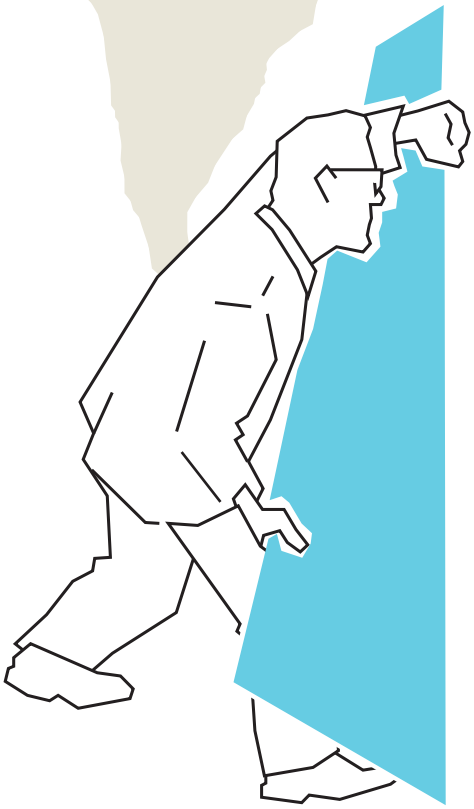
Implementation and Monitoring

Guidelines to programme cycle management

Solidaridad network

making our PROMIS a reality

Contents



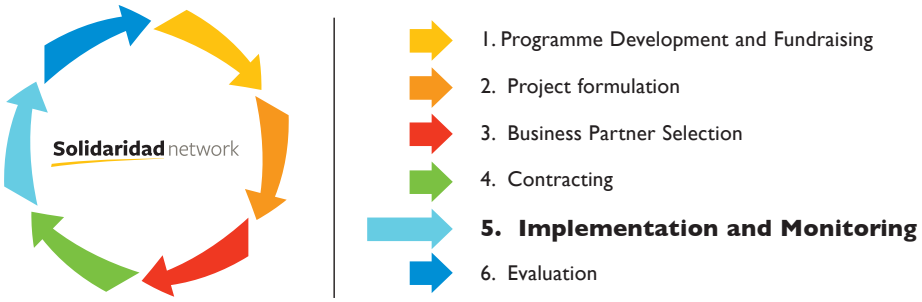
1. Introduction: the need for learning

Implementation and Monitoring is the 5th step in the Solidaridad programme cycle. This phase begins once the contract is signed, and the project actually starts. During monitoring one basically checks if the implementation of the project is going according to plan. Monitoring is often considered important for reporting, but monitoring during implementation serves many more goals and is for example very important for learning.

The need for learning is gaining more importance for Solidaridad. It is no longer sufficient just to know to what extent results have been achieved, we need to gain understanding about the processes we are part of and reflect on how we can improve our work. Therefore a better understanding of our impact and how change occurs is high on the agenda. For this purpose, proper monitoring is a precondition.

Information for internal purposes is just as important as information for external purposes. Where the first provides a base for learning and continuity, external purposes provide legitimacy and accountability. Both are important in strengthening performance and reputation. In general it can be stated that public, private and government actors have increased the pressure on organizations like Solidaridad to show results, on making the added value explicit as well as the distinguishing features of our approach.

This booklet describes the what, how and when of monitoring within the Solidaridad Network.

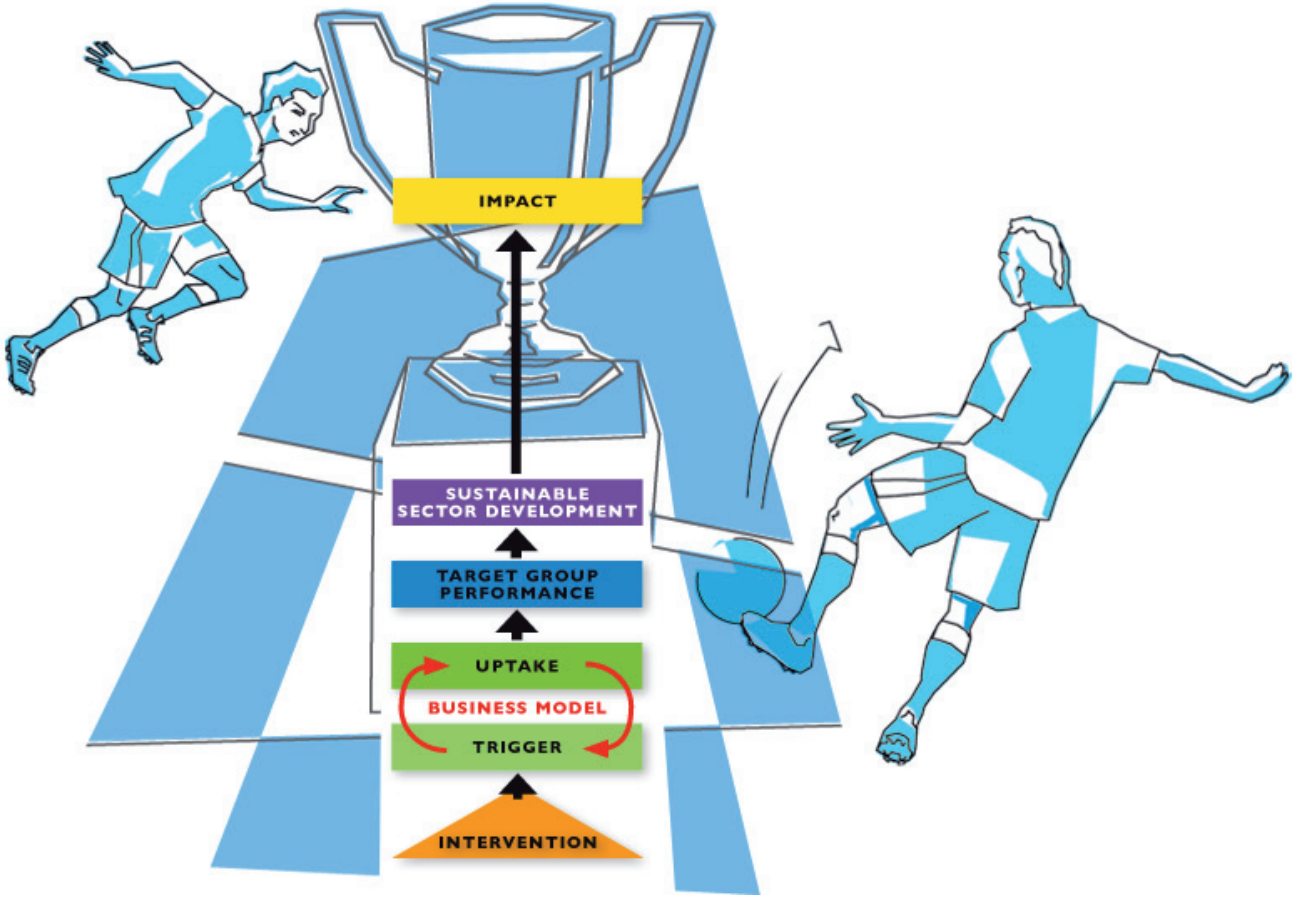


1.1 What is monitoring?

Monitoring is defined as the consistent checking of the project's progress through the continuous and systematic collection of information. Said in other words, monitoring is all about checking whether you are doing things according to the plan (in our case: according to the Results Chain). Within the Solidaridad Network, we would like to emphasize that information should always be analyzed and used to learn and improve.

Follow the path on the way to reach the goal

As explained before, each project or programme starts with strategic planning. Strategic planning is about setting out a strategy or path to reach a goal.
Imagine you are playing a football match. Obviously you like to make as many goals as possible. You can't do this alone so you have to form a perfect team. And develop a strategy on who does what, when and how to work together. During the match, things can go differently than expected, and you might have to change your left striker with a central midfielder and thus adjust your strategy. When you think very carefully about all the different aspects and scenarios, the chance of reaching your desired goal, winning the football match, becomes much greater!



This booklet describes the components of the proposed monitoring system for the Solidaridad Network.

A monitoring system can be defined as a set of tools and procedures for project managers to verify whether the project activities and results are realized according to planning and whether means are used in a correct and efficient manner. This includes both the collection of information as well as the analysis of the same to draw conclusions. The monitoring system must supply the project management with a continuous flow of information throughout the course of the project to facilitate decision-making and learning.

Within the Solidaridad Network we promote that for each project a monitoring plan is developed. This monitoring plan describes the proposed monitoring system for your project. Since the Results Chain describes in detail what you want to do and achieve with your project, it forms the foundation for the monitoring plan. The targets set here therefore function as a basis to monitor against.

An important part of your monitoring plan is the so-called measurement plan. The measurement plan defines for each of the expected results of the Results Chain how you will measure the indicators and who's responsibility it is to collect the data, including a timeframe detailing when to collect the data. You can read more about the measurement plan in paragraph 2.1.

Usually the Results Chain and the first version of the measurement plan are developed in the Project Formulation phase. However, once the implementation starts, both documents will be filled with data and adapted to the current realities. This will result in updated versions of the Results Chain and the measurement plan. On top of the Results Chain and the measurement plan your monitoring plan will encompass information on reporting, learning and even communication.

A good monitoring system is likely to enhance the overall quality of the project implementation. This booklet describes the recommended key steps for developing a monitoring system, how to develop a measurement plan (chapter 2), methods for collecting monitoring information (chapter 3) and information on reporting, learning, decision-making and communication from monitoring data (chapter 4).

1.2 Why monitoring?

The example of the two farmers growing coffee below shows us the importance of monitoring. Without keeping track of the process and the external conditions affecting this process, you cannot guarantee good results.

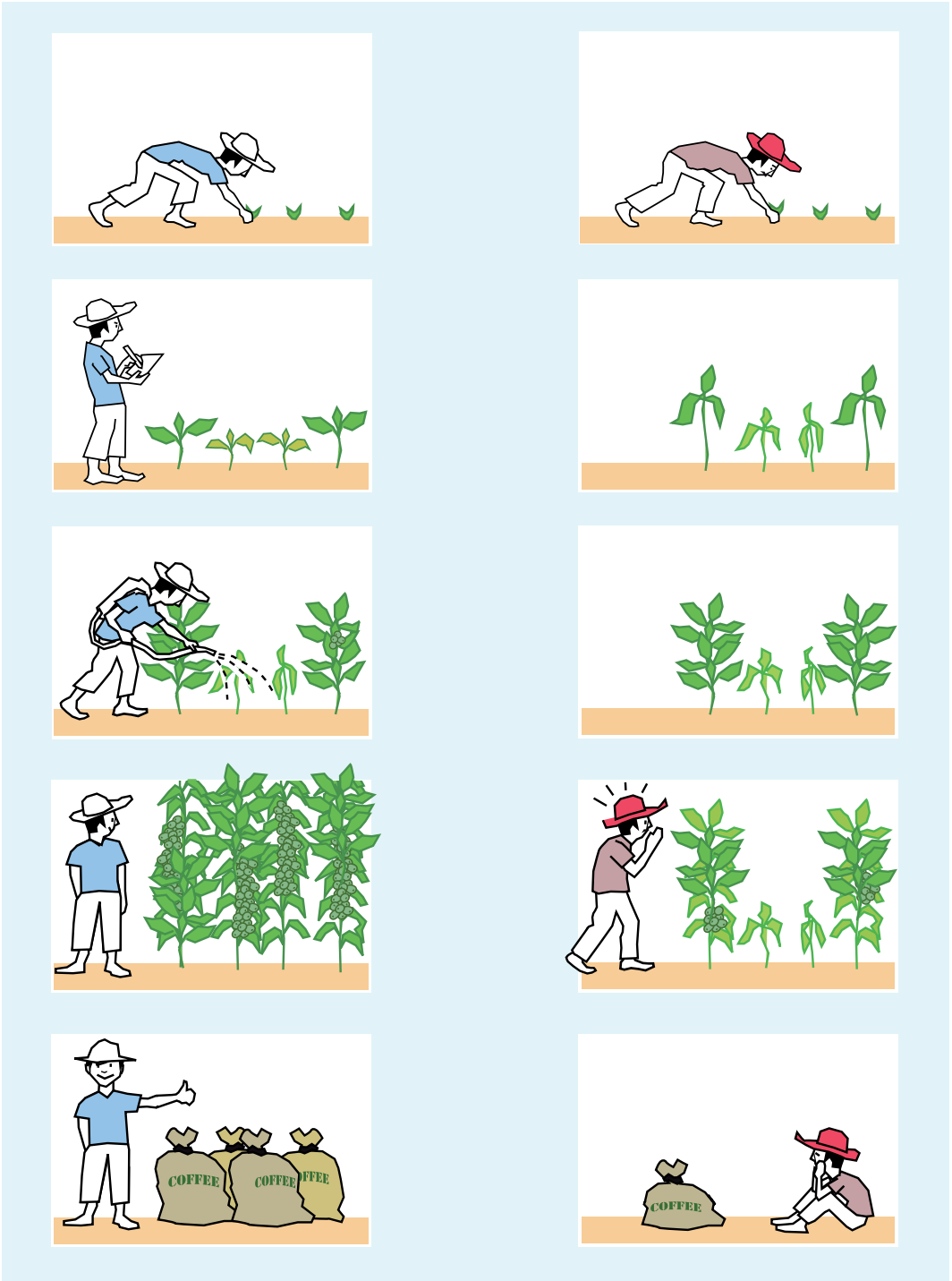


Figure 1 Tracking the growth of coffee.

Monitoring is all about steering and adapting your approach for good results (quality) and not only for counting whether you've done what you promised to do (quantity). In this example you could even think of a third farmer, who only harvested half a bag of corn, but is still very happy. If you never monitor, it is hard to understand what result can be considered to be good or poor and you might be satisfied with a very poor result, thinking that you have done a great job.

As illustrated below, monitoring can serve a variety of purposes. In general an important distinction can be made on whether it is for internal or external purposes. A second distinction can be made on whether the kind of information needed is known beforehand or not. The following figure gives an overview of the specific purposes that have been identified by the Solidaridad Network.

	Internal purpose	External purpose
Clear and concrete known information need	- Operations management (Decision and control)	- Accountability upward, downward and horizontal
Open/diffuse Information need	- Organisational learning - Generation of (new) knowledge	- Empowerment of stake-holders (beneficiaries, policy makers, private partners, etc.) - PR, communication and to generate support with different stakeholders

Improve organizational performance

Figure 2 Internal and external purpose of monitoring.

When information needs are clear

When the information need is clear at forehand, information flows can easily be organized and structured. Policy and processes for accountability and operations management can be structured planned and standardized. Based on the monitoring information, you should be able to know whether your project is on track and whether you are successfully working towards achieving the planned results.

This serves accountability both internally as well as externally. When there are irregularities or inefficiencies in project implementation, they can be corrected in a timely manner. This way, monitoring facilitates project management to intervene and adjust, for example in terms of project activities, planning or staffing.

When information needs are open and diffuse

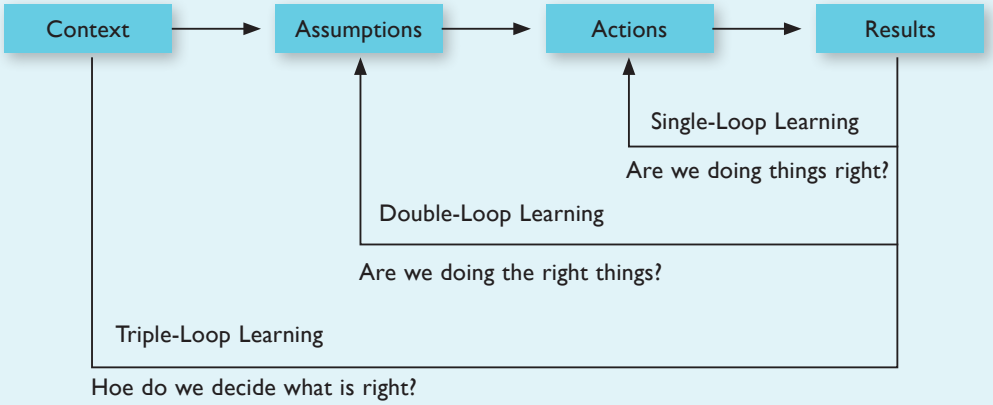
Many times information needs are not that specific or even clear beforehand. When this is the case, it is even more important to organize the learning process and related responsibilities well and to plan the cooperation from important stakeholders at an early stage.

An example of open and diffuse information, which is not known beforehand, is the need for organizational learning and improvement. This can arise at any moment during project implementation. Plus, stakeholders can express additional information needs or new stakeholders can express their wishes. It is important to realize that these information needs are important and should be catered for during the implementation of a project. The monitoring system might help to provide this information.

Another example is new insights you gain during the implementation of the project. It is important to capture these lessons learned. Internally this will serve organizational learning and the generation of new knowledge. Furthermore it is important to share these lessons outside the internal organization and use it to empower stakeholders, communicate transparently and as means of PR.

Learning can take place on three levels

When engaged in monitoring, learning usually takes place on three levels: single loop learning, double loop learning and triple loop learning.



Single loop learning is most common. Questions asked are "Are we doing things right?" or in practice "Is the intervention implemented as planned?" Have we received the documents on time?" "How can we do this better next time?" Corrective measures take place. Answers are procedures and rules. Small changes take place based on choices and behavior in the past. This way, improvements are made without considering if the assumptions are right. This has a high internal focus and is activity oriented.

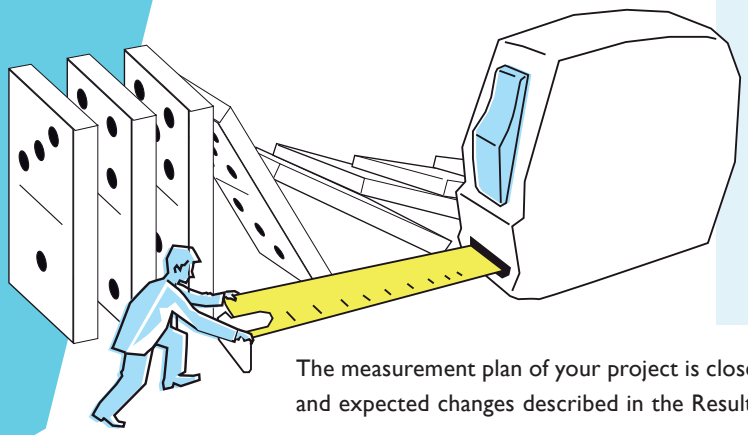
Double loop learning leads to insight whether things work or not. Questions asked are "Are we doing the right things?" or in practice "Does a solution to a problem really work?" It is not just about doing things better, but more to question if we are doing the right things or that we should be doing things differently. The answer involves insights and patterns. For this we need to deepen our understanding of the rules of the game. Although internally focused it is usually external actors who define if you are doing right or wrong with statements such as "certifying poverty" and "green window dressing". Double loop learning refers to your capability to provide an answer to these statements.

Triple loop learning moves beyond insights and patterns, to context. The question asked is "How do we decide what is right?" The result provides a shift in perspective i.e. point of view and leads to new principles, the reason why we do things. This goes beyond organizational boundaries and reflects upon your position in society.

2. Developing a Monitoring Plan

2.1 Setting up a Measurement plan

Setting up a measurement plan already starts in the Project Formulation phase as described in the booklet on Project Formulation. During this phase you started thinking about the targets that you would set for your project to get a clear picture on the changes you foresee. It was required to formulate information questions, indicators and target values on all levels, from intervention to impact. In this booklet we will repeat these first steps and explain how to complete and use the measurement plan.



You want to know ...

If expected changes are happening?

To what extent changes are occuring?

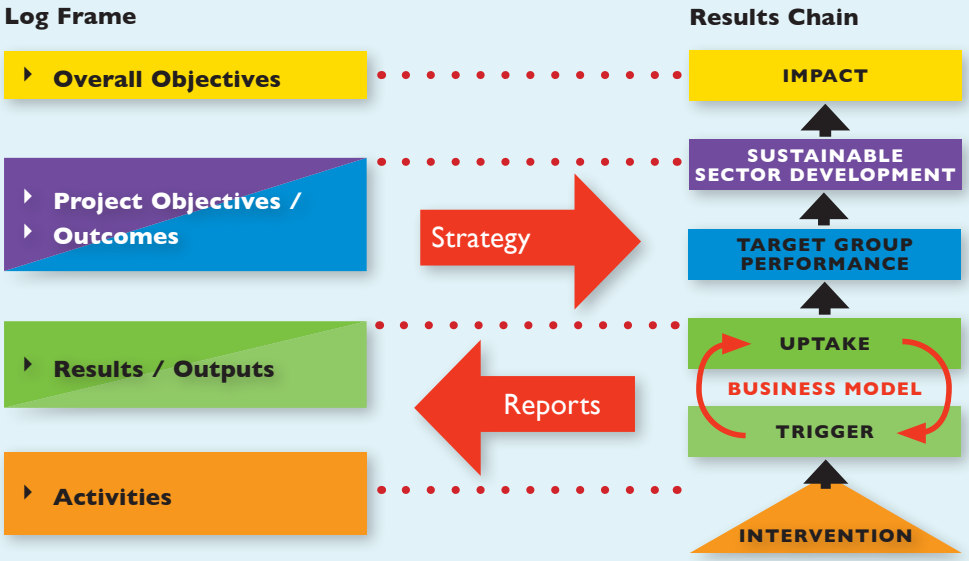
How and why changes are taking place?

To what extent changes are sustainable?

The measurement plan of your project is closely connected to the Results Chain, since all planned activities and expected changes described in the Results Chain need to be tracked and monitored.

Results Chains are compatible with logframes

Many donors and organizations use terms like "activities, outputs, outcomes and goals" to identify different levels for monitoring. It could happen that for example, a donor will request you to use these levels in your reports. Even though within Solidaridad we prefer using Results Chains to Logical Framework as PME tool, the link can easily be made. A logical framework could be seen as a summary of a Results Chain:



Making a measurement plan

The next step in developing your measurement plan (after formulating information questions, indicators and targets) is to detail for every box in the Results Chain:

- How to observe whether the indicated change took place.
- When to monitor whether the indicated change took place.
- Decide who should keep track of this.

A possible format for the measurement plan is shown in the figure below.

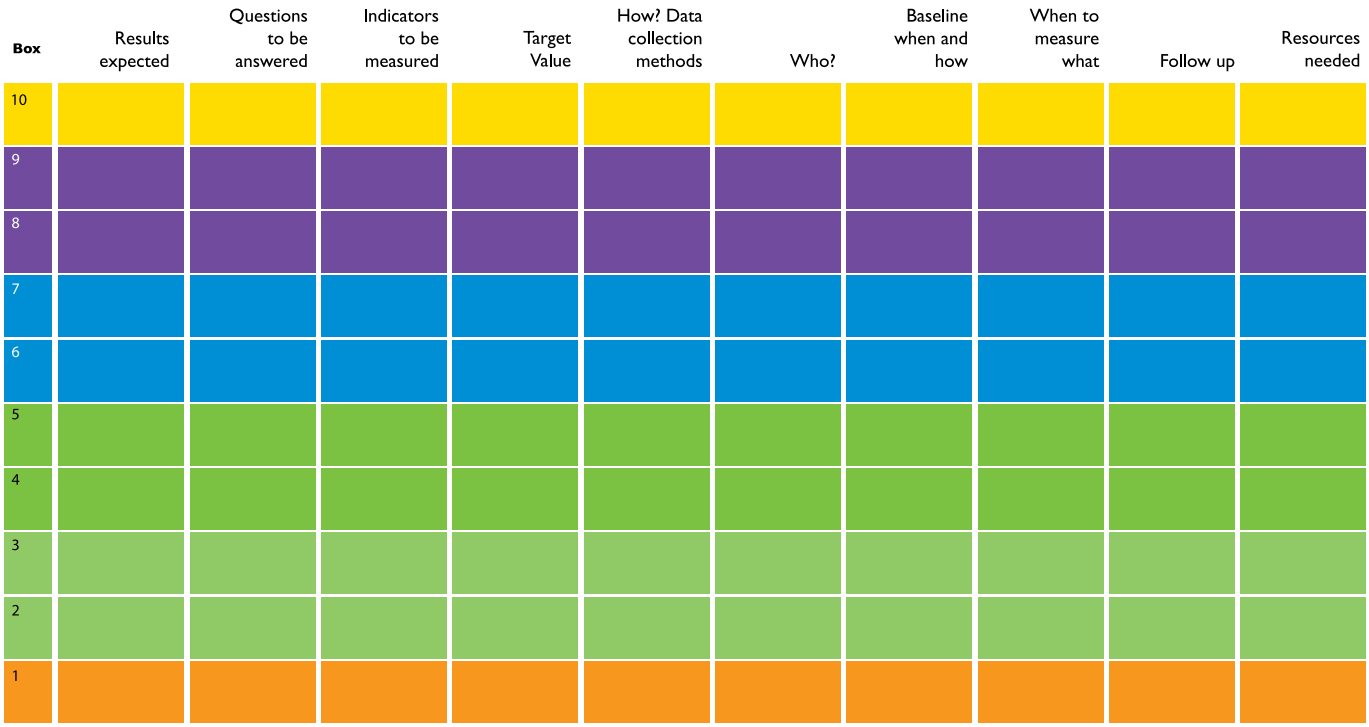


Figure 3 A measurement plan template.

We recommend to make your measurement plan in excel. Start with listing all the boxes from the Results Chain. As explained in the booklet on project formulation, you should number all boxes in your Results Chain. This comes in handy in this phase: copy the numbers of the boxes in the first column of your measurement plan. Then follow this first column up with 10 columns. How to fill in each of the columns is listed below.

2nd column: What results are expected?

The second column in your measurement plan describes the expected results. You can just copy the text from the boxes in your Results Chain.

3rd column: What information do we need?

The third column is where you ask yourself what you need to know to measure if the expected changes and results take place. Take the information needs of the various stakeholders involved in the project into account. For each level you need to ask to what extent the expected changes are occurring and how and why these changes are taking place. Also question yourself whether you can measure if changes will last. Are people satisfied? Are changes profitable? The key questions are how you can see and proof these changes took place. Finally, do not forget to consider "how information will be used".

4th column: What are key indicators?
In the fourth column you can list your indicators. Indicators should give answers to the key questions you listed in the previous column. Remember to include both qualitative and quantitative information. Quantitative indicators measures quantity (for example how many, how much) and qualitative indicators are more descriptive of nature and serve to explain underlying mechanisms and people's perceptions of change (satisfaction for example). Both types of indicators reinforce each other.

5th column: What are the projected target values?
During the project-planning phase you have probably already calculated what your expected target values are. We call these "projections". For example, you might have calculated how many farmers you expect to train or how much productivity increase you expect. This is where you list your projections. It is important to review these projections during the implementation of your project: when targets are not met, it means that expected changes are not taking place.

6th column: How will the information be gathered and analyzed?
Now you have listed what you need to measure, the next question is "how?" What tools will you use to gather the information? You can read more about this in chapter 3 of this booklet.

7th column: Who is responsible for measuring?
Monitoring is a shared task between project staff and management. Therefore, it requires clear responsibilities, adequate planning, appropriate skills and sufficient human and financial resources. It is recommended to indicate who is responsible for what in your measurement plan.

8th column: Do we have a baseline value and/or how do we measure this?
It is important to note the baseline value for each indicator. More about this can be read in paragraph 2.3.

9th column: When do we measure?
It is helpful to plan your monitoring activities well in advance. Some changes can only be expected after a certain period. Therefore there is no need to measure on these levels in the first months of your project implementation for instance. Besides it is good to realize at forehand when it is most practical to for example visit the field. You can for instance try to combine your monitoring activities with other activities.

10th column: What will we do with the information? What follow up is needed?
Some information might be confidential, for example from a business perspective or because of personal reasons. Therefore, it is important to think in advance on how you want to use the collected information. Additionally, it is good to think in advance on the external communication of your project: once you reach certain milestones, you can plan to celebrate and invite press to share your successes.

11th column: What resources are needed to be able to measure?
Finally it is important to think of resources needed for all monitoring activities. Is there enough budgets reserved for the planned activities? If not, you might have to redo your project budget, or you'll have to make adjustments to your measurement plan.

2.2 More about indicators

As mentioned above, for each level of results, we design indicators. An indicator is an instrument that helps us measure change in terms of quantity or quality: it provides an *indication* of the expected change.

An indicator = an instrument that specifies what we want to see in the end.

Defining indicators is not easy, as we have to think about what will actually change when we reach our goals. Besides, we need to be able to present evidence and identify sources of verification. A great indicator is one that is meaningful and SMART:

SMART
S - Specific
M - Measurable
A - Achievable
R - Relevant
T - Time bound

An indicator is **specific** when it refers to the element discussed. For instance, if the output were to train farmers, the specific indicator to measure this would be the number of farmers trained. A good indicator is **measurable** when two different people would be able to measure it in the same way. The indicators we choose must be **achievable** in the sense that we can easily collect the data with the resources we have. The indicator must be **relevant** to our project. And lastly, the indicator should include a reference to a specific moment in **time**. To follow the same example above about the output to train farmers: it would be important to indicate when it is expected that the farmers participate in the training.

Indicators with or without target values?
Usually an indicator will not only give the description of the information that is to be collected but also defines specifics, for example *"25 farmers trained in Good Agricultural Practices by May 2014"*. This is a SMART indicator.

However, in the measurement plan format the description *"nr of farmers trained in Good Agricultural Practices"* and the specific projected target value *"25 farmers by May 2014"* are separated. This is to ease the usability of the measurement plan. Often descriptions remain the same, but target values could change over time.

KPIs in the Solidaridad Network

A KPI is a Key Performance Indicator. These indicators are considered key to measure the performance of projects and programmes. The Solidaridad Network developed a shared set of KPIs at global level and promotes the usage of these specific indicators in as many projects as possible. Using KPI's in an organization or a Network promotes working towards same goals and makes it possible to show overall impact. The KPIs are mostly cross-commodities and provide a good basis for global monitoring. Solidaridad Network KPIs are registered in Promis. Some examples of KPIs in the Solidaridad Network include:

Of small scale producers (miners and/or farmers) that have adopted (certified) sustainable practices as a result of working with Solidaridad

Of hectares under environmental sustainable management (by estates and/or small farmers) as a result of working with Solidaridad

Of producer organizations capable of and engaging in improvement programmes (including (multi)-certification programmes)

Of course not all projects necessarily aim for changes at all key performance indicators. Sometimes a project has one very specific goal only, and this is acceptable as well.

Monitoring should be truthful and realistic

We should always make an effort to ensure consistent monitoring over time, and stick to the initial indicators that have been developed at the onset of the project. However, it is not uncommon to add new indicators and drop old ones as the project or project approach has been modified. Based on implementation experiences and evolving insights, we sometimes need to conclude that certain indicators are not valid anymore. It is recommended to acknowledge this in your reporting, explaining and justifying deviations from the original indicators. This way indicator measurement will be truthful and does not become a superficial straightjacket.

2.3 Baselines and the Counterfactual

A baseline study is an analysis describing the situation prior to or at the start of a project, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made after completion of the project. It is very difficult to measure the impact of your project if you do not know, and have not documented, how the situation looked like, or how the market was functioning, before you started the project.

Baseline information is data that is relevant to the indicators you have decided that will help you measure the effects of your work. The data is generally relevant at outcome and goal level, as described in your Results Chain. Knowing the baseline value of your indicators allows you to define realistic targets and track future progress against the initial situation at the start of the project.

In general, there are two types of baseline data:

- General contextual data: These are often available in official statistics (e.g. unemployment rates etc.). Always try to find information that is relevant for the region that you work in. If it is not available in official statistics, you may need to do some information gathering yourselves. This might involve surveying, either comprehensively or using sampling. Focus on your indicators of impact when you collect this information.
- Specific data from partners, producer organizations, and people you work with, related to you outcome- and goal indicators: This can be information on family income, production rates, net yearly profit, number of employees, etc. Remember to focus on the indicators that you have decided on in your Results Chain and hence are important for your work. You can read more about how to collect this data this in chapter 3.

Within the Solidaridad network, we strongly encourage to collect baseline information on all indicators before the project starts. During the process of strategic planning (step 1 of the Solidaridad project cycle) or project formulation (step 2) you might have collected part of the baseline information as part of your MASP or sector context analysis. However, it can be necessary to complete, update and/or validate this information before starting the project. If no baseline measurement is possible before the start of the project, this should be justified in your measurement plan. In that case, you can consider collecting secondary data or conducting a retrospective study later on that compares the present with a previous point in time to assess changes.

Attribution and the Counterfactual

Sometimes it is fairly easy to establish the attribution of your project to a certain change. For example, if your project is the only organization, organizing trainings for a specific farmer group, it is fair to attribute all "farmers trained" to your project interventions. However, sometimes attribution is more difficult to define and you need to gather more data to "proof" your attribution and consequently claim certain results and impacts. What helps is to establish the so-called counterfactual. The figure below illustrates what the counterfactual is. To calculate the counterfactual you normally use a control group that can be compared to the farmers of your intervention, except for the fact that the control group has not been "touched" by your project interventions.

Imagine your project is about improving productivity. The red line shows the changes that have taken place over time in a certain place. The green line shows the productivity increase that you have measured amongst your project farmers. In this example all farmers in the area improved on productivity. However, the farmers involved in your project improved their productivity much more. The extra improvement can be attributed to your project.

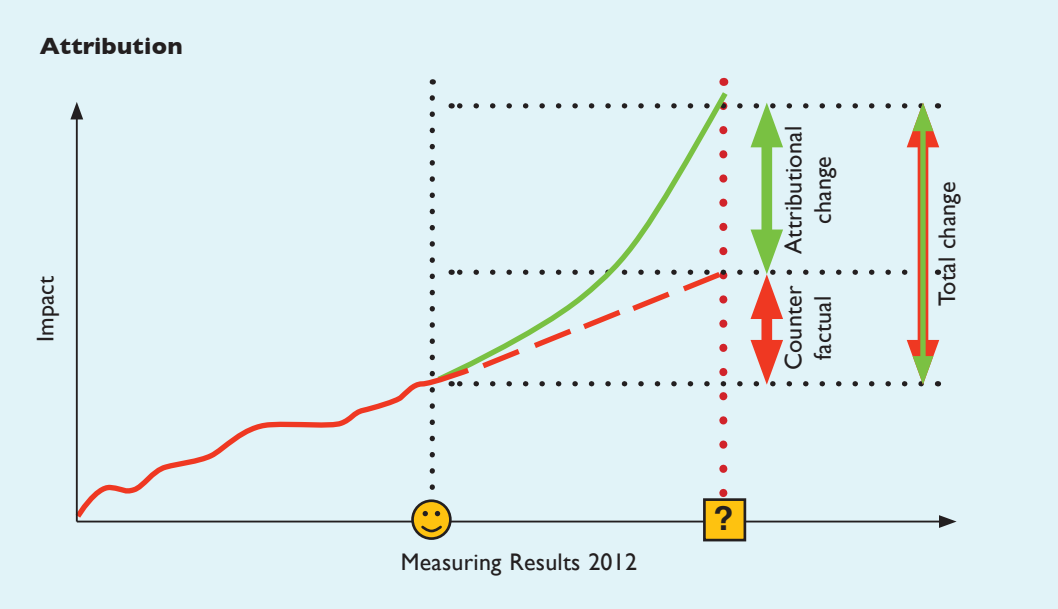


Figure 4 Measuring the counterfactual and attributional change.

The whole discussion about attribution and the counterfactual can be rather complicated. If you would like to know more about this contact the PME experts in the Network.

3. Methods of data collection

3.1 Selecting tools for data collection

There are many different techniques & exercises that can be used to collect information. In this paragraph we discuss a selection of possible tools.

To select tools, first ask yourself what kind of information you are looking for. The questions you want to ask should drive the selection of methods! Qualitative information requires other tools than quantitative information.

Another important aspect is whether you need to understand a situation or rather need to proof certain results.

Qualitative monitoring is useful…

- When 'how and why' questions need to be answered.
- When quantitative data needs to be explained/supported/complemented
- Participatory approaches are favored

Quantitative monitoring is useful…

- When you need statistically representative information about the target population/ market figures
- When numerical data (easy to be generalized) is required

Tip: It is important to consider participatory methods, where stakeholders are involved in the data collection. This is important for triangulation of data, but also to ensure that all stakeholders are heard. Imagine you have a project on introducing good agricultural practices. Introducing new production techniques might work out different for men and women in a community. Also it might influence the position of youth or local laborers. It is important to include all these different groups if you gather information about changes that took place due to your project. Focus group discussions are a good participatory method and also story telling reveals the opinions of various ranges of stakeholders. Both are further explained in the toolkit.

The following are some tools or methods that can be considered for monitoring. A lot of additional information on monitoring tools and methods can also be found on the internet and a selection of very relevant tools are further elaborated upon in the toolkit.

1. Observations

A very good tool or method for data collection is simply observation. In our work we actually use this tool a lot, often without realizing its importance. Especially when we properly document observations, this can be a very powerful tool for monitoring.

Strengths	**When to use**
▸ In the course of the work ▸ To quickly assess changes ▸ To validate findings from other research	▸ Day to day ▸ During field visits
Costs and Skills needed	**Tips**
▸ Low costs ▸ Need only in-house skills	▸ Look, hear, smell, taste and…. ▸ Document your findings

2. Secondary Sources

A second important tool for monitoring is the use of secondary sources. This tool is used very frequently within our organization as well. We use secondary sources in the programming phase, when starting to analyze a sector, but during the implementation phase it can be a very valuable tool as well.

Strengths	**When to use**
▸ Available and informative ▸ External validation of findings	▸ When entering a new sector or region ▸ As additional to your own data
Costs and Skills needed	**Tips**
▸ Low costs ▸ Need analytical skills	▸ Verify reliability ▸ Record sources

3. Company Records

Especially in our work with the private sector we should not overlook the data available with our partners. Some company records might be confidential, but if the partner realizes you need certain information to track whether you are achieving the goals of your project, they are often more willing to share company records.

Strengths	**When to use**
▸ Available and factual ▸ Over time	▸ During implementation ▸ When implementing with partners
Costs and Skills needed	**Tips**
▸ Low costs ▸ Need analytical skills	▸ Be clear about the usage of information ▸ Record sources and verify reliability

4. Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions are a very powerful tool to assess qualitative questions. Very important are preparation and facilitation. The toolkit provides an explanation on how to organize a Focus Group Discussion.

Strengths	**When to use**
▸ Uses groups dynamics ▸ Captures perceptions	▸ To understand *why* people change ▸ To understand quantitative information
Costs and Skills needed	**Tips**
▸ Low costs ▸ Need facilitation skills	▸ Think well about group composition ▸ Prepare structure and setting

5. Stakeholder Consultation

Like observation, stakeholder consultation is a tool we use a lot. Especially when we properly document the consultations and draw conclusions, this can be a very powerful method for monitoring.

Strengths	**When to use**
▸ In the course of the work ▸ Captures perceptions	▸ Day to day & during field visits ▸ To understand cause and effect, trends and dynamics ▸ To understand qualitative information
Costs and Skills needed	**Tips**
▸ Low costs ▸ Need facilitation skills	▸ Think of the right selection of stakeholders ▸ Prepare structure and setting

6. In depth interviews

In depth interviews are a good tool to get a lot of detailed information from key stakeholders. Likewise for the application of this tool, thorough documentation and drawing conclusions is very important and often forgotten.

Strengths	**When to use**
▸ Good for quantitative and qualitative information ▸ Captures perceptions ▸ Fast	▸ To understand cause and effect, trends and dynamics ▸ To investigate specific issues ▸ To explore attribution of interventions
Costs and Skills needed	**Tips**
▸ Low costs ▸ Need interviewing skills	▸ Purposely sample 5-15 people ▸ Prepare and structure the interview ▸ Probe to understand

7. Mini surveys

Mini surveys are a good tool when you need to start proving that results were met or confirming a baseline situation. It can be a good tool to verify and validate information received through, for example observation or consultations.

Strengths	**When to use**
▸ Relatively fast and flexible	▸ During field visits ▸ To validate information ▸ To gather quantitative information
Costs and Skills needed	**Tips**
▸ Relatively low costs ▸ Need interviewing and data processing skills	▸ Purposely sampling ▸ Simple closed questions

8. Outsource Surveys

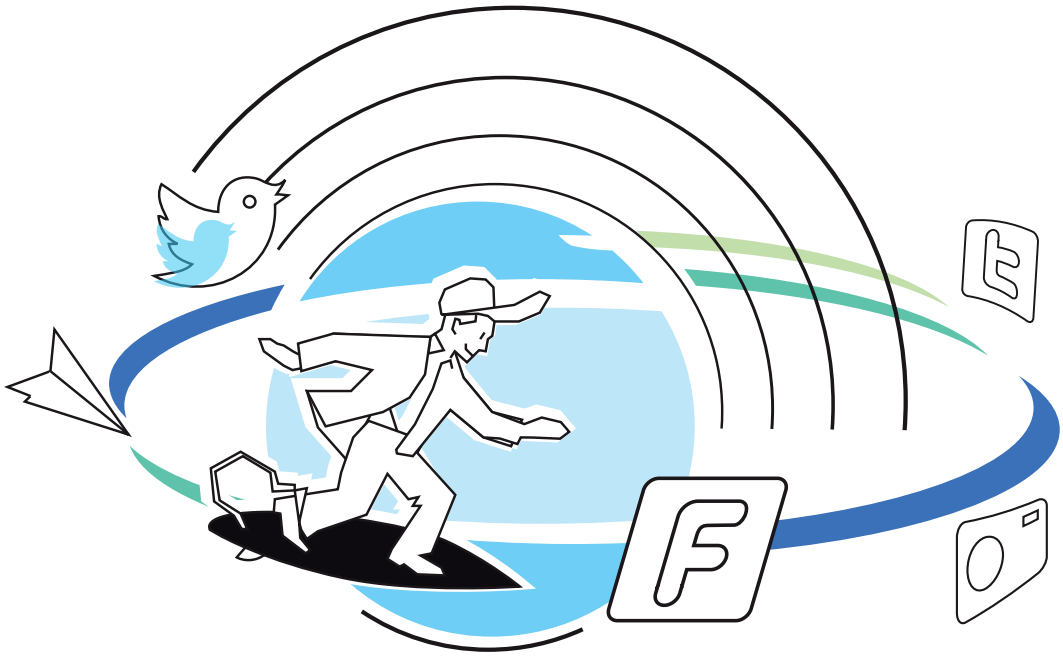
When the scope of your research reaches beyond a small in-house survey, it might be a good idea to outsource the assignment to an independent (consultancy) agency. This way you assure that the results of the survey are objective and therefore more reliable. This could be a smart idea when you need to measure for example the impact of your project.

Strengths	**When to use**
▸ Large coverage ▸ Reliable and objective ▸ Standardization and aggregation	▸ mpact/ higher levels ▸ To proof changes and justify investment ▸ To isolate factors
Costs and Skills needed	**Tips**
▸ High costs ▸ Interviewing and data processing skills	▸ Random sampling 100-200 ▸ Outsource to professional(s)

9. Using ICT for data collection

One way to facilitate (and often reduce costs of) data collection is by using new information and communication technologies. Examples of ICT-based technologies are:

- Mobile phone: They are becoming more and more widespread in developing countries and can be used for surveys and real time reporting. For example: women micro entrepreneurs and small enterprise owners submitting sales reports on a daily basis with their mobile phone.
- Mapping geographic information (internet): Using basic mapping software of more advanced Geographic Information System (GIS) enables programmes to visually track activities and results. This can supplement other data to enrich analysis. Such tools (like Ushahidi for example) are often combined with mobile device technology (PDA, tablet etc.).
- Photo and video monitoring; always to complement and support M&E data/findings
- Social media: for instance twitter can be used for polls.
- Online questionnaire tools like SurveyMonkey.



3.2 Analyzing monitoring information

After the information is collected it is important to organize how you are going to analyze the data and make sense of the findings. The key issue is to look for multiple observations and explanations.

It is advised to involve the relevant people in making hunches about what works and what not. Particularly where complex issues are concerned one needs to be on top of things and make decisions based on 'rough' data. The issue here is to use monitoring data to understand and manage: 'stimulating the things that go well and quickly change those that do not go well'. Managers and staff should at least regularly analyze project expenditures and efficiency, in order to make well-informed decisions on next steps.

Key questions for analysis are:

Monitoring information	Key questions for analysis
Inputs	▸ Money: Is the budget sufficient and used as planned? ▸ Human resources: Is staff capacity sufficient? ▸ Time: Is the project carried out within the planned timeframe?
Interventions	▸ Are interventions/ activities carried out as planned?
Triggers and Uptake	▸ Have the products of the activities/services reached the target group aimed for as planned (e.g. how many people have been trained)? ▸ If not, what has happened?
Target group performance and sustainable sector growth	▸ Are there signs of progress on the outcome indicators? ▸ Are all parties involved satisfied? Is the new situation profitable? Are they able to continue? ▸ If not, why not and what can we do about that?
Impact	▸ Can we show our attribution to the overall impact goals as we had envisaged?

Data-drowning

We often have the tendency to collect too much information without actually making use of it. Before starting any data-collection we strongly advice to do a quick information needs analysis by asking yourself:

- Do we really need this information?
- Is the information already available through existing sources?
- Who will make use of it, and how (e.g. in which report)?
- Do we need to collect this information once, or regularly?
- Who will analyze the information? (Remember that a pile of filled out questionnaires is not information)

4. Using monitoring information for reporting, decision-making & communication

4. 1 Reporting

Projects are generally carried out with external funding, which must be made accountable by the RECs. Responsible staff members are required to report to funding agencies (or donors) in time and according to the donors reporting requirements. The monitoring information that is collected in PROMIS forms a good base for these reports.
Within the Solidaridad Network, there is generally a semi-annual reporting interval, composed of a mid year regular progress report and annual reviews. Monitoring information should naturally be incorporated into these reports.

Regular progress reports and reports of field visits

The half yearly progress reports are developed by Solidaridad or by its partners, and monitor outputs, key performances, expected changes, and the indicators. The last scheduled progress report also functions as a final report.

Next to written progress reports (registered in PROMIS), monitoring takes place by Solidaridad project staff through field visits. Within the Solidaridad Network, staff members are encouraged to visit project partners and beneficiaries several times before, during or after the implementation of a project to support development and implementation and verify progress. After each field visit, a short report is written (and registered in PROMIS) highlighting the key findings of the field visit.

Annual review

Every project should have a clear system through which the Results Chain(s) are formally reviewed at least once a year to ensure that the evidence and assumptions on which it is based are still valid. Updates should then be made according to necessity.

The annual review should give staff and managers the opportunity to take an in depth view on the effectiveness of the project, and ensure that any changes in market strategy or activities are documented, and that impact predictions and estimates are updated.

4.2 Decision making

As part of your PM&E system (and as described in your monitoring plan) you will set the frequency of when and with who you will sit together at your organization to discuss the data you have collected. This could be every three months for instance.

Ask yourself: Did things go according to plan or has nothing that was planned actually been done? Talk about why it went the way it did and adjust the planning for the rest of the year in a realistic way. Then discuss what activities went great and which ones failed. What's the secret of your success? If you have done these meetings more often, you can begin to ask yourself whether there are certain patterns – find out what the unwritten rules for your way of working are and write them down.

Guidelines for successful monitoring meetings

- Use your Results Chain and projections as the basis for discussion
- Make sure all levels of your organization are represented
- Have the notes of earlier meetings available
- Reflect on your projections versus your achieved results
- Be critical! Ask the others why they think an event was a success or a failure
- Be open to criticism and look for solutions
- Create a list of things to do to improve your way of working

4.3 Communication

Another key issue to consider is what information needs to be communicated internally and externally, to who and how. Equally important is the question on how to get feedback. Important aspects to consider are:

- Agree with primary intended users of the information, how and when the findings need to be communicated to them and how they intend to use these findings.

Communication in the Solidaridad Network

In the Solidaridad Network each year a global annual report is published. In this publication we report on our key indicators (KPI's). It is good to remember this when selecting your indicators for your project. Check when you are choosing your indicators what information is important for the communication department.

- Organize the receipt of feedback from different stakeholders on the key findings, to make sense of what these findings mean in their particular context, and what the consequences are for individuals, interpersonal relationships and organizations.
- Ensure transparency of findings to stimulate use (e.g. actions) and think through the consequences (e.g. different thinking) of the information.
- Findings should be understandable and meaningful to stakeholders.
- Lessons learned should be carefully analyzed and shared with others where possible. Don't be afraid to admit that things went different than expected.
- Finally we advise you to celebrate your success. If you have achieved certain milestones, don't forget to ensure publication about your achievements!

It is useful to make a communication plan for your project where these points are further worked out.

Colofon

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