

S T A N D A R D S

Monitoring and Evaluation

VERSION 1.0 | June 2009

PREAMBLE

What are M&E Standards? CRS' M&E Standards define the key elements and expected level of performance for conducting Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). Secondly, the Standards address the organizational environment in which M&E takes place. Taken together CRS seeks to improve the quality of M&E that is undertaken by its staff and partners in order to have a positive impact on program quality, learning and, ultimately, the people we serve.

CRS Guiding Principles and M&E Standards. The Standards speak directly to the CRS Guiding Principles, in particular Subsidiarity, Option for the Poor, and Stewardship. We stand in service to the poor and marginalized. Our responsibility is to work with our partners to engage and empower communities in programs that improve and enrich their lives. We are entrusted with significant resources to support our humanitarian and development efforts and for which we are held accountable.

The M&E Standards complement existing sector and cross-cutting standards including partnership, community participation and gender. All existing CRS programming standards should be evident in project design and the M&E system.

CRS Strategy and M&E Standards. The Standards represent an agency-wide initiative that responds to the mid-term review of the M&E 10-year action plan; they reflect agency values and guiding principles and build directly upon ongoing activities in several CRS Regions. The Standards are a key element in the CRS Organizational Change strategy that addresses accountability, innovation and learning.

Applying M&E Standards will promote better learning and strengthen accountability to stakeholders. Agency-wide M&E systems inform decisions at the field level about progress and success of projects and programs and inform investment decisions on direction, policies and operations. These are

critical elements of a high performing, dynamic learning organization.

How are the M&E Standards organized? The standards are organized into two broad categories and each category contains several areas.

M&E Standards	Area
Project Performance	Design, Monitoring, Evaluation
Organizational Performance	Human Resources, Agency Learning and Networking

Each of these five areas has specific Standards. An M&E Standards Support Tool is available to provide guidance and support to staff in meeting the Standards.

How are the M&E Standards used? The accompanying document, M&E Standards Support Tool, is designed to support the work of staff in assessing the quality of their own systems and taking the steps needed to improve. The Tool is composed of: 1) a series of questions to guide discussion on adherence to the standards; 2) a list of key entry points for use of the M&E Standards; and 3) a list of resources that support this work. The process of using the M&E Standards Support Tool may be as important as any of the Standards themselves.

M&E STANDARDS

CRS' M&E Standards define the key elements of project Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and an organizational environment in which M&E can improve program quality and positively impact the people we serve. These standards reflect key characteristics of high quality programs and agency culture that promote better learning and strengthen accountability to stakeholders. Agency-wide M&E systems inform decisions at the field level regarding progress and success of projects and programs and inform agency-level investment decisions on agency direction, policies and operations. These are critical elements of a “high performing, dynamic learning organization.”

CRS M&E Standards	
PROJECT PERFORMANCE	
Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CRS and partner staff jointly develop project proposals that include measurable objectives and an M&E plan, tailored to project scope and stakeholders' needs, to communicate progress and results. 2. CRS and partner staff ensure that M&E plans promote community participation and reflect diversity within communities, particularly gender. 3. CRS and partner staff budget sufficiently for M&E in all project proposals.
Monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. CRS and partner staff jointly set up and implement monitoring systems that generate qualitative and quantitative data that are timely, reliable and useful. 5. CRS and partner staff use monitoring system information for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tracking progress against targets; • assessing outcomes of interventions, including those that are unanticipated; • making decisions; and • producing evidence-based reports.
Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. CRS and partner staff jointly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design and implement evaluations that assess relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, and • use evaluations findings to improve program effectiveness.
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE	
Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Country Programs, Regional Offices, and HQ units have qualified staff with defined M&E responsibilities.
Agency Learning and Networking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Country Programs, Regional Offices, and HQ units contribute to agency and industry learning by sharing evidence-based reports and publications, exchanging M&E tools and techniques, and engaging in dialogue and critical reflections.

A large, white flag with the letters "CRS" in a bold, serif font is flying against a bright, cloudy sky. The flag is slightly wrinkled and has a thin black border. The letters "CRS" are dark and prominent. The background shows a soft-focus view of other flags and clouds.

CRS

© Catholic Relief Services

pqpublications@crs.org | www.crs.org | www.crsprogramquality.org

Graphic Design by Ephra Graham. Cover photo by Steve Rubin for CRS.