STANDARDS

Monitoring & Evaluation

Support Tool

Using the Standards to Improve Monitoring and Evaluation

VERSION 1.0 | July 2009

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Contents

Introduction 3

Project Design 5

Project Monitoring 9

Project Evaluation 12

Human Resources 14

Agency Learning & Networking 16

Key Entry Points for M&E Quality Standards 18

Introduction

What is the M&E Standards Support Tool? The M&E Standards Support Tool is composed of

- a series of questions to guide discussion on adherence to each of the M&E Quality Standards;
- key entry points for use of the Quality Standards; and
- a list of resources that support the work.

Each of the Standards has a list of questions that promotes a better understanding of the important elements that make up each Standard. By answering these questions, staff are able to assess how well their own work meets the requirements of the Standard.

The Key Entry Points are opportunities to introduce and use the Standards in a cost-effective and strategic manner. The entry points are events that occur in the regular work of CRS offices and offer significant opportunities to discuss the Standards and to work with staff and partners to improve the quality of our work.

Many of the resources listed in the M&E Standards Support Tool are available online for downloading from the M&E Community site library at: <https://global.crs.org/communities/ME>. These tools will be further refined, in response to feedback, to help improve the achievement of the M&E Quality Standards.

Using the M&E Quality Standards Support Tool. The M&E Standards Support Tool is intended to support staff to generate discussion and address gaps in the current level of attainment of the Project Performance and Organizational Performance Quality Standards. While the questions are posed in a yes/no manner, responses will require discussion and critical review.

- If a response is 'no' to any of the review questions, staff should develop an action plan to address the gaps.
- Even if a response is 'yes', staff are encouraged to discuss the level of quality of the specific M&E work under review. Even with a 'yes' answer, it's important to analyze the quality of the work and plan ways to improve it.

Use the Standards Support Tool in a flexible manner. This initial version of the M&E Standards Support Tool can be amended as needed for Country Program and Regional Office use. Focus on the questions that need the most attention for your program office. Add questions to the format to get at particular challenges in the program offices. As noted above, new regional and agency resources can be added as they are developed.

Design sessions that engage project team members and other M&E stakeholders in a timely and useful discussion. Call upon M&E staff for technical assistance where necessary.

Use the M&E Standards Support Tool to make sound decisions about your work; adjust to the size and scope of the initiative.

While all projects require good M&E, the size of the project and the resources available must be considered when establishing M&E components and tailoring them to the specific needs of each project.

PROJECT DESIGN

Tools to consider using

- Results Framework, Proframe, M&E Plan, Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT), Project Budget (Logframe and other donor specific tools requirements)
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) Manual
- Integral Human Development (IHD) Framework
- Gender Responsive Programming Toolkit in the Project Proposal Guidance (PPG)
- Globally-Accepted Indicator (GAIN) Templates
- Justice Reflection
- Detailed Implementation Plan

Resources available

- ProPack I and II
- MYAP Manual
- Regional M&E Tools
- PRA & RRA Manual
- IHD Users Guide
- Project Proposal Guidance (PPG)
- Project Tracking System (PTS)
- Partnership Toolkit
- Regional Capacity Needs Assessment and Training Modules
- GAIN WorkGroup site on CRS Global

M&E STANDARD #1—PROJECT DESIGN

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.

1. Have you discussed with partners their expectations and desired level of collaboration on all components of monitoring in projects on which you are collaborating?
2. Have you developed a collaboration plan and defined roles and responsibilities for monitoring that is agreed by partners and your office?
3. Has your partner been actively engaged during project design, planning and proposal writing?
4. In your proposal, are you drawing on and referencing existing knowledge:
   - Previous CRS projects in the same sector?
   - Agency knowledge that is relevant to your project (PTS, knowledge communities, RTAs, DRDs/PQ, PQSD)?
   - External sources of information?
5. Does your project proposal include a Results Framework and Proframe, or its equivalent?
6. Do your indicators provide information that is useful for stakeholders to track progress?
7. Do your indicators provide information for decision making?
8. Does your M&E Plan include information regarding data collection for each objective and indicator showing
   - Targets/time
   - Person responsible for collecting the data
   - Frequency of collection
   - Methods
   - Source of data?
9. Does your M&E Plan include information regarding data analysis for each objective and indicator showing
   - Calculations required for the analysis
   - Person responsible for analyzing the data
   - Frequency of analysis
   - How the information is to be used
   - Who the information will be disseminated to?
10. Does your M&E Plan allow space for information gathering that responds to the uncertainty of project implementation, i.e., information that is not based on pre-determined indicators?
11. Does your project proposal include plans for project critical reflection events?
12. Do indicators reflect agency and industry Quality Standards, such as SPHERE, FFP/FANTA, PEPFAR, etc.
13. Do you have an agreed plan for developing partners' capacity in M&E?

M&E Standard #2 — project design

CRS and partner staff ensure that M&E plans promote community participation and reflect the diversity within communities, particularly gender.

1. At the start of the M&E planning process did you and your partner conduct a stakeholder analysis of community members/groups with whom the project will be working?
2. Did you and your partner meet with, and actively engage, a wide variety of community members or participants in the M&E planning process and have you documented this in your proposal?
3. Have you and the partners done a gender analysis of the communities engaged in your project?
4. In your M&E plans, are you drawing on and referencing existing community knowledge and experience?
5. Does your M&E plan allow for comparisons among different groups (women, elderly and vulnerable such as refugees, minority groups, etc. as related to the project design.)
6. Does your M&E plan ensure confidentiality of respondents to avoid any potential situation that could lead to harm?
7. Do your indicators provide information that community members find useful for tracking project progress?
8. Do your indicators provide information that informs project-related decisions of community members?
9. Does your project proposal include plans for critical reflection events involving community members?
10. Do you have an agreed plan for developing community members' capacity in M&E?

M&E Standard #3 — project design

CRS and partner staff budget sufficiently for M&E in all project proposals.

1. Have you discussed M&E budget issues with your partner?
2. Did you consult with Finance Department staff and available donor guidance about how much to budget for the project's M&E component?
3. Is M&E a separate line item in the project's budget?
4. Have you budgeted for reflection and learning opportunities with partners and communities?
5. Have you budgeted, if appropriate, for appropriate staff and support funds for:
   - Baseline survey
   - Midterm evaluation
   - Final evaluation
6. Have you budgeted for the following M&E-related expenses:
   - Human resources
   - Physical resources, e.g., computer, software, vehicles
   - Capacity building for staff, partners and communities
   - Activities, e.g., hiring and training enumerators, data base design, date entry, etc.

NB: Ideally, M&E budgets usually range from 5 – 10 percent of the total budget.

PROJECT MONITORING

Tools to consider using

- Detailed Implementation Plan
- IPTT
- M&E Calendar
- Financial Reporting
- M&E Operating Manual

Resources available

- ProPack II and SMILER System
- Regional M&E Tools
- ICB M&E Modules/Short Cuts series
- Outcome Mapping – Enhancing IR-Level Monitoring
- Most Significant Change
- Critical Reflection Events Calendar
- Gender Responsive Programming Toolkit (in PPG)
- Globally-Accepted Indicator (GAIN) Templates
- PTS
- Partnership Toolkit
- Regional Capacity Needs Assessment and Training Modules

M&E Standard #4—project monitoring

CRS and partner staff jointly design and implement monitoring systems that generate qualitative and quantitative data that are timely, reliable and useful.

1. Are roles and responsibilities of CRS and partner staff clear in gathering, analysing and reporting on data?
2. Do communities or participants have an active role in monitoring the project?
3. Does your project have an M&E Operating Manual, binder or equivalent consolidation of documentation?
4. Do your monitoring forms:
   - Capture all of the monitoring indicators from your Proframe?
   - Capture data that will allow for comparisons between specific groups, such as women or other key vulnerable groups?
   - Include additional information (not in Proframe) to help monitor the contextual factors that effect project implementation?
   - Collect both qualitative and quantitative information (most project need some of both)
   - Have clear instructions specifying purpose, frequency, and tips for completion to improve the quality of data collected?
   - Request data in a clear and simple format?
5. Have you trained staff and partners on using the monitoring forms?
6. Do communities and participants understand their role in data gathering and analysis?
7. Can staff and partners report on data using the reporting formats?
8. Have you revised your monitoring forms to incorporate feedback from the staff, partners and community members and field testing?
9. Have you done a quality check of the monitoring data?
10. Have you created a database for your monitoring data?
    - Does your database allow you to record and track just the main ideas from the qualitative monitoring data collected?
    - Does your database allow you to summarize and track your data based on the summaries appropriate for your project (i.e. by month, by geographic location, and/or by partner)?
    - Is it possible to create an electronic link between activity, output, and IR data when necessary?
    - Is the process of data entry and analysis providing timely results and summaries?
11. Do you routinely include financial information in your monitoring of the project?

M&E STANDARD #5 — PROJECT MONITORING

CRS and partner staff use monitoring system information for tracking progress against targets; assessing outcomes of interventions; making decisions; and, producing evidence-based reports.

1. Have you planned meetings for critical reflections and learning with your partners?
2. Have you planned to meet with communities as part of the critical reflections and feedback process?
3. Are critical reflections long enough and frequently enough to allow for timely review of the monitoring data? And for timely programmatic decisions that are relevant to the timeframe of the project?
4. Does your monitoring system provide enough information to:
   - identify progress and challenges related to your project, and
   - explain the quantitative data -- this includes a) qualitative information that enriches the quantitative data, and b) quantitative data of sufficient quantity and quality that will enable you to look at other factors such as sub-groups, key variables, etc.
5. Are you looking for unexpected results, beyond the Proframe indicators?
6. Are your reports evidence-based; do they provide reliable, verifiable data that document results?

PROJECT EVALUATION

Tools to consider using

- Terms of Reference (TOR) / Scope of Work (SOW)
- Evaluation Check List

Resources available

- ProPack II
- Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) Modules / Short Cuts series
- Regional M&E Tools
- American Evaluation Association (AEA) Guiding Principles for Evaluators <www.eval.org>
- Food And Nutritional Technical Assistance Guidance <www.fantaproject.org>
- Most Significant Change
- Gender Responsive Programming Toolkit (in PPG)
- PTS
- Partnership Toolkit
- Regional Capacity Needs Assessment and Training Modules
- Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) <www.alnap.org>

M&E Standard #6 — project evaluation

CRS and partner staff jointly design, implement evaluations that assess relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability; and use evaluation findings to improve programs.

1. Have you discussed with partners their expectations regarding how evaluations will be implemented?
2. Have you developed a collaboration plan and defined roles and responsibilities for evaluation that is agreed by partners and your office?
3. Has the community been consulted on the Scope of Work for the evaluation?
4. Do you have an agreed plan for developing partners' capacity in evaluation?
5. Have you identified with partners and community members ways to improve levels of community participation in evaluation?
6. Have you discussed and agreed with your partner and other intended users which of the five issues – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – will be addressed with regard to needs of the project?
7. Does the Scope of Work include examination of how well the M&E system worked during the life of the project and how to improve M&E for a similar project, with reference to the M&E Standards, in the future?
8. Does the Scope of Work make clear how the evaluation design will contribute to program quality, learning and decision-making?
    - Have you planned meetings for critical reflections and learning with your partners?
    - Have you planned to meet with communities as part of the critical reflections and feedback process?
    - Do the critical reflections allow for timely review of the evaluation data? And for timely programmatic decisions that are relevant to the timeframe of the project?
    - Does your project evaluation provide enough information to:
        - identify progress and challenges related to your project, and
        - explain the quantitative data -- including a) qualitative information that enriches the quantitative data, and b) quantitative data of sufficient quantity and quality that will enable you to look at other factors such as sub-groups, key variables, etc.?
    - Are you looking for unexpected results, beyond the Proframe indicators?
    - Is the evaluation report evidence-based; does it provide reliable, verifiable data that documents results?
9. Does your project evaluation Scope of Work include a statement that the evaluator should be guided by the American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles in conducting their work?
10. Does your project evaluation make clear who will be the main users of the findings?
11. Do project participants have the opportunity to hear the draft findings of the evaluation and provide feedback? If yes, has adequate consideration been taken of their views about the evaluation?
12. Does your project evaluation have a reporting and communication plan to ensure wide dissemination of the report?
13. Have you scheduled a critical reflection with various stakeholders to discuss the findings of the report and its implication for future programs?

HUMAN RESOURCES

Tools to consider using

- Job Descriptions
- Interview Guides
- Performance Management System
- HR Competencies Framework

Resources available

- Regional Capacity Needs Assessment and Regional Training Modules
- Regional Capacity Building Plans
- ICB M&E Modules/Short Cuts series
- Management Quality Assessment Tool (MQAT)
- Program Quality Assessment Tool (PQAT)

M&E STANDARD #7 — HUMAN RESOURCES

Country Programs, Regional Offices and HQ units have qualified staff with defined M&E responsibilities.

1. Is there a staff member in place to ensure that M&E is conducted at country and project levels in a systematic, professional and efficient way?
2. For each project, do the staff have clear responsibilities for M&E in the proposal development and project implementation phase?
3. Are these responsibilities made explicit in their performance management plan?
4. Is good M&E work acknowledged?
5. Are all the components of M&E being addressed through the current staff?
6. For staff with specific M&E activities, do they have the capacity to undertake the activities?
7. Does the Country Program have an objective to develop and strengthen M&E capacity in its Strategic Plan?
8. Do the Project Manager and Head of Programs provide constructive feedback on M&E generated information?
9. Does the County Representative provide constructive feedback on M&E generated information?
10. Do Regional staff provide constructive feedback on M&E generated information?
11. Do CP management and Regional staff participate in critical reflections with project staff?
12. Do regional and HQ staff provide relevant support on a timely basis for the different phases in the project cycle?
13. Do regional and HQ staff provide support that enables the roll-out of the M&E Quality Standards?
14. Do all technical staff provide on-going support for staff and partners in M&E?
15. Do all technical staff support capacity strengthening efforts for staff and partners in M&E?

AGENCY LEARNING & NETWORKING

Tools to consider using

- M&E Community on CRS Global
- PTS
- Operations Research
- Tools for Knowledge and Learning
- Globally-Accepted Indicator (GAIN) Templates

Resources available

- Tools for Knowledge and Learning
- CRS as a High Performing, Dynamic Learning Organization
- GAIN WorkGroup site on CRS Global

M&E STANDARD #8 — AGENCY LEARNING AND NETWORKING

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.

1. Does your Country Program regularly update the Project Tracking System?
2. Are technical and program staff members of CRS or other M&E knowledge communities?
3. Are relevant technical and program staff included on the CRS M&E global community listserv?
4. Do staff find needed information within CRS?
5. Do staff collaborate with external knowledge networks and find needed information from these sources?
6. Do you make project reports and other project documentation available and accessible to the wider CRS and PVO community through publications, audio reporting, or other dissemination media?
7. Do you capture learning through workshops, dialogue and critical reflections for sharing with the wider CRS community?
8. Do you look for information from other country programs in the region, or globally?
9. In your new proposal, are you drawing on learning from:
   - Previous CRS projects in the same sector
   - Agency knowledge that is relevant to your project (PTS, knowledge communities, RTAs, DRDs/PQ, PQSD)
   - External sources of information?
10. In your proposal, have you referenced existing knowledge and explained how they influenced your design?
11. Do you use PTS and the win-loss Report to learn about other projects when designing or implementing your projects?
12. Do you use relevant list-serves or collaborative mechanisms on the CRS Sharepoint to enhance your work?
13. Do you contribute to Country Program, Regional and HQ (meta-) analyses of higher-level programmatic impact?
14. Has any project evaluation in your country program/ region been submitted to ALNAP or other publication for sharing beyond CRS?

KEY ENTRY POINTS FOR M&E STANDARDS

Entry point	Possible Types of Activity
SPP and annual reviews	Used to assess capacities and develop plan to address better M&E Used in conjunction with Program Quality Assessment tool
APP	Used to budget for M&E staff
Project design	Used to check on thoroughness of design and quality of proposal
Regional peer review	Used to check on quality of M&E during project approval process
Project implementation	Used to help the process of developing a project's M&E Operating Manual. Used during critical reflection events with staff, partners and community
Project evaluations	Used in SOW for evaluation
M&E Assessments	Used by project staff review of quality of work followed by plan of action
RTA/STA visits	Used as a framework for SOW for visit
Staff retreats	Used to assess overall capacity on M&E
Regular program meetings	Used as a framework for discussion and then action
Training for staff	Used to determine training objectives for workshop
Meeting with partners	Used as discussion points to improve program quality with partners
M&E Consultants	Used to formulate SOW and to direct final debrief
Management team meetings	Used to set agenda to discuss M&E
M&E Consultants	Used to formulate SOW and to direct final debrief
Management team meetings	Used to set agenda to discuss M&E

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