Briefing

MARCH 2010

Working Effectively in Conflict-affected and Fragile Situations

Briefing Paper I: Monitoring and Evaluation

Context

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in situations of conflict and fragility is an emerging and continually developing field of practice. This paper reviews some of the emerging practices and lessons. Part I discusses what should be monitored at different levels, from country plans, through sectoral programmes down to individual projects. Part II provides practical guidance on particular M&E challenges in fragile contexts, including:

- theories of change;
- conflict-sensitive indicators;
- setting baselines;
- data collection in insecure environments;
- monitoring by beneficiaries;
- 'real-world' evaluations;
- evaluation criteria in conflict situations

Related guidance can be found in *Briefing Papers A: Analysing Conflict and Fragility*; *B: Do No Harm* and *H: Risk Management*.

Note that expanded operational guidance on measuring results in conflict-affected and fragile situations will be available in Spring 2010.

Introduction

M&E is often neglected in situations of conflict and fragility, for a number of reasons. Where the context is insecure and volatile, programme objectives and activities are often fluid, making it difficult to maintain a coherent approach to monitoring. The impact of donor activities on fragility and conflict is complex and difficult to measure. Data can be hard to come by, making it difficult to prepare baselines and identify changes. In insecure environments, implementing agencies may lack the staff resources or expertise for effective monitoring. Yet the case for a well-structured approach to M&E in situations of fragility and conflict is just as pressing, if not more so, as in other development contexts.

M&E should be used by DFID programmes in situations of conflict and fragility for a series of interrelated purposes:

- to assess whether programmes are achieving their objectives, including objectives intended to reduce conflict and instability;
- to monitor progress towards peace-building and state-building objectives;

- to assess whether programming is conflict sensitive – that is, that it avoids unintended negative impacts on conflict and stability;
- to assess whether the risks presented by conflict and fragility are having a negative impact on programme delivery; and
- to monitor changes in the country context, to determine whether programme objectives, modalities and partnerships remain appropriate.

M&E is important for our accountability to the UK public and our partner countries, as well as to fulfil the commitment donors made at the DAC High Level Forum in Accra in September 2008 to monitor the implementation of the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations.

What do we monitor in situations of conflict and fragility?

M&E in situations of conflict and fragility is typically done at several levels:

- common strategic frameworks;
- country plan;
- sector-level engagement; and
- individual projects and programmes.

Common strategic frameworks

Joint monitoring processes involving donors and partner governments may be established around peace-building processes or major political transitions, as well as around national development plans or Povery Reduction Strategy Papers. Transitional Results Frameworks (TRFs) are designed to support monitoring of short-term (typically six-monthly) objectives which map out a critical path for an early recovery programme. Even in a low-capacity environment, joint monitoring provides a mechanism for engaging country partners in the coordination and oversight of complex interventions.

The UN Peacebuilding Commission has been promoting monitoring and tracking mechanisms for integrated peace-building strategies. In its first two focus countries, Burundi and Sierra Leone, it has supported country partners to articulate their peace-building objectives and priorities in the form of a Strategic Framework for Peace-building, together with monitoring matrices setting out objectives and risks, critical benchmarks and indicators of progress. National structures have been established to conduct the monitoring, and to support a stronger dialogue around the peace process.

DFID Country Plans

Country plans in fragile contexts should include objectives, with indicators and data sources, that are explicitly designed to address sources of conflict and fragility, in addition to poverty reduction and other development goals. This is in line with DFID's 2010 Policy Paper *Building the State and Securing the Peace*, which defines state-building and peace-building as central objectives in conflict-affected and fragile states

and sets out an integrated framework to take forward these objectives. A purely MDG-focused programme is likely to miss key state-building and peace-building dynamics, and our results frameworks should be adjusted accordingly.

Monitoring at Country Plan level serves a number of objectives:

- It provides a regular overview of how effective the country programme has been at reducing conflict and fragility.
- It provides regular information on changing country conditions, enabling country offices to assess the continuing relevance and appropriateness of objectives, sectoral engagement, aid modalities and partnerships, and to identify new opportunities for strategic initiatives and policy dialogue.
- It can be used to support scenario planning for risk management purposes, jointly with HMG partners (see *Briefing Paper H: Risk Management*).

Monitoring can be done using a range of techniques. Strategic conflict assessments should be updated periodically, to provide a picture of changing conflict dynamics. A wide range of data sources (many of which can be found in the Country Governance Analysis *How To Note*) and reports from independent agencies can be utilised, and supplemented with surveys on issues such as human rights, social exclusion or human security. Many country offices now maintain a set of indicators on the broader political, economic and social context, and regularly update them from a variety of secondary sources and direct staff knowledge, often through joint processes with HMG partners.

Sectoral engagement

Joint M&E processes at sectoral level offer a basis for improving partnerships between donors and national authorities in low-capacity environments. Where there is an agreement with country counterparts on a set of broad, sectoral objectives, a programme of joint or independent progress reviews can create a useful platform for dialogue and build a shared understanding of policy and institutional priorities. In Yemen, for example, joint annual reviews form the core of sectoral coordination processes in the education and water sectors.

In Zimbabwe, DFID's Expanded Support Programme for HIV and AIDS is helping to strengthen the national HIV/AIDS M&E system, in support of a shadow alignment approach. In a very difficult political environment, it has helped to identify joint objectives, such as the need for measures to prevent the drain of qualified personnel out of the health sector.

Zimbabwe: Aligning with the national HIV/AIDS monitoring system

EU member states do not provide government-to-government assistance in Zimbabwe. Within this constraint, DFID has sought out ways to engage constructively with certain public institutions in areas where a credible technical dialogue is possible. One of its priorities has been to preserve what remains of a deteriorating public healthcare system. Its health programmes are delivered through UN and NGO partners but, using a 'shadow alignment' approach, are designed as far as possible to support national policy oversight and decision making.

The Expanded Support Programme for HIV and AIDS (ESP) is a pooled funding mechanism for UN agencies and NGOs to deliver prevention, testing, diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS. With HIV prevalence in Zimbabwe among the highest in the world, it aims for universal antiretroviral treatment coverage by 2010. The programme is led by the National AIDS Council (NAC), whose CEO chairs the ESP Working Group that approves all funding decisions. The UN works closely with the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare on the treatment and care components, and all of the programme's activities emerge from the citizen's perspective as services delivered through the public health system.

In a tense political environment, the first challenge has been to establish an effective working relationship with the national authorities. One strategy for building this relationship has been to develop a joint M&E process. Donors and government have agreed on an annual independent review, which provides the ESP Working Group and the NAC with a frank and independent assessment of policy consistency, coordination, budgeting and management across the sector, in order to improve transparency and create a basis for dialogue. Regular monitoring is done through the national HIV/AIDS M&E system. Using ESP funds, UNAIDS is providing support and supplementary resources to the national system, including measures to improve data quality and verification, training on the use of IT systems, logistical support and resources for operational research. This supports monitoring of the national HIV/AIDS programme as a whole, rather than parallel monitoring of the particular components funded by the ESP.

This aligned approach has limitations in terms of the accuracy of monitoring. The first annual review found a range of problems with the national M&E system, including missing baselines and weak compliance with data requirements by national authorities. For the time being, this makes it difficult for donors to track the overall achievements of the ESP. Nonetheless, the programme has the flexibility to identify and gradually address these weaknesses in the coming years. In the meantime, the aligned approach is helping to build mutual understanding and cooperation between the national authorities and donors, creating the basis for a more programmatic engagement in the sector. In the Zimbabwe context, this is a notable achievement.

Joint monitoring at the sectoral level also helps to stimulate demand for data, and can usefully be combined with longer term programmes of support to national statistical offices or sectoral information management systems. In the short term, however, where administrative data systems are weak, they can be supplemented with surveys of public perceptions on service delivery, whether commissioned by DFID or taken from reputable independent sources.

For example, in the Sierra Leone Justice Sector Development Programme there is no capacity at present in the Ministry of Internal Affairs to monitor the progress of police reform. DFID therefore commissions annual surveys of public attitudes towards the police. Note, however, that in conflict-affected situations, public perceptions can be highly volatile and need to be interpreted with care.

> **Using surveys to monitor police reform in Sierra Leone**
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> In Sierra Leone, DFID has been supporting a Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP), which provides an integrated reform and investment strategy for the various ministries and agencies that make up the justice sector. Implementation is supported by a Justice Sector Coordination Office and a Technical Working Group, under the leadership of a Cabinet sub-committee. Among the goals of the strategy is to support improved effectiveness, accountability and public trust in the police force, in particular through the introduction of community-based policing and Family Support Units.
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> Because the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the national statistics agency are largely ineffective at collecting data on the justice sector, the Coordination Office commissions an annual survey of public attitudes. The survey tracks a number of performance indicators on police reform, including public perceptions of the security situation at community level, trends in crime rates, personal safety, levels of satisfaction with police performance, relations between the police and the community, public willingness to collaborate with the police and personal experience of police misconduct or corruption. The survey is designed to support both management of the reform effort and improved public awareness. It is published in the form of a Justice Sector Survey, alongside data on police structures, geographical deployment, human resource strength and caseloads.
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> The survey has picked up quite dramatic changes in public perceptions of police over the life of the JSDP. Overall, the proportion of people declaring themselves to be satisfied or very satisfied with police performance increased from 26% in 2007 to 60% in 2008. However, in certain areas the trend was in reverse, with more people believing the police had become politicised. DFID Sierra Leone notes that, while perception surveys are useful, care needs to be taken to disaggregate the results, and be aware of the possibility of large, short-term fluctuations. The JSDP provides support to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on how to make use of the data gathered from the survey to improve its oversight of the police.

Project level

As in any other context, project-level M&E in fragile situations is an essential part of the management process, and serves a number of objectives:

- Where projects have explicit peace-building or conflict-reduction goals, the objectives and theories of change (see below) should be set out explicitly and tested through periodic evaluation.

- OECD-DAC guidance highlights the tendency of external interventions in fragile contexts to generate unintended consequences.[1] Monitoring should capture any impacts, direct or indirect, that might have a tendency to aggravate grievances, worsen exclusion or perpetuate conflict. This applies not just to peace-building programmes, but to all development interventions in situations of conflict and fragility.

- In a volatile context, particularly in a difficult security situation, regular context monitoring is required to assess the risks posed by the environment on programme delivery, including security risks to implementers and beneficiaries. This enables the appropriateness of objectives, geographical coverage, partnerships and modalities to be kept under constant review.

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[1] OECD-DAC, *Encouraging Effective Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities: Towards DAC guidance* (September 2007).

When working through NGO partners, additional support from DFID may be required to ensure that partners are aware of the importance of conflict-sensitive M&E and have the necessary capacity. This is one of the goals of the joint DFID-GTZ Risk Management Office in Nepal (see also *Briefing Paper H: Risk Management*).

Supporting conflict-sensitive M&E by partners: The Nepal Risk Management Office

In Nepal, DFID has established a Risk Management Office (RMO), jointly with GTZ. The RMO undertakes continuous monitoring of security risks in conflict-affected areas, to provide implementing partners with the confidence to operate in a difficult environment. The RMO also helps implementing partners to integrate conflict-sensitive approaches into their entire management cycle, including M&E. The RMO encourages partners regularly to analyse threats, vulnerability and risks to projects, their relationships with local counterparts and their impacts (direct and indirect) on the conflict. Among the questions that partners are asked to review are:

- Are their programmes, staff and partners seen as neutral or aligned with stakeholders or parties to the conflict?
- How are they perceived by the insurgents and security forces?
- With whom and where are they working – and not working?
- What are the human and financial resources that their programmes transfer, and who benefits?
- Whose power, interests or needs are they challenging or reducing, directly or indirectly, and whose are they helping to build?

Monitoring at Country Plan and individual project levels should be mutually reinforcing, to create a cycle of lesson learning and accountability. Some country offices are now developing a cascading set of monitoring arrangements, which incorporate state-building and peace-building objectives at the Country Plan level into the logframes of individual projects. This allows data collected at the project level to support monitoring of the contribution of the country programme as a whole to addressing sources of conflict and fragility.

A cascading approach to monitoring in Nepal

DFID Nepal has developed a cascading system of M&E arrangements, encompassing both the country programme and individual project levels, to ensure that the country programme as a whole responds appropriately to a volatile political and security situation. Results from the monitoring are reviewed in detail at Annual Country Office Retreats, to inform the Country Plan Annual Report. Three types of monitoring are used at country programme level:

- **Conflict impact monitoring:** DFID monitors the impact of the conflict on DFID-managed projects and programmes, by requiring implementing agencies to produce a quarterly situation analysis identifying the extent to which their activities have been affected by the security situation (e.g. implementation rates, ability of staff to travel within districts). These quarterly returns are validated against expenditure data and incident logs.

- **Livelihoods and social inclusion (LSI) monitoring:** In 2002/3, DFID commissioned a major piece of research with the World Bank and the National Planning Commission, tracing the linkages between livelihoods and caste/ethnic group membership and its impact on conflict dynamics. It then introduced a system of biannual LSI monitoring, using the three-tier conceptual framework (assets and access to services; rules of the game; and voice, influence and claiming rights) developed in the original analysis.

  This model is integrated into the logframes of individual projects, using a combination of process and outcome indicators, with all monitoring data disaggregated by social group and gender. Programme partners are provided with guidance on how to measure their achievements against LSI indicators, and brought together for biannual retreats to synthesise their experience. Individual project reports are analysed to determine whether the country programme is addressing the socio-economic drivers of conflict.

- **Context monitoring:** Using qualitative data from internal and national sources, DFID monitors developments in the wider political and security context, to assist with assessing the appropriateness of delivery modalities, particularly in respect of budget support and sectoral programmes. Indicators include communal violence, human rights abuses, rule of law, representatives of marginalised groups in political institutions and other factors.

How to conduct M&E in fragile contexts

This section outlines a range of practical elements of M&E through the programme cycle, including what should be measured (indicators and evaluation criteria), how it should be measured (baselines, data collection) and by whom.The first thing to consider is how change is likely to happen.

Theories of change

Interventions aimed at conflict reduction, state-building or peace-building should articulate a clear theory of change that can be tested through evaluation. Church and Rogers provide a useful survey of different theories of change for conflict-reduction interventions.[2] In complex environments, a set of parallel initiatives aiming for different types of change may have the best prospect of success. Conflict analysis can provide assistance in identifying which types of change, or sequence of interventions, is most likely to work in the context. It is important to remember that people's *perceptions* of change often matter as much as what empirical data can demonstrate.

In practice, theories of change are often not made explicit in programme designs. The box below sets out some examples to illustrate the importance of unpacking broad objectives and translating these into clear, logical theories about how such

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[2]   Church, C. and Rogers, M., *Designing for Results: Integrating monitoring and evaluation in conflict transformation programs*, Search for Common Ground (2006).

objectives can be achieved. This informs the programme logic, which will later be examined by evaluators to see how well it stands up to scrutiny.[3]

Theories of change: Peace-building examples

- **Individual change theory:** peace comes through the transformative change of a critical mass of people, including their knowledge, attitude, behaviours and skills.
- **Healthy relationships and connections theory:** peace comes from breaking down isolation, polarisation, division, prejudice and stereotypes between/among groups.
- **Withdrawal of the resources of war theory:** war requires vast amounts of material and human capital to be sustained. If the supply of people and goods is disrupted, the war-making system will collapse and peace will break out.
- **Reduction of violence theory:** peace results from a reduction in the level of violence perpetrated by combatants.
- **Root causes/justice theory:** we can achieve peace by addressing the underlying issues of injustice, oppression, exploitation, threats to identity and security, and people's sense of injury and victimisation.
- **Institutional development theory:** peace is secured by establishing social institutions that guarantee democracy, equity, justice and fair allocation of resources.
- **Political elites theory:** peace comes about when it is in the interest of political (and other) leaders to take the necessary steps. Peace-building efforts must change the political calculus of leaders and elites.
- **Grassroots mobilisation theory:** if enough people are mobilised to oppose war, political leaders will have to pay attention.
- **Economic theory:** individuals and leaders make decision about war and peace based on systems of incentives that are essentially economic in nature. By changing the economic logic associated with war, we can bring about peace.
- **Public attitudes theory:** war and violence are partly motivated by prejudice, misperceptions and intolerance of difference. We can promote peace by using the media (television and radio) to change public attitudes and build greater tolerance in society.

When testing theories of change, untangling the chains of cause and effect can be very difficult. When attributing change to the programme is problematic, a broader evaluation approach that asks 'what happened, and why?', rather than 'did X cause Y?' can be used. An analytical narrative describing the events and processes, based on the accounts of stakeholders and informed observers, may be more useful than a strict social science method.

Conflict-sensitive indicators

Selecting the correct indicators from the start is essential to identifying both positive and potentially negative impacts of interventions. Because of the high levels of variation between and within conflict and fragile situations, it is not easy to specify a generic set of indicators for monitoring impact. However, the literature offers a range of guidance on indicator selection:

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[3] OECD DAC *Guide on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities. Working Document for Application Period.* 2008. Available at:
http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/20/39289596.pdf

- Begin by considering the sources of data available. While published sources such as media and NGOs may be sufficient for tracking some conflict dynamics, it may be useful to commission additional surveys on issues such as social exclusion. It is often useful to reassess indicator choices after baselines have been set, to check that adequate data will be available.

- It may be useful to include both indicators of drivers of conflict and fragility (e.g. mortality rates, human rights violations, perceptions of insecurity, indicators of social capital) and of successful peace-building and state-building (e.g. reintegration of displaced persons, levels of marginalised minority groups utilising government services, levels of access to justice). A useful list of sample indicators was prepared for USAID by the NGO Social Impact.[4]

- When monitoring intangible qualities, such as trust or confidence among groups, proxy measures can be used. For example, rather than directly assessing changes in intergroup relations, look at freedom of movement, numbers of intergroup organisations and process, or social indicators such as intermarriage rates.

- Most authors suggest a mixture of qualitative indicators, which measure perceptions, and quantitative indicators, which attempt to capture objective changes. In fragile situations, both types of indicators have their limitations. Data shortages can make qualitative measures unreliable; there may be high levels of misinformation, and subjective assessments may over-represent more extreme opinions. Cross-referencing perceptions with quantitative data may therefore provide the most robust results.

- Data needs to be sufficiently disaggregated to expose differential dimensions or effects of the conflict (e.g. by region, gender, age, disability, religion or ethnic origin). The level of disaggregation should be sufficient to enable assessment of whether the country programme is targeting the right groups. Local circumstances can differ considerably within the same country, or even the same district, province or town. It is important to capture these variations.

Country Plan monitoring in DRC

DFID DRC has developed a monitoring system at Country Plan level to track changes in the external environment and maintain an overview of how the programme as a whole contributes to sustaining peace and tackling poverty. The monitoring system, which complements monitoring at programme and project level, is used to track developments against four scenarios set out in the Country Plan, and to provide recommendations to senior management and ministers on the size and modalities of the UK assistance.

The monitoring system uses seven indicators, covering conflict reduction and security, human rights and the rule of law, corruption, democratic process, basic service delivery, public financial management and economic growth. It is done by a synthesis of qualitative information emerging from a range of external sources (e.g. news media, press statements by NGOs), any available quantitative data (e.g. business climate surveys indicating perceptions of corruption) and subjective assessments by DFID staff of political and institutional developments. The monitoring is done on a quarterly basis jointly with FCO and MOD.

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[4]   Social Impact, *Fragile States and Peacebuilding Programs: Practical tools for improving program performance and results* (2006). Available at:
http://www.socialimpact.com/resource-center/downloads/fragilestates.pdf.

Setting baselines

A baseline should always be established when starting a new intervention, in order to provide a comparative basis against which to measure impact. Collecting baseline data also enables us to set realistic objectives and targets for programme impact, taking into account implementation capacities.

Setting baselines and targets is often overlooked, particularly in fragile environments, where staff are under heavy pressures. Where appropriate M&E arrangements have not been put in place at the outset, it is important to develop them as soon as circumstances allow. For example, an evaluation team can be tasked with reconstructing a baseline (from secondary sources or stakeholder interviews) and with recommending indicators and targets.

Data collection in insecure environments

Data collection often presents serious challenges in conflict-affected environments. National statistical data may be unavailable. Fluid programme objectives or delivery arrangements may mean that baseline data is no longer relevant or that indicators have not been monitored regularly. Security and logistical constraints may limit access to conflict-affected areas (a recent NAO report found that M&E arrangements in 40% of DFID programmes in fragile states had been disrupted by security concerns). Safety is a paramount concern, and nationally engaged staff may face different levels or sources of danger than international personnel.

In such cases, conducting sound M&E means locating 'good enough' data so that it is possible to draw useful conclusions about programme impact. Where travel is constrained, other options may be available for data collection, including drawing on secondary sources, changing the geographical sample for monitoring purposes, or identifying proxies (e.g. representatives able to speak for minority groups in conflict-affected areas, parents of child soldiers). Alternatively, it may be possible to bring representatives of key groups out of the conflict zone, in order to conduct focus groups (although assessments must be made as to whether this might endanger the participants). Some examples of practical solutions that have been used in Iraq are given below.

Practical solutions for M&E in Iraq

In Iraq, limited access for safety and security reasons to both project sites and government counterparts has made obtaining first-hand information for monitoring and evaluation very difficult. National statistics on Iraq are not reliably collated. Alternative approaches to M&E have been used on the Iraq programme, including obtaining more data from partners implementing the projects, gathering information from other donors and utilising external assessments. DFID, FCO and MOD have agreed on a set of indicators and datasets for use in Iraq to monitor the achievement of the UK Public Service Agreement (PSA) 30: Preventing and Resolving Conflict.

These are:

- state effectiveness (World Bank Governance Matters dataset – indicators on government effectiveness and rule of law);
- number of refugees/IDPs (UNHCR database);
- number of Iraqi battle deaths (consolidated data from the Iraqi ministries of health, interior and defence, published by Reuters/AFP);
- trends in infant mortality (no data currently available); and
- per capita GDP growth (Medium Term Fiscal Framework statistics).

At the project level, security constraints have required alternative approaches to M&E. These include obtaining more qualitative data from implementing partners, use of military patrols on the ground for site monitoring, utilising independent reviews and gathering feedback or narrative and verbal reports from other reliable sources, including donors, UN agencies and NGOs.

Recognising the limitations of relying heavily on data provided by partners, London-based programme staff have significantly increased the frequency of their visits to Iraq to improve management and monitoring of outputs. With the improved security situation they are able to conduct more site visits. In addition, DFID Iraq-based staff have increased the resources they allocate to programme management. These changes are providing DFID with better first-hand information about project outputs and constraints on the ground. Other examples of techniques to supplement the information partners provide include the following:

- For the Support to Centre of Government, Economic Reform and Governorates Capacity Building (GCBP) programmes, DFID has used external output-to-purpose reviews to provide independent assessments of progress. In the case of the GCBP, the participation of the Stabilisation Unit in the review team will ensure wider incorporation and retention of the experience and lessons of delivering this programme.

- For its support to establish an independent radio station in Basra, DFID has built two listener surveys into the design of the project to identify the project's impact. The surveys have provided valuable data on the demographics of the audience, and on listeners' views on Iraq's development and service delivery.

- For its Water Towers project in Basra, DFID staff have until recently been unable to visit the site for safety reasons. However, two engineering consultancy companies were used to monitor the local contractors, using site visits, aerial photography and reports from local engineers to monitor progress. DFID has also worked in close partnership with the GoI Water Directorate which has provided engineers to oversee construction and site testing.

In the provision of humanitarian assistance, DFID selects its implementing partners on the basis of their ability to operate across the territory. For example, at present, ICRC has the widest area of operation, which gives it superior planning, operational and monitoring capacity. To improve the collation of humanitarian information, DFID has encouraged and supported the UN mission (UNAMI)'s establishment of an Information Analysis Unit, which provides information and analysis in support of development programmes.

Monitoring by beneficiaries

One promising strategy for monitoring programme delivery in contexts where administrative data collection is poor is to support monitoring of outputs and impacts

by the beneficiaries, including public or social audits. Increasing the transparency of assistance (i.e. publicising exactly what should be delivered, where and to what standard), and assisting local communities to monitor delivery through community-based organisations or other civil society mechanisms, can serve a number of purposes simultaneously. As well as providing an additional source of data to triangulate with official sources, it helps to strengthen the accountability of local service providers and implementing agencies to their own communities.

This approach may be particularly helpful in high-corruption environments. In Cambodia, a series of corruption scandals in connection with World Bank projects in 2006 led to the introduction of additional fiduciary controls across the portfolio. Perhaps the most successful of these mechanisms for tackling corruption has been the systematic use of beneficiary monitoring, established under a Good Governance Framework for each lending project.

'Real world' evaluations

When commissioning evaluations in difficult circumstances, the challenge is to devise an evaluation approach that is as thorough and effective as possible in the circumstances. The World Bank has produced a guide to 'real world' evaluation approaches under budget, time or data constraints.[5]

While a pragmatic approach is necessary, the evaluator should take care to analyse what biases may result from these compromises and take steps to address them. For example, for quantitative analysis, combining several analytical methods may help to limit methodological bias. It is also important to be aware that there may be high levels of unreliable information and bias among interlocutors, particularly in situations of conflict where disinformation may be a tactic used by the combatants.

Evaluation criteria in conflict situations

When assessing conflict impact, the standard OECD-DAC evaluation criteria can be supplemented with specific, conflict-related evaluation questions:

- **Relevance:** Is the programme based on an accurate assessment of the conflict? Does the programme address key actors and issues? Is the theory of change credible? Has implementation responded flexibly to changing circumstances?

- **Impact:** What have been the effects – intended and unintended, direct and indirect – of the programme on the dynamics of the conflict? Has it helped to prevent violence, or address long-term drivers of conflict?

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[5] Bamberger, M., 'Designing Quality Impact Evaluations under Budget, Time and Data Constraints', World Bank (July 2005). Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTISPMA/Resources/Training-Events-and-Materials/Designing_quality_IE_under_constraints.pdf.

Other possible evaluation criteria include:

- **Coherence:** Is the programme coherent with the overall national or international strategy for conflict resolution, and with the activities of other actors, including HMG partners?

- **Linkages:** Are peace-building efforts at the political level linked to the grassroots, or vice versa? Commentators such as Mary Anderson have concluded that peace-building activities that work solely at the grassroots level, without translating into institutional impacts at the socio-political level, are unlikely to produce sustainable results.[6] Conversely, however, working solely with political elites, without influencing public attitudes, may not be effective.

- **Coverage:** Are the communities or geographical areas in which the programme is operating the right ones, given the conflict dynamics?

- **Consistency:** Is the programme being implemented in a way consistent with UK policies and values (e.g. respect for human rights, support for democracy)?

Key lessons

- Country-level monitoring should look at a combination of **political**, **security**, **economic and social indicators**. It should ideally be linked to scenarios (as part of risk management) and combine qualitative and quantitative indicators.

- **Joint monitoring of transitional results frameworks**, even in low-capacity environments, can provide a mechanism for engaging country partners in coordination and oversight of complex interventions.

- **Joint monitoring at the sectoral level** may be a good foundation for sectoral coordination and dialogue or a form of shadow alignment.

- In conflict prevention, state-building and peace-building interventions:

  o **theories of change**, **baselines and indicators** should be made clear at the outset. Where these are not available, the evaluator should aim to reconstruct them in dialogue with partners;

  o indicators should cover **positive and negative** developments;

  o **qualitative and quantitative** indicators should be mixed; and

  o data should be **disaggregated** to ensure the right groups are benefiting.

- In highly insecure environments, monitoring and data collection may require **flexibility** ('good enough' data) and **innovative solutions**. **Involving beneficiaries** in monitoring can offer multiple benefits.

- The results of M&E must be fed back in the form of changes to an ongoing programme where necessary and into new **programme design**.

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[6] Anderson, M., 'Experiences with Impact Assessment: Can we know what good we do?' in A. Austin, M. Fischer and N. Ropers (eds.), *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict - The Berghof Handbook*, Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management (2004). See also Lederach's pyramid of intervention levels: Lederach, J.P., *Building Peace. Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*, Washington, DC: USIP (2004), 6th edition.