

## **Handout for Monitoring and Evaluation Session**

### **Selected evaluation terms and definitions<sup>1</sup>**

Donors, evaluators, and practitioners often use different Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) terms to mean the same thing. It can be confusing, but here are some common terms to help you understand the basics.

**Action plan:**

A list of activities that you are going to implement in order to achieve your strategy.

**Assumptions:**

A proposition that is taken for granted, as if it were true. Assumptions are sometimes hypotheses about what activities cause what outcomes or results.

**Baseline:**

Information collected before or at the start of a project or program that provides a basis for planning and/or assessing subsequent progress and impact.

**Benchmark:**

A standard against which results are measured.

**Beneficiaries:**

The individuals, groups, or organizations that benefit from an intervention, project, or program. Also called participants or clients.

**Data:**

Information collected and analyzed to yield findings that serve as the basis for conclusions and recommendations.

**Data Collection Methods:**

Techniques used to identify information sources, collect information, and minimize bias during an evaluation.

**Evaluation:**

A systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program or policy. Evaluations might be undertaken to (a) improve the performance of existing interventions or policies, (b) assess their effects and impacts, and (c) inform decisions about future programming. Evaluations generally include systematic collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative information.

**Evaluation Design:**

The methodology selected for collecting and analyzing data in order to reach defensible conclusions about program or project impacts or effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup>*Adapted from USAID Glossary of Evaluation Terms (2009)*

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### **Goal:**

The higher-order objective to which a project, program, or policy is intended to contribute.

### **Impact:**

A result or effect that is caused by a project or program. Impact is often used to refer to higher level effects of a program that occur in the medium or long term, and can be intended or unintended, and positive or negative.

### **Indicator:**

Things that can be counted or measured that provide reliable means to measure progress towards objectives

### **Inputs:**

Resources provided for program implementation. Examples are money, staff, time, facilities, equipment, etc.

### **Logical Framework (Logframe):**

A management tool used to improve the design and evaluation of interventions that is widely used by development agencies. It identifies strategic project elements (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact) and their causal relationships, indicators, and the assumptions or risks that may influence success and failure. (Related terms: Results Framework, Logic Model)

### **Monitoring:**

The performance and analysis of routine measurements to detect changes in status. Monitoring is used to inform managers about the progress of an ongoing intervention or program, and to detect problems that may be able to be addressed through corrective actions.

### **Objective:**

A statement of the condition or state one expects to achieve through one's activities (see also SMART Objectives).

### **Outcome:**

An effect that is caused by or attributable to the project, program or policy. Outcome is often used to refer to more immediate and intended effects. (Related terms: Result, Effect.)

### **Outputs:**

The products, goods, and services which result from activities.

### **Participatory Evaluation:**

An evaluation in which managers, implementing staff and beneficiaries work together to choose a research design, collect data, and report findings.

### **Qualitative Data:**

Observations; information that can be observed but not measured in precise numbers.

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### **Quantitative Data:**

Information that can be expressed in numerical terms, counted, or compared on a scale.

### **Risks:**

Factors (sometimes called assumptions) that affect, or are likely to affect, the successful achievement of a project or program's objectives.

### **SMART objectives:**

A statement of what one expects to achieve that is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound (meaning, that the objective includes the expected date by which it is will achieved.)

### **Strategy:**

A method or plan chosen to bring about a desired future, such as achievement of a goal or solution to a problem.

### **Theory of Change:**

A Theory of Change describes how and why a program is expected to work and explains the underlying *causal chain* or theory that connects the building blocks and ultimate goal. It is often depicted as a map or pathway of change, as one expert says, it is "a roadmap to get you from here to there."

Yet expectations and existing Theories of Change vary greatly and are designed to accomplish very different things. Some reflect existing research or organisational priorities while others may be frameworks that unite and support a global movement, such as the *Girls Not Brides* Theory of Change to end child marriage.