of the key players agree to these assumptions?
2. Were the activities of the project or programme implemented?
3. Did the chain of expected results occur? Have any unplanned changes been induced?
4. Did other factors influence the project or programme assessed?
5. Was the relative contribution of other influencing factors recognised?

### Example of a contribution analysis chart:







### Conducting a contribution analysis

#### Step 1: Acknowledge and set out the attribution problem to be addressed

- Determine the cause-effect question to be addressed
- Determine the level of proof required: What decisions will be based on the findings?
- What would show that the project or programme made a difference?
- Determine other key influencing factors
- Is the expected contribution of the project or programme plausible?
- Are there baseline data?
- Given the size of the project or programme, the magnitude and nature of the problem and other influencing factors, is an important contribution really likely?

#### Step 2: Develop the theory of change and the risks to it

- Develop a theory of change and a Results Chain.
- Determine the level of detail needed
- Determine the expected contribution of the project or programme (direct control, direct influence or indirect influence)
- Spell out the assumptions behind the theory of change (what conditions have to exist or what risks are there for A to lead to B)
- Include considerations of other factors that may influence results
- Assess whether some of the key players have alternative theories of change

#### Step 3: Gather existing evidence on the theory of change

- Assess the logic of the links in the theory of change
- Gather the evidence on results and activities, assumptions, and other influencing factors

#### Step 4: Assemble and assess the contribution story and challenges to it

- Which links are strong/weak?
- How credible is the story?

#### Step 5: Seek out additional evidence

- Identify what new data are needed (in addition to discussions of stakeholders, experts and literature search)
- Adjust the theory of change
- Gather more evidence via surveys, case studies, tracking variations in programme implementation, synthesizing research and evaluation findings

#### Step 6: Revise and strengthen the contribution story

Even though Contribution Analysis provides strong plausibility on cause-effect-relationships, uncertainty will remain about the magnitude of the outcome and impact and about the extent to which changes are due to the project activities or other influencing variables. But that is normal in the analysis of change. We can get certainty only on very simple questions, if at all. Contribution Analysis increases our understanding of the causes of change. That is the best we can hope for.

## Annex 5: Reporting formats focussing on impact and outcome

The following template indicates the possible structure of a narrative report. It shall visualise how the project activities and outputs contribute to the outcomes and impacts of the project. The sequence can also be modified: when starting with the goal/impact level, it can be explained which outcomes and outputs have contributed to it, and how.

The matrix format has been chosen to point the logical structure up, but the report itself should be a normal narrative text.

For quantitative indicators and for any additional information on outcomes and impacts which are not necessarily presented in the LogFrame structure, the more general model 2: “What has changed” can be followed.

### **Model 1: Reporting format in the logical framework structure**

<b>Levels of Planning/ Monitoring</b>	<b>Changes referred to <i>planned</i> achievements</b>	<b>Changes referred to achievements <i>not foreseen</i> in planning</b>	<b>Analysis of findings</b>
<b>(1) Activities</b>	(1.1) <sup>12</sup> To what extent have the activities been implemented?	(1.2) Additionally to what was planned, what was implemented?	n/a (optional comments)
<b>(2) Results/ Outputs</b>	(2.1) To what extent has each of the project outputs been achieved?	(2.2) What other (in addition to the planned) outputs of the activities have been achieved?	n/a (optional comments)
<b>(3) Use of outputs</b>	(3.1) To what extent have the primary stakeholders have made use of each of the project outputs?	(3.2) How else (in addition to as planned) did the primary stakeholders use the outputs?  (6.2) Who else has used the outputs?	n/a optional comments: What has contributed to this use of outputs? What has hindered this use of outputs?

<sup>12</sup> Note: The numbers indicate the ideal sequence of the reporting.

Levels of Planning/ Monitoring	Changes referred to <i>planned</i> achievements	Changes referred to achievements <i>not foreseen</i> in planning	Analysis of findings
(4) <b>Project Objective/ Outcome</b>	(4.1) To what extent has the situation of the primary stakeholders improved with regard to (each of) the project objective(s)?	What other outcome of the use of outputs (other than planned) was observed? i.e.: (4.2) What else has changed in the situation of the primary stakeholders? (4.3) Who or what else has changed through the use of the outputs?	(4.4) <sup>13</sup> What was favouring the achievement of the project objectives/outcomes? (4.5) What was hindering the achievement of the project objectives/outcomes?
(5) <b>Goal/ Impact</b>	(5.1) To what extent has the project contributed to goals?	(5.2) To what other changes/processes did the project contribute?	
(6) <b>Conclusions</b>	(6.1) What can each stakeholder do to reinforce the positive outcomes and impacts? (6.2) What are the specific potentials for the future of the project? (6.3) What are the specific challenges/risks for the future of the project? (6.4) What are the lessons learnt?		

**Model 2: General reporting format: “What has changed?”**

The more general model (which is independent from Logframe) for reporting on outcomes and impacts establishes:

- What is monitored?
- What are the measurement results: the baseline, earlier (intermediate) and the last (actual) measurement?
- What has contributed positively and negatively to the observed change?

Areas to be monitored	baseline	inter- mediate	actual	What has contributed positively and negatively to the observed change?

- What else has changed?
- What should be done to reinforce the positive effects?

It can be used for quantitative and for qualitative information.

<sup>13</sup> If possible, distinguish between the primary stakeholders', the project's and others' favouring and hindering contributions or influences!

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## Publications

In order further to document and share the results of NGO-IDEAs, the following publications have been released

- **NGO-IDEAs Impact Toolbox**  
The Impact Toolbox describes simple tools for participatory planning and monitoring of grassroots' projects. It is designed to enable NGOs, groups and group members to steer a project to enhance positive outcomes or impacts, and reduce negative ones.
- **NGO-IDEAs Tiny Tools for Impact Assessment**  
The "NGO-IDEAs Tiny Tools of Impact Assessment" present easily applicable tools, which help to assess changes (outcomes and impacts) and its causes with only one single application. They can be used for external evaluation as well as for self-assessment of projects.
- **"Monitoring Self-Effectiveness": A Manual to Strengthen Outcome and Impact Oriented Project Management**  
The Manual intends to support an organisation to focus its planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures towards increased outcome and impact orientation.
- **"How do they do it? – Civil Society Monitoring Self-effectiveness": An NGO-IDEAs documentation of field experience**  
The publication presents descriptions of examples of outcome and impact analysis, which illustrate to staff of development organisations how outcome and impact assessment can be implemented and used in different ways.
- **NGO-IDEAs GrafStat Guide**  
GrafStat is a simple and helpful software which can be used by development organisations to prepare their monitoring data for analysis. This guide focuses on applications and examples of GrafStat relevant for NGO-IDEAs.

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**VENRO** is the umbrella organisation of development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany. The association was founded in 1995 and consists of around 120 organisations. Their backgrounds lie in independent and church-related development co-operation, humanitarian aid as well as development education, public relations and advocacy. 16 one-world networks are part of VENRO. These represent about 2000 local development initiatives and NGOs.

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- engages in advocacy for the interests of developing countries and the poorer segments of society
- sharpens public awareness of development co-operation issues

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