

Firelight Newsflash! 27 August 2007 - Why do we monitor and evaluate?



Why do we monitor and evaluate our projects?

The two birds above are facing a fork in the river. Either they can continue on, straight into the mouth of the crocodile. Or they can stop to consider their options and perhaps choose a safer direction. Every day, we face similar options – to continue to run our activities as we have always done or to consider ways that could take our programs in a new direction.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is the means by which we can make sound assessments of how a program is progressing, through the tracking of activities and results. Unfortunately, M&E is often thought of something technical that is done by “experts” or an activity undertaken solely to satisfy the demands of donors. However, you should know that actually we all engage in M&E on a daily basis, although perhaps not systematically nor based upon consistent information. Using M&E data allows you to improve your organization’s performance over time and respond to new challenges, as well as to provide information to communities, stakeholders and other external audiences.

What is the purpose of M&E?

Learning

Information collected and analyzed from M&E activities can be used to improve programming. Organizations learn from experience in order to plan and re-plan activities that better serve children and communities.

- Staff and/or volunteers can learn from different experiences and share lessons learnt and results with each other and stakeholders.
- Organizations can determine if activities make a difference.
- We can adjust activities over time as we understand more of the situation for children and communities.

Management

Monitoring and evaluation is an essential aspect of good management, allowing you to make better decisions about programs. M&E can help you implement more effectively, by helping to decide how resources should be allocated, and if activities can be made more useful to the community.

Advocacy

Sound findings from monitoring and evaluation can be invaluable to efforts to inform and convince decision-makers and the public that a meaningful response to the needs of children and communities is required.

Accountability

At all levels, organisations are required to be responsible in terms of financial management, achievement of goals and objectives, and delivery of services.

Attracting Funding

Findings from M&E can help bring in additional or new funding for programs. Being able to document your organization's results helps attract donors.

What can M&E tell us?

As an essential function of management, M&E may be viewed as serving the purpose of providing answers to questions that are of importance to staff, communities and key stakeholders. For example:

- What types and quantity of resources have been used?
- Are activities being carried out as scheduled?
- Are activities being carried out at the standard of quality expected?
- What have the activities cost? Are these costs in line with expectations?

- How many beneficiaries has the program reached?
- Are we serving the target groups we intended to serve?
- Have we satisfied the short-term needs of the children and families?
- How can we see long-term changes in the well being of children and families?
- How do beneficiaries and community members feel about the services provided? What changes would they like to see?
- Have the beneficiaries been empowered to address their own needs as a result of our activities?

As always, please let us know how we at Firelight can support you in carrying out monitoring and evaluation for your activities.

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