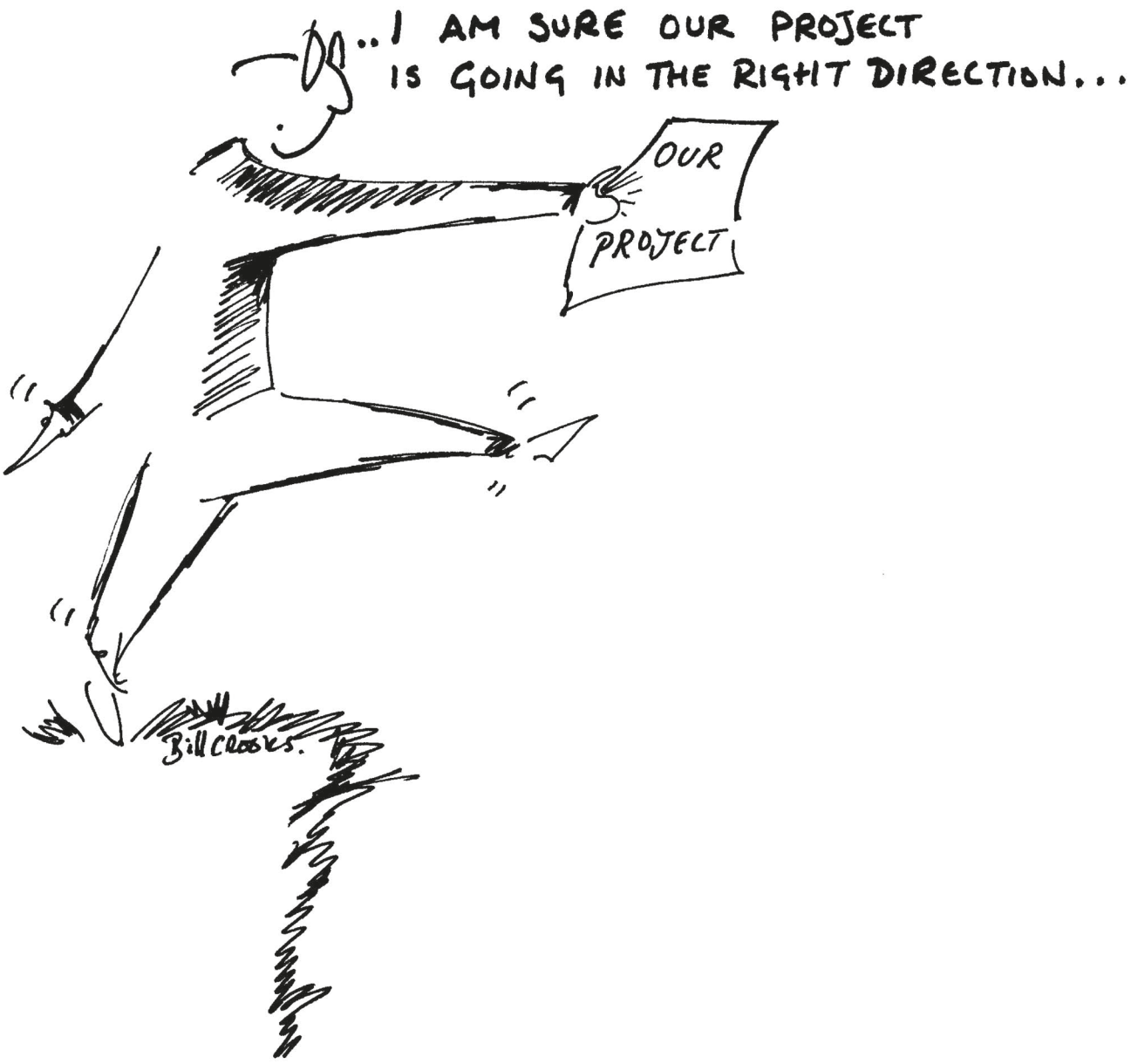

Design and implement a monitoring system.

Make decisions to achieve results
Promote engagement to develop the project
Learn from experience
Be accountable to the various actors and donors

Methodological guide.

Terre des hommes
Helping children worldwide. tdh.ch

Terre des hommes

Helping children worldwide. tdh.ch

Terre des hommes (Tdh) was founded in 1960 and is Switzerland's largest non-governmental organisation providing aid to children in need. With projects in more than 30 countries, it improves the daily life of more than two million children and their families, primarily in the sectors of health and protection.

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If I had known they wanted me to use all this information I wouldn't have requested them.
Julie

MONITORING, A CRUCIAL PROCESS

Are we on the right path? How do we know? How can we change our actions to improve our chances of achieving a project's objective and attaining the expected results?

Development cooperation or humanitarian aid projects take shape in uncertain and changing environments that involve multiple actors, each with their own interests and strategies. These projects aim to tackle problems that are often complex. Implementing a project to achieve expected objectives can often prove to be very challenging.

Monitoring is therefore a vital process **when running a project to ensure that it contributes to a real change for the "beneficiaries".** Its aim is either to assess a project's progress and ensure it is on the right track to achieve the expected results, or to observe and understand discrepancies, difficulties or even new opportunities. **Monitoring therefore helps us to decide what adjustments are needed to achieve the project's goals.**

Monitoring combines various methods that allow us to define the information we require, to gather it, analyse it and share it with the parties involved in the project so the right decisions can be made. **This workflow drives the project, but it also feeds organisational learning, accountability and advocacy.**

Monitoring is therefore a crucial step for anyone implementing a project.

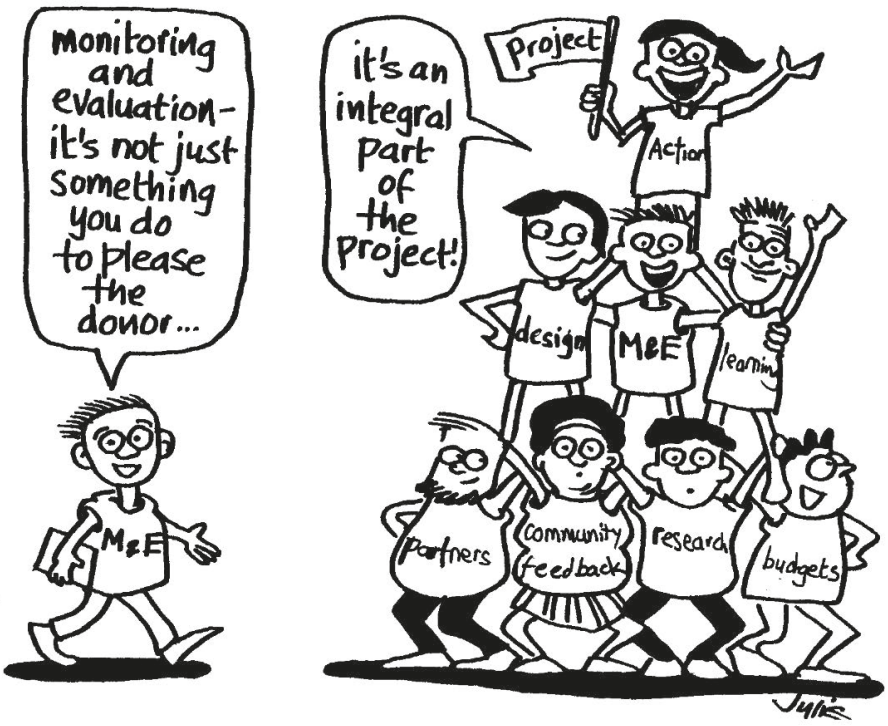
One of the objectives of this guide is to shed preconceptions on monitoring as being an externally imposed constraint focused on reporting back to the donors or headquarters, and to demonstrate its usefulness when approached in **a comprehensive and strategic way.**

This quick guide complements Tdh's Project Cycle Management handbook. It does not provide a formula that can easily be replicated between projects and contexts. Each monitoring system must be **tailor-made,** designed for and in line with the project and adapted to its own specific context.

This guide encourages to ask the right questions, at the right time, and provides methodological markers to help the teams build and implement a monitoring system, which meets strategic and operational project management requirements, incorporating the expectations of the various actors involved.

It may, in future, be supplemented by a document detailing the methods and tools for collecting and processing quantitative and qualitative data.

I. What is a monitoring system? What purpose does it serve?

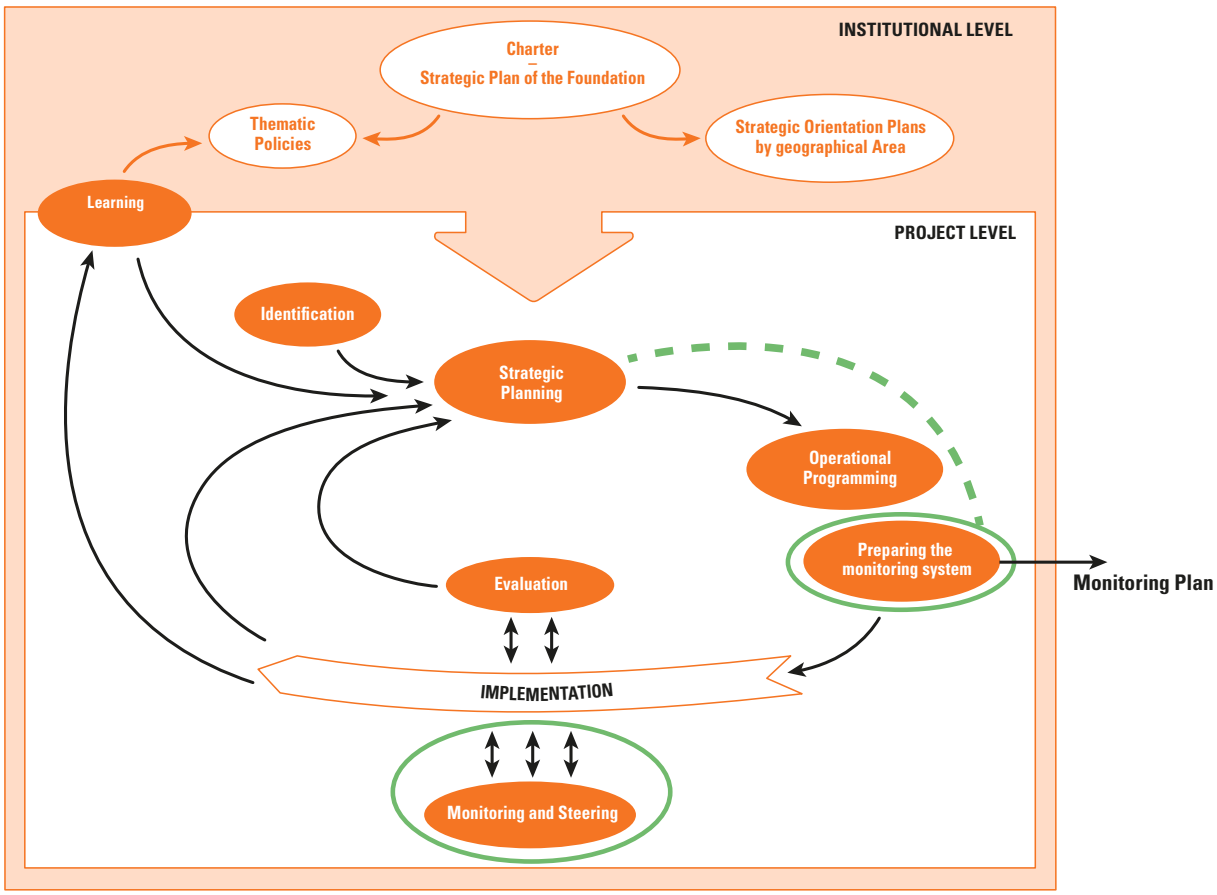


1. HOW DOES IT WORK?

A monitoring system allows you to collect, process, analyse and disseminate information[1] amongst/ with a group of actors involved in a project's implementation, to help them reach a decision, access information and learn from the experience.

Monitoring in project management

A monitoring system is part of project cycle management. A monitoring plan is designed based on the work carried out on the strategic planning and, in particular, on the logical framework, but **it can only actually be determined after the operational programming** has taken place. It is used throughout the project implementation phase and **it feeds the strategic and operational steering processes.**



[2] The terms "data", "information" and "knowledge" have been defined in the attached glossary

The information required for the monitoring is made up of **quantitative and qualitative data** that informs the indicators. It can also draw on the **knowledge of the teams, the partners involved, representatives of the local population or of the children the project is targeted at.**

Monitoring uses a very broad range of methods and tools. It comprises **systems for collecting and processing data, analysing information, communication processes and decision-making procedures.**

All of these working processes and the means required to implement them **must be organised and planned. The monitoring plan is the final result of this groundwork, the document that sets out all the work to be carried out**[2]**.** It explains what needs to be monitored and measured, the methodology required to do so and describes the procedures for managing the information, communicating and analysing it, and the way it links to the steering and management. **The workload required to create the monitoring system is largely offset by its contribution to achieving the results, the collective learning and accountability it provides.**

Monitoring applies to the project as a whole

Monitoring applies to all the project's components that contribute to achieving the results:

- **Operationally:** the human, material, financial and organisational resources; the activities and their direct results (outputs).
- **Strategically:** the project's objective, the intermediate and final results (outcomes), the project strategy's underlying assumptions.
- **The context:** the key actors – directly or indirectly involved in the project; the various social, economic, political and environmental dimensions of the context, which can have a positive or negative impact on the project and/or the actors.

Therefore, to avoid being overloaded with information, without necessarily having the capacity to make use of it, we can see that it is essential **to prioritise what should be targeted by monitoring.**

Monitoring is key to achieving results

The "project" is determined by the interactions of different and sometimes contradictory rationales: that of the donors; that of Tdh as determined by its mandate, its human, organisational and economic dimensions; that of people with diverse interests and strategies; that of local authorities at various regional levels and within evolving political, economic and social contexts.

The project remains subject to these multiple influences, both positive and negative, expected and unexpected that must be decoded and taken into account **to adapt the project if necessary, within the framework defined with the donors and Tdh, to ensure it achieves its objective.**

[3] Cf. typical structure of a monitoring plan page 40.

In addition, a project designed within the framework of strategic planning is still based on assumptions, which themselves have been built upon expertise, practical knowledge and experiences that are more or less consolidated. Hence, for each project, we assume that performing actions A, B, C will lead to intermediate results 1, 2, 3…, which will in turn contribute to end results I, II, III, and help to achieve the objective. As with all assumptions or hypotheses, they must be verified. **Monitoring is a process that allows one to assess if the project is producing the expected results or is on the right path to doing so, and that the strategy's underlying assumptions have therefore been well substantiated.**

Monitoring is one of the key processes in project management. It should help to achieve the objectives while taking into account changes in context, and verifying the validity of hypotheses upon which the project was designed.

Monitoring and evaluation – strong ties, but two different approaches

Often monitoring and evaluation are combined, sometimes they are confused.

Both subscribe **to the same approach: developing knowledge and using it for founding action.** They **are closely linked:** monitoring provides evaluation with some of the data it requires for it to be carried out and evaluation takes a closer look at the monitoring results or complements them if the results require more time to be properly judged.

These two approaches are however also different. Evaluation allows one to judge the value of a project. In most cases, it requires the intervention of a third party and a specific time frame. It is often conducted at set times during or at the end of a project. Ultimately, key questions raised by an evaluation require a more ambitious methodological structure and more in-depth analysis than monitoring on its own can provide.

2. WHAT IS A MONITORING SYSTEM FOR?

Monitoring addresses four main objectives:
- **Assist with decision-making** to achieve the expected results; **document the project** to support **learning processes,** communication, or even advocacy; **be accountable** to the key actors; **contribute to the capacity-building** of the parties involved.

Assist with the decision-making, on a strategic and operational level

Monitoring is used strategically in project steering[3]**, by assessing the results that have been obtained, with a view to achieving the expected outcomes.** Monitoring therefore allows you to verify that the project's underlying assumptions are relevant and realistic. In the light of this information, adjustments may be deemed necessary. Such changes in project strategy must be discussed with the key partners, with **the approval of headquarters and often that of the donors through dialogue facilitated by sound information.**

Similarly, monitoring assists the project's operational management[4] by ensuring that the activities are implemented according to a set programme in keeping with the resources that have been allocated and that they produce the anticipated outputs. Any discrepancy can lead to a review of resource allocation and organisation of activities or even the quality of the activities if the expected outputs have not been achieved or the resources used exceed the planned allocation. These changes are usually negotiated by country offices unless a budget review is required.

Support learning, communication and advocacy processes

Monitoring allows us to draw lessons from the action for a better understanding of the problem or a better organisation of an activity or the review of an approach. **Even though they do not systematically justify institutional learning, lessons learned from the action may require consolidation or a simple drafting of the salient points so they can be shared with the project team as well as the partners and even other Tdh delegations.**

The monitoring results allow for **concrete and up-to-date** discussions on a project to take place amongst the key actors, to help mobilise them and recruit support from parties who may initially have been more intractable.

These results can also **support advocacy amongst competent authorities or civil society stakeholders** and encourage greater consideration of the problem or new practices, a commitment from institutions who may have been absent up to this point, or even a process of scaling up.

For example, Restorative Juvenile Justice projects suffer from portrayals in the media or by certain policy-makers who advocate a strictly punitive approach. Building an accurate and reliable system for collecting and optimising project data is a key challenge if one is to convince the state, local authorities and the media of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of restorative approaches.

[3] Cf. attached glossary.
[4] Cf. attached glossary.

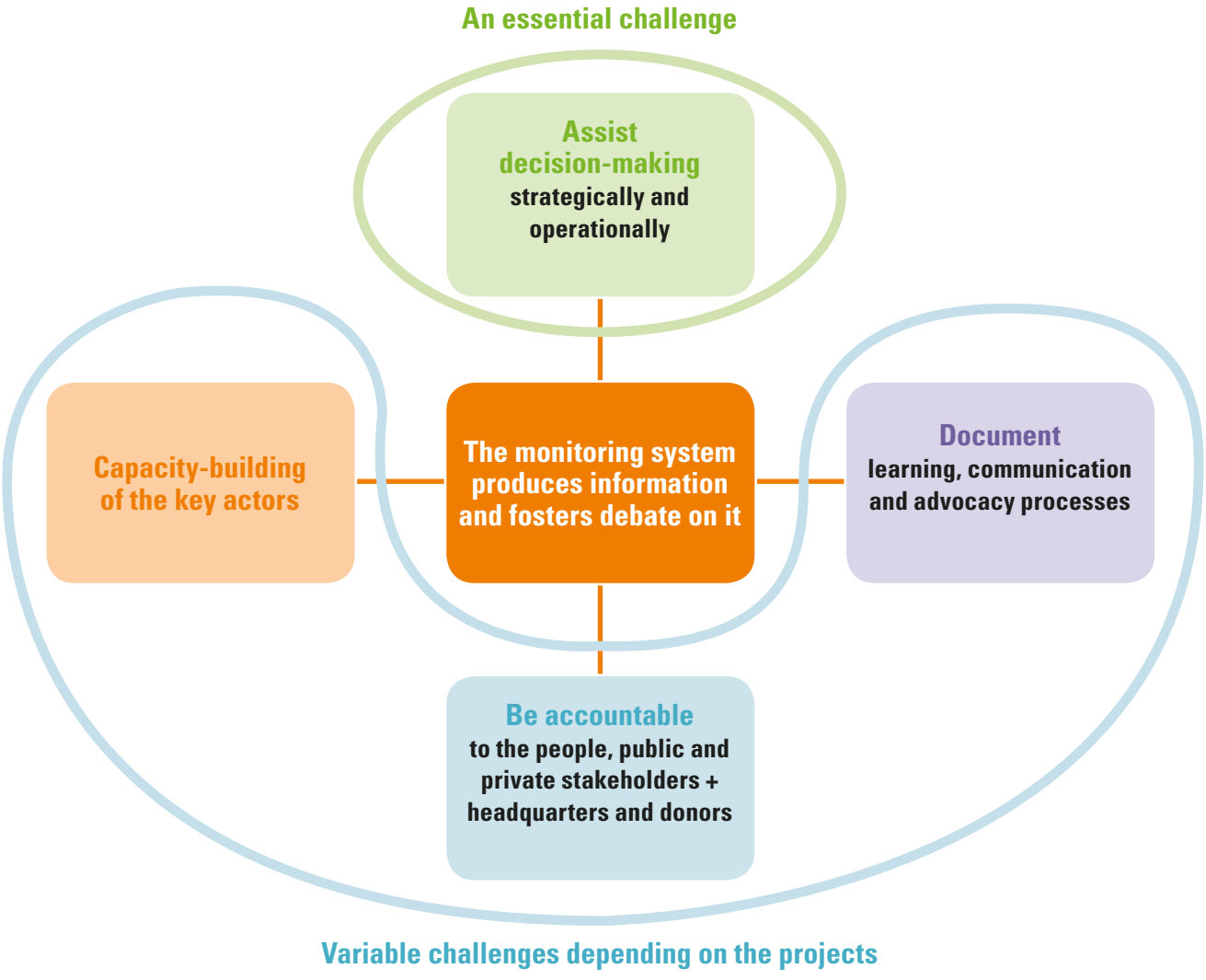
Be accountable to the project's key actors

Monitoring allows for **information to be conveyed to the project key actors on the project's progress, its results as well as the obstacles that have been encountered.** These parties may be representatives of the State, local authorities, civil society organisations, population groups, children or international organisations as well as donors.

Capacity-building of the key actors

Monitoring is also an opportunity for training as concrete work on the project's successes and failures is carried out with the various parties involved. This aspect is vital if the project is to support a government body, a local authority or civil society organisation in implementing a new public policy, reorganising a service or a new project.

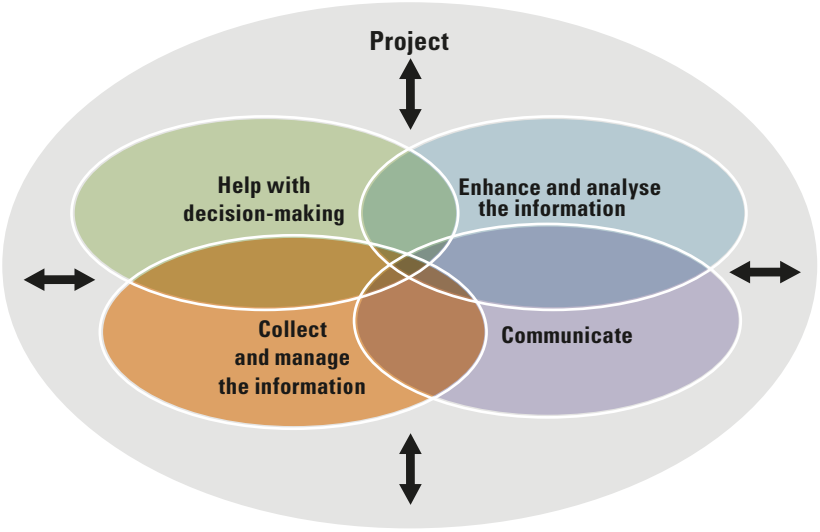
This capacity-building may be more directly focused to **the design and running of the monitoring itself** and is a goal in its own right when the plan is to transfer a project to the State or another organisation.



3. DESIGN MONITORING AS A SYSTEM THAT IS SHARED, ORGANISED AND INTEGRATED WITH THE PROJECT STEERING

Components that are interdependent: a system

Approaching monitoring as a system allows us to emphasise **the range of monitoring elements, their interdependence and how they interact with the project:**



- **Collect and manage the information** – qualitative, quantitative, formal and informal. The monitoring can sometimes be reviewed if there are problems gathering or interpreting the information or untapped potential it may reveal.

- **Enhance, analyse the information.** Once information has been gathered, it must be analysed with the individuals involved in the project. This critical examination can enhance the information and adapt the action's more minor challenges that are sometimes key to a project's successful implementation. This process also contributes to a shared dynamic and to the capacity-building of the actors, and allows the monitoring system to be reviewed if problems are noted and areas to be identified that must be examined more closely once new data has been collected.

- **Communicate. Communicating the information to those who will be using it** (donors, headquarters, executives and field staff, partners, etc.) can also result in feedback - readjustments, better understanding, better mobilisation, etc.

- **Help with strategy and operational management decisions.** Different time frames will be applied (monthly, half-yearly, yearly), different responsibilities will be allocated and negotiations will be carried out depending on the activities, resources or management of the action or strategy. Decisions taken should be communicated to the various actors, enabling a new form of monitoring and project ownership.

Each one of these activities helps to build ownership of the project and improves the quality of the process. There are many and diverse monitoring tasks, which are distributed amongst a number of people. Monitoring is therefore a shared responsibility. To the extent possible, monitoring tasks should be integrated into existing project activities (such as meetings, visits, supervision), in order not to overburden the project teams.

Different types of monitoring systems may be considered. A monitoring system can be highly complex requiring considerable expertise both in collecting and in processing and analysing the information. It can also be very simple, based on regular project meetings organised so as to harness the knowledge of the various parties involved and based on the idea that only few good indicators can help to support, target or structure the reflection. The size and **complexity of the monitoring system will depend on the project, the objective and the monitoring's area of intervention, but also on the budget and the skills available within Tdh's team or partners.**

A system shared with the project key actors

It is essential to have the key actors' agreement and a shared understanding of the usefulness of the approach. This agreement allows the project **to draw on the knowledge of the various actors and helps prevent the feeling of control** that can arise if the monitoring is misunderstood, which can sometimes lead to biased information. This collective learning dynamic ensures better involvement by all parties in reflections and decisions made based on the results of monitoring, as well as in the implementation of the decisions that may be taken on this basis.

This support is contingent upon the involvement, contribution and, at the very least, information of the key actors when the monitoring system is designed and implemented.

A system that is integrated with project management

Monitoring is a cross-cutting approach, which should be shared amongst a diverse group of actors, contributing to collect, analyse data, to feed project strategic and operational management.

For this very reason, monitoring overall responsibility corresponds to the Program Coordinator / Project manager ultimately in charge of managing the project. The monitoring officer is aimed to provide technical support for designing and implementing the monitoring system, including information sharing about project's outcomes to the main actors.

Enabling this shared responsibility raises three different issues: the position of the person/people in charge of the monitoring in the organisation chart, the organisation of monitoring tasks and the time allocated for a collaborative analysis of the information and of the decision-making process that is part of the project governance.

- **Organisation chart.** More and more country offices are choosing to have a person or a team in charge of monitoring. **This function should be placed in the organisation chart so as to encourage this cross-cutting approach.** A position alongside the Country Representative or the Programme Coordinator(s) is usually appropriate

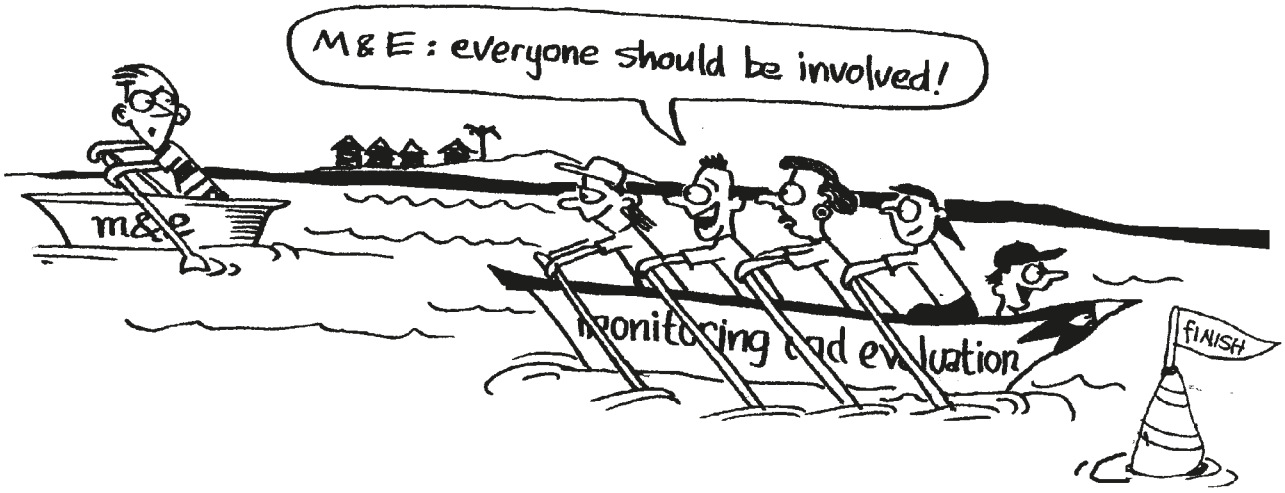
- **Organisation of monitoring tasks.** Where possible, and if specific skills are not required, the various project actors must be included in the daily tasks and the routine of data collection, processing and analysis.

- **Project governance.** Project governance designates the bodies and the processes for reflection, information sharing, coordination and decision-making to run the project, both strategically and in terms of its operational implementation. Governance essentially comprises the steering bodies and operational management. A broader approach is sometimes proposed in view of the fact that governance relies on various actors, different channels for interaction (personal meetings), different types of meetings (formal, informal) on a regular (bi-monthly, quarterly etc.) or ad hoc (debriefing workshop, prospective, etc.) basis. **The information from the monitoring must be included in this organisation.**

In view of the range of components in the monitoring system – collection, data processing, analysis and critical reflection, communication, help with decision-making etc…, and **the need to integrate this system with the project's strategic and operational management, a specific organisation will be required to operate effectively, precising 'Who does what?', 'When?', 'With whom?' and 'How?' This constitutes a corpus of roles, responsabilities, work processes and timelines which are defined in the monitoring plan.**

The conditions for successful monitoring:
- It must be **targeted** to the **project's requirements and the expectations of the project's key actors.**
- **The monitoring system must be tailored to the project.** It should not require too much time and investment **compared to the project itself,** unless if the project's experimental nature requires specific investment in monitoring to help prepare it to be scaled up, transfer it to the State or to another actor, or even for advocacy purposes.
- It should involve a **consensus** between project team members and the project key actors.
- Finally, it should be **integrated with the steering and project management.**

II. How does one build a monitoring system?



1. THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK: A STRUCTURE THAT MUST BE COMPLETED, SOMETIMES REVISED, TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE MONITORING PLAN

The summary of the project's strategy may differ between country offices. Nevertheless, the logical framework prevails, within Tdh practices.

When designing the logical framework, some initial work is carried out to help develop the monitoring system:
- Firstly, the indicators and the means of verification defined in this framework are an initial basis, generally focus on the objective and the expected final and intermediate results.
- A description of the risks and sometimes the assumptions upon which the project strategy is based, complete the elements that will make up the monitoring plan.

However, this basis should be reviewed regularly, for the following reasons:

The logical framework is usually designed before all aspects of the project have been established: the operational programming has not yet taken place and practical familiarisation with the context, the stakeholders or the conditions for the action may sometimes still be at a preliminary stage.

- **Indicators sometimes need to be reviewed** to verify **their relevance and the feasibility** of collecting, processing and analysing the data in light of the project's resources and expertise. The lack of time in defining the indicators of the logical framework as well as the project's lack of operational knowledge may make it essential to conduct this check/review.
- The logical framework remains a summary of the project's strategy. **The indicators defined when the logical framework is formalised usually only cover the objective and the expected results.** These are crucial indicators that must be supplemented by a definition. Likewise, the necessary indicators to monitor the project actions and resources must be defined. Moreover, the context is generally approached in terms of risk to the project. But changes in the context do not necessarily bring risks; they could also generates opportunities for the project. **The context's monitoring requirements and methods must therefore be thorough.**
- **The monitoring objectives in terms of learning and accountability to the "beneficiaries"** are not generally taken into account in the logical framework's indicators.
- Finally, the logical framework does not allow an accurate representation of **the work involved in the collection, processing, analysis, critical reflection and decision-making.**

A comprehensive monitoring system must therefore be designed to complete and refine the log frame, with a clear definition of the monitoring objective, methods, and planning, which is captured through what is generally called a monitoring plan (cf.p.40)

- that defines what should be monitored, measured, when, how, by whom and how the tasks and responsibilities should be allocated,
- that specifies the means of managing the information, communicating and analysing it and the way it connects to the steering and management,
- that allocates the resources needed for this monitoring.

Often, projects are submitted to donnors too swiftly to allow time for this monitoring plan to be drawn up, it is still important to take time to review the indicators and amend them if the contract with the donor allows it or simply fill in the missing elements.

2. THE APPROACH AND PREREQUISITES

Before starting to prepare a monitoring plan, several points need to be checked.

Is the project established and the key actors involved ?

The monitoring system can only be drafted once the operational programming has been defined: the team is in place, partnerships have been built, each actor's role is clear, the activities have been organised and the resources required to implement them have been mobilised.

The operational programming allows us **to identify exactly which elements will be monitored, the people who will be able to collect and process the information, and the potential sources** for data collection.

All the actors involved in the project must have a shared understanding of the project, each should know what they are contributing to and why. **If the process of drafting the project could not be shared with the various parties involved, a workshop may be organised so that each actor may have a sense of ownership of the project:** a meeting can bring together all the actors allowing each one an understanding of the project as a whole, with specific workshops on each component to provide relevant partners with more detailed information.

Has the project governance been defined?

The monitoring system must be part of the steering and project management. I**t is therefore important to be clear about the project's governance**[5] **: Who participates in the steering of the project? Who takes part in the operational management? Who should be informed? Within what framework? When?**

Based on this, we can then specify: to whom information should be sent (steering committee, technical committee, team meetings, etc.)? When? What is the objective (to enhance the information, communicate, provide help with the decision-making, etc.)?

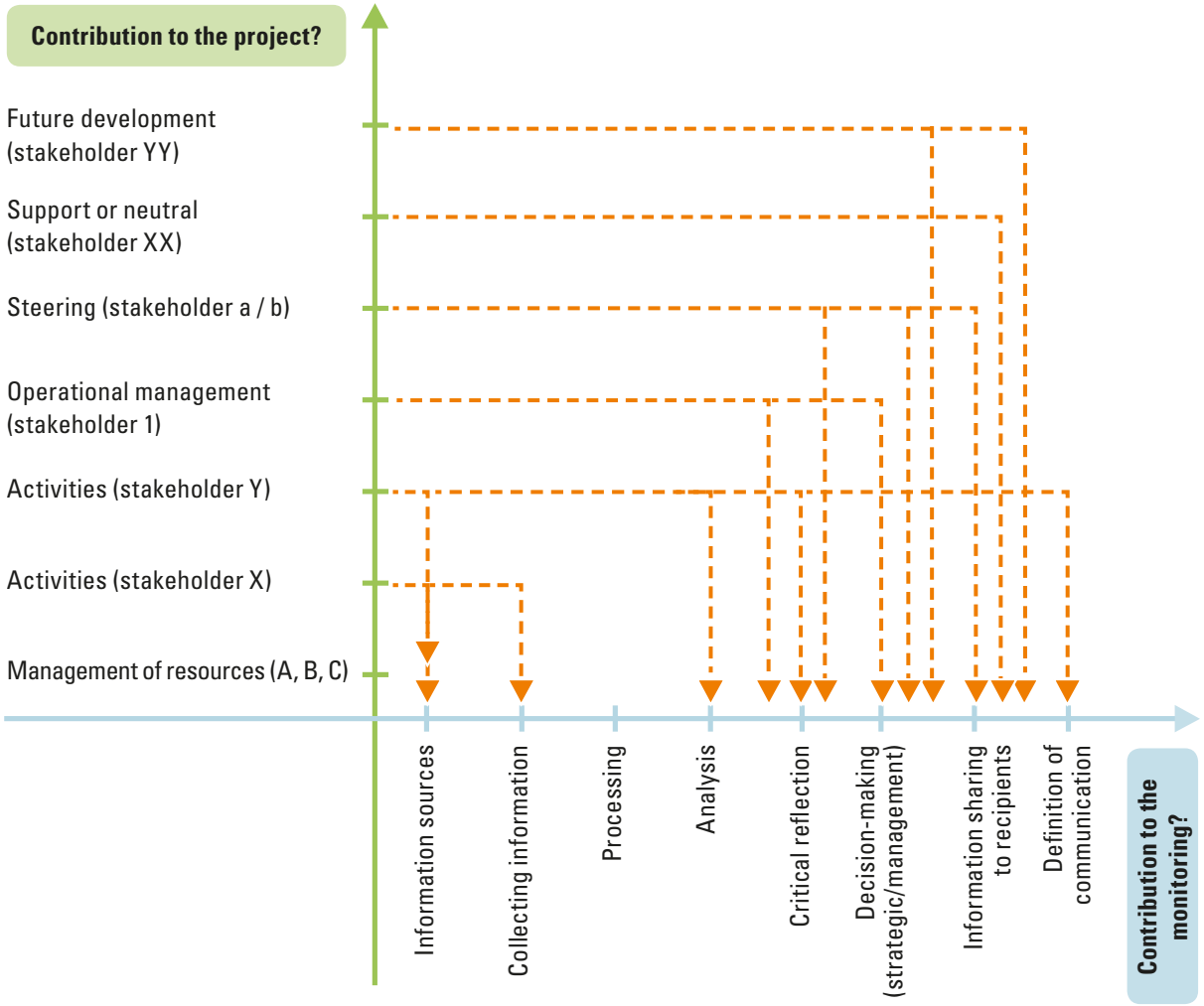
Have the actors that will take part in the design and implementation of the monitoring been identified?

Three different roles may be proposed to the members of the Tdh team and other key actors, depending on their involvement in the current project, and its future development:

- Help with the **design** of the monitoring system to ensure it is relevant, but also effective.
- **Contribute to the implementation of the monitoring and at various levels:** participation in data collection, contribution to the analysis, critical examination of the impact of the project, decision-making and strategic and/or operational plan, dissemination of information on the results of monitoring, and even decisions taken regarding the project.
- **Be a recipient of information on results and/or decisions** taken on the project.

[5] Cf. glossary.

The following template can help you to identify the key actors in the monitoring and define their role:



This matrix should of course be adapted to your project's internal and external actors.

Instructions for use:

1. A quick reference point on who does what in the project implementation (activities, management of resources etc.), but also who plays a supporting role, those whose neutrality must be ensured and those who have a role to play in enabling the project's future development (scaling up, deployment in another region or district)?
2. Based on this, reflect on how each actor identified can help to facilitate the monitoring, either as a source of information, as a data collector or participant in the analyses or decision-making or as a recipient of the information.
3. Actors whose contribution to the monitoring is key (e.g. those who can provide important data or key political support, etc.) must be involved in all or part of the design of monitoring to help draft a relevant and effective system, contribute to the decision-making or as recipients of the information.

Example : the social workers of a given association can gather simple and systematic information while carrying out their activities. The person in charge of this association, who is in frequent contact with the local authorities can add a regular item to the agenda of the monthly meetings to conduct a quick assessment of the project. The representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs who will deal with the scaling-up of the project should also receive this information.
This example shows that it can be important to involve the person in charge of the association in the design of the monitoring plan to ensure that the information-gathering is not only done in a meaningful way, but is also achievable. Furthermore, time will also need to be spent with the Ministry of Social Affairs' representative to take their expectations into account and ensure they will give credence to the results of this monitoring.

The various stages in the design of the monitoring system

Once these prerequisites have been met or verified, the monitoring system can be designed. It can be broken down into **five stages:**

1. Define the **objective** and scope of the monitoring.
2. Identify **your** requirements for information, draft questions on the performance.
3. Define **the information and indicators needed** to respond to the questions that have been identified
4. Specify **methods for analysing, sharing and communicating** the information collected, including a **link to the steering.**
5. **Organise the** monitoring **system** and resources (HR, material resources, budget).

3. DEFINE THE OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE MONITORING

Not all aspects of the project will receive the same attention and not all the project monitoring objectives will be equally important. It is therefore essential to specify the objective and scope of the monitoring for each project.

Questions to ask yourself: What are the main reasons for Tdh and other key actors to set up a monitoring system? What is the required scope and degree of precision and complexity?

To answer this, several elements have to be examined:

1/ Elements pertaining to the size of the project, the contractual undertakings and resources available:

- **Requests already specified by the donor(s) and headquarters (thematic/programme indicators);**
- **Human resources and budget** available for the monitoring, internally at Tdh and within the partner organisations.
- The project's **geographical scope** - the level of accuracy may vary depending on the context of each project intervention area or on a decision to examine some sample areas more closely.
- The project's **demographic scale** - the level of accuracy may vary depending on the categories of "beneficiaries" or a decision to expand to get more information on sample groups.

2/ Elements directly linked to the monitoring objectives [5b] that may be prioritised:

"Contribute to project steering and management" is a main objective. **For the three additional objectives below always ask yourself 'What is the need?' and 'What might be the benefit and possible consequences to the project?'**

- "Document the project"? Why?
  - Feed an internal learning process? A capitalisation exercise?
  - Nurture communication on the project, which could be a crucial element in its success?
  - Support an advocacy approach that may be a specific element of the existing project or its future development?
- "Strengthen the project's accountability" to the donors (see above) and "beneficiaries"? If the latter are already closely involved with the project, the monitoring will not require specific procedures to be put in place. The context, time and configuration of the project can also put this aspect in perspective.

- "Contribute to the capacity-building of the key actors"?

This initial work will allow the monitoring to be targeted and its scope to be defined. It should normally be carried out with the project's key actors.

4. DEFINE YOUR INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS, DRAFT THE QUESTIONS REGARDING PERFORMANCE: FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE INDICATORS

N.B. The proposed methodology in the following chapters (Sections 4, 5, 6) may be useful to define the indicators when the logical framework is drafted or when drafting the monitoring plan. In this latter case, this work will **allow you to complete, confirm or review, and even prioritise the indicators that you might have defined in advance when drafting the logical framework.** The indicators may be part of a contractual undertaking with the donor. The choice between the various stances will therefore depend on your **capacity to engage in dialogue with the donor** with the benefit of having robust data to hand.

The challenge in defining indicators on the basis of the expected result, which often describes a complex situation, can lead us to resort only to output level indicators. These are simpler to define and measure but they do not capture the change experienced by the beneficiaries (outcomes).

First, drafting **the questions for which monitoring should provide responses and hence identifying your information requirements** will help to target your research and define any relevant indicators more easily. These questions on the information requirements question the project's capacity to achieve the expected change and query its performance. They are therefore generally classified as questions **relating to performance.**

[5b] See page 10-11, section 2 : "What is a monitoring system for?"

Another reason for drafting these questions is to allow you to analyse various types of indicators together and give you with the structure to combine them.
Identifying the questions the monitoring should target follows an iterative process: the initial choice will certainly be reviewed according to its feasibility and final decisions, to ensure that the monitoring corresponds both to the project's needs and resources.

If we do not ask the right questions, we are not likely to reach the right answers. If our questions overlook critical elements, the results of monitoring, however positive, may be misleading. Indeed, we may have overlooked key elements that could have revealed different trends. For example, by simply limiting our indicator to "number of social workers adequately trained for the implementation of a child protection program" we would not capture dimensions that may have a real influence on the ability of the trainees to be effective, e.g. their status (age, experience), which will influence the consideration and support they will get from their hierarchy and therefore impacts on their ability to make change at institutional level.

Several examples have been put forward to illustrate the process for defining indicators. Please refer to page 30 to 33.

What information is required to monitor outcomes?

Monitoring must meet a dual objective: verifying whether or not the expected results have been achieved, but also explaining why they have succeeded or failed. It is only by knowing why something has or has not happened that you will be able to decide what adjustments to make.

N.B. Certain changes (particularly in terms of knowledge, attitudes and practices/behaviours) are difficult to measure in project monitoring, and require more time to become manifest as well as a more targeted assessment, which is only possible through evaluation. Monitoring focuses on the elements that indicate that the conditions for this change are present so that it can really take place.

In a certain number of projects, the expected results encompass complex realities, consisting of several interdependent elements and present situations which, at best, will only come to light at the end of the project.

It is therefore a question of identifying the elements that will provide us with information on the evolution of the situation and on the likelihood that these developments are on the right track to achieve the expected result.

Three analytical perspectives can help identify the key elements that monitoring should provide responses to:
1. Describe the desirable outcome of the situation experienced by individuals whose number should increase.
2. Define the prerequisites for the change that you wish to achieve at the end of the project. The existence of these prerequisites can demonstrate that the expected final change is under way.
3. Define the various components of the change that must be observed to ensure it is actually taking place.

Depending on the project and the results in question, these different elements can be combined to define more information, which may lead to additional indicators being drawn up.

The expected result **Examples**	What are the changes that will show us if the result is on track?	What questions should the monitoring answer?
1. At least 1852 children in mines and quarries in three areas (Ouaga, Zorgho and Dori) have received quality primary education.	**The expected changes:** Working children who are not attending school (boys and girls) are able to go to school. The school results of children (boys and girls) who have recently enrolled improve.	How many children (B/G) who are working and not attending school enrol in school? How many children (B/G) go to school regularly? How many (B/G) manage to finish the school year? How many enrol the following year? How many children (B/G) see their school work improve?
2. Community associations backed by the project identify and refer children who are victims of exploitation, trafficking or abuse (ETA*) to the appropriate organisations.	**The required prerequisites to change :** The members of the associations understand the problem and referral methodology. The members work together. The associations are acknowledged by the people to be credible partners and the first port-of-call for care provided to children who are victims of ETA. The members can identify and correctly refer the children who are victims of ETA.	Are the members of the associations capable of jointly analysing the situations of the children who are victims of ETA and of monitoring the referral methodology? Are the children who are victims of ETA progressively referred to associations? Are the referrals to the specialist services relevant to the children's situation? How many children are lost to follow-up after their first meeting with the associations?
3. The capacity of the State actors and civil society organisations to work together to identify and tackle strategic questions on child protection has improved.	**The various components of the expected change that are needed :** The state and civil society representatives regularly work together at a high level. Knowledge-sharing is organised between these various actors. Documents with appraisals or recommendations are drafted collaboratively. These documents are distributed to the various parties who are in charge.	Who participates regularly in strategic meetings? How does the participation of the various actors change? Are documents (appraisals or recommendations) produced and approved by all the actors? Are the key questions on child protection in the country being tackled? Are these documents being discussed and if so, how?

At this stage in the work, the challenge is not yet to define new indicators[6] ; this will be done in a second stage. Nevertheless, it is **useful to make some initial observations on our data collection capacity to allow us to respond to any questions made** and avoid concentrating on questions for which there may not be any replies.

[6] Cf. introductory paragraph to Chapter 4.
* ETA : this acronym was created only for the need of the project.

What information is required to monitor outputs?

Since outputs are the direct result of project activities, it is simpler to identify the questions to be asked. While most projects monitor outputs, this data is not always put into perspective with the resources and expected outcome results. This coordinated monitoring may prove unwieldy for certain projects. It is then important to prioritise.

It is useful to **target the outputs you may consider strategic to the project's success or those that seem more difficult to produce.**

What information is required to monitor activities and inputs?

The information used to manage the project's operations is as important to the quality of the project as the information on the results. A certain number of elements are monitored as part of the country office's own day-to-day administration system:

- programming and management of the activities and tasks;
- financial management, budget tracking;
- staff management;
- management of the facilities, equipment;
- management of the contracts in the context of contractual undertakings, etc.

It is essential (and it may require time) to include this information in the monitoring and put it in perspective with the information on achieving the outputs and outcomes.
Here again, the **target** should be on what is strictly necessary: the most difficult resources to manage, resources not usually monitored by the staff in charge, complex or new time-consuming activities, a difficult or new partnership...**and the work so be organised in order to make the data easily sharable.**

To help with the overall analysis and swiftly identify if the difficulties noted in achieving the results are related to HR problems, financing or availability of material: use **visual means** – a red, orange or green light, with a scale established in advance.

What information is required to monitor the context?

The information required includes details on **the evolution of the actors and their interaction as well as political, economic, social, geopolitical, environmental and other elements, etc., which may also have an impact on the project and/or the various actors involved.**

Some of these elements have been identified as risks in the logical framework, but these elements can be fine-tuned once the project starts and a more collective examination of the conditions for its success takes place. Furthermore, changes in the context not only present **risks, but also opportunities** for the project.

Monitoring the context must **combine a method focused on key elements and an open and more general approach to avoid overlooking factors that had not been anticipated.**

Monitoring the context can draw on the **formal and informal knowledge of the project's actors,** be more thorough at specific times, but also nurtured by **specialised external participants** if the complexity of the situation requires it (annual discussions with academics, journalists, etc.).

What information is required to monitor cross-cutting issues - gender, ethnic and religious diversity?

Gender issues are crucial to the project. To ensure that **women/young girls take part and/or benefit from the project in the same way as men/boys,** the monitoring system must **at the very least** disaggregate the data by gender.

In certain countries, close attention will be paid to social and cultural diversity and each individual's capacity, regardless of **caste, ethnic group or religion,** to participate and benefit from the project in the same way. Data collection, specific studies or observation systems must be organised so that these issues are taken into account and analysed.

What information is required to monitor any unintended consequences and ensure the *do no harm* approach is implemented?

It is of course difficult to plan the monitoring of unintended consequences. It is important to **set aside some time to reflect upon the unexpected** and seize positive opportunities for the project, but also **to prevent damage associated with the project from having an impact on certain population groups** (Do No Harm).

The environmental dimension should not be overlooked. Projects' negative impacts on the environment are indeed increasingly well-documented and require special vigilance from the parties involved for these to be avoided.

During annual meetings with the project's stakeholders, the following questions may be raised:
- Since our last meeting, what happened that we could not have predicted?
- In what way is it not what we had expected?
- What is the impact on the people, public actors and civil society organisations? What is the impact on the environment? What is the impact on our work?

What information is required to monitor the key assumptions of the strategy?

In order to complete the monitoring plan, it may also be useful to monitor the key assumptions that form the basis of a project's strategy. There may be several of these so it is essential **to identify the core assumption/s to avoid being overloaded with data.**

 An example put forward by DFID[7] **clearly shows the importance of monitoring key assumption/s for certain projects:**
For several years, the international community engaged the conflict in Southern Sudan through the peace dividend theory: that all development contributes to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The theory has proven valid in other contexts. In a later evaluation, however, the link between delivering services and abating violence in Southern Sudan was not found. "The reasons for violent conflict are more often found in ethnic divisions, land and cattle disputes, and disaffected youth – variables that are in many cases outside the influence of socioeconomic forms of assistance". A concerted monitoring strategy that examined whether the peace dividend theory was indeed valid in the context of Southern Sudan combined with on-going monitoring and updating of the conflict analysis, could have improved the relevance of assistance and created greater positive impact on both the conflict dynamics and the development of the region.

It will not always be necessary to develop new indicators. It may only be a question of prioritising the assumption/s to be used and to group together the questions relating to performance of this/these assumption/s with performance indicators that have often already been identified, so as to structure your thoughts during the implementation of the project and help you make the necessary decisions.

5. PRIORITISE, CHOOSE – "TOO MUCH INFORMATION KILLS THE INFORMATION"

Choices have to be made on the resources available both for collecting data, but also for processing and analysing it.

In fact, the main reason for the failure of a monitoring system is undoubtedly the monitoring of too many indicators and the gathering of too much data. It is best to focus on a limited number of indicators on points that are important to monitor and which present a significant challenge.

From time to time, you may need to be more moderate with your ambitions and restrict the number of issues to be monitored.

Relevant questions to ask for each piece of information requested:
- Is this information essential to improve results and their viability? Why?
- Who needs this information, when and why?
- Is this information not available elsewhere?

[7] Vanessa Corlazzoli and Jonathan White, *Change in Conflict, Security, and Justice Programmes - Part II: Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation.* DFID: Department for International Development, 2013.

6. DEFINE THE DATA AND INDICATORS THAT MEET YOUR INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

Take into account the challenges in data collection methods

Defining the indicators will lead you to choose the data collection methods. Before selecting[8] the indicators, you should therefore weigh up the following factors, which must be considered when choosing the methods[9] and may lead you to review your indicators.

- **What type of data is being collected and how detailed is it?**
  It is generally desirable to be as accurate as possible, but **then there is a risk of not being able to interpret results that are too detailed or which require specialist knowledge to be interpreted.**
  For example, the detailed opinion of each one of the participants on the various aspects of a training session is perhaps not needed and a summary of the range of opinions on all the elements covered would be difficult to include and is liable to be biased. Focus groups on the effectiveness of this training session may be more useful to the project.

- Can **data collected by others meet your information requirements?**
  You may initially envisage a relatively similar indicator but which requires specific data collection, however using reliable data that is already available may prove to be a winning strategy in terms of time and budget saved. In addition it can be a good strategy to reinforce partnership and appreciation of the organisation that carried out this work. **Of course, the reliability of the data must be verified and it must relate to the target population for the period covered by the project/programme.**

- **Does the team and/or do the partners have the skills required to collect, process and analyse the proposed data?**

- **How accurate and reliable is the anticipated method?** 'Accuracy' refers to a possible degree of error in terms of the method of measurement used and 'reliability' refers to the possibility of obtaining the same result each time the measurement is retaken, regardless of when or who measures it. This can result in a method that has too high risk of bias being abandoned or of combining it with other methods.

- **Do the defined indicators combine supplementary methods,** namely by providing a good balance between quantitative and qualitative methods; methods using individual approaches (questionnaire, interview, etc.) followed by collective approaches (focus group, analysis of minutes of meetings, documents, etc.)?
  Methods should be chosen that complement one another, reduce the risk of bias and ensure triangulation. In other words, the strengths of a selected method offset (at least partially) the weaknesses of another, and the various perspectives on the intervention are therefore taken into account.

  Quantitative data enables a shared language to be adopted, allowing you to assess the breadth of a phenomenon and often gives a positive impression of being more rigorous. **Qualitative data** allows you to add meaning to the quantitative data, to make a more accurate assessment of the issue at stake (points of view, values, power dynamics, etc.) and to understand what is happening.

- Is the method **appropriate to the context** (culture, environment)?
  For example, in a context where women are strongly discriminated against, it is important to schedule specific times when they are able to express themselves freely and to organise several meetings so that a climate conducive to free expression may be established.

[8] Cf. introductory paragraph to Chapter 4.
[9] A forthcoming document will present the objectives, advantages, constraints and methods of implementing each one of the data collection methods used.

- **Does the country office and/or do partners have the financial means required to organise other methods** for collecting, processing and analysing data? Is the cost of implementing the method offset by the expected benefits?

- **To what extent will the methods that have been envisaged allow the beneficiaries to be involved with the monitoring?**

The need or interest in choosing one or more of the participatory methodologies does not mean using the "beneficiaries" as sources of information, but as co-users of it.

Occasionally, it is essential to test a method before implementing it to ensure that it will collect the data being sought with a minimum of bias.

How do you define an indicator?

What is an indicator?

> **Indicators** are signs that can be measured or observed to **validate the existence of a phenomenon or a change that has been achieved.** Indicators may be quantitative or qualitative and may require qualitative or quantitative methods to collect and process the necessary data to report on them.

The OECD defines an indicator as a **"Quantitative or qualitative** factor or **variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes** connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor or the added value it provides".

An indicator is **sometimes considered to be a value rather than a variable. This is the case when a target is defined.** It is however preferable to be guided by variables and to include the target ("500 children or 50% of children", etc.) in the information on the indicator (see below).

> In more general terms, **the right level of disaggregation** must be selected for the indicators. Is it often vital that the data be disaggregated **by gender!**

Quantitative indicators are numbers expressed in quantities or amounts. **Qualitative indicators** use words, colours or symbols to express attitudes or points of view. Sometimes **scales need to be established for the assessments** (e.g. poor, average, good etc.) t**o ensure that the meaning of the terms used is well understood** by all – interviewers, respondents, those processing the data, etc.

An indirect indicator or proxy provides indirect, or even approximate information on data that is very difficult to capture (e.g. the number of households with a bicycle for information on income level).

Verify the quality of the indicators.
Often we talk of SMART indicators:
- **Specific:** specific to the item one wishes to find out, the indicator is not common to several items. We only measure one thing at a time.
- **Measurable:** the data needed to report on the indicator is available.
- **Achievable:** the phenomenon you wish to observe is achievable in terms of the project and its conditions for implementation.
- **Realistic:** the data required for the indicator can be obtained within budget and by employing reasonable effort, requiring skills that already exist or can easily be accessed (cost/availability).
- **Time-bound:** the period is defined during which this phenomenon can be observed.

When choosing an indicator other factors must also be taken into account:
- **An indicator must be representative,** covering the most important aspect or aspects of the result you wish to follow up. Often several indicators need to be combined and it is by interpreting them as a whole that you can determine if the result has been achieved. You must therefore have sufficient indicators defined for a result to assess the achievement of this outcome.
- **An indicator must be reliable:** measured using rigorous methods and based on a coherent sample, if sampling is required. Sometimes scientific expertise may be required in collecting, processing or analysing the data.
- **Accurate.** If the description of the indicator uses an adjective, it should be defined accurately to avoid different interpretations depending on the parties involved. Beware the following types of wording: "completed successfully", "implemented effectively", population "at risk", a "participative" action plan etc.
- **Clarity of interpretation,** the information needed to interpret the data that has been collected may be grouped together (an adequate indicator or an appropriate combination of selected indicators).

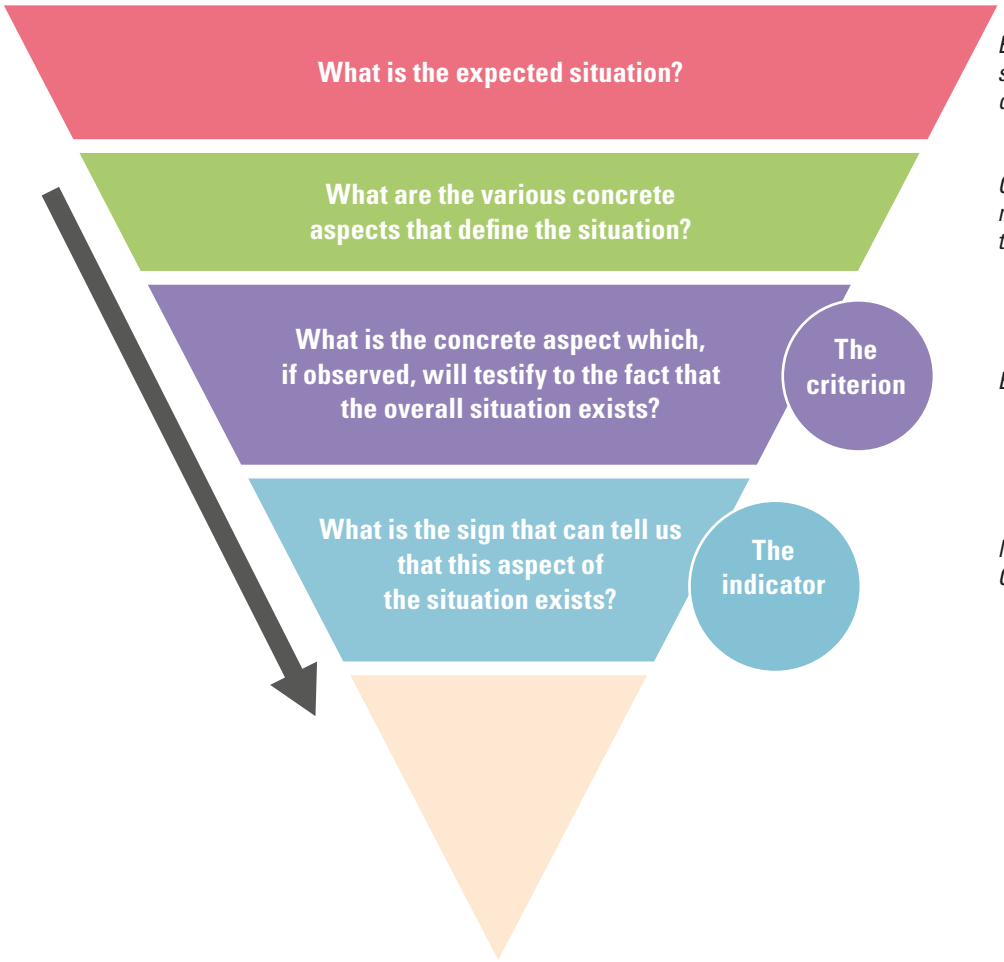
How do you define an indicator?

The wording of the questions on the performance usually ensures better targeting of the information you need.

If the phenomena you seek to observe are complex, it can sometimes be difficult to define an indicator, even based on the scope redefined by the question(s) you have drafted pertaining to the performance. **In this case it may be worthwhile defining in advance a criterion that will allow you to target your research a little more accurately.** Cf. examples p: 30

What is a criterion? A criterion specifies the **angle** used to verify that the phenomenon you wish to observe (process, action, changes for the "beneficiaries") is in place. It defines **the aspect according to which the judgement will be based to ascertain if the phenomenon you wish to observe actually exists.**

Define indicators, by using criteria



Expected result/ situation: a healthy child

Cheerful mood, no ill-ness, symptoms, body temperature

Body temperature

Number of degrees Celsius

Examples of the process of defining outcomes indicators

First type of example: prior changes must take place for the final change to be observed. The questions will seek to verify the reality of these changes.

Results	Questions regarding performance	Criteria if needed	Indicators	Method and source
RF2: The communities in the surrounding sites and villages are mobilised to fight against the phenomenon of the worst forms of child labour[10]	Is the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) a subject for discussion amongst the people involved?	Contributions on the subject by a growing number of people at meetings organised by Tdh and its partners. The local media are interested in the subject.	Number of participants speaking at meetings being organised. Number of times the subject is tackled in the local media.	A head count by the meeting organisers. Weekly press review. Monthly review on the local radio station.
	Is the issue of WFCL covered by the people's representatives – government authorities, social leaders, religious leaders?	Subject placed on the agenda at meetings of local authorities. Subject included in sermons. Social leaders informed.	Number of meetings covering issues related to WFCL for each local authority. Number of sermons on WFCL. Knowledge of subject by social leaders.	Minutes of meetings. Half-yearly survey with religious leaders. Half-yearly survey with social leaders.
	Has anyone contacted the services affected by WFCL-related problems (schools, health centres, social workers etc.)?	*Not necessary to use a criteria*	Number of people who have contacted the services in question (school, social services, health services).	Question included in social service and health registers. Monthly interview with school head teachers.
	Have specific actions been taken by population groups and/or political, administrative, social representatives/ contacts?	*Not necessary to use a criteria*	Number of actions implemented outside the project. Average number of people committed to each action.	Monthly meeting with the key actors in each town.

[10] This result is of course taken from a more complete project which allows you to work on the sustainability of this mobilisation and ensure that it has a positive impact for the children involved.

Second type of example: The questions seek to ensure that the various aspects of the expected change are in place.

Results	Questions regarding performance	Criteria if needed	Indicators	Method and source
RI.2.2: 13 protection committees improve their capacity to respond to Exploitation, Trafficking, Abuse (ETA[11])	Do the committee members work together?	The members meet regularly.	Members regularly attend committee meetings	Minutes of committee meetings
	Are the committees able to identify and advise the children who are victims of ETA?	Members have a good understanding of ETA issue and of their role. Vulnerable children or victims of ETA are notified to the relevant professionals.	The role of the committee in ETA and Mobility problems is understood by its members. Number of children referred by the committee to the professionals in question. Relevance of the guidance.	Minutes of the members' meetings. Register of the committees. Analysis of a sample of individual cases.
	Does the population know they can ask the committees and/ or their members for help, if needed?	Initiatives are developed to help understand the role of the committees. Contact is made with the committees by the families, their relatives, children or professionals in contact with the children.	Number and quality of initiatives set up by the committees. Number of participants in the initiatives. Number of cases handled by each committee/number of children referred to the committees.	Meetings with local stakeholders. Register of committees and minutes of meetings.

[11] Acronym created for project communication needs.

Results	Questions regarding performance	Criteria if needed	Indicators	Method and source
Basic health cover for the mother and the newborn in health facilities and in the community is effective (availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality)	Are the health facilities able to offer quality services to monitor the pregnant women and newborns?	Prenatal care Labour Postnatal care	% of pregnant women who have had at least one prenatal appointment. % of deliveries that have taken place in a hospital environment. % of deliveries by qualified staff. % of mothers and newborns who have benefited from a postnatal consultation in the last 48 hours	Routine data Survey
	What is the quality of BEONC and CEONC services?	Human Resources Inputs Services	% of pregnant women who have received basic care during their pregnancy[1] % of women who have received uterotonic agents after labour. % of newborns who have received each one of the four elements of basic care for newborns[2] % of districts offering BEONC and CEONC 24/7.	Routine data Survey

BEONC: Basic Emergency Obstetric Neonatal Care
CEONC: Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric Neonatal Care

[1] Anthropometry, blood pressure, folic acid supplements, at least two tetanus doses, deworming, advice on danger signs, breastfeeding and preparing a birth plan.
[2] Immediate drying, skin to skin contact, delayed cord clamping and commencing breastfeeding in the first hour of life.

Third type of example: The expected change relates to the increase in the number of people affected by a situation it tries to describe. The questions relate to the various aspects of the situation:

Results	Questions regarding performance	Criteria if needed	Indicators	Method and source
RF 2. At the end of 2016, 2500 children in precarious situation (including 1600 new cases) identified in Zakpota, Bohicon and Abeokuta saw their situation improve [12]	Are the children not attending school able to enrol for regular school attendance?	Birth certificate and school registration. Relative progress in basic knowledge.	Number of children enrolled at school. Number of children targeted by the project who know how to read and write and master the basics of arithmetic. Percentage of children targeted who, in the opinion of their teachers, have improved their school results.	School registration. End-of-year results. End-of-year survey.
	Does the improvement in the children's working conditions prevent them from being victims of the Worst Forms of Child Labour?	Dangerous locations. Dangerous jobs.	Number of children removed from dangerous locations. Number of children removed from dangerous jobs.	Field observation, survey amongst children. Field observation, survey amongst children.
	Do the children having access to social spaces (recreational, sports, dialogue, discussions) improved their well-being [13]?	Subjective well-being. Confidence in the future.	Number of children who have improved their subjective well-being. Number of children capable of planning for the future.	Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) Positive and negative affect schedule Interview based on the child's self-portrait. Individual monitoring tools Conversations with the child (drawings).

[12] This improvement focuses on the problems that the children at the locations in question suffer from.
[13] Cf. Working with children and their environment. Psychosocial Reference Document, Maria Bray and Sabine Rakotomalala, Tdh, 2012.

Jointly define information on indicators

The work to define this information can sometimes lead to a review of the wording of the indicator if it proves not to be sufficiently accurate or incapable of leading to a consensus or requires resources or skills that are not available within the framework of the project. This is also an iterative process.
If relevant, the use of standard indicators (e.g. SPHERE, ODD) ensures an agreed definition and reliable measure using proven methods.

The following elements must be defined:
- **The terms used in the description of the indicators.** The definition of the indicator must involve the actors participating in the monitoring to ensure that these terms are understood and mean the same thing to everyone.
- **The sources** used to collect the data. They must be reliable, accessible and usable within budget and achievable based on the expertise of the country office staff and/or its partners.
- **The units** covered – %, number, etc.
- **The scale of values defined for a qualitative indicator.** Constructing a scale of values demands good knowledge of the context and the participants questioned. A test may be required prior to final validation.
- **The methods of calculation** used.
- **The target value.** Not needed for all the indicators. It depends on the initial situation and on the context. It is defined based on an analysis of the situation and/or the baseline study carried out, as well as on the expertise and experience of the various actors with regard to their capacity to act and influence.
- **The baseline value.** For certain indicators, accurate knowledge of the initial situation is essential to assess changes in the situation. See below.
- **The frequency of data collection.** This indicates the collection frequency (monthly, quarterly, annual, etc.).
- **The organisation of the work.** The distribution of the tasks and responsibilities must be defined for each one of the stages in collecting, processing and analysing the data.

Determine the baseline value

Some information may be extracted from an analysis of the situation, but the accuracy of an indicator (one of the components of its quality) may require targeted knowledge of a particular aspect that has not been examined in such a detailed way during the situation analysis.

Some benchmarks for this reference information:
✓ Limit the data collection strictly to what is required to compare the various situations for the aspect being defined.
✓ Explore the following questions:
- What information is already available?
- Which sources can be used?
- What is the most relevant and realistic method in terms of resources and skills available?
- Who will be in charge of collecting, processing and analysing data and according to what schedule?

Remain realistic. The baseline information may not be perfect.
If the survey proves to be too costly or complex to implement, you can use the current situation and rely on the memory of the respondents and their appraisal of the situation to evaluate changes that have taken place over time. Individual surveys or group discussions should therefore ensure they enable the various groups involved to express themselves objectively and fully.

A table can help to define this information systematically and then communicate the key elements to the people in charge.

Expected results At various project levels	Questions regarding performance	Selected indicators	Definition of the indicator	Data sources required	Collection method	Frequency of the collection	Method of calculation	Baseline value	Target value			Distribution of tasks		
									n+1	n+2	n+3	collection	processing	analysis

Short checklist for a final check on the quality of the indicators:

	Yes	No
Indicators have been defined for the project's objective, the final and intermediate results and for the activities and core resources.		
No indicator may be considered to be an output or an activity.		
All identified indicators are SMART.		
The sources and the methods of collecting and processing the data have been identified		
The baseline and target values have been defined where necessary.		
The distribution of the tasks and responsibilities for collecting, processing and analysing data are clearly defined.		
It is possible to measure and deliver on the indicators at a reasonable cost (skills, resources).		

The following must then be defined and organised:

- **the means of recording data by identifying a suitable medium** (cards, charts, mobile charts, etc.)
- **the process of verifying the quality of the data,**
- the data **protection** and **storage,**
- the data **processing,** if it requires specific expertise and/or technology,
- the **initial analysis** of the data.

These questions will be expanded on in the future document on "collecting, processing and analysing quantitative and qualitative data".

7. SHARE INFORMATION SO IT CAN BE OF USE

Use the information to make the right decisions and learn lessons from the action

This work is crucial. The data from monitoring is only relevant if it is used by the project's key actors. The project can only achieve the expected results if the actors make changes, which can only happen by reflecting on the information, setting aside time to learn the lessons and make the necessary decisions. Sometimes we describe this process as a critical examination. It is therefore important to verify that the decisions taken have actually been implemented.

This critical reflection therefore has the following aims:

1. To interpret the information, enrich it, analyse it with the key actors involved.
2. Assess the implications of this analysis on the project's strategy and actions with the concerned actors.
3. To make the necessary decisions and ensure that these decisions are implemented.
4. To draw on the lessons learned for the project and/or for other projects in the country or elsewhere.
5. To share the information, the decisions taken on this basis, and lessons learned.

Identify the actors to be involved in the critical examination and keep them informed

It may be necessary to ensure that the actors to be involved in this critical examination and who must be informed have indeed been identified at the start. A template may help to identify the relevant actors for the three main objectives. Prioritisation may facilitate the decision-making: high, medium, low priority.

Which actors will be involved?	Enhance the interpretation of the results of the monitoring of:				Assess the consequences for the project		Share the results	
	Resources	Actions/activities	Results	background	From a strategic point of view	From an operational point of view	Before decisions	After decisions
Management of XX department		*low*	*medium*	*high*	*high*	*low*		
Sector A team								
Centre Y team	*low*	*high*	*medium*			*high*		
Donors							*high*	*high*
….								

Encourage critical examination

The Tdh team and key actors' commitment to a critical examination of the project may be restricted by several factors: hierarchical relations and internal power games at Tdh; an asymmetry between Tdh, which has the financial resources and the actors who wish to benefit from them; pressure from donors and headquarters to proceed, the convenience of not challenging what has been decided, cultural and/or social obstacles (risk of losing face by acknowledging a mistake or not knowing how to answer question, rigid hierarchies, clientelist dependence etc.).

It is important to be aware of these obstacles and to put procedures in place to overcome them:

- **Share information ensuring that it can easily be understood by all.**
- **Enhance internal critical examination, and encourage similar approaches between partners:**
  - Promote formal and informal exchanges within the team.
  - Regularly ask the team's opinion about the actions being carried out.
  - Value the contributions of partners and "beneficiaries" and promote regular exchanges to create a climate of trust (field visits, formal and informal exchanges, festive occasions etc.).
  - Put mistakes into perspective and enhance learning.
  - Include in job profiles and evaluations the capacity to make critical assessments of the activities carried out and proposals for their improvement.
- **Organise training for team leaders and project managers to facilitate meetings.**
- **Make meetings more conducive to critical examination:**
  - Set agendas in advance,
  - Promote discussions that allow to assess (+/-) what happened that was important, to understand the reasons and identify solutions.
  - Encourage the expression of different points of view on issues being covered and always ask yourself if a point of view has not been overlooked. Promote open systems for generating ideas.
  - Be open to a possible reappraisal of the patterns established, by taking some distance and using creative methods and long-term projections.
  - Use outside guests to develop new ways of thinking.
  - Draw conclusions that clearly set forth the decision, the methods of implementation, roles and responsibilities and monitoring procedures to be presented.

Building this culture of openness and discussion, which allows room for error and, in turn, ongoing improvement of the action, extends beyond specific monitoring issues and is a useful management method.

Organise critical examination

There must be a provision for critical examination and communication when designing the monitoring system, organised and planned so as to provide the time and means for information to be shared and examined and lessons to be learnt.

The challenge where possible is to integrate information-sharing and discussion time in the project's operational procedures – project team meetings, Tdh meetings, meetings with partners, project governance (steering committee and technical committee if applicable) so as to minimise, where possible, the burden on the overall system, but also to nurture decisions (major and minor) made on the basis of monitoring. A large part of this time is formal, but it is also important to capitalise on informal discussion times. Specific times should also be organised.

The organisation and methods must be defined:

- **Clearly indicate who does what and when so that the information is available in a timely manner,** discussions are documented and that this information itself is transmitted.
- **Include in the organisation and management of the project's "ordinary" meetings** time dedicated to monitoring, sharing information and for taking any measures that may be needed. The key questions are as follows:
  - "What is happening?"
  - "Why?"
  - "What are the consequences for the project?"
  - "What should one do now?"

- **Allocate a budget for partners** when travel costs are not supported by their organisation (also the case for state institutions)
- **Plan "special" workshops once a quarter or every six months (operational reviews) or once a year (strategic review) depending** on what is needed or being worked on – day to day follow up, operational management, strategy.
- **Organise and provide the tools for communication:** what medium, for what type of stakeholder, when. Check that the message is clear to your recipient, that the methods used for the activities have been adapted to the target audience and that the premises used for the meetings allow everyone to feel at ease.

It is critical to communicate the results so they can be finalised with the actors and then transmitted in their final form. Don't hesitate to invest in effective methods and tools to enhance communication between the project stakeholders.

Consolidate lessons that draw on experience

The monitoring process allows you to identify elements that may be considered to be **lessons that draw on the experience gained through the project** and which needs to be documented and shared.

If you want the critical examination to be dynamic, focused on learning rather than monitoring, it is important to make the learning **a regular activity that will then be extended with more detail at specific times, every one or two years. These specific times will, if necessary, allow these elements to be explored further for example by formalising a summary of key lessons learned and embarking on a process of institutional learning.**

If these elements can provide some added value to the organisation as a whole, they can be used for more thorough capitalisation process with a more detailed description of each stage to enable the replication of the process which led to the observed results.

Prepare and draft reports

Two types of information should be provided:
- the data and information collected so the key stakeholders can review and improve them, assess the consequences to the project and make the necessary decisions.
- the results of this critical examination and decisions taken. These final conclusions may address the requirements for accountability, advocacy or negotiations.

Several parties are involved: the project partners in charge and field workers, the Tdh team, the institutional partners who support the project or that we would wish to see them support, the headquarters, the donors. Ensure that **the message is clear and appropriate** to the various target groups.

Our expectations of the recipient must be analysed: sharing information for critical examination; decision-making; financial help, political support, involvement in the action.

The message's **format** must be defined: short/long text, technical/general, symbol, graphics, cards, videos or photos.

The **frequency** of communication must be defined, in accordance with the deadlines that have been set (donors, headquarters).

A good communication strategy and the team's capacity-building in this area, can be sound investments that help to consolidate the project's alliances.

8. ORGANISE THE MONITORING SYSTEM

At the start of the project, **the appropriate structure to implement monitoring must be thought through** depending on the size of the project and the aims of the monitoring. There are two options:

- **A dedicated person[14] (full-time or part-time)** working alongside the head of the Country Representative or Programme Coordinator to promote the cross-disciplinary aspect of the monitoring process. The Project Managers may need to collaborate with assistants depending on the size of the country office and the complexity of the projects or programmes. This/these people must of course be involved from the beginning when the monitoring plan is drafted. External support may be provided depending on the expertise required.
- **An external team** may therefore be organised for **complex projects** and/or if the stakes in the outcomes of monitoring are particularly strategic or **when planning the transfer of the project to the State or to a private organisation.**

Organising the monitoring system involves planning the following elements:

- **The schedule** of tasks to carry out, "ordinary" meetings where some time is dedicated to monitoring, "extraordinary" meetings (operational monitoring workshop - quarterly or half-yearly; strategic workshop - annual) etc.
- **The people: tasks and responsibilities** must be assigned according to the skills available, any recruitment must be evaluated and any training organised, if needed.
- **The cost – be careful about having a system that is too costly in terms of work... Keep it modest otherwise you run the risk of the system failing!**
  - Investment in working time – collecting, processing and analysing data but also time spent at various meetings, management time, etc.
  - Financial investment – salaries, equipment, external resources, communication tools, organisation of events etc.
- **Ensure there is a budget for additional data collection or further analysis.** IFAD advises allocating 10% of the monitoring budget to necessary and unanticipated additional expenditure.

[14] **Typical job descriptions will be drafted with the HR Department and will supplement this paragraph. Some country offices have included a Monitoring Officer in a department in charge of broader support for the teams and partners, for project management, for performing situation analysis, for ongoing monitoring of the context, in order to increase accountability, etc. In March 2015, Mali has set up a Quality & Monitoring Department.**

9. MONITORING PLAN

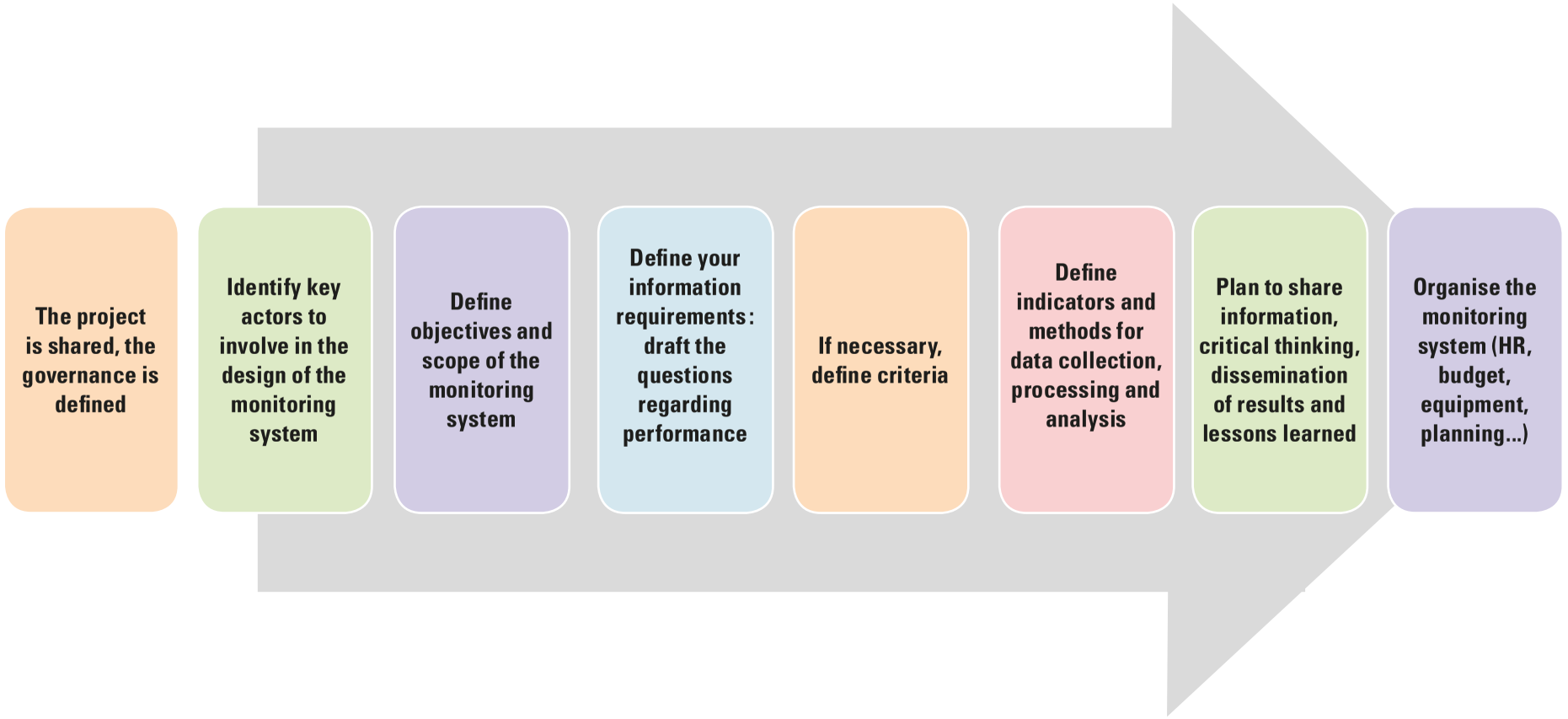
The information that defines the objective, scope, information required, indicators and data needed, methods and tools as well as the organisation and resources, etc. are then recorded in a document generally called a monitoring plan.

If this process includes local actors, it may need to be translated into the national and local language.

Indicative content of a monitoring plan – following IFAD's proposed document

Subjects – main chapters	Description
Objective and scope	• Summary of the project's main outline • The objectives and justification for monitoring • Preferred approach for monitoring: the participation of various actors, quantitative/qualitative methods, individual and collective approach, the highlights of the work etc.
Questions on the performance at various levels, indicators, information sources	• Clear definition of information requirements at all levels in the hierarchy of objectives and all the issues covered by monitoring. • Accurate definition of the data, indicators, methods, sources, work organisation on: - resources/activities/outputs – monitoring of the project management - final and intermediate results/outcome, assumptions – monitoring of the project strategy
Information system	• Organisation of data collection and summary of the information: - For each piece of information: who, what, when, where - Storage, data management. - Schedule for producing information: who, what, when, for whom, for what • Reports and summaries, informal resources, type of reports – formats and frequency depending on the subject and the recipient.
Implementation of the resources and skills	• Organisation of the information system: - Collaboration needed between various institutions and relevant actors - Existence or not of a unit in charge of monitoring, its place within the project's structure • Requirements in terms of human resources: - Workforce, capacities and responsibilities of the project staff and actors - Incentives - Training requirements • Resources needed: - Equipment, technical support.
Budget	5% of the project's budget is the amount that is often suggested.
Annexes	- Initial and revised logical framework matrices - Lists and descriptions of the indicators

Quick synthesis : a readiness check and 7 steps to follow !



Annexes.

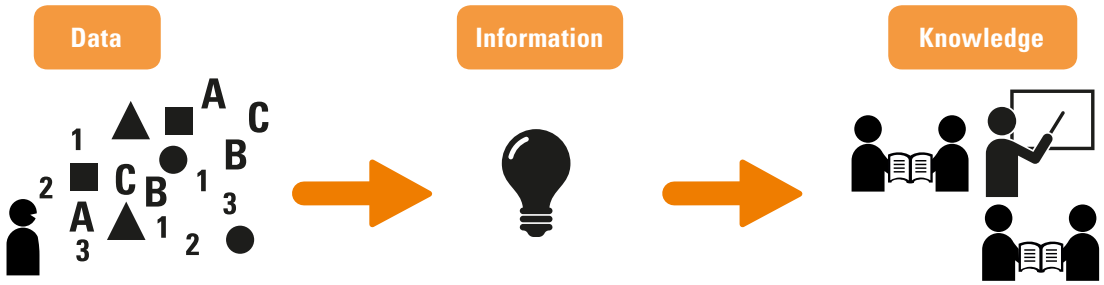
DON'T LET M&E
BURDEN THE VERY PROGRAMMING
IT IS SUPPOSED TO SERVE!!

GLOSSARY

A piece of data is a direct outcome of a measurement. It can be collected by a monitoring tool, by a person or already exist in a database. One single piece of data will not be used as a basis for decision-making on an action to be launched.

Information is a piece of data to which a meaning and interpretation have been attributed. Information allows an operations manager to make a decision (local or small-scale) on an action to be taken.

Knowledge is the result of a study of the information analysed based on experiences, ideas, values, opinions and expertises. Knowledge allows information to be placed in context for a better understanding and broader interpretation of the phenomena highlighted by this information.



Steering. Project steering refers to all the activities aimed at implementing a project from a strategic point of view. This aspect concentrates on the policy guidelines, the overall definition of the project and differs from the operational management of the activities. **Steering aims to** ensure that the conditions for progressively achieving results are met, analyse the overall running of the project and make necessary adjustments. With complex projects, steering is generally carried out by a **Steering Committee** made up of the project's stakeholders who are able to make the necessary decisions on the project (resource or budget allocation, review of the project's scope, review of deadlines, etc.). When making these decisions, the committee essentially bases itself on the results of monitoring, on negotiation with the key partners and on observations and proposals from the actors involved in the operational management.

Operational management: design, review, coordination of the scheduling of all the project's operations, the planning, management and monitoring of human, material and financial resources. This operational management may require the support of a Technical Committee.

Different types of data

- **Secondary data:** is the information and data collected, sometimes processed and analysed, by other organisations. Using it represents a saving in terms of time and resources, provided it is reliable (check sources, methodology). Sometimes raw (non-processed) data may be retrieved, which can be used according to the project's monitoring requirements.
  The search for this data must in particular query the country's capacity with a related question: can the national systems be used or strengthened? From the perspective of a long-term action, it can be important to strengthen the national monitoring systems.

- **Qualitative data :** relies on words to measure and explain. It may have very little and/or an informal structure (field staff impressions, ad hoc points of view expressed by the team members, partners, "beneficiaries" etc.), which does not detract from its identification and analysis. It can also be structured based on survey questions, observation methods, the management of focus groups or meetings. When coded, it could be translated into quantitative data.

- **Quantitative data:** Quantitative data relies on numbers to measure and clarify (percentages, ratios, averages, etc.).

- **The baseline information.** For certain indicators, accurate knowledge of the initial situation is essential to assess changes in the situation.

Several types of methods can be used to collect the data. Note that they can be combined with one another:

- **Direct measure, in conjunction with the activity carried out** as part of the project. The data is recorded during the course of the activity and collecting it is one of the tasks to be conducted. The method used can vary: paper, electronic medium (tablet, mobile phone). The processing depends on the complexity of the phenomena observed and methods of calculation needed (ratio, percentage, average etc.).

- **Collection and comparison of points of view:** focus group, specific meetings or ones planned during the running of the project, which can mobilise various materials for discussion: photos, videos, drawings, games etc. These meetings can be integrated with the running of the project or be specific to this monitoring. The management and mobilisation of different media nevertheless demands specific skills and knowledge.

- **Direct observation:** observation can both form part of the daily work of the officers working on the project and be a part of a specific component of the monitoring. Nevertheless, observation relies upon preparation and ad hoc media that allow you to target what must be observed and record it so as to be able to process this data and interpret it later.

- **Semi-structured interviews:** a series of questions prepared beforehand to guide the interview, target key questions and ensure that the same questions are asked to the various people involved. Part of the interview is free with open-ended questions (the reply cannot be 'yes' or 'no') planned to cover aspects that are outside the project's scope as designed by the project organisers, or even the project's unforeseen impact.

- **Interview using questionnaires:** interviews using a questionnaire allow data to be collected from a large number of people. The questions can be closed: 'yes', 'no' or 'choice of several suggestions', which facilitates the quantitative processing of the answers. They can also be open-ended and require the data to be coded. Categories are then created depending on the answers given by the respondents.

- **Specific studies:** depending on the monitoring requirements specific studies may be conducted on one aspect of the project and on one group of people to analyse a result in more detail or on a specific group's understanding of one aspect of the project. A closer analysis can be carried out of a particular case or situation (case study, monograph). These studies are generally entrusted to consultants with the necessary skills.

- **Cost/benefit analysis :** the study of the costs and benefits of an action or of an area of the project may allow the start of the project to use the resources more effectively or to redirect the activities based on accurate information if a budgetary drift has been noted. This analysis demands specific expertise.

- **Mapping:** mapping allows you to present data on various areas – social, economic, health, political etc. , and using various scales – district, village, town, region etc. Mapping uses representational conventions that must be shared. Despite the wealth of information that a map can provide, it can rarely be dissociated from the comments of those who have created them or those who are the subject of it. Maps can be drawn using rudimentary materials – sand, pieces of wood, paper/pencils etc. or using sophisticated digital media (such as geographical information systems) to put together different types of data collected by participants during a workshop, data from a national statistics system, data collected by contributors in virtual communities etc.

- **Significant changes:** a participatory and qualitative approach based on "significant stories of changes", changes that people know about because of the project. Groups of people at various levels in the project's hierarchy choose the most significant of these stories and explain their choice. This alternative evaluation method seeks to focus on the specificities and different points of view rather than summarise the information.

- **Relational analysis:** to understand how a project is progressing it is essential to understand the evolution in relations between the actors or between elements of the project, organisations, population groups, or any type of feature where interaction plays a determining role in the project. Several methods can be used to report these interactions and their changes and help to analyse them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

IFAD. A Guide for Project M&E, Managing for Impact in Rural Development, 2009.
https://www.ifad.org/evaluation/reports/guide
This guide has eight modules and provided much inspiration in the drafting of this methodological guide.

Gret. Le suivi-évaluation pour piloter, apprendre et rendre compte [Monitoring and evaluation to steer, learn and report], Coopérer aujourd'hui n°72, 2011. **http://www.gret.org/publication/le-suivi-evaluation-pour-piloter-apprendre-et-rendre-compte-quelques-reperes-pour-concevoir-et-ameliorer-les-dispositifs-de-suivi-evaluation-des-actions-de-developpement/ (in French)**

IFRC. Project/programme monitoring and evaluation (M&E) guide, 2011. **http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/monitoring/IFRC-ME-Guide-8-2011.pdf**

DFID. Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security, and Justice Programmes Part II: Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation, 2013. **https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/304614/Practical-approaches-theories-change-conflict-security-justice-prog-part2.pdf**

Search for common ground. Designing for results. Integrating Monitoring And Evaluation In Conflict Transformation Programs, 2006. https://www.sfcg.org/Documents/manualpart1.pdf
Search for common ground. Emerging practices in Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation for education for peacebuilding programming, 2015. **http://learningforpeace.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Emerging-Practice-Guide.pdf**

On the right track? A brief review of monitoring and evaluation in the humanitarian sector. Saul Guerrero, Sophie Woodhead, Marieke Hounjet, 2015. **http://www.alnap.org/resource/8211**

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Foster the critical reflection!

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