MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL) GUIDE

Using MEL to strengthen your organisational effectiveness

Contents

Introduction

This MEL guide has been developed to support your international development organisation to increase knowledge, confidence and success in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). It aims to strengthen your organisational MEL practices; enhance your capacity to become more effective; and maximise your impact; through review and learning with partners and the communities you work with. Additionally, it will equip your organisation to meet funders' requirements on MEL.

In this guide, you will find answers to questions like:

- ✓ Why is MEL important?
- ✓ What are the benefits of MEL to project stakeholders?
- ✓ What is the difference between organisational MEL and project MEL and why are they both important?
- ✓ What is the MEL cycle?
- ✓ What are the steps for developing a MEL plan?
- ✓ Who should be involved in MEL planning and implementation?
- ✓ How do you collect data?
- ✓ What do you do with the data collected?

This guide will be useful to your organisation in two main ways.
- If your organisation is new to MEL - it will walk you through the steps for setting up and implementing MEL systems for your projects.
- If you already have a MEL system in place, it will guide you to review and improve the MEL systems you already have in place.

In either case, this guide will support your organisation's efforts to monitor, evaluate and learn from your project activities and results to enhance your effectiveness and impact.

You do not need to read this guide from cover to cover. The table of contents will guide you to sections that may address your specific needs. It is however recommended that you read section 2 if your organisation is new to MEL.

What is MEL

Let's begin by defining the basic terms in this concept.

Table 1: MEL explained

	What is it?
Monitoring	Monitoring refers to the routine monitoring of project resources, activities and results, and analysis of the information to guide project implementation.
Evaluation	Evaluation refers to the periodic (mid-term, final) assessment and analysis of an on-going or completed project
Learning	Learning is the process through which information generated from M&E is reflected upon and intentionally used to continuously improve a project's ability to achieve results.

Monitoring and evaluation can help you to work out what difference you make through your projects. Your organisation and partners can then go on and learn from this to improve your performance in future.

MEL activity may already be taking place in your organisation; this guide will help you to take stock of what you are already doing, put plans and systems in place and learn from it.

MEL can sometimes be thought of as activity we do to allow us to report to our funder, while this is true, a good MEL system can be so much more.

Table 2: Who is MEL for?

Stakeholder	**Benefits of MEL**
Your organisation	MEL helps **your organisation** answer questions like: - Are you on track to achieve your mission? - Is what you are doing contributing to the long term change your organisation is trying to create? - Are your project activities are on track? - Are your partners' activities are on track? - Is your intervention reaching target communities? - Are target communities experiencing anticipated changes as a result of your project? - Are there any challenges to address; - What is working well, what is not and why, and what could be done differently?
Your partners	MEL helps **your partners** answer questions like: - Are their activities on track? - Are their activities reaching target communities? - Are communities experiencing anticipated changes as a result of the project? - Are there any challenges to address? - What is working well, what is not and why, and what could be done differently?
Communities you work with	MEL enables **communities** to: - provide critical information on their needs, abilities and capacities - input into the project design - reflect on their participation in project activities - scrutinize how the project or the organisation is operating - provide information on how the project is affecting them and changing

	their lives - participate in reflecting on project achievements - provide recommendations for how to improve project achievements.
Your funders	MEL allows **funders** to understand: - how the funds committed are used - whether funds are spent on identified needs - whether strategies to address needs are appropriate - who benefited from project activities and outputs - whether lives are changed as a result of the project - whether the changes will last after the project ends

Ensuring that the needs of and benefits for each stakeholder in MEL is carefully considered makes your organisation accountable

There are two levels of MEL, organisational MEL and project MEL.

Organisational MEL

At the organisational level, your MEL will focus on monitoring the performance of your organisation as a whole. The areas considered in organisational MEL include:
- Your organisation's mission;
- Your organisational structure;
- Your planning, implementation and MEL processes;
- The relevance of your projects to your mission; and
- Your organisational capacity.

Organisation X's mission is to *create and promote opportunities for girls to become empowered (personally, socially and economically) in order to be able to contribute to the development of their communities*.

Organisational MEL should include:
- how your projects meet the needs of communities you work with, and how this relates to your mission
- whether your organisational structure and roles allow you to implement girls' empowerment activities
- what systems are in place for project planning implementation and MEL, and how effective they are
- your organisation's capacity (staff capacity, funding, partnerships, networks) to achieve your mission.

Project MEL[1]
Project MEL focuses on the following for the specific project:
- monitoring targets
- results
- changes
- challenges

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[1] Due to the target audience of this guide we will refer to projects as a unit of intervention. Larger organisations may look at MEL from a programme perspective and terminology may differ between organisations.

This guide focuses mainly on Project MEL, but the tools can equally be applied to the organisational level. There are however, many other tools that can be used for organisational level MEL. Resources and guidance on organisational MEL can be found in the resources section.

MEL for advocacy
MEL can provide critical information for your advocacy work on behalf of target communities. This includes information on the needs of target communities as well as the changes they experience as a result of specific projects. Normally this has the objective of developing new partnerships or obtaining more funding.

MEL of Advocacy efforts is a specialised topic which is not covered in this guide. You will find links to more information on this topic in the resources section.

MEL: the basics

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning cycle

MEL is an integral part of project design, implementation and completion; MEL is done at all stages within the project cycle The MEL cycle helps you to position MEL in the life of your project, as shown on the diagram below.
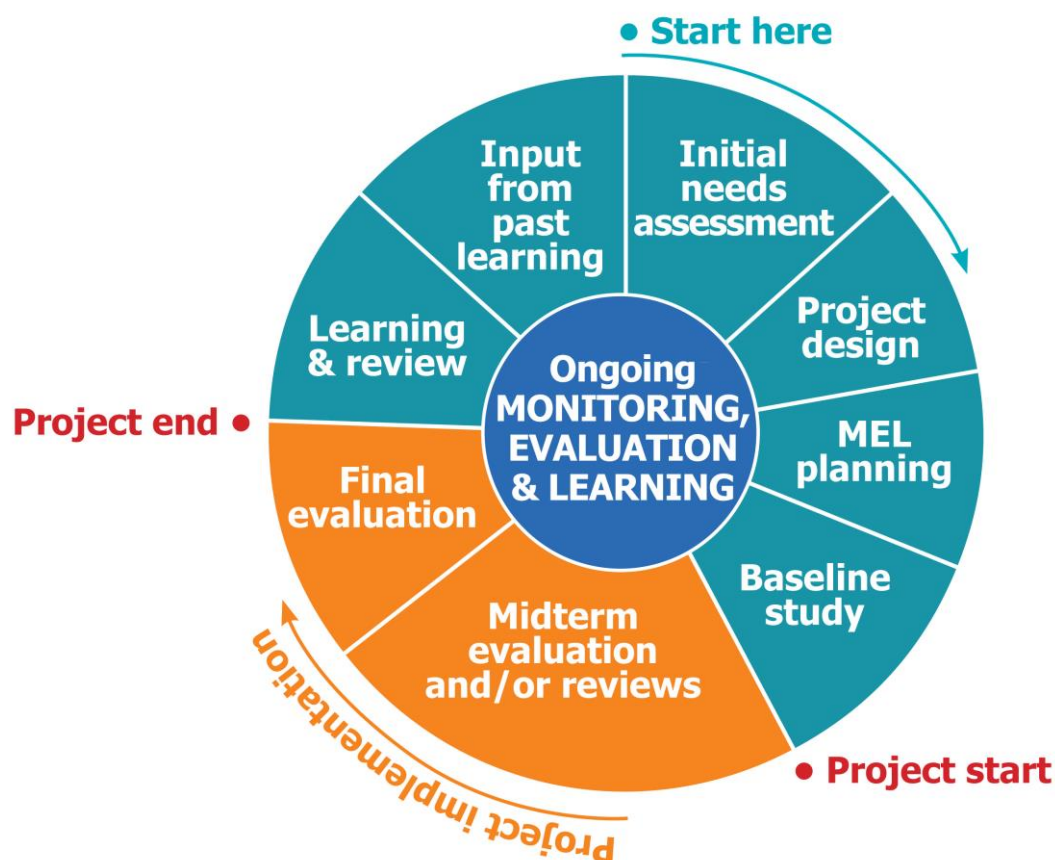

Figure 1: The MEL cycle
* There is no one generic project cycle and associated MEL activities. This figure is one way of showing this.

The MEL cycle starts with the **initial needs assessment**, this is when you identify a particular need or problem in a specific community which your organisation is able to address. Ideas are generated by learning from existing projects, projects which have ended or simply through conversations with partners, communities and funders. Then you develop an in depth understanding of the need or problem, its underlying causes, and how it affects the target communities. This is also the stage to think through potential solutions with your partners and target communities. Having identified a need you then need to **design a project.** The project will be the most credible intervention to address the problem. A critical stage in the MEL cycle is MEL planning. This is where you, in collaboration with your partners and target communities, decide the main MEL activities. You then go on to put in place a realistic plan for undertaking them. **MEL planning** is a critical stage in the MEL cycle where you should consider planning for the following MEL activities: conducting a baseline, undertaking routine monitoring, undertaking mid-term and final evaluations; deciding how to go about reflecting on information and learning from it to improve project performance.

> **What is a baseline?**
>
> A baseline study will establish how a target group/area is prior to the implementation of the project. It is so important to work from a good baseline as this is what you will compare to your project results to show the change your project has made.
>
> **'bad' baselines affect the quality and validity of project MEL**

During project implementation **monitoring** will be an ongoing process. You should allow time for MEL activities in staff workplans and timetable regular checks with partners to ensure monitoring is taking place. It is also recommended that you conduct a **mid-term evaluation.** This allows you to take stock of where your project is and whether you are on target to achieve project outcomes. At the completion of your project a final evaluation should be conducted. This is the stage of the MEL cycle when you evaluate, in collaboration with your partners and communities, whether your project brought about any real change in the lives of the communities you work with. Once the final evaluation is complete you should take time to review it and take note of any **learning** that can be gained. This stage also provides opportunity to use this **learning as input** to new project ideas.

Planning for MEL

MEL planning is the process for identifying which methods to adopt for monitoring, evaluation and learning on activities, outputs and outcomes. It is also the process for describing:

- what data is needed;
- where the data will be collected from;
- how the data will be collected and analysed;
- when the data will be collected (baseline, routine MEL, mid-term evaluation, final evaluation); as well as
- who has responsibility for collecting the data.

Additionally, it specifies:

- how the information generated will be used;
- the resources that will be needed to carry out MEL activities; and
- how the project will be accountable to stakeholders in the process.

A MEL plan, resulting from the MEL planning process, is simply the working document produced that guides you on how and when to implement MEL activities.

Before starting the MEL planning process, providing answers to the following questions will enable you keep the planning exercise focused:

- Who should be involved?
- Who should oversee?
- How much time will it take?
- How much will it cost?

Guidance on answering these questions is given in the section **MEL in Practice**

Some further questions you might want to consider at this stage are:

- o What is the current status of project MEL? What has been done so far and by whom?
- o Are there staff with specific MEL responsibilities who should be involved in the MEL planning process?
- o To what extent are project participants, stakeholders and partners involved in MEL?

- o What are partners already doing and how does this relate to the project MEL?
- o How do project staff perceive MEL?
- o What are some of the issues/constraints involved in project MEL?

Good Practice

Consider how to actively involve partners in the MEL planning process. Are your partners local? Are they international? How can you involve them in the process?
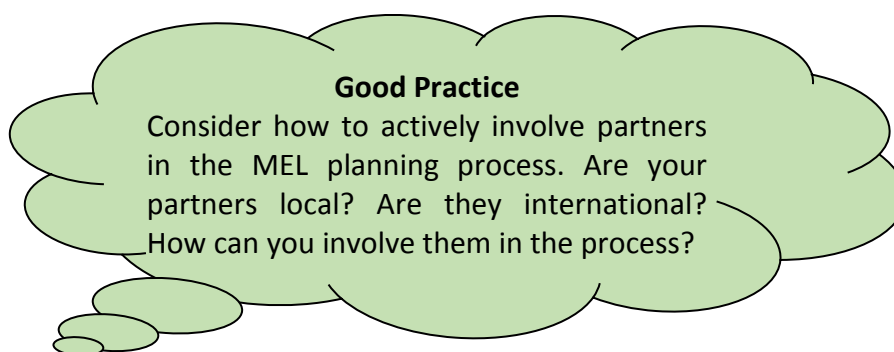
Key Elements of MEL

Aims, outcomes, outputs indicators and activities are key terms/concepts that you need to be familiar with when planning MEL. Note that different donors use different words (e.g. some donors use 'aims' instead of 'goals', but the 'levels' are the same, so at this stage try to understand the concepts and then you can adapt them to the language used by specific donors.

Table 4: Goals, Outcomes, Outputs and Indicators

Terminology	Definitions
Goals	Goals refer to the change that the project hopes to achieve in the long term (i.e., beyond the life of the project). These are usually stated as substantive improvements that are expected to take place during the lives of the project participants or target population.
Outcomes	Outcomes are all the changes that happen as a result of your work, expected or unexpected, welcome or unwelcome. The outcomes you hope to see are all the specific changes that will help you to achieve your aims.
Outputs	Outputs are direct results of project activities, i.e., generated through the project and within project control. Outputs occur within the life of the project.
Activities	Activities are all the things you actually do during the life of the project.

Indicators

Indicators are clues, signs or markers that measure one aspect of a project and show how close a project is to its desired path and outcomes. They are observable and measurable characteristics that can be used to show changes or progress a project is making toward achieving a specific change. **Indicators are relevant at all levels.**

In defining indicators, you need to decide:
- what is it that you want to measure, i.e. what is the 'clue' that is going to tell you whether you have achieve your change
- what is your target – i.e. above which threshold you would consider that it was a success. **To determine your target, it is very important to have baseline data**

Figure 3 and table 5 provide examples of goals, outcomes, outputs, activities and indicators.

MEL Planning Tools

There are several ways/tools that can help you to visually represent your goals, outcomes, outputs, activities, and related indicators. For clarity this guide gives two examples often used in international development, there are however many others.

The tools identified in this guide are Weavers Triangle and Log Frame. These are explained in the sections below with references for additional reading. Both tools allow you to present your project intervention in a logical way. They help you assess whether the solutions you have identified to tackle a particular issue will actually bring about change.

Weavers Triangle[2]The Weavers Triangle is a simple tool that can help you think about your project and do planning, monitoring and evaluation of your work. It can both help you develop your organisation's strategy and plans for its projects, as well as work out whether you are being successful in achieving what you set out to achieve. For small organisations a Weaver's Triangle is the best place to start.

The Weavers Triangle allows you to specify your goals, develop your outcomes and outputs (check if also activities?) to show how they link and contribute to each next stage in a logical manner.

An example of a Weavers Triangle is presented in figure 3.

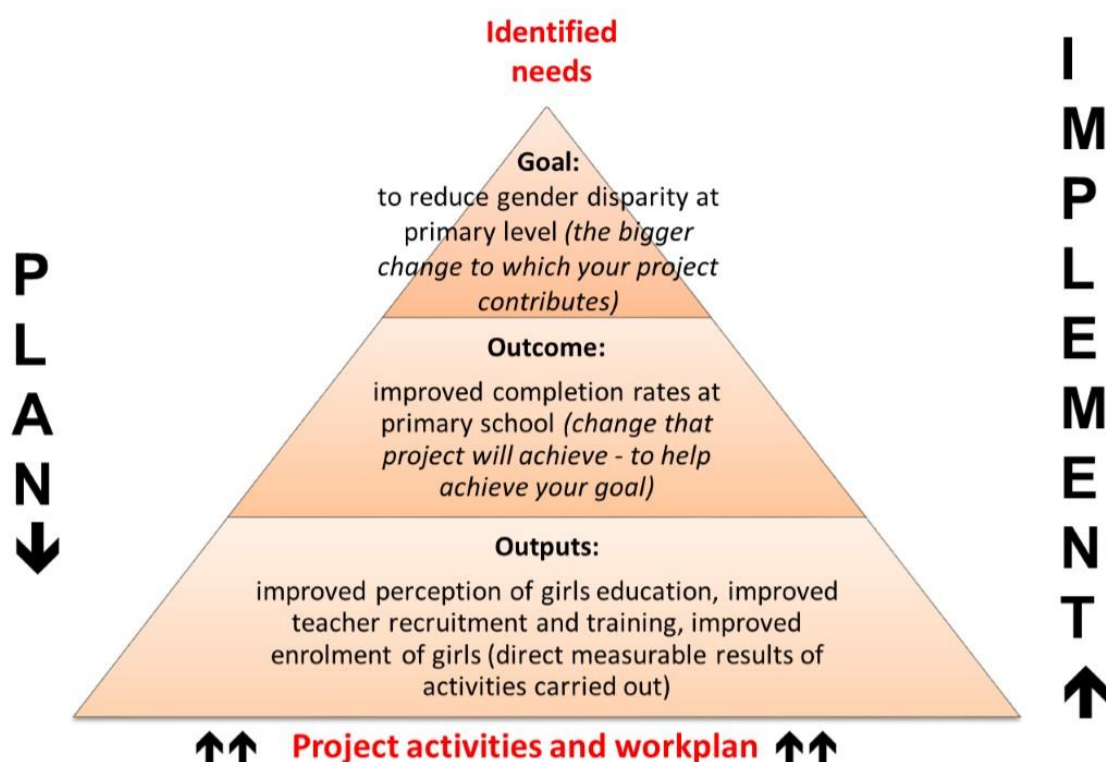**Figure 3: Example of a Weavers Triangle**

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[2] The Weavers Triangle was originally developed by Jayne Weaver who worked for the Charities Evaluation Services. For more information see www.ces-vol.org.uk and http://www.effectiveness. nidos.org.uk

Logical Framework

Similar to the Weavers Triangle, a Logical Framework (often referred to as a **Log Frame**) is a tool which allows you to specify your project's goals, outcomes, outputs and indicators to show how they link and contribute to each next stage in a logical manner. It also allows you to identify sources of data as well as the assumptions, i.e. the conditions necessary for outputs and outcomes to be delivered. The Log Frame comes is in the form of a matrix, as presented in table 5.

Theory of Change

The Theory of Change approach is an increasingly popular approach to development planning and MEL, which aims at promoting critical thinking and learning, and to unpack and challenge assumptions about how change happens. This Guide does not deal specifically with Theory of Change – please see the Resource section for references.

Table 5: Example of a Log Frame

	Project Description	Indicators	Data Sources	Assumptions
Goal	To reduce gender disparities in enrolment, retention and completion at primary level	Net enrolment rate (male/female)	School Records, National Statistics	That all enrolments to schools are recorded and available
Outcome	Girls claim their right to primary education in districts X and Y in order to transition to secondary school, gain qualifications, and improve their life chances and wellbeing.	Number of girls who complete primary six (in comparison to boys)	School records, district budget Girls, parents, community leaders, teachers	There is not situation of conflict, drought or famine to disrupt the school year
Output	Improved understanding of the importance of girls' education Improved quality of teaching at primary level	Perception of the importance of girls education Number of teachers supported to provide quality education	Girls, parents, community leaders, teachers Training records, teachers	Parents and community members are able to attend awareness raising events Teachers are supported to attend training
Activity	Community outreach sessions on importance of girls education Provide volunteer mentors to teachers	Uptake of outreach sessions Number of teachers mentored	Girls, parents, community members Teachers	Staff can gain access to target areas Teachers are given permission by employer to work with mentor

Data

What data you decide to collect, how and when are key to the success of your project. Including partners in data collection enriches the process by providing insight into findings. Those engaged locally are the only ones who have intimate knowledge of factors that can play a big part in affecting, and indeed distorting, both the data collection process and results. These could be practical factors such as local holidays or transport limitations affecting logistics, or sensitive cultural issues such as ethnic group divisions or gender relations affecting how and who you speak to. Involving communities in MEL activities proves your accountability to them as project participants as well as building community MEL capacity and strengthening community ownership of your project.

Types of data[3]

There are two main types of data: qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative data is numerical data, i.e. data that can be counted for example numbers, amounts, proportion. Qualitative data is descriptive, expressed in words or visual/auditory images, and gives a more holistic picture of a situation than one can get with quantitative data. Qualitative approaches are particularly useful for describing the range and nature of issues in a given situation; for eliciting perceptions, beliefs, and explanations; and for spontaneous discovery of issues emerging from the field. Qualitative data can best be described in words, opinions, levels of understanding, etc. or diagrams and pictures or videos.

Table 6: quantitative and qualitative data

Type of data	Examples
Quantitative	- # of women/girls in community leadership roles; - Proportion of people who agree that girls should have the same rights as boys.
Qualitative	- Description of levels of girls' participation in education awareness campaigns; - Perception of parents about the importance of girls education; - Description of the girls' daily activities.

Sources of data

Data is collected from two main sources, primary and secondary. **Primary sources** refers to data collected directly from target communities. **Secondary sources** refers to data from written records.

Table 7: primary and secondary sources of data

Source	Examples
Primary	- surveys completed by girls and parents - recordings of community meetings - observations by project staff
Secondary	- national statistics - published accounts - government documents

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[3] Taken from: Mary Picard, Ph. D; 2000 – 2001, Materials for the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DME) course, CARE Kosovo; P. 16 & 17.

Methods for data collection

The main methods for collecting data from primary sources are **individual interviews, focus group discussions, observation and surveys.** Each of these methods can be structured to provide qualitative or quantitative data. Secondary sources data is collected by **documentary review.** This is simply reviewing relevant records and reports to find information related to your data collection objective. Documentary reviews can help you identify already existing information and keep data collection from primary sources focused and at reduced cost. It is normally the first step in the data collection process where you identify gaps in information.

Data collected from primary sources can be done in participatory and non-participatory ways.

Table 8: qualitative/quantitative vs. participatory/non-participatory[4]

Type of data	Approach	
	Participatory	Non-participatory
Qualitative	Open-ended interviews Focus group discussions Participant observation Some PRA tools, e.g., mapping, ranking, charts, etc.	Direct observation without discussion Photos (if done by outsider) Spontaneous data (e.g., letters to newspaper)
Quantitative	Some PRA tools (e.g., scoring) Self-completion of questionnaire or records (e.g., by teachers, literate parents)	Structured surveys

Frequency of data collection varies depending on your project…

After deciding what data to collect and how, you will need to determine how frequently you want to undertake MEL activities. This ranges from routine monthly tracking activities and quarterly learning and reflection to annual reviews and evaluations.

Ensuring quality of data

The following set of common principles[5] underpins quality evidence in international development:

- **Voice and Inclusion:** ensure that the perceptions, beliefs and explanations by target communities are included in the data to provide a clear picture of who is affected by the project and how.
- **Appropriateness**: ensure that the right methods are used to collect different types of data.
- **Triangulation**: ensure that data is collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as primary and secondary sources of data This allows you to cross check whether the information provided is a true reflection of reality.
- **Contribution**: develop questions that will elicit responses on how change happens, the contribution of your project to bringing about change, and the factors outside your project influencing or contributing to change.

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[4] Tom Barton; Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation: CARE Uganda; 1997

[5] See www.bond.org.uk

- **Transparency**: ensure transparency in your dealings with partners and communities, for example transparency around project budgets and the use of project resources.

You should ensure your field plan meets **ethical considerations** for data collection. These include:

- ✓ *voluntary participation*: this requires that respondents for data collection are not coerced into participating in any study.
- ✓ *informed consent*: this means that prospective respondents must be fully informed about the procedures and risks involved in the study and must give their consent to participate.
- ✓ *risk of harm* : this requires that you do not put respondents in a situation where they might be harmed as a result of their participation in the study.
- ✓ *confidentiality*: this requires assuring respondents that information will not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study.
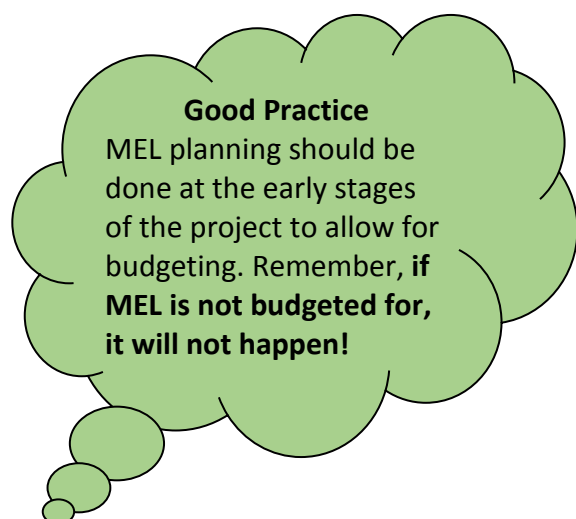- ✓ not raising *expectations* beyond what is in the control of your project.

Other ethical issues to consider throughout the MEL cycle relate to managing expectations of project benefits; providing feedback to communities after data collection exercises; and involving communities in key MEL processes.

MEL in Practice

Who should be involved in your MEL work?

Who should be involved in MEL will depend on your project strategy on participation and partnership. Like many international development organisations, yours may already be committed to participatory principles. Involving various stakeholders in MEL planning is a good way to set a participatory tone right from the beginning of your projects. A MEL planning process is also a good opportunity to engage your partners and communities and to familiarize them with your projects. Additionally, it is an opportunity to build the capacity of partners and target communities in MEL, and for you and your partners to understand your various roles and responsibilities.

Generally, all those who are expected to benefit from MEL should be involved in the planning. In practice, it may not be possible to include all project stakeholders in all steps of the MEL planning process. In this case, consider setting up a MEL core group to work on the details.

Good Practice
MEL planning should be done at the early stages of the project to allow for budgeting. Remember, **if MEL is not budgeted for, it will not happen!**

Who will manage or oversee MEL?

Your project manager and MEL Officer should have joint responsibility for overseeing the process. If you are a small organisations managing a few small projects you do not necessarily need dedicated MEL staff. The project manager should have the knowledge required for MEL. Even if your organisation can afford to have dedicated staff, it is important integrate MEL into all project roles to ensure coherence and effectiveness.

How much will your MEL cost?

It is common practice to allocate between 5-10% of the project budget to MEL. However, it is recommended that you plan for and cost MEL based on specific project needs. Generally, you should consider costing the following activities:
- consultations with communities on needs assessments and project design;
- participation of partners and communities in MEL planning;
- specific MEL activities including needs assessments, baselines, routine monitoring, ongoing reflection and learning, and periodic evaluations
- participation of partners and communities in implementing specific MEL activities.

Your project's MEL plan and level of participation of partners and communities will help you determine how much of the budget to allocate for each MEL activity.

How much time might it take?

The time spent on MEL planning varies from project to project and depends on the type of MEL plan envisaged. It is common practice to devote one week, in a workshop, to plan for MEL, and up to another week to finalise the outputs. This can take slightly longer if your partners and communities participate remotely.

It is recommended that you develop a MEL plan before you start project implementation. This will enable you figure out how long MEL activities might take, who has responsibility for which MEL activities and how much it might cost. Table 3 below provides indications of how long specific MEL activities might take.

Working well with consultants

Consultants are a good resource to rely on for support. Whilst having internal MEL capacity is best practice, not every MEL activity has to be done internally. Consultant services can be particularly useful for needs assessments, baselines, and evaluations. Where there is opportunity, assigning staff to team up and work with consultants is a good way of developing internal MEL capacity.

Learning

The learning part of MEL is the one most at risk of being overlooked or forgotten.

Collection, analysing and making sense of data is a great learning opportunity for your organisation. At the project level, you will learn what works well in a particular context or what does not work well, which aspects of a project has more influence the achievement of results, which strategies can be replicated etc.

At the organisational level, you can compare results across projects to determine which ones contribute to achieving your organisation's mission; you can also aggregate results from different projects (depending on project similarities or in response to cross cutting organisational indicators) to understand the wider reach of your organisation; or you can aggregate learning from different projects to guide the strategic development of new projects and funding opportunities.

You can facilitate both levels of learning through formal or informal learning and reflection meetings of all stakeholders. It is good practice to share learning at both project and organisational levels, and results achieved by projects (positive and negative) with your partners, communities, and funders, in response to their needs and the benefits MEL provides for them; as well as the general public (through your website). This strengthens accountability and transparency.

The risk is often that the learning stays with the people who were directly involved and is not shared with the organisation and is lost when the specific people leave. So You will need to ensure there is appropriate documentation of processes and reports (paper based, photos,

videos etc.); and appropriate storage (filing - electronic, paper based) of MEL outputs in order to keep learning within your organisation when key staffs leave.

How can you develop your organisations skills further?

You can develop your MEL skills further by working through the guide with a specific project example to get a good grasp of the MEL planning process, understanding of the key terminology and a feel of what your MEL framework and plan could look like. For this, you will find templates in the annexes that will help you.

NIDOS offers a number of services to help your organisation strengthen its effectiveness.

Mentoring NIDOS has a number of mentors, each with their own set of skills, and all with extensive experience of working with international NGOs. The mentoring process can focus on specific issues or identified needs within an organisation and help participants reflect and question existing practice. Having a mentor means access to someone external who can bring fresh eyes and help your organisation by asking useful questions, recording decisions and making constructive suggestions. If you are interested in learning more about the mentoring programme, please contact valeria@nidos.org.uk

Training Each year NIDOS runs a number of training courses in response to member feedback. Past courses include; producing good log frames, project management, social media, effective budgeting, fundraising strategy and IATI. NIDOS can also organise tailored/in-house courses; if you would like to find out more about this please contact gemma@nidos.org.uk

Mel Working Group NIDOS members with a particular interest in MEL can join the MEL Working Group. The group offers NIDOS members a space where they can share approaches to MEL, discuss challenges, learn about innovative tools, invite external guests to present, as well as organising ad-hoc training. All NIDOS members are welcome to join. If you are interested in joining, or would like more information, please email valeria@nidos.org.uk.

Support for recruiting MEL consultants for specific assignments. NIDOS keeps a database of external consultants that members can access (however, these consultants do not work for NIDOS nor are endorsed by NIDOS). Consultants have specific expertise in a number of areas, including MEL. Please contact allyson@nidos.org.uk if you would like more information.

Resources

Electronic platforms

Pelican Initiative: Platform for Evidence-based Learning & Communication for Social Change
The Pelican Initiative focuses on the central question: How can we learn more from what we do while at the same time having the biggest possible impact on the social change processes in which we engage?

Monitoring and Evaluation NEWS
A news service focusing on developments in monitoring and evaluation methods relevant to development programmes with social development objectives.

Better Evaluation
An international collaboration to improve evaluation practice and theory by sharing and generating information about options (methods or processes) and approaches

BOND Group on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (BOND members only)
The group is open to all Bond members, and its aim is to share learning and experience to improve practice on MEL. The group meets periodically in person and share resources electronically.

Participatory Methods
The Participatory Methods website, run by the Institute for Development Studies, provides resources to generate ideas and action for inclusive development and social change.

Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation – Managing for Impact
The portal is managed by Centre for Development Innovation (CDI), Wageningen University and Research centre. It provides access to key publications and internet resources on planning, monitoring and evaluation. Special reference is made to Managing for Impact, an integrated approach to managing for results with attention to engaging people in a learning oriented process.

General MEL Guidance

Investing in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning – Issues for NGOs to Consider (Itad, in association with nef Consulting. Edited by Jennifer Chapman, 2014).
This study was commissioned by Comic Relief, DFID, Big Lottery Fund, NIDOS and Bond to address the lack of evidence available to support NGOs working in international development in deciding what resources to commit to MEL. The study focused on understanding the full investment that NGOs are making on MEL, the kinds of MEL systems that NGOs have, and how NGOs use and value their MEL systems.

Project/programme monitoring and evaluation (M&E) guide (IFRC, 2011)
The purpose of this guide is to promote a common understanding and reliable practice of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for IFRC project/programmes.

A Step-by-Step Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation (School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford, 2014).
This resource is designed to help groups working on community led approaches to climate change and energy conduct their own Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). It aims to provide an

accessible background to the principles of M&E, together with selected links to resources and approaches that may be useful for your group.

[Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results](#) (UNDP, 2009).
The handbook was developed to help UNDP staff and partners to become more results-oriented and improve their focus on development changes and real improvements in people's lives.

[Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance for International Applicants and Grantees](#) (Comic Relief, 2013)
This document provides guidance for applicants and grantees on Comic Relief's expectations in terms of MEL. The aim is to help applicants and grantees to understand Comic Relief's MEL requirements and the kind of support Comic Relief can offer, both during the application process and over the life of the grant.

[An evaluation of Big Lottery Fund's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy for grant holders](#) (Big Lottery Fund, 2013)
This report summarises the findings of a research commissioned by the Big Lottery Fund to find out how Fund projects were using the evaluation and monitoring element of their budget and whether the allocation of up to 10% of grant budget towards monitoring and evaluation was felt to be appropriate; the impact of wider learning for projects; and the effectiveness of BIG's approach.

[Impact Evaluation Guide](#) (BOND 2015)
This is a guide to impact evaluation aimed at managers and commissioners.

Theory of Change
[Understanding Theories of Change in International Development](#) (Danielle Stein and Craig Valters, 2012)
This is a review of the concepts and common debates within 'Theory of Change' material, resulting from a search and detailed analysis of available donor, agency and expert guidance documents.

[Theories of Change in International Development: Communication, Learning, or Accountability?](#) (Craig Valters, 2014)
This paper seeks to address a critical gap in understanding the actual effects of using a Theory of Change approach, and considers how the approach may be better understood, if its aim is to improve development policy and practice.

MEL for advocacy and campaigning
[Top tips for better monitoring, evaluation and learning in coalition campaigns](#) (BOND).
The guide offers tips to understand the basic of MEL in coalition campaigns, to track progress and to capture learning.

[A guide to monitoring and evaluating policy influence](#) (Overseas Development Institute, 2011).
This paper provides an overview of approaches to monitoring and evaluating policy influence, based on an exploratory review of the literature and selected interviews with expert informants.

[Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Influence and Advocacy](#) (Overseas Development Institute, 2014)
This paper explores current trends in monitoring and evaluating policy influence and advocacy; discusses different theories of how policy influence happens; and presents a number of options to monitor and evaluate different aspects of advocacy interventions.

TEMPLATE – PLANNING MEL

	Specific MEL activity	Who's involved	Who's responsible	Expected dates	Expected duration	Cost
1	Needs assessments and baselines, including consultations with communities.					
2	Presentation of project to communities.					
3	Evaluations, including consultations with communities, analysis of findings with communities, and presentation of preliminary/final findings to communities for final feedback and input.					
4	Routine monitoring, reflection and learning, with partners and communities.					
5	Specific reflection and learning events with partners, communities and funders.					

This may change during project implementation; that's fine this is intended to be a starting point