



The CRS Asia M&E Guidance Series



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Revised – July 2011



Founded in 1943, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) support relief and development activities in more than 100 countries. Without regard to race, creed or nationality, CRS provides emergency relief in the wake of natural and man-made disasters. Through development projects in education, peace and justice, agriculture, micro-finance, health and HIV& AIDS, CRS works to uphold human dignity and promote better standards of living for the poor and disadvantaged overseas.

In Asia, CRS works with several thousand partner organizations, focusing on improving community resilience to disasters, including HIV/AIDS, promoting the dignity and empowerment of women, as well as strengthening agricultural livelihoods, community water management, health and education systems.

CRS also works throughout the United States to expand the knowledge and action of Catholics and others interested in issues of international peace and justice. Our programs and resources respond to the U.S. Bishops' call to live in solidarity-as one human family-across borders, over oceans, and through differences in language, culture and economic conditions.

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List of Acronyms

BCC	Behavior Change Communication
CP	Country Program
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HH	Household
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
IR	Intermediate Result
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
RTE	Real-Time Evaluation
SO	Strategic Objective
SOW	Scope of Work
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Introduction and Table of Contents

This series provides guidance for designing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. This series supports and complements [CRS' global M&E standards](#) (CRS 2009). While the global standards represent the agency's commitment to quality M&E as a key component of program quality, this series provides 'how to' guidance for operationalizing this commitment in practice. Each topic in the series includes its own set of standards (page 3), which emphasize the specific key messages and quality considerations relative to the topic. While the global M&E standards are high level overarching commitments, the standards in this series provide practical quality control considerations specific to individual components of an M&E system.

This guidance series is intended for programming staff at all levels including M&E staff, field staff, and project managers/officers, and highlights the role of each in multiple steps. The content of this series complements the information provided in both ProPack I (Stetson et al. 2004) and ProPack II (Stetson et al 200) and references key sections of both documents. Staff should have a solid foundation in ProPack I and II in order to maximize the utility of this guidance.

The guidance is intended to be dynamic and to engage staff members in the critical-thinking required to design and implement an M&E system. Each project is unique and good M&E practice will vary between contexts. For example, this guidance applies both to emergency and non-emergency contexts but sampling, tool content, and frequency of monitoring are all quite different in emergency settings than in non-emergency settings. What should remain constant in all contexts are the quality of the M&E system and the quality of the data it collects. Staff members should contact technical M&E technical staff (either in-country or regional) for support in implementing or discussing the guidance provided.

The development of the M&E system should be documented in an M&E Binder, or operations manual. The binder should include monitoring forms and survey questionnaires, sampling methodologies, and data entry and cleaning processes, for example. Thoroughly documenting the decision-making behind the M&E system provides staff with a ready reference against which future decisions and plans can be made and supports quality control processes and audits.

Staff members in the initial phases of M&E system design should first read the basic M&E guidance topics and then proceed to consult the guidance for planning and implementing an M&E system, following each in chronological order. Staff members which have begun designing or implementing their M&E system should identify the topics which are currently most relevant to their project. However, it would be worthwhile for these staff to review the full series to see if there are

revisions or changes which can be made to their current system to improve M&E quality.

This series aims to be a living document, revised and updated according to feedback received from the field. After reviewing or using the series, please send your suggestions or comments to Dominique Morel at dominique.morel@crs.org or Clara Hagens at clara.hagens@crs.org.

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4. Have you trained staff and partners on **using the monitoring forms**?
5. Have you conducted a **quality check** of the monitoring data?
6. Have you created a **monitoring database**?
7. Have you trained staff and partners on **data entry and analysis**?
8. Have you planned for **M&E meetings** or other events?

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Core M&E Standards

Core M&E Standards

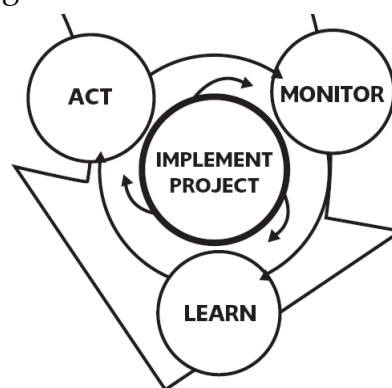
- #1. M&E systems include 'need to know' information only
- #2. M&E staff collects reliable data
- #3. M&E staff transforms data into information and then into knowledge
- #4. M&E staff uses and disseminates results

The following core M&E standards apply to all aspects of M&E and to each M&E activity. These core standards are stated broadly and meant to provide a foundation for the standards in the other guidance series.

#1. M&E systems include 'need to know' information only

It is important that M&E systems are light and able to provide timely data to meet information needs and inform project decision-making.

- ➔ *Include in your M&E system only information that you **need to know**. There is a great deal of information that is **nice to know**; however, nice to know information will only slow down the timeliness of your information system. Information which comes too late will likely not contribute to improved project quality.¹*



Source: Stetson et al. 2007

A light and efficient M&E system will allow you to **monitor, learn, and act** throughout project implementation.² An efficient M&E system also allows us to test the assumptions which we have build into our project. If project outputs have been achieved, but intermediate results have not been met, perhaps the planned outputs are not sufficient to achieve the intermediate results? Similarly, if the intermediate results have been achieved, but the strategic objectives have not, were the intermediate results most appropriate for these objectives?³

For a monitoring system to be responsive, it must produce timely data and results. Logically, timely analyses and timely results are required for timely decision-making. Monitoring data are collected to allow project staff and other stakeholders

¹ Refer to ProPack II, p. 97 for further information (Stetson et al. 2007).

² Refer to ProPack II, p. 200 for further information (Stetson et al. 2007).

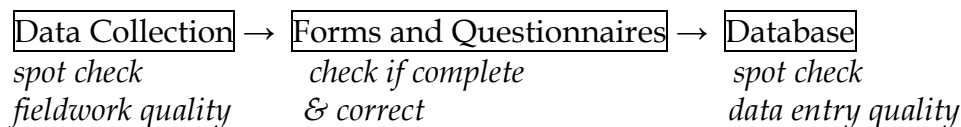
³ Refer to ProPack II, p. 179 for further information (Stetson et al. 2007).

to make decisions to improve project quality and responsiveness, without having to wait for mid-term or final evaluations and potentially missing key opportunities for project improvement. Monitoring data can reveal whether or not a training curriculum or IEC (information, education, and communication) materials have been effective in time for these curricula or materials to be revised and improved if needed. Monitoring data can also reveal community concerns and hesitations, which may be addressed by providing additional outputs (i.e. locks for female-headed households in a tsunami-response project to increase their sense of safety) or skills related to the project objectives.

- ➔ **Check early and check often** to make sure your project have the intended impact. *By first monitoring information from lower levels in the results framework (i.e. outputs), we can be more confident that the IR-level change will be accomplished. Use your monitoring data to identify which levels have been fully achieved and which levels have been partially achieved.*

#2. M&E staff collects reliable data

Key project and management decisions are based on M&E data and results. Collecting unreliable data will likely lead to poor decisions and decrease project quality. Reliable data begin with the appropriate tools and methodology for data collection, well-trained data collectors and data enterers, and requires several quality checks throughout the data collection and entry process.



#3. M&E staff transforms data into information and then into knowledge

Data, in their raw form, cannot meet project informational needs or allow for learning. Data are unanalyzed materials gathered by an information system. Data must be analyzed and transformed into **information** specifically formulated to meet M&E plan needs and inform decision-makers. The analysis plan should outline how to transform your project’s data into information. **Knowledge**, in turn, comes from the absorption, assimilation, understanding and appreciation of information.⁴

- ➔ *All data collected should be transformed into information and contribute to knowledge. Data that will not directly meet your informational needs should not be included in your data collection activities or in your M&E plan. Instead include such data in future operations research or other M&E activities.*

Learning is the process through which individual and agency knowledge is gained and ultimately project quality is improved.

⁴ Adapted from ProPack II, p. 99 (Stetson et al. 2007)

- ➔ *Ensure that all project and technical staff provide constructive feedback on the reports and briefs which convey the information and knowledge gained from the data.*

#4. M&E staff uses and disseminates results

Use the M&E results during regular project meetings and M&E-specific meetings. M&E results must be utilized in a timely manner so that any problems identified can be addressed without delay and successes can be replicated. The use of M&E results can be as simple as dedicating 10 – 15 minutes in each project meeting to discuss the latest monitoring or evaluation findings. Include project staff and managers in the M&E discussions.

- ➔ *After collecting and analyzing the data, we often mistakenly think the M&E activity is completed. The final step in this process is use of the results.*

Disseminate results throughout your organization and to multiple types of stakeholders. Include project staff, technical staff, and management staff in your dissemination plans. Each staff position will learn from the results in different ways and contribute differently to their interpretation and to the decisions made based on these results.

- ➔ *Knowledge and information are of no use when kept on the shelf. Be pro-active about sharing your results.*
- ➔ *Disseminating results to a variety of stakeholders contributes to the transparency of your work.*

Tailor the means of dissemination to the type of stakeholder. For example, donors may prefer to receive quarterly or annual reports, while other stakeholders may benefit most from a presentation or discussion. Hold a community meeting to disseminate the results to recipient or participating communities. Remember to include these community meetings in your timeline.

Include not only successes and accomplishments, but also challenges, weaknesses, and lessons learned in the results you disseminate. Challenges and weaknesses are also results and should be openly shared with stakeholders in order to maintain full transparency. Include an analysis of the results and how you intend to address any challenges or problems identified.

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Gender and M&E

Gender and M&E Standards

- #1. M&E systems include a comparison of data from women and from men*
- #2. M&E staff collects data from women in culturally appropriate ways*

Effective projects incorporate relevant gender issues and considerations in their design and in all monitoring and evaluation activities (Catholic Relief Services, 1998). Projects often tailor activities and interventions to meet women's specific needs and, similarly, M&E systems should be designed to draw women's perspectives, to consider gender issues in the local context, and to determine the ways in which interventions impact men and women differently. Gathering information from women on project impact often requires adapting tools and methods of data collection to make sure women's perspectives are heard.

➔ *Gender is a cross-cutting issue that should be considered at all stages of project design and implementation, including monitoring and evaluation activities.*

#1. M&E systems include a comparison of data from women and from men

It is not sufficient to measure and understand project progress and impact at the community-level given that projects often progress in different ways for men and women and have different ultimate outcomes. In one community, men may report that a new well in the community is beneficial because it supports livestock and allows for more irrigation while women may report benefits related to reduced time for water collection and improvements in child health. Women and men may also report different types of coping strategies during times of household food shortage. Similarly, project progress may differ for men and women, even within the same activities.

In order to compare data from women and men, begin by asking the same questions (qualitative and quantitative) of men and of women and compare their answers. Also include separate questions about project activities targeted towards women (for women) and questions about project activities targeted towards men (for men) if relevant.

➔ *Refer to your analysis plan to determine the type of gender analysis needed. Often analysis plans include specific instructions for comparisons between male and female perspectives on project outcomes, looking specifically at impacts on women.*

- ➔ *Based on women's daily activities and responsibilities, women typically can provide different types of information than men. For example, women may be more likely to know how much and what types of food their children consume while men might be more likely to know about local land agreements. Design specific questions to be asked to women that will draw upon their specific knowledge related to the project intervention.*

#2. M&E staff collects data from women in culturally appropriate ways

When collecting data, be sensitive to cultural norms around men and women in the same location. In some areas, women join men for community meetings while in other villages women are not able to attend any meetings, even within their own village. Assess the level and type of gender constraints in your target communities. In most contexts, it is preferable to hold separate focus groups for women and for men. Women-only focus groups allow for women to voice their opinions and may be more culturally-appropriate in many contexts. Female staff should facilitate and take notes for women-only focus groups.

- ➔ *Be sure that female staff is on data collection teams whenever possible. If you do not have female staff, be creative. Is there female partner staff that could work with CRS staff? Are there local female teachers, health workers, or students that could assist you with data collection with women at the village level?*

Talk to elders and community leaders so that they understand why you are speaking directly and separately to women. If elders and community leaders are comfortable with the situation you are less likely to have a male acting as a monitor or reporting back to the men what the women said during the session.

- ➔ *Be aware if there is a man outside the door listening, which can be just as constraining for women as having a male in the room.*

There may be some topics which are particularly controversial or emotional in your target communities. While these may be of particular interest to you, avoid asking direct questions about these topics. Questions which evoke overly emotional responses will not only yield unreliable data, they may also jeopardize the future of the data collection exercise. In extreme situations, bringing up controversial topics can quickly sour relations between your organization and communities and, if they are related to gender, place women at risk of harm.

For more information on gender and M&E, refer to:
[Integrating a Gender Dimension into Monitoring & Evaluation of Rural Development Projects](#) (The World Bank, 2001).

Project Monitoring Standards

- #1. M&E staff monitors the project and context both formally and informally*
- #2. M&E systems are designed to engage communities in monitoring*

#1. M&E staff monitors the project and context both formally and informally

Guidance on monitoring is integrated throughout the M&E Guidance Series; however, it merits additional attention here because the importance of informal monitoring is often understated or overlooked in M&E systems and by project staff. Informal monitoring refers to the knowledge of project progress and the project context gained by CRS and partner staff during each field visit. These informal monitoring data should be actively incorporated into project decision-making and management. Much of this knowledge may be assumed among project staff but only through sharing and discussing this knowledge can informal monitoring data inform project decisions and management. An example of a form designed to collect informal data is provided in Annex A.

- ➔ *Informal monitoring data are often quickly transformed into knowledge, given the depth of experience of CRS and partner staff. Sharing both the data (raw observations or feedback from community members or stakeholders) and the associated knowledge (gained through the interpretation of these data) will allow staff to discuss conclusions and gain new insights by considering multiple sources of data together.*

Informal data are commonly collected through observations of behaviors and practices, conversations with community members and leaders and other stakeholders, and observations of external factors which signify changes in the project context.

- Behavioral observations may include homecare practices of women with children under 5 years for a health project. For an agricultural project, staff may choose to observe the proportion of promoted crops planted at the beginning of the agricultural season.
- Conversations with community members and community leaders could focus on project achievements and obstacles, feedback on the implementation of activities, and any suggestions to increase overall project progress and impact.
- Observations of changing context for a health project could include reductions in water quality and availability (given that it may result in increased diarrhea rates). For an agricultural project, it may be important to observe the progress of the plant growth in the field many times during the agricultural

season to better predict the quality of the harvest and ultimately changes in the availability and access to staple foods in local markets.

- ➔ *Many of the examples above may also be included in formal monitoring tools but the advantage of monitoring informally (in addition to formally) is that informal data can be collected much more frequently, during each field visit.*

Include observation and conversations related to IR-level indicators and change. IR-level change is commonly evaluated during the mid-term evaluations but it is essential to monitor (formally and informally) progress towards these IR indicators to make sure the project is on the right track.

Encourage staff to contribute to each M&E event (part of existing project meetings or stand-alone events) with informal monitoring data (in addition to formal monitoring data if they are available). Work with staff to outline the key questions to be considered in informal monitoring. Examples of key questions for informal monitoring are included in Annex B. Record informal monitoring questions in your analysis plan (refer to Guidance for [Creating an Analysis Plan](#)).

- ➔ *Emphasize to CRS and partner staff that no field trip is complete without an element of informal monitoring! Remind staff how simple and straightforward informal monitoring can be. It can be as easy as a 15 minute discussion with a farmer or a walk through the community's agricultural fields. All informal monitoring should be properly documented (in monitoring reports) so that it can be shared.*

Informal monitoring alone is not sufficient and should be complemented by formal monitoring. Here formal monitoring refers to data collected through qualitative and quantitative tools to meet ProFrame information needs. This M&E Guidance Series also offers guidance for developing [Quantitative Tools](#) and [Qualitative Tools](#) as well as guidance for [random sampling](#) and [purposeful sampling](#) for monitoring.

#2. M&E systems are designed to engage communities in monitoring

Community involvement in monitoring is beneficial for both communities and project quality. Community engagement allows communities to play a more active role in project management, to reflect upon progress and to assess changes in their situation and context. Projects are enriched by gaining additional insight on how communities view progress and identify early signs of change and impact. Community involvement in monitoring also builds the community's capacity to direct their development, increases the community's sense of ownership of the project, and builds accountability and transparency.

- ➔ *Community participation in monitoring provides many benefits to the community in addition to contributing to the monitoring system. Community monitoring often increases the community's sense of ownership of the project and awareness of key issues which they have identified early on in the design process.*

In many cases, communities track indicators of progress and impact which are not included in the ProFrame (and thus not included in official project reports). For example, one community may chose to monitor the number of fruits being harvested from local trees before they ripen. In this community, people eat these fruit unripe only when they do not have enough of the local staple to eat. Thus, an increase in the number of unripe fruit harvested is a sign of food insecurity. While the number of unripe fruit taken may not be one of the project’s impact indicators, discussing this information with the community certainly provides insight into a changing food security situation.⁵

There is a spectrum of community participation in monitoring (see below). For current projects, identify where your project falls in this spectrum and determine if there are feasible steps which can be taken to increase the level of community participation in monitoring. For new projects, determine a feasible starting point given current staff and community capacity.

<i>Top down approach</i> ↓	<i>M&E Participation Spectrum</i>				<i>Participatory Approach</i> ↑
Communities provide data but don't receive the results	Communities provide data and receive feedback on the results	Communities provide data and participate in interpretation of data and results	Communities participate in the collection of data from community members and interpretation of data and results	Communities participate in the design of tools and methods, collect data, and interpret data and results	Communities design, implement, analyze, disseminate, and manage the monitoring system

For on-going projects, an easy starting point is to involve the community in the interpretation of monitoring results. Hold regular meetings with community members to discuss the monitoring results and interpret these results against the project’s monitoring questions and information needs. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tools are designed to maximize community participation and ownership and incorporating PRA tools in your monitoring system is a great step towards increased participation. Refer to the Guidance for [Collecting Qualitative Data](#).

➔ *Increased community participation requires staff capacity to train and support the community in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. CRS and partner staff can support communities during regularly scheduled field visits and community meetings.*

⁵ Instead of asking communities about the quantity of unripe fruit taken, a formal monitoring tool may include this coping strategy at the household level and ask households if they have harvested any food (fruit, staples or otherwise) during the last two weeks. Collecting these monitoring data through a survey would be statistically reliable but time-consuming, whereas informal monitoring conversations will provide instantaneous information. Moreover they provide communities with means of tracking their own food security situation.

The process for establishing community involvement in monitoring should also be participatory. CRS and partner staff should facilitate and support the community to design monitoring questions and indicators, providing input and minimal monitoring theory when necessary. Seven basic steps for engaging communities in monitoring are included in Annex C.

- ➔ *In facilitating the development of the community monitoring system and tools, emphasize to communities the importance of capturing early signs of change. Communities are likely to have great insights into indicators for early signs of change.*

Community Score Cards

Community score cards are a participatory tool which can be developed by community members to measure change and set thresholds for achievement. Communities begin by selecting the criteria or indicators to be tracked in the score card. Each indicator should be tied to a desired quality or change while many indicators can be used to measure the same quality or change. Community members designate the current status (either through voting or consensus) from a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest or best. The value for each criterion is summed to provide a snapshot of the current status. Using the score card regularly can track the course of change for multiple services or situations.

Additional information on scorecards:

[The Scorecard Toolkit: A Generic Guide for Implementing the Scorecard Process to Improve the Quality of Services.](#) (CARE Malawi, 2007)

For additional information:

[The Community's Toolbox: The Idea, Methods and Tools for Participatory Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation in Community Forestry](#) (FAO, 1990).

[People-Centered M&E: Aligning Incentives so Agriculture Does More to Reduce Hunger](#) (IDS, 2010).

Annex A. FIELD TRIP REPORT

Why: To provide Project/Program Managers, Heads of Programming & Heads of Office regularized and standardized feedback on a project's success and challenges, as updated through regular field visits

When: For staff who take trips to partners or field sites less than once a week, to be completed after each trip; for staff who regularly (daily or weekly) visit partners / field sites, to be completed once a week

Who: To be completed by most senior Project/ Field Officers, preferably electronically; reviewed and commented on by Project/Program Managers, especially action plan for follow up; then shared with respective Head of Programming/ Head of Office for final review/ approval

Sector:		Project Number(s):	
Office:		Start and End Date of Trip(s)	
Communities Visited:			
Overall Purpose of the Trip(s):			

A. Key Observations

should be based on anecdotal evidence (e.g. focus groups) , observations, or some other monitoring sheet (e.g. Classroom Observation sheet); other supporting documents should be attached

Reportable Outputs/Observations <small>(may be pre-determined by PM)</small>	Successes/ Highlights <small>(completed by most senior FO or PO)</small>	Challenges/ Ongoing Needs <small>(completed by most senior FO or PO)</small>	Follow Up Actions Recommended (who/ when) <small>(completed by most senior FO or PO)</small>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

B. Managers Comments

PM must insert comments/ feedback and share with direct reports; HoP/ HoO may choose to write additional comments if required

Submitted by: FO/ PO (Name/Sig/ Date)	Reviewed by: PM (Name/ Sig/ Date)	Approved by:HoP or HoO (Name/ Sig/ Date)	Returned to: FO/PO (Name/ Sig/ Date)
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Annex B. Examples of Informal monitoring questions

1. What have been the problems, if any, with project implementation? What have been the successes, if any, with project implementation? What are the reasons for these problems and successes?
2. What has been the project's progress so far (considering multiple levels of indicators in the ProFrame)? Has progress varied among different groups? Consider different geographic areas, households of different socio-economic status, and male and female participants.
3. Are project activities reaching the target groups? Consider who is participating in meetings, attending trainings, receiving inputs or goods. Discuss the effectiveness of the targeting with non-participants as well to receive an additional perspective.
4. What has changed or is changing in the broader context for these communities and households? Consider change in relation to the project's critical assumptions. How should the project tailor its future activities or interventions to account for these changes in context?

Annex C. Seven Steps for Involving Communities in Monitoring

1. Discuss and identify reasons for monitoring

Start by explaining the general purpose of monitoring to community and then facilitate a discussion about whether monitoring is important for communities. If the community decides that monitoring is important, ask the community to identify 2 or 3 concrete reasons why.

➔ *Identifying that the community places importance on the concept of monitoring and is interested in participating in monitoring (in some capacity) is necessary before proceeding to the next step!*

2. Review objectives and activities of project

Revisit with the community the objectives of the project and the activities included. The review may be brief, but remember that not all community members will be familiar with all aspects of the project.

3. Develop monitoring questions

Facilitate a discussion in which the community identifies a series of monitoring questions (5 or less) which would be of interest for them to track throughout the life of the project. Begin this discussion without referring to the project's monitoring questions to solicit fresh ideas from the community, without community members thinking there is a right or wrong answer. After the community has identified their monitoring questions, present the project's monitoring questions so that the community is aware of what CRS and partner staff will be tracking.

➔ *If this is the community's first experience in participatory monitoring, start with one monitoring question to slowly introduce the community to the concept and process.*

4. Identify indicators

Ask the community to identify one or two indicators for each monitoring question. Spend a bit of time explaining the concept of indicators and give a few examples of less complex indicators.

5. Identify tools

The indicators identified by the community may or may not require tools. Tools can include basic worksheets (if there are literate community members interested in participating in data collection), participatory tools or discussions with key community members.

6. Decide who will monitor

Ask the community how the monitoring responsibility should be allocated. Communities may prefer to have a few individuals collect the data while others may be interested in creating a monitoring committee.

7. Analyze and present results

Ask the community how they would like to structure the analysis sessions and to present the results to the larger community. Emphasize the importance of participation in analysis and involving more than just those who participated in collection. The analysis and dissemination of results can take place in the same sessions or at different times. These may be scheduled during existing community meetings or as separate events.

Source: The Community's Toolbox: The Idea, Methods and Tools for Participatory Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation in Community Forestry (FAO 1990).

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Creating an M&E Plan

M&E Plan Standards

- #1. M&E plans are finalized within the first quarter of the project*
- #2. An M&E plan's level of complexity is appropriate for the scale and timeframe of the project*
- #3. M&E plans include an appropriate balance of qualitative and quantitative data*

#1. M&E plans are finalized within the first quarter of the project

The first step in creating a quality M&E system is to ensure that you are collecting the appropriate data to meet the information needs of your project's various stakeholders. Your M&E plan should clearly reflect these information needs. Annex A presents a template for summarizing your project's M&E plan. Refer to ProPack I Chapter IV (Stetson et al. 2004) and ProPack II Chapters IV, VI, and VII (Stetson et al. 2007) for guidance on developing a ProFrame and an M&E plan. Annex B provides further for guidance and tips for completing an M&E plan.

- ➔ *The ProFrame provides the foundation for the M&E plan. Ensure that your ProFrame clearly states your objectives and anticipated results and has been reviewed and finalized by relevant CRS and partner staff prior to beginning your M&E plan.*
- ➔ *To review the quality and appropriateness of your M&E Plan, refer to the M&E System Review Tool [Step # 1](#).*

The M&E plan should be finalized early within the program cycle, by the end of the first quarter at the latest. For some programs, it is feasible to finalize the M&E plan prior to the start of the program. For other programs, it is feasible to finalize the M&E plan within the first quarter of the program. Specify an appropriate deadline for the finalization of the M&E plan for your project and communicate this date to all relevant CRS and partner staff. Ask these staff to participate in a review session or workshop on the M&E plan and allow for sufficient time to revise the M&E plan ahead of this date.

- ➔ *Avoid an extended cycle of revisions and drafts of the M&E plan. Some projects have continued past mid-term with their M&E plans still in draft form or incomplete and have ultimately not collected required monitoring data throughout the life of the program. It is important to consolidate feedback and finalize the M&E plan within the project's first quarter (at the latest) to ensure that correct data are collected throughout the project.*

Create an M&E binder (or Operating Manual) to house all relevant M&E documents for your project, including the Results Framework, ProFrame, M&E plan template, monitoring, evaluation and reporting formats and tools, and schedules for analysis and reflection events and for reporting. Refer to the Monitoring System Review tool for a checklist of suggested M&E binder components. Use this binder as a reference through the life of the program and be sure to add any new or revised documents or tools as they are developed.

- ➔ *Include a narrative for each M&E form in your M&E binder which provides in-depth instructions on how to use that monitoring form. These instructions will serve as a reference for M&E staff and the data collection team and complement their training and orientation on the tools.*

#2. An M&E plan's level of complexity is appropriate for the scale and timeframe of the project

The M&E plan should be as simple as possible while meeting the project's information needs; the level of complexity of the M&E plan will vary depending on the level of complexity and time-frame of the project. Some one-year projects have M&E plans that require extensive data collection and too great a portion of time and resources are spent on M&E. While no strict rule applies, shorter and less complex projects (including many emergency response projects) should have lighter M&E systems, meaning fewer indicators and less complex and time-consuming methodologies. Conversely, multi-year or multi-sectoral projects may require that more resources are dedicated to M&E, including full mid-term and final surveys for example.

- ➔ *For short-term projects or for emergency projects, consider using mainly qualitative data to monitor the projects at IR and SO levels, in addition to quantitative activity-level and output-level tracking. Limit or exclude indicators that will require household surveys if you do not think it will be feasible to conduct a baseline and final household-level survey during the project's time-frame.*

The level of complexity of the indicators for the project should also be appropriate for the complexity of the project. Some indicators (i.e. mortality or morbidity rates, anthropometrics) are complex indicators which, by nature, require large samples and/or extensive human resources and should be avoided especially for short-term and emergency projects.

#3. M&E plans include an appropriate balance of qualitative and quantitative data

Ensure that your M&E plan includes elements of both qualitative and quantitative data. M&E plans without qualitative data will provide numbers and figures without a sense of context or an adequate explanation of 'why' or 'why not'. Conversely,

M&E plans without quantitative data included provide information about the context and community thoughts and perceptions, but the information is very difficult to generalize outside of the surveyed communities or perhaps outside of the surveyed households. Many objective statements have both qualitative and quantitative components. For example, household use of improved hygiene practices can be measured quantitatively to provide the percent of households practices the defined behaviors and qualitatively to understand why households do and do not practice different behaviors.

- ➔ *Be sure that indicators in your M&E plan which require quantitative data (such as '%', averages or sums) will be collected with quantitative tools and that qualitative data will be collected with qualitative tools. Relying on qualitative methods, such as focus groups, to provide quantitative data is a common mistake.*

Annex A. M&E Plan Template

M&E Plan Template								
Proframe element	Indicator (with definition of terms as needed)	Data Collection				Means of analysis		Use of information for communication & decision-making
		Method	Frequency of Collection	Person who will collect data	Respondents (who to talk to)	Type of analysis	Comparison groups	
S.O.1								
S.O.2 ...								
I.R.1.1								
I.R.1.2...								
I.R.2.1.....								
OUTPUT 1.1.1								
OUTPUT 1.1.2								
OUTPUT 1.2.1								
OUTPUT 2.1.1...								
Key Assumptions								
Cross-cutting elements*								

* As appropriate

Annex B. M&E Plan Template Guidance and Tips

Column: Guidance	Example
<p>Proframe element: Enter all SOs, IR, outputs, critical assumptions and cross-cutting themes for the project.</p> <p><i>Note: Different terms are used by different donors. Use the terms that the donor is most comfortable with.</i></p>	<p>IR1.2—Targeted beneficiaries adopt promoted agricultural behaviors.</p>
<p>Indicator (with definition): State full indicator (including targets and timeline) for each ProFrame element. Include definitions for any words or concepts in the indicator that may not be understood the same way by everyone.</p> <p><i>Note: Many concepts may be clear to CRS and partner staff but may be understood differently by others and in different contexts. Common examples include “appropriate”, “sufficient”, etc. but also terms such as “capacity”, “preparedness”, or “livelihood security”. For emergency responses, you will need to define what “Sphere compliant” means in your particular context.</i></p>	<p>60% of targeted households adopt one or more promoted agricultural behaviors by mid-term.</p> <p>“Adopting” refers to utilizing during the previous/current agricultural season. “Promoted agricultural behaviors” include improved seed varieties, inter-cropping, and using improved fertilizer.</p>
<p>Data collection – method(s): Identify the method(s) for collecting data against the indicator, e.g. HH survey, focus group discussions, observations, etc. For SO and IR level indicators, different methods for monitoring and for evaluation will usually be selected. Include both formal and informal monitoring methods in the table.</p> <p><i>Note: IRs, for example, may be measured with a HH survey at baseline, mid-term, and final as well as monitored throughout the life of the project using a combination of observations and informal discussions with beneficiaries and community leaders.</i></p>	<p>HH survey, direct observation of planted fields, key informant interviews</p>
<p>Data collection – frequency of collection: Determine how often the collection should take place.</p> <p><i>Note: Each method may have a different frequency of collection. Be sure to consider seasonal factors when determining the timing and frequency of collection. Data collection should be frequent enough to capture change, but not more. If data are collected more often, they will not show results and this will result in a waste of time and resources. Consider how often the indicator will change. Relate the timing and frequency of data collection to project milestones (from your DIP) related to this objective statement.</i></p>	<p>HH survey – baseline, midterm, and final</p> <p>Direct observation – monthly, during agricultural season only</p> <p>Key informant interviews – quarterly, during agricultural season only</p>
<p>Data collection – who will collect the data: List the one person who has primary responsibility for actual collection of data.</p>	<p>Agricultural field officer.</p>

<p>Data collection – Respondent (who to talk to): Identify the type of respondents/groups who will give the most reliable data for the specific indicator. Be as specific as you can, e.g. female or male beneficiaries, landless or landowning farmers, all or only target HH...</p>	<p>Male farmers in targeted communities.</p>
<p>Means of analysis – Type of analysis: Identify the most appropriate type of analysis for the indicator, e.g. summary tables, review of data, qualitative matrices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Databases</u> are used for quantitative data and present summary tables, e.g. the cumulative numbers or percents stated in the indicator. Excel and SPSS are commonly used databases. • <u>Review of data</u> is appropriate for qualitative data. If the data are limited in scope and scale, the review can be limited to reading through notes and field observations. • <u>Qualitative matrices</u> are used to organize more extensive qualitative data and when comparison groups are included in analysis. Post a matrix on the wall and enter the data for staff to review and discuss. <p>If a particular indicator requires multiple types of data collection, include the type of data analysis for each method. Be sure to record these means of analysis in the project’s analysis plan (refer to pg. 27-30).</p> <p><i>Note: in all cases, results highlighted in the analysis should be discussed and interpreted with project staff at the first available opportunity.</i></p>	<p>HH survey – excel database to produce summary tables</p> <p>Observation – systematically review (share and discuss) observations of field staff during weekly debrief meetings</p> <p>Focus group discussions – enter data into qualitative data matrix on wall</p>
<p>Means of analysis - comparison groups: determine whether you will need to compare the data from different groups in order to understand differences in experience or impact. <i>Refer to the guidance for developing analysis plans (pg. 27-30) for more information</i></p>	<p>Farmers in communities targeted by Partner A and by Partner B.</p> <p>Poor vs. better off farmers</p>
<p>Use of information – decision-making and reporting: Think ahead about how the information will be used in project decision-making and communication. Specify which reports will use the data and the meetings or events in which the data will be discussed or used. Indicate the frequency of the meetings and reports as applicable.</p> <p><i>Note: The data should not be collected and analyzed more often than they will be used for decision-making or communication & reporting.</i></p>	<p>Quarterly reports</p> <p>Monthly project meetings</p>

For additional information on developing M&E plans, refer to ProPack I, pg. 97-148 (Stetson et al. 2004) and ProPack II, pg. 83-130 (Stetson et al. 2007).

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Creating an Analysis Plan

Creating an Analysis Plan Standards

- #1. M&E systems include analysis plans for monitoring and for evaluation*
- #2. Analysis plans remain dynamic throughout the life of the project*

#1. M&E systems include analysis plans for monitoring and for evaluation

Analysis plans help to organize the analysis process and provide a good reference when developing tools and methodologies to ensure that the data collected will meet all project information needs. Analysis plans frame the project's major monitoring or evaluation questions, and may include learning questions or critical assumptions related to the project's underlying theory or theories of change, as appropriate. Analysis plans also outline the steps required to calculate and interpret M&E results.

- ➔ *Analysis plans record which groups (if any) should be compared during data analysis and provide any calculations required to create these groups and compare the corresponding data.*

CRS and partner staff should work together with relevant stakeholders to create the analysis plans, in particular to develop the monitoring and evaluation questions, discuss the methods, and determine how theories of change and assumption will be checked or tested.

Analysis plans for monitoring and for evaluation should be created separately given that the monitoring and evaluation questions and the process for analyzing the two types of data will be quite different. Refer to Annex A for key components of an analysis plan.

- ➔ *House both monitoring and evaluation analysis plans in your M&E binder so they can be easily located during tool development and analysis.*

#2. Analysis plans remain dynamic throughout the life of the project

Analysis plans are dynamic and should be updated and altered throughout the life of the project. Many aspects of the analysis plan (such as those directly related to ProFrame information needs) will remain constant throughout the life of the project, but following initial analyses or as the context or project stage changes, new analyses

or comparison groups may become relevant and should be included in the plan. Project theories of change and critical assumption (also housed in the analysis plan) should be refined and updated as learning occurs (both through monitoring and through evaluation). Analysis plans can also be updated and expanded during the analysis process. Initial findings will often spark new ideas for groups to be compared with existing data; however, be sure that these new ideas fall into the 'need to know category' before proceeding with additional analysis. Any new ideas should be recorded in the analysis plan to serve as a reference for future work.

- ➔ *Analysis plans for monitoring should be updated to focus on higher-level change as initial changes (at the activity and output levels) begin to occur. Keep track of the project's current stage of implementation and change and begin to monitor the next level of change early to make sure the project stays on the right track. This is especially important for IR-level change – monitor early and often!*
- ➔ *Analysis plans for evaluation should be updated just prior to evaluation events. If the mid-term evaluation plan was created at the time of project design, revise the plan just before the mid-term to incorporate any changes in context and information gained from project monitoring data. Similarly, analysis plans for final evaluations should be adapted based on both monitoring and mid-term evaluation findings.*

Annex A. Key Components of an Analysis Plan

Analysis plans should include the following key components:

1. Monitoring/Evaluation Questions

Common monitoring questions include, but are not limited to:

- Level of project progress against planned achievements
- The effectiveness of targeting
- Early signs of intended change (at all levels of the ProFrame)
- Early signs of unintended change
- Changes in the context at the household and community level
- Problems and successes in implementation of project activities

Common evaluation questions can be related to:

- Appropriateness of project strategies and interventions
- Efficiency of implementation
- Effectiveness of the activities
- Impact of the project (intended and unintended, positive and negative)
- Sustainability of the project's impact

Refer to ProPack II Chapter VII 'Project Evaluation and Close-out' (Stetson et al. 2007) and [Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria: An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies](#) (ODI 2006) for more information on developing evaluation questions.

2. Cross-tabulations

List any cross-tabulations required for analysis which have not already been specified in the M&E plan. This is important for both impact results and for tracking project progress and outputs. It is also helpful to create the tables to house these results at this time.

- ➔ *Save the syntax for calculations in the analysis plan so that the calculations can quickly be rerun with new data or altered slightly and run again.*

3. Comparison groups

List all comparison groups required for the project's information needs. Common comparison groups include male-headed vs. female-headed households, different wealth groups (based on household asset ownership), different geographic regions, and households with different primary livelihood strategies.

- ➔ *Comparison will often require additional calculations to create the comparison groups (wealth groups, levels of livelihood security, etc). Record these calculations in your analysis plan.*

For both qualitative and quantitative data, make sure that your sampling strategies support these comparisons. The sample size for quantitative data must be designed to support comparisons between groups (or “strata” as they are referred to in random sampling) if statistical comparison is required. Qualitative data must be collected from appropriate groups or individuals in order to be able to adequately represent intended comparisons.

➔ *Ensure that qualitative data will allow for necessary comparisons. Make a note of what perspectives should be represented by the qualitative data.*

4. Theories of change, critical assumptions, and learning questions

State how the project’s theories of change will be tested or checked through the monitoring and evaluation data. Theories of change are suggested relationships between occurrences or factors, such as types of households and levels of food security that are key to achieving the project’s higher level impact. Theories of change may be tested through IR and SO level ProFrame indicators, monitoring whether activities and outputs result in intended change in behavior and whether these in turn lead to the higher level outcomes aimed for. The project’s critical assumptions, identified in the ProFrame, should also be monitored to ensure that the intended change can occur in the project context.

Operations Research projects typically include learning questions that frame the M&E plan and analysis. Learning questions are larger questions, often about the method of project implementation, the context for participating households and communities, and/or individual perspective or behaviors.

➔ *Monitoring theories of change, critical assumption, and learning questions will likely require synthesizing multiple indicators or results. The interpretation should include multiple perspectives held by different stakeholders.*

5. Special reporting requirements

List any special reporting requirements that may have been requested by donors and other stakeholders. These may include different outputs, indicators, or comparisons not included in the ProFrame.

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Quantitative Tool Development

Quantitative Tool Development Standards

- #1. Quantitative tools include only 'need to know' information*
- #2. Quantitative tools include only quantitative questions*
- #3. Quantitative tools are field-tested and revised as needed prior to use*

#1. Quantitative tools include only 'need to know' information

Review the project monitoring and evaluation plan to identify your quantitative information needs for either monitoring or evaluation tools. The information needs stated in the M&E plan are considered 'need to know' information, meaning they are required to monitor and evaluate the project. Additional information which may be of interest but that is not stated in the M&E plan is considered 'nice to know'. 'Nice to know' information would likely be of interest, but is not essential to understand the progress or impact of the project. Collecting 'nice to know' information risks taking away staff time and other resources that should be focused on quality project implementation, including quality M&E for the project. By building the questions directly from the indicators in your M&E plan, the questionnaire will stay as short as possible and the data collection process will be more efficient.

➔ *The M&E plan should also state whether the quantitative data should be collected at the household level, the community level, or from another source. In general, information common to all members of a community (number of different types of households, main hazard risks, last flood events, etc) should be asked in a community-level survey. Information which varies for different households (livelihood strategies, monthly income, dietary diversity, etc) should be asked with household-level surveys.*

Review your analysis plan to determine which comparison groups are required for analysis. For example, households may be compared based on socio-economic status, geographic location, and flood-affected or drought-affected status. The analysis plan should state what information is required to create these comparison groups. Include survey questions to collect the comparison group data.

Once you have completed your draft questionnaire, **recheck the questionnaire** against the M&E plan to make sure that 1) the questionnaire includes all M&E information needs stated in the M&E plan and 2) the questionnaire doesn't include additional information (that is only 'nice to know').

Refer to Annex A for guidance on developing and formatting the questionnaire. While monitoring questionnaires are often simpler and shorter than evaluation tools due to lighter monitoring information requirements, monitoring tools should still follow the guidance for tool development (Annex A) and for questionnaire development provided below.

#2. Quantitative tools include only quantitative questions

Quantitative data refer to numerical responses or responses which can be coded, such as 'yes/no' questions. In contrast, qualitative data are longer responses or discussions. Quantitative tools should include questions which generate quantitative data only. Questions which generate quantitative numerical data include 'minutes to reach nearest water source' and 'number of meals eaten yesterday', for example. Questions with coded responses allow respondents to reply with words or phrases and are not limited to numerical responses. However, the coded responses for the question quickly categorize the respondent's answer into one response in a list of common responses provided. Refer to Annex B for guidance on developing quantitative questions and to Annex C for common problems and solutions in question development.

- ✓ *Any open-ended questions required by the M&E plan should be included in qualitative data tools.*

State the units used in each question so that respondents provide comparable data (meters vs. kilometers, etc). **Code responses** whenever possible to ease the data analysis process. Questions can be coded as 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know'. Questions can also be coded by offering a multiple choice selection of a range of common or expected responses. Coded responses may include ranges if you anticipate that these ranges will be adequate for data analysis. For example, you may ask 'how far is the nearest drinking water source from your household?' and for coded responses include 'less than 1 km', '1-3 kms', and '5 kms or more'.

- ➔ *Refer to qualitative data to inform the coded responses. Create the list of possible responses based on recent focus group discussions or other qualitative exercises in which communities have provided feedback on related issues. If you have not had an opportunity to conduct qualitative exercises or do not have recent qualitative data available, refer to field staff or other persons on your team who are most knowledgeable about a particular sector within your target communities*
- ➔ *Include both correct and incorrect options for knowledge-related questions. It is important to understand the community's level of awareness and common misconceptions. Again utilize the qualitative data to draft both correct and incorrect options for these questions.*
- ➔ *Always include an option of 'other' in the list of coded responses and provide adequate space for enumerators to record the specific answers given by respondents.*

#3. Quantitative tools are field-tested and revised as needed prior to use

Field test the questionnaire as a part of the larger training for the quantitative data collection team (refer to M&E Guidance on [Training and Field-Testing](#)). The review during training and the field test are opportunities to gain additional insights from the data collection team based on their experience and to determine whether the questions will generate the intended types of answers from respondents. Based on the discussion and feedback from the field test, make any required revisions to finalize the questionnaire.

Annex A. Guidance for Developing and Formatting the Questionnaire

Begin by including a **standard introduction** at the top of the questionnaire for enumerators to read to each interviewee prior to conducting the survey. Standard introductions commonly include the objective(s) of the study and basic information about your organization and state that any information collected will remain anonymous and that participating in the survey does not guarantee participation in any projects in the future.

Include unique **questionnaire identification** code at the top of each questionnaire. Develop a system for questionnaire identification based on location and any other relevant information. Keep a record of the questionnaire codes which are located in a given geographic area or which were asked among a specific type of household, etc. This information will be helpful during data analysis. Also include a place for enumerators to record their names.

- **Number each question** with a unique number so that you can refer to questions by number during training. This will also help with data entry and data analysis.
- **Review the order** of themes (agriculture, education, water, etc...) and the order of questions within each theme. Cover each theme fully before moving on to the next.
- **Build in skips** to maintain the logical flow of the questions during each interview. Skips ensure that respondents do not have to answer questions which do not apply to them. For example, if a respondent answers 'no' to 'do you have access to a latrine?', build in a skip so that this respondent will not be asked the follow-up question of 'how many people are currently using this latrine?'. Refer to the example given below.

D11.	Do you treat your drinking water?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No → <i>skip to D13.</i> 2. Yes 3. Don't know
D12.	What are the all of the methods you use to treat your drinking water? <i>Circle all that apply.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boiling 2. Filtering 3. Treat with chlorine 4. Other (specify) _____
D13.	What is your main water source? <i>Circle only one response.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canal 2. Spring 3. Well 4. Other (<i>specify</i>) _____

Annex B. Tips for Developing Quantitative Questions

- ✓ **Refer to previous surveys** from the same sector to see how questions were phrased and the lists of coded responses provided. If possible, discuss which questions worked well and which did not with staff who participated in the survey. It is important to build on past experience and to avoid repeating the same mistakes.
- ✓ **Refer to international guidance** for developing survey questions. Many sectors, including health, nutrition, education and agriculture, have extensive guidance on developing internationally-recognized indicators and survey questions. Refer to the FANTA project at www.fantaproject.org for guidance.⁶
- ✓ **Make questions specific** so that they will be understood in the same way by all respondents. Include detail and ask that the enumerators read the questions *word for word* during data collection.
- ✓ **Note that some indicators may require multiple questions.** For example, you need to first ask 'did you attend a health center in the last 6 months?' before asking 'how many times did you attend a health center in the last 6 months?'
- ✓ **Ensure that the questions are culturally-appropriate** by getting input from experienced staff with a good understanding of the local context.
- ✓ **Limit questions to one piece of information.** If questions include multiple pieces of information (such as 'do you limit your number of meals and the number of items in your diet during the hungry season'), it will be difficult to interpret the responses. Ask these questions separately.
- ✓ **Use appropriate language** which will be understood by respondents. The questionnaire should be developed in or translated into the language in which it will be conducted. There should be no translation in the field. Work with field staff to determine which words and terms will be best understood by targeted communities or households. Wording of the question should be simple and clear and not open to multiple interpretations. If you translate the questionnaire after it is developed, thoroughly review the quality of the translation or translate the questionnaire back into the original language and compare this re-translation with the original draft to identify any gaps or discrepancies.
- ✓ Ensure that questions are **neutral, not biased** and that they are not leading participants towards a particular answer. Think about any assumption that the question might contain.
- ✓ **Avoid emotionally-charged or overly personal questions** which may draw out a heated response or make the respondent feel uncomfortable. Either can jeopardize the remainder of data collection with this respondent.
- ✓ **Ask questions about the respondent's own knowledge, attitude, and practice.** Do not ask respondents about other people's practices as these data would not be reliable and would potentially be subject to bias.

⁶ The FANTA project provides technical assistance related to food and nutrition and is supported by USAID.

- ✓ **Specify whether the enumerator should read the list of possible responses** or if the respondent should provide the answer without a list to choose from. Include this information just after the question itself. It is rare that the list should be read before the participant has a chance to respond. Consider the type of information you would like to collect when deciding whether to read the list or not.
- ✓ **Specify whether the enumerator should record one or multiple answers.** Following questions which could solicit multiple responses, provide a note to the enumerator stating either 'circle only one answer' or 'circle all that apply'. If you are hoping for multiple answers, include a note to the enumerator to prompt the respondent by saying 'any others?' or 'anything else?' so that respondents will know to provide multiple answers.
- ✓ **For additional tips and guidance,** refer ProPack II, page 113 (Stetson et al 2007).

Annex C. Common Problems and Solutions in Developing Quantitative Questions

Question Examples	Issue	Improved question
<p>1. Do children use the latrine and water tank at school? __ Y __ N</p>	<p>This question includes multiple pieces of information. If a respondent answers ‘yes’, it is not clear if the children use the latrine only, use the water tank only, or if they use both the latrine and the water tank at school.</p>	<p>OPTION 1: Do children use the latrine at school? __ Yes __ No Do children use the water tank at school? __ Yes __ No</p> <p>OPTION 2: Which of the following facilities do the children use at school: (check all that apply): __ latrine __ water tank __ other (specify) _____</p>
<p>2. How far do you live from school?</p> <p>How far is your nearest water source from your home?</p>	<p>These questions do not specify what type of information the respondent should provide. Some respondents may answer ‘15 minutes’ while others may answer ‘5 kms’. These two answers would not be comparable during data analysis.</p> <p>Specify which unit of time and distance the enumerator will record on the questionnaire. Each response must be recorded in the same unit. Include a simple calculation table if the calculation is at all complicated, to reduce error (e.g. minutes to hours).</p>	<p>How much time does it take you to reach the nearest water source? _____ minutes</p> <p>How many kms away is the nearest water source from your home? _____ km.</p>
<p>3. Are you following DEO guidance on forming PTAs?</p> <p>Is the teacher using TLM correctly?</p>	<p>Abbreviations can be confusing, so write out the words whenever possible. If respondents do not have a good understanding of DEO (District Education Office) guidance or TLM (teaching learning materials), they may have trouble answering this question. These questions can be broken up into multiple questions about DEO guidance or TLM practices.</p>	<p>Were elections called when forming parent teacher associations? __ Yes __ No Which materials did the teachers or students use during the lesson? <i>Check all that apply.</i> __ flashcards __ posters __ pocket board __ other (specify) _____</p>
<p>5. What percentage of your average monthly income is from remittances?</p>	<p>It is not likely that respondents (at the household-level or at the community-level) will be familiar with the concept of percentages. Instead, include multiple questions which will allow you to calculate percentages during data analysis.</p>	<p>What was your household income last month (in rupees)? _____ rupees What was the amount of remittances that your household received last month (in rupees)? _____ rupees</p>

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Developing Qualitative Tools

Qualitative Tool Development Standards

- #1. Qualitative tools include only 'need to know' information*
- #2. Qualitative tools include only qualitative questions*
- #3. Qualitative tools are field-tested and revised as needed prior to use*

#1. Qualitative tools include only 'need to know' information

Review the project monitoring and evaluation plan to identify your qualitative information needs for either monitoring or evaluation tools. The information needs stated in the M&E plan are considered 'need to know' information, meaning they are required to monitor and evaluate the project. Additional information which may be of interest but that is not stated in the M&E plan is considered 'nice to know'. 'Nice to know' information would likely be of interest but is not essential to understand the progress or impact of the project. Collecting 'nice to know' information risks taking away staff time and other resources that should be focused on quality project implementation, including quality M&E for the project. By building the questions directly from the indicators in your M&E plan, the qualitative tools will stay as short as possible and the data collection process will be more efficient.

- ➔ *Any indicator included in the M&E plan that requires results stated as percentages (%) should be included in quantitative data tools.*
- ➔ *The M&E plan should state whether the qualitative data should be collected through focus groups, key informant interviews or other tools.*

Review your analysis plan to determine which comparison groups are required for analysis. For example, households may be compared based on socio-economic status, geographic location, and flood-affected or drought-affected status. The analysis plan should state which types of participants are required to provide the necessary information.

- ➔ *Once you have completed your draft discussion tool, **recheck the tool** against the M&E plan to make sure that 1) the tool includes all M&E information needs and 2) the tool doesn't include additional information (that is only 'nice to know').*

#2. Qualitative tools include only qualitative questions

Qualitative data are open-ended and narrative data that provide detailed descriptions of contexts and challenges, events, types of people or households, and observed behaviors. Qualitative data can include direct quotations from individuals about their perspectives, experiences, behaviors, and observations. In contrast, quantitative data are numerical responses or responses which can be coded, such as 'yes/no' questions.

- ➔ *Begin each qualitative activity with an explanation of the purpose of the exercise and an explanation of the type of answers and discussions that you would like from the participant(s). Emphasize to the participant(s) that there are no right or wrong answers, that you are very interested in their opinions and experiences, and that you hope for many details and examples in the discussions and answers.*
- ➔ *Refer to previous qualitative tools which address the same subjects, if available, before developing your tool. Ask staff who worked with the previous tools about which questions worked well and which questions did not work well, to determine which questions are appropriate for your tool.*

Each question should be open-ended. Open-ended questions do not suggest possible answers (such as yes or no), but give the respondent(s) an opportunity to answer in his or her own words. Open-ended questions often begin with 'how', 'what' or 'why'.

- ➔ *Sometimes a yes or no question (closed-ended question) is necessary to begin a discussion of a new topic. In this case, follow up with a probing question (discussed below) to generate qualitative data, including more discussion or explanation.*

Each question should be followed with one or more **probing questions** to solicit richer discussion and explanation. Probing questions ask respondents to think more critically about their responses, explain a context or idea further, and to provide specific examples of what they are discussing.

- ➔ *Some questions may require **different probing questions** based on the respondent's initial answer. For example, include 'if so, why' and 'if not, why not' after questions that could generate positive or negative answers and allow the interviewer or facilitator to choose the appropriate probing question.*

Some tools include a **short discussion guide** under each question which lists a few possible or anticipated responses (i.e. negative coping strategies, influence of socio-economic status on water access); however, this is not required. These discussion guides help the facilitator or interviewer to recall which types of responses or discussions the question was designed to capture and to encourage him or her to continue using probing techniques around these key issues. However, including a few key points in a discussion guide should not limit the discussion to these responses.

→ *Order the questions in the tool according to a logical train of thought. Cover one topic fully before moving on to the next. Build the next question on the type of discussions and topics that each question will generate.*

Refer to Annex A for guidance on developing and formatting questions for qualitative tools. While monitoring tools are often simpler and shorter than evaluation tools due to lighter monitoring information requirements, monitoring tools should still follow the guidance for question development (Annex A).

#3. Qualitative tools are field-tested and revised as needed prior to use

Field test the tool as a part of the larger training for the qualitative data collection team (refer to M&E Guidance on [Training and Field-Testing](#)). The tool review during the training and the field test are opportunities to gain additional insights from the data collection team based on their experience and to determine whether the questions will generate the intended types of answers from respondents. Based on the discussion and feedback from the field test, make any required revisions to finalize the tool.

Annex A. Common Problems and Solutions in Developing Qualitative Questions

Question Examples	Issue	Improved question / method
Has this project had a positive impact on your community?	This is phrased as a close-ended (yes or no) question. Each question should be followed up with a probing question.	Has this project had a positive impact on your community? If so, how? <i>Please be specific.</i>
Has your household food consumption changed since the beginning of this project? If so, why? If not, why not? <i>Please provide specific examples.</i>	This question assumes that respondents are aware of when the project began. If possible, refer to seasonal events (i.e. since before the harvest, since after the harvest, since this time last year) in collecting comparison or change data. Determine which comparison is most relevant for your analysis.	Has your household food consumption changed since this time last year? If so, why? If not, why not? <i>Please provide specific examples.</i>
How many livestock does your household own?	This question asks individual level information in a group setting. This answer will likely be quite different for different households and should be asked at an individual level. This question is close-ended and not designed to generate rich discussion data. This question asks for quantitative data in a qualitative tool. This question should be moved to a quantitative tool (collected according to appropriate quantitative methods).	<i>*Move question to a quantitative tool*</i>
How has the lack of water contributed to the loss of livestock in your community this year?	This is a leading question which assumes first that there is a lack of water in the community, second that there has been a loss of livestock, and third that the lack of water has contributed to the loss of livestock. If you anticipate that these are indeed key topics and issues in a community, ask questions which give the respondents an opportunity to bring up these topics and to explain the situation as they see it (prior to hearing your conclusions).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the current water situation in your community? <i>Please explain.</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. In what ways has the water situation affected your community? <i>Please provide specific examples.</i> b. In what ways has the water situation affected households in your community? <i>Please provide specific examples.</i> 2. Has livestock ownership in your community changed since this time last year? If so, how has it changed? Why has it changed? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What has contributed to these changes in your community? <i>Please provide specific examples.</i>

Random Sampling Standard

- #1. *Random sampling is used when collecting quantitative data*
- #2. *The sample size is determined by the standard sampling equation*

#1. Random sampling is used when collecting quantitative data

Random sampling, also known as probability sampling, is statistically representative of a survey population.⁷ In other words, an appropriate random sample allows us to survey a number of households and to generalize our findings to describe the larger target population, including those households that have not been surveyed. By definition, in a random sample every unit (within the target population) has an equal chance of being selected. By ensuring this equal chance of selection, we are able to generalize the results of the survey to the larger population.

- ➔ *Any bias that is introduced into the sampling process (meaning that there is even a slight difference in chances of selection) will question the ability of the results to represent the larger target population.*

Determine your sampling unit. Your sampling unit is your unit of comparison. What or who will your data represent? Common sampling units include households, women of reproductive age, and children under 5 years of age.

- ➔ *Think ahead to your results. Refer to the indicators in your M&E plan to identify the sampling unit you need to represent. If your sampling unit is a household, you cannot state '16% of women of reproductive age reported receiving antenatal care during their last pregnancy'. Conversely, if your sampling unit is women of reproductive age, you cannot state '82% of households reported that their main drinking water source is within 5 kms of their home'.*

Identify the population that the sample will represent. Surveys need to limit their scope to a certain area and often to specific households, or individuals, within that area. The population can be determined by a combination of geographic boundaries and household demographic characteristics or other inclusion/exclusion criteria. Provide clear inclusion or

⁷ This guidance sheet provides the necessary steps and tips to ensure proper sampling, hence reliable and representative data; however, it does not provide all the technical details or statistical justification regarding random sampling

exclusion criteria to define your sample population. Ensure that all sampling units which fit these criteria will be represented by your data.

- ➔ *Consult your analysis plan when determining your sample population. Will your data represent a district, a country or a community? What types of households or individuals will your sample represent within this area? For example, are you interested in representing the situation of project participants only or that of all residents (participants and non-participants) in a certain geographic area?*

Next, **select the number of sampling units** required by your sample size (refer to Standard #2 below). There are two options for selecting units (such as households), whether within clusters or within the overall sample population.

- ➔ *If you cluster your sample (discussed in Standard #2 below), refer to Annex A for guidance on selecting clusters prior to selecting individual units.*

If you have a complete list of all sampling units, follow the instructions in Annex B for systematic random sampling. The list of sampling units must be up-to-date and include all sampling units within your sample population. For example, your sampling frame could be a list of all households in a given district or it could be all women of reproductive age within designated districts.

- ➔ *Make sure your list includes all potentially marginalized households, individuals, or units which may be excluded from certain government or community lists.*

If you have any doubt that your list is complete or up-to-date, proceed with the 'spin the pen' sampling method provided in Annex C.

#2. The sample size is determined by the standard sampling equation

In determining an appropriate sample size (i.e. the number of units to be surveyed), consider the sampling methodology (i.e. how sampling units, such as households, will be selected) and the analysis plan for the data collected. Discuss these considerations with a technical M&E staff person and your Head of Office or Head of Programming, as these will ultimately shape the framework for your survey and your results.

Calculate the sample size based on the confidence level and level of standard error (also known as the confidence interval) appropriate for your survey and whether or not you will cluster or stratify your sample. Each of these terms is defined and explained below. Given the possible variations, sample size calculations are presented in Table 1.

- ✓ What **confidence level** is acceptable given your information needs? It is customary to use a 95% confidence level.⁸
- ✓ What **level of standard error** is acceptable for the survey? Common levels of standard error are +/-6% and +/-7%. **Aim for the minimal level of error that is feasible given time or logistical constraints and project survey resources.**⁹
- ➔ *Monitoring data generally use a higher level of error and a smaller sample size. The higher level of error is appropriate for monitoring surveys because they are conducted repeatedly and must produce quick results to feed into on-going project management and decision-making.*
- ➔ *Survey results should be interpreted given the confidence level and the level of standard error selected. If the survey results stated that 55% of households were displaced by the flood, with a level of standard error of +/-6% and a confidence level of 95%, this means that we can be 95% confident that the actual proportion of displaced households was between 49% and 61% (within +/-6% of 55%).*
- ✓ **Will you cluster your sample?** Clustering a sample refers to first selecting clusters (such as communities or schools) and then selecting the actual units (households or school children) from within these clusters. Clustering a sample usually reduces the time required for field work and travel time, but requires an increased sample size to account for the error it introduces. It is advisable to cluster your sample if:
 - you do not have a complete list of all sampling units in your sample population (e.g. a complete list of all households in your targeted districts), and/or
 - conducting fieldwork within a few smaller geographic areas would save considerable time and resources.
- ✓ **Will you stratify your sample?** Stratified samples allow for statistical comparisons between key sub-groups. Stratification requires an increased sample size so that each sub-group can be adequately represented. Common comparisons are between socio-economic groups, districts or states, flood-affected and drought-affected areas, project participants (beneficiaries) and non-participants, men and women, etc. Are any comparisons between sub-groups required by your analysis plan?
- ➔ **Remember: There is no magic 10% sampling rule.** *It is important to note that the sample size is not related to the size of the population being sampled. A frequent mistake is to conduct surveys among 10% of a given population; in fact, it is likely that 10% of the population is either too many or too few households. With too many households, the survey is using excessive resources and time; with too few households, the sample will not adequately represent the population.*
- ➔ **Account for non-response.** *Due to challenges in data collection, it is common practice to increase the sample size by 10% to account for non-response. Non-*

⁸ The confidence level refers to the probability that the actual value in the population falls within the standard error (+/-) of the survey result (<http://www.stats.gla.ac.uk/steps/glossary/alphabet.html>)

⁹ The level of standard error is the magnitude of error associated with the survey results (<http://www.stats.gla.ac.uk/steps/glossary/alphabet.html>)

response may be due to difficulty in locating all the selected units (individuals or households, etc), to unwillingness of a unit to respond, or to data collection errors.

Table 1. Sample Size Calculations

Level of Standard Error	Confidence Level	Sample Size ¹⁰	Clustered Sample (no stratification)	Stratification (no clustering)	Stratification + Clustering
				<i>Sample per strata</i>	<i>Sample per strata</i>
7%	95%	216	432	162	281
8%		165	330	124	215
9%		130	260	98	169

- ➔ *If the number of sampling units (i.e. households) is less than the calculated sample size, include all units.*
- ➔ *Document the confidence level and the level of standard error used in the methodology section of your report that the results can be interpreted within these boundaries.*

For further information on sampling, refer to:
[Constructing Samples for Characterizing Household Food Security and for Monitoring and Evaluation Food Security Interventions: Theoretical Concerns and Practical Guidelines](#) (Carletto 1999).
 The Survey Sample Calculator (<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>)

¹⁰ The sampling equation used to create the base sample is presented at <http://www.surveysystem.com/sample-size-formula.htm>. The sample assumes maximum variation in the sample population (p=0.5) and adds 10% to account for non-response.

Annex A. Clustering your Sample

If you cluster your sample, first determine the number of clusters you will select. The number of clusters (i.e. communities, villages, administrative units, groups, etc.) should be decided based on the variability between clusters and the variability within clusters. Aim to capture the greatest degree of variability within your sample.

- If you anticipate that units within clusters (e.g. households within communities) are relatively similar and that there is greater degree of variability between clusters, you should opt for more clusters to capture the variation. In this case, with a sample of 432 units, you could select 31 clusters (communities), and 14 units (households) within each cluster.
 - If you anticipate that there is a greater degree of variability within clusters and that the clusters themselves are relatively similar to one another, select fewer clusters and more units within each cluster. For example, you could select 14 clusters and 31 units within each cluster. *Note that both options result in a sample of 432 units.*
- ➔ *If you have reliable population data for each cluster, follow the guidelines for **probability proportional to size cluster sampling** at www.cdc.gov/cogh/descd/modules/MiniModules/PPS/page01.htm . This is an important step to keep the data fully representative of the survey population.*
- ➔ *If you do not have reliable population data for each cluster, simply randomly select the desired number of clusters.*

Annex B. Selecting Sample Units with a Complete List of Units.

If you have a complete list of units (e.g. the list of all households or of all mothers of children under 5 living in the area targeted for survey):

- Enter all sampling units into one column of an excel spreadsheet so that each unit has a unique row number.
- Sum the total number of units (for instance 14,330)
- Calculate the *sampling interval*, X , by dividing the total population by the sample size. (In this case if you need a sample size of 648, this would be $14,330/648 = 22.1$. We would round up to 23. $X=23$)
- Determine your *random start*, Y , by typing the following into an excel worksheet cell: `=RAND()*14,330` (if you have a total of 14,330 households). Excel will give you a random number between one and 14,330 (for instance $Y=441$)
- Select the unit, or household, that corresponds to Y , the random number presented, as your first sample unit.
- Select the next unit, or household, by adding the sampling interval, X , to the random start, Y (i.e. $23+441=464$). The unit, or household, that corresponds to the number $X+Y$ (i.e. 464) will be your second selected unit. Repeat this until you reach the end (i.e. 487, 510, 533, etc).
- Once you have reached the end of the list of units, restart from the top of the list until you have selected all units required (i.e. 14,241, 14,264, 14,287, 14,310, 3 ($14,333-14,330 = 3$), 26, 49, etc.).

Annex C. Selecting Sample Units without a Complete List of Units.

If you do *not* have a complete list of units (e.g. households), the teams will need to select the units (households) to be surveyed once they arrive in the clusters (villages).

➔ *Provide additional training on this selection method to ensure that it is carried out in the same way by all teams in order to preserve the random nature of sample selection.*

Team supervisors should be responsible for the selection process, but enumerators may participate as well. In order to begin sampling households in a given village:

- Find the center of the village. Work with the village leaders to define the geographic boundaries and identify the center point. If you think there may be poorer or marginalized households living at the edge of the village which you would like to include in your survey, ask the leaders to include these areas within the village boundaries for this exercise.
- Stand at the center of the village. Spin a pen in the air to pick a random direction.
- Walk to the edge of the village following the direction of the pen and count the number of households that you find along this line.
- Randomly select one of these households to start. For instance, if you counted 7 households along this line, randomly select one of these 7 households: this will be the first household to be surveyed. One method to randomly select the first household is to write the number of each household along this line (1 through 7 in this example) on a separate piece of paper. Fold each piece of paper so that the corresponding household number cannot be seen and ask a team member, or a village leader, to randomly select one of the pieces of paper. The number on the selected piece of paper will be the first household included in the survey.
- In order to select the next household to be surveyed, look to your right when facing out of the door of the first household. The first household in your line of vision will be that next household to be surveyed. Continue selecting households in this way until you have reached your sample size.
- If, following this method, you reach the edge of the village prior to completing your sample, return to the center of the village and repeat the selection process. Begin by spinning the pen to randomly select another direction and continue all steps as indicated above.

➔ *It is often more time-efficient for enumerators to begin data collection while the supervisor is still continuing the household selection process. If appropriate, the supervisor can mark the selected households so that enumerators can head straight to the next household for data collection. Common methods for marking households include placing a colored piece of paper under a rock near the door or making a chalk mark on the same rock. Do not mark houses if there is any chance that this would be culturally inappropriate or would decrease the likelihood that households would be willing to participate.*

Purposeful Sampling Standards

- #1. Purposeful sampling is used when collecting qualitative data*
- #2. Two to three groups or individuals are included to represent each perspective*

#1. Purposeful sampling is used when collecting qualitative data

Purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative data collection, such as focus group discussions or semi-structured interviews. Purposeful, also known as non-random, sampling is the selection of participants based on their knowledge, perspective or other characteristics of interest (females or males, young or old, very poor or better off, etc).

- ➔ *Remember that qualitative data generated from purposeful sampling cannot be generalized to represent larger populations. Data from purposeful sampling should be used to understand more about the context or situation of the respondents only.*
- ➔ *Review the information needs and required comparisons stated in your analysis plan to determine which type of purposeful sampling is best suited for your survey.*

Common Types of Purposeful Sampling:

Best and worst case sampling compares communities or individuals who are considered best or worst cases based on designated characteristics. For example, best and worst case sampling could look at beneficiary households that are most vulnerable and least vulnerable in a given community in order to characterize vulnerability in the community and identify target groups for future interventions. Another example would be to compare communities that had the highest and lowest rates of completion for a given project. Here, best and worst case sampling would be used to highlight the factors contributing to these various rates of completion. Best and worst case sampling is not useful to understand typical cases or the common context.

Typical case sampling provides greater understanding of the general scenario by studying typical cases, meaning those that are average or are not markedly better or worse than others according to the characteristics of interest. It is important to resist the temptation to select best case communities and call them typical; this would create a bias in the data and the project would be misrepresented.

Critical case sampling selects a sample of individuals, households, or communities with particular characteristics, based on the idea that they are critical to understanding a context or situation. Interviews with community leaders or focus groups with widows are examples of critical case samples. They are useful to understand particular perspectives of key stakeholders or of members of vulnerable groups.

Quota sampling is designed to interview or include participants with particular characteristics in proportion in the sample population equal to their proportion in the community. For example, if an estimated 30 percent of households in a community are female-headed, quota sampling would stipulate that 30 percent of respondents must be from female-headed households and 70 percent from male-headed households.

- ➔ ***Avoid convenience samples.*** A convenience sample is taken of individuals who are readily available to participate in the study. There is a high degree of bias involved in this method. For example, choosing a sample of communities which are close to a main road may be convenient, but it would likely show markedly different results than a sample of communities that are several hours away from the main road.
- ➔ ***Inform communities in advance*** if they will participate in the survey. It is important to give adequate warning so that household members can plan to be available on a certain day (and at a given time if we are able to be that specific). If we do not inform communities in advance, many individuals may be in the fields working when the interview teams arrive, for example. This leaves the teams to only interview individuals who are not in the fields because they do not own land, have access to land or have access to the required agricultural inputs and may bias the sample.

#2. Two to three groups or individuals are included to represent each perspective

Two to three focus group discussions are needed to represent a particular perspective. The number of interviews or discussions required depends on the level of representation and types of comparisons you desire from the data. Here the example of focus group discussions is used. The same guidance applies when using semi-structured interviews, direct observation, or other qualitative data collection tools.

- ➔ *Review the information needs and required comparisons stated in your analysis plan to determine the overall number of groups or individuals needed.*
- If you are planning to simply represent the survey population as a whole, conduct two or three focus group discussions / interviews.
- If you plan to compare the perspective of communities in which a particular intervention was highly successful with the perspective of communities in which the same intervention was much less successful, plan to conduct two

- (or three) focus group discussions in the more successful communities and two (or three) focus group discussion in the less successful communities.
- If you'd like to compare the perspectives of men and women regarding the current obstacles for education for girls in the community, hold two or three focus groups with women and two or three focus groups with men. Men and women will likely have varying viewpoints on this topic and to collect data from only one or the other would not represent the full range of current obstacles.
- ➔ *It is important to disaggregate the groups based on the characteristics which will likely influence their opinions or perspectives on the key issues or topics to be discussed. If socio-economic status could potentially influence participants' perspectives on the availability of water in the community or the barriers to the education of girls in the community, then separate focus groups should be held with participants from higher and participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds. If these groups were not separate, the data would not show which obstacles were specific to which socio-economic group. Consider which characteristics or factors (gender, age, socio-economic status, type of livelihood, etc.), if any, are relevant for your discussion topics when deciding whether or how to disaggregate the participants.*

Consider which participants should represent a certain perspective or are most likely to give reliable information. For example, if you are interested in understanding more about care-seeking practices for children under 5 years, conduct focus groups with or interview mothers and caretakers of children under 5. If you are interested in local agricultural practices, hold the focus groups with or interview persons involved in agriculture.

Determine the appropriate method for selecting focus group or interview participants. Common methods include asking community leaders to help select participants and asking individuals with the desired characteristic (i.e. mothers or caretakers of children under 5) to help identify additional participants. It is important that the method chosen does not only yield participants from the same family or social group (unless this is specified by your methodology).

Ensure that **no marginalized groups are excluded** from the exercise. Consult your team to determine which groups are likely to be marginalized in your target areas. Ensure that members of these groups are included in the discussions or interviews or, if more appropriate, hold separate discussions or interviews with members of the marginalized groups only. Explain the reasons you would like to include the perspective of these groups to community leaders so that they will not feel threatened by their participation and possibly assist in locating these households.

- ➔ *Include a description of your selection methodology in your report. Be specific about how and why you chose sites and participants. Include any possible biases in your selection method in the limitations section of the report. Be honest and remember that many surveys encounter one type of limitation or another.*

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Training and Field-Testing

Training and Field-Testing Standards

- #1. The data collection team is trained on survey objectives and tools prior to each data collection exercise*
- #2. Data collection teams field-test the tool(s) prior to use*

#1. The data collection team is trained on survey objectives and tools prior to each data collection exercise

Training is required prior to any data collection exercise. Even staff with extensive experience in data collection should be trained on the specific objectives, tools, and protocol for each exercise. The following guidance is applicable for both qualitative and quantitative surveys and for monitoring and evaluation activities. If your survey includes both qualitative and quantitative components (and two data collection teams), combine the initial stages of the training (objectives and overview of the survey and principles of data collection) and then separate the group to allow the qualitative data collection team to focus on qualitative data collection techniques and tools and the quantitative data collection team to focus on the quantitative techniques and tools.

- ➔ *Include data enterers in the training if possible. It is important for data enterers to understand the objectives of the survey and to be very familiar with the questionnaires and tools used in the survey. This will help to reduce errors and increase time efficiency during the data entry process.*

Each data collection team should have a supervisor. Supervisors have extra responsibilities in addition to data collection (in some surveys, supervisors do not themselves collect data). The roles and responsibilities of supervisors are detailed in Annex A.

- ➔ *If you do not have supervisors identified prior to the training, select them mid-way through the training. Select training participants who have exhibited a good level of attention to detail, dedication to the exercise, and a strong understanding of the methodology and tools to be supervisors.*
- ➔ *Hold an additional training session (1-2 hours) for supervisors to discuss their roles and responsibilities.*

Depending on the level of experience of the data collection team(s), the length and complexity of the survey tools, and whether or not translation is required, the

training could last two to four days. Refer to Annex B for topics which should be covered in the training. Annex C provides principles for data collection.

#2. Data collection teams field-test the tool(s) prior to use

All members of the data collection team should have an opportunity, as part of the training process, to field-test the tools. The field test will provide the team with additional practical experience in data collection. As a result, data collectors are likely to be more at ease during actual surveys and discussions, likely making respondents and participants more at ease as well. Field testing is not only a critical component of the data collection team's training; it is also essential to verify whether any question is unclear, ambiguous or otherwise likely not to yield desired information, and whether all data collectors and supervisors can adequately perform their roles.

Field test each tool in a community which will not be included in the data collection exercise but that is fairly similar to the targeted communities. If possible, pick a community which is fairly close by to avoid extended travel time. Quantitative team members should each conduct at least two interviews and qualitative team members should each have a chance to practice their roles (whether facilitator or note taker) at least once during the field test.

Following the field test, hold a discussion to solicit feedback from team members on how the tools worked overall and any suggestions they may have on revisions or alterations to specific questions. Make final revisions to the tools based on this discussion.

➔ *Print the questionnaires and tools for the survey after these final revisions are made.*

Annex A. Roles and Responsibilities of Supervisors

Supervisors participate in the actual data collection along the other team members, but also have additional responsibilities related to the quality and management of the data collection and field work. It is common for supervisors to conduct fewer interviews per day so that they have adequate time for their additional responsibilities.

Supervisors are responsible for:

- **Meeting with community leaders** to explain the purpose of the survey.
- **Selecting households** based on the specified criteria and common methodology discussed during the training. Enumerators will assist with this as well, but the supervisors are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the selection follows the established protocol.
- **Reviewing the data** (quantitative questionnaires or qualitative notes) once the data collection is complete. Supervisors should review these data while still in the field at the end of each day so that the team members have an opportunity to fill in any gaps or clarify any points before leaving the community. The supervisor should read through the data to check for completeness and clarity.
- **Reinforcing the quality of data collection.** After reviewing the data collected each day, the supervisor may be aware of quality issues or concerns related to particular team members or which are found more commonly in the data. The supervisor should discuss these concerns with the team members and provide suggestions for maintaining and improving quality as needed.
- **Communicating with project staff** or other relevant staff members on a regular basis regarding the team's progress and/or any obstacles encountered.

Annex B. Training Topics

- Overview of the project or related interventions. Briefly present the Results Framework and ProFrame so that participants understand how the project components fit together and how progress will be measured.
- Objectives of the data collection exercise (i.e. to collect baseline data, to better understand a specific context or problem through operations research or to measure progress with a mid-term or final survey).
- Key principles for collecting quality data (here quality refers not to qualitative data but to collecting reliable and accurate data with minimal error). Refer to Annex A for Principles for Data Collection.
- ➔ *At this point, divide into separate trainings for the qualitative data collection team and for the quantitative data collection team (if applicable for your survey) in order to focus on the different tools and methodologies for qualitative and quantitative data collection.*
- Provide an overview of specific data collection techniques (qualitative techniques to the qualitative team and quantitative techniques to the quantitative team).
- Review all questionnaires and tools included in the survey, question by question. Discuss the possible coded responses for quantitative tools and discuss the key issues and types of discussions sought by qualitative questions.
- ➔ *Conduct the tool review in the language in which the data will be collected in the field. Use this as an opportunity to check the quality of the translation of the tools. The team may have suggestions for different words or phrases to better preserve the meaning of the questions. Revise the translated tools based on this feedback.*
- Give team members an opportunity to practice using the tools with each other. For a quantitative questionnaire, team members can take turns asking each other the questionnaire. For a qualitative tool, the team can hold a mock focus group discussion in which each team member can practice the role of the facilitator and note taker for a different question.
- ➔ *Ask the team members to make the practice test challenging! As mock respondents, they can provide misaligned responses for the quantitative tools and act a bit unruly in the focus group discussions, challenging other team members' skills to bring them back on track.*
- ➔ *Create field manuals which include the principles of data collection, an overview of the protocol for data collection once in the field, and guidance for each question. Print a copy for each team member to take to the field.*

- Discuss the method for selecting households or participants. Both qualitative and quantitative exercises will require selection or identification of participants upon arrival in communities. For quantitative surveys, this may require random selection of households or school children, etc. For qualitative surveys, this may require identifying participants based on key characteristics and ensuring that no marginalized groups are excluded from the exercise.
- ➔ *Ensure that this selection method will be consistent across teams to maintain comparability of the data collected.*
- Field-test the tools in order to provide field experience for the data collectors and to identify any necessary revisions in the tools. Hold a debrief session following the field-test.
- Present the protocol for fieldwork including the number of surveys/discussions to be completed in a day and the number of days required for the fieldwork. Create teams and designate roles (whether enumerator or supervisor, facilitator or note taker) based on the team member's ability shown during the training and the field testing.¹¹
- Once you have identified the supervisors (one for each data collection team), hold an additional half-day training specifically for the supervisors. to discuss their additional roles and responsibilities during data collection. The additional roles for supervisors are included in Appendix A.

¹¹ It is important to determine the logistics plan and the team composition prior to the training to ensure that you have the correct number of enumerators. The number of enumerators needed will be determined by the number of communities selected and the survey timeline.

Annex C: Principles of Data Collection¹²

To be successful, both qualitative and quantitative data collectors must behave in a way that encourages the respondent to talk freely and openly about the survey topic. Whether a respondent agrees to be interviewed and how openly he or she responds to the questions depends primarily on the interviewer's behavior and the communication established between the two.

In order to motivate a respondent to speak freely, an interviewer should:

- **Show warmth**, responsiveness, and a general interest in the respondent
- Accept all responses **without showing personal reactions**, judgments or biases either verbally or non-verbally

A successful interviewer is one who is able to create a comfortable interviewing atmosphere, is naturally **observant** of the reactions of others, and can **adapt** according to these reactions. In the interviewing situation, interviewers must be careful to **avoid giving any cues**, either verbal or non-verbal, that might affect a respondent's answers.

Interviewer's style - Style refers to the way the interviewer speaks, acts or presents him or herself. Interviewers should keep their style as neutral as possible, avoiding the extremes of being either too formal or too relaxed.

Non-verbal cues - Facial expressions may indicate an attitude or a judgment without the interviewer actually saying anything. Maintain a neutral facial expression during the interview. A frown, a shake of the head or a nod can all indicate positive or negative reactions to the respondent and may bias the data.

Verbal cues - Avoid verbal cues. Expressions of opinions or attitudes on the part of the interviewer are the most direct kind of influence on a respondent. Something the interviewer says or the tone or manner in which s/he says it can be biasing.

➔ *Avoiding biasing comments and gestures does not mean that the interview has to be stiff or awkward. The interviewer must find the right balance of being non-judgmental while still showing concern, friendliness and warmth.*

Interviewer expectations - Interviewers must avoid assuming or guessing answers to questions based on what they have already heard or observed in the interview or based on the ideas included in qualitative discussion guides. Interviewers must not allow observations of a respondent's behavior, economic status or living situation to influence their job as reporters. Unless specifically stated in the question, interviewers should not record their observations.

¹² Excerpt from CRS Emergency Assessment Manual (CRS 2003)

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Collecting Qualitative Data

Collecting Qualitative Data Standards

- #1. M&E staff chooses appropriate qualitative method(s) to meet information needs*
- #2. M&E staff triangulates qualitative data to reduce bias*
- #3. M&E staff collects in-depth qualitative data*

#1. M&E staff chooses appropriate qualitative method(s) to meet information needs

Choose the appropriate qualitative method(s) to meet your information needs. There are many common methods to generate qualitative data. These methods include focus groups discussions, semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews, social mapping, seasonal calendars, Venn diagrams, and several other rapid and participatory rural appraisal (RRA/PRA) tools. Selecting methods inappropriate for your M&E activity will likely produce unclear data or result in more questions than the data answered.

Qualitative methods often differ for evaluation and for monitoring. Evaluation methods are more rigorous and likely to include focus groups and any other tools which are directly comparable with baseline data. Qualitative monitoring data are collected more frequently and through both more and less structured methods. Monitoring often includes multiple qualitative methods to capture formal monitoring data (linked to ProFrame indicators) and informal data to monitor changes in the context and gain immediate feedback on project activities. For monitoring, create tools which focus on the implementation of specific project activities and early indicators of change at the household and community level, or which allow respondents to provide their perspective on changes in the overall community context (which may affect future project activities or impact).

➔ *Ideally, focus groups and other types of qualitative data should be collected prior to any quantitative data collection exercise, so that quantitative questions and tools can be developed or refined based on qualitative findings.*

Participatory rural appraisal tools (PRA tools) refer to a series of qualitative tools which emphasize local participation and knowledge and facilitate a community-led process for identifying problems or constraints and formulating action plans.¹³ PRA tools include the following:

¹³ Refer to CRS' Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): A Manual for CRS Field Workers and Partners (included in the ProPack II Resource CD-Rom, hyperlink page 129) for further guidance (Schoonmaker and Freudenberger, 1999)

- **Semi-structured interviews** follow a fairly open framework which guides the interviewer to cover certain topics but leaves room for additional topics or questions that may arise (CRS RRA/PRA Manual pgs. 74-76). Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for information monitoring as they allow for iterative questions to be developed based on the interviewees feedback and interests.
- **Participatory mapping** uses spatial analysis to gather information about a range of issues and concerns (CRS RRA/PRA Manual pgs. 77-81).
- **Direct observation** allows staff to record behaviors, practices, infrastructure, and landmarks. For example, staff can observe which crops households planted in fields, the quality of housing structures, and the education techniques used in a classroom. Transect walks are a great tool for direct observation of a village's context and layout (CRS RRA/PRA Manual pgs. 82-84).
- **Venn diagrams** map social relationships both within the community and with other communities and organizations (CRS RRA/PRA Manual pgs. 85-87).
- **Calendars** record seasonal issues and changes throughout the year related to agriculture, food security, and/or health (CRS RRA/PRA Manual pgs. 88-91).
- **Wealth ranking** provides greater understanding of the distribution of wealth and resources (CRS RRA/PRA Manual pgs. 92-93).
- **Historical profiles** provide a chronology of events of interest and are particularly useful to identify a community's vulnerability to risks (CRS RRA/PRA Manual pg. 94) (Schoonmaker and Freudenberger 1999).

Focus groups discussions are a common qualitative tool used to solicit discussion and a group's perspective regarding a series of topics or issues during both monitoring and evaluation activities. Focus group discussions are not simply question and answer sessions. The aim is for participants to discuss the questions amongst themselves with guidance from a facilitator. The facilitator asks open-ended questions to the group and follows up with probing questions to solicit additional details and depth regarding certain topics. The note-taker is tasked with recording all comments and discussion in a clear and concise manner easy for review by other team members.¹⁴

➔ *Focus groups should have between 8 and 12 participants so that each participant will have a chance to participate in the discussion. Focus groups should be conducted among groups of individuals with similar characteristics.*

Key informant interviews use open-ended questions similar to that for focus group discussions, but collect data from individual respondents. Key informant interviews can be used to complement focus group discussions by generating information from potentially marginalized or excluded individuals which may not feel comfortable voicing their opinions in a larger group. Additional questions can be included in

¹⁴ For a further description of qualitative data, refer to ProPack II, p. 107 (Stetson et al. 2007).

key informant interviews which ask respondents about their individual situation or the situation of their household.

Qualitative methods have multiple purposes; however, it is important to remember that qualitative data cannot be generalized to describe larger populations. Common purposes and uses of qualitative data include to:

- Assess programmatic impact (intended and unintended) among multiple groups;
- Monitor (both formally and informally) progress of program at the activity, output, and IR-level;
- Increase understanding of a given context, problem and/or current levels, causes, and seasonal factors related to household or community vulnerability;
- Increase understanding of quantitative survey results, for instance by probing into why a certain (e.g. child health) practice is not being adopted by mothers in spite of adequate knowledge about it;
- Inform quantitative tools and questions by determining the appropriate questions and possible responses for key issues and themes (e.g. common coping strategies during times of food shortage);
- Clarify concepts or themes (such as community capacity for disaster prevention) by identifying the community's perception and definition of such concepts;
- Inform the development of information, education, and communication (IEC) materials and behavior change communication (BCC) messages;
- Understand problems related to current programmatic interventions and identify possible solutions.¹

#2. M&E staff triangulates qualitative data to reduce bias

Triangulation is a key principle of qualitative data collection and states that data are collected from multiple sources, sometimes using multiple tools, to identify and reduce bias. If we do not triangulate qualitative data, we run the risk of biasing or distorting the data collected, resulting in incorrect or incomplete information (CRS' RRA/PRA Manual pgs. 17-26) (Schoonmaker and Freudenberg 1999). By collecting data from multiple sources or with multiple tools, we can identify and address discrepancies or inconsistencies in the data. Triangulation often leads to additional questions or clarifications, which can be answered through follow-up interviews, discussions or exercises.

- ➔ *A mistake common for M&E systems is to rely solely on either observation data or participant responses. Observation data alone do not provide an explanation of practices or behaviors and often require large assumptions on the part of the M&E team. Focus group data (an example of participant responses) may not capture important practices which participants do not see as relevant and may record instead what participants think data collection teams want to hear.*

In order to triangulate qualitative data, first determine whether the methods selected will provide sufficient data to allow for comparison and identification of any bias. Include additional methods if you decide they are necessary for triangulation. Next determine whether you have included an adequate number of respondents or groups to triangulate your data within each method. Triangulation relies largely on data analysis and the ability of the data analysis team to identify unreliable data and inconsistencies.

Focus group discussions, for example, often generate social norms and the data often do not capture the true variation of opinions and values which exist in a community. For this reason, it is advisable to also include key informant interviews and/or household surveys to triangulate focus group data.

For evaluation and formal monitoring efforts, conduct 2 or 3 qualitative exercises (discussions, interviews, etc) to fully represent each perspective of interest in the survey. Refer to M&E Guidance on [Purposeful Sampling](#) for site selection for evaluation and formal monitoring. For informal monitoring, sampling procedures are less rigorous. Staff should collect informal monitoring data during routine field visits and simply need to consider the types of communities and contexts represented (or not represented) by the data and the potential for bias if no sampling procedure was followed.

➔ *Be sure to include vulnerable or marginalized groups (households or individuals) in your sample. If you are following the procedures for purposeful sampling, include vulnerable or marginalized households (or individuals) as a comparison groups. If you are informally monitoring, seek out vulnerable or marginalized households for discussions, interviews, or direct observations.*

Once your sites are selected, inform the communities ahead of time so that community leaders and community members can plan to be available on the planned day and time. There is a risk of bias in the data if communities are not informed in advance. For example, without warning, all adults members from poor households might be away working in distant fields when the data collection team arrives, leaving the team to collect data only from more wealthy households who rely on hired labor to tend their land and/or whose lands lay closer to the village. Consult field staff and community leaders to identify persons with desired characteristics to participate in qualitative exercises.

#3. M&E staff collects in-depth qualitative data

The quality and depth of the data collected depends largely on the skills of the data collection team and the appropriateness of the data collection tool. For individual interviews and other informal methods, only one staff member is required to both facilitate and record the exercise. However, you will need a team of two members, one facilitator and one note-taker, for many of the more structured qualitative

exercises such as focus group discussions and many PRA methods. The facilitator asks each of the questions and guides the discussion while the note-taker writes down exactly what is said (word for word) by the participants. Include both facilitators and note-takers in an extensive training session to ensure quality data are collected (refer to the M&E Guidance on [Training and Field-testing](#)). Tips for facilitators and note-takers are provided in Annex A.

- ➔ *If you chose to record the discussion or interview on a tape recorder, one staff member should still take back up notes in case the machine malfunctions. The note-taker can also record the reactions or expressions of participant(s) during the discussion. Consider the cultural appropriateness of introducing a tape recorder into interview or discussion.*
- ➔ *Conduct female-only discussions or focus groups (led by female facilitators and recorders) if this will increase the participation by women and if culturally appropriate. Refer to M&E Guidance on [Gender and M&E](#) for more information on gender considerations.*

The objective of qualitative methods is to learn about participant's situations, perspectives and preoccupations. The questions in qualitative tools should be phrased in a way to generate discussion and in-depth data, not yes or no answers. Each question should be followed up with probing questions, such as 'why' or 'why not', 'any other examples?', or 'could you be more specific'. For information on developing qualitative tools, refer to M&E Guidance on [Developing Qualitative Tools](#).

Tips for conducting qualitative exercises.

- ✓ Plan to hold the exercise in a neutral location.
- ✓ The exercise should last no more than two hours (much less for informal methods and interviews). Estimate the time required based on the number and depth of the questions you include. Reduce the number of questions if you find the exercise will take too long.
- ✓ Explain the objectives of the exercise to the participants and make sure that the exercise does not raise participants' expectations that they will receive anything for their participation.
- ✓ At the close of the exercise, thank the participants for their time and input.
- ✓ Common problems and their solutions are provided in Annex B.

For focus group discussions, PRA tools or other team monitoring exercises, hold a debrief session with the data collection team at the end of each day. The debrief session can be fairly short and informal but should give the team members an opportunity to discuss the data collected that day and any problems encountered during data collection. Document the debrief sessions as they may contribute to lessons learned or the final analysis process.

Start by asking the team what went well today and what did not go well today. Next, ask team members if they have any initial ideas for analysis or interpretation of the data collected. These debrief sessions do not replace a formal analysis process. However, the analysis of qualitative data is an on-going process and initial qualitative results may lead to refining questions and adding additional questions. If the team finds that the tools and questions are not yielding the intended discussions or responses, the team (with input from an M&E technical person) may opt to rephrase the question. In addition, if the data collected lead to additional questions to answer to the project's information needs, the tool can be revised to include additional questions.

→ *Debrief sessions are an opportunity to triangulate data. If you find conflicting results from different methods or from different respondents (using the same method), the team will need to probe further or possibly include new questions to clarify the results.*

During the debrief session, the team should discuss any problems encountered during the data collection process. Note any problems mentioned and consider how these problems could have influenced the data collected. Also note how these problems were addressed and/or how they could be solved in the future. Make sure that an M&E technical person has reviewed and approved any suggested changes to the tools or the protocol.

For more informal monitoring, ensure that findings from all qualitative methods (including direct observation) are recorded in field monitoring reports and discussed with the rest of the team at regular times. This could be done during weekly field staff meetings or monthly project reviews for instance. In emergency contexts, these meetings may be held on a daily basis. Refer to M&E Guidance on [Reflection Events](#) for more information.

For more information on collecting qualitative data, refer to: [TIPS: Conducting Focus Group Interviews](#) (USAID 1996) and CRS Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): A Manual for CRS Field Workers and Partners (Schoonmaker and Freudenberger 1999).

Annex A. Tips for the Facilitator and Note-taker

Tips for the facilitator:

- ➔ Read the questions exactly as they are stated in the tool. Many questions also include follow-up questions. Once participants have given their initial answers and thoughts, ask follow-up questions such as 'why is that important to you?', or 'are there any other reasons for this?'
- ➔ Guide the discussion back on track if it starts to take another course. If the discussion starts to veer off track, be patient and do not interrupt any participants.
- ➔ If more than one participant, draw out each participant by asking individuals to respond if they have been quiet throughout the discussion. Make sure that certain individuals do not dominate the conversation.
- ➔ Keep a neutral facial expression throughout the interview or discussion and do not react to any comments or statements.
- ➔ Allow pauses after each question and comment to allow participants to provide additional feedback and for the recorder to write all that has been said.

Tips for the note-taker:

- ➔ The notes should be recorded in the language in which the qualitative exercise is conducted. The notes should be translated at a later time.
- ➔ The recorder should write the number of each question that is asked and the discussion that follows and note when the facilitator ask a follow up question in the notes. Use a new line and a bullet point to indicate when a new participant speaks.
- ➔ At the end of the discussion for each question, write an arrow to highlight the consensus reached by the group or write 'no consensus'.
- ➔ Once the discussion is finished, the recorder should take extra time to expand the notes and add any additional information while it is still fresh in his or her mind. Other team members should be able to understand all information in the notes even if they did not participate in the discussion.

Annex B. Common Problems and Solutions

Problem	Solution
Participants are not engaging in discussion and instead are providing one-word answers.	<p>Remind participants that the purpose of the exercise is to discuss these topics and that you hope to hear from everyone in the group. Also mention that there are no right or wrong answers, you simply want to know about their experience and perspective.</p> <p>If this does not result in more of a discussion, discuss the possible reasons for the reluctance to participate with other qualitative data collection team members. Could this be due to social or political dynamics in the group or community?</p>
One or two participants are dominating the discussion.	Rely on good facilitation skills to draw out contributions by other participants. Listen to the dominating member's contribution, thank them for their input, and then directly call on other participants. It may also help to make eye contact with the quieter members as a way to encourage them to contribute.
An elder or village leader is dominating the discussion. Due to social norms, younger participants or those from a different caste cannot contradict the elder, even if they disagree.	<p>Ask younger participants to answer the questions first, then allowing the elder to share his opinion. Try to facilitate dialogue about the differences as much as possible.</p> <p>In certain cultural contexts, it is appropriate to hold age-specific discussions so that young persons feel freer to discuss the issues.</p> <p>It may be appropriate to hold a focus group discussion with community leaders or elders prior, and in addition, to the planned exercise with other community members. This will provide the community leaders with a chance to voice their opinions. Do not replace the planned discussion with that of the community leaders. Again, analyze these data in context and consider the perspective of the community leaders in the interpretation of the data.</p>
Participants begin discussing topics which are not related to the questions or the purpose of the exercise.	Wait for a break in the discussion and make a comment that shows you understand and appreciate the points they are making. Then quickly repeat your latest question to try and guide the conversation back to the planned topics.
Many people are gathering around to watch the discussion and listen to responses.	Pick a location that is somewhat private. Request that people leave if this is socially appropriate.
There is a lack of female staff (or of any staff) to collect qualitative data.	Ensure that at least two women are included in the qualitative training. If possible, include three women in case one woman cannot ultimately participate. Assign an adequate number of staff to qualitative data collection so that you are able to follow your data collection schedule. Include all staff in the qualitative training.

<p>The answers did not appear to be accurate.</p>	<p>Cross-check your results with other exercises (this is why we include 2 or 3 exercises for each perspective) or field staff. If you still doubt the validity of the results, do not use any of the data collected in this particular exercise. Consider what could have contributed to the biased, inaccurate results. How can this be avoided in the future? Hold another discussion to replace the lost data.</p>
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CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Developing a Quantitative Database

Quantitative Database Standards

- #1. *The software used is appropriate to the project's needs and resources*
- #2. *Project databases make data accessible for timely and efficient decision-making*

A quantitative database transforms data into information. With raw data, we are not easily able to make project decisions, to review trends or to meet the information needs of various project stakeholders. The database should systematically transform data into information that meets the needs stated in your M&E plan.

#1. The software used is appropriate to the project's needs and resources

The common types of quantitative database software used are Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, and the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Each software has its advantages and disadvantages, which are summarized in Annex A. Prior to selecting the software, first consider whether you require a monitoring or an evaluation database based on the type of data you are collecting and the frequency of collection. Monitoring and evaluation databases are discussed briefly below. Annex B provides additional descriptions of monitoring and evaluation databases.

➔ *Do not merge monitoring and evaluation data in one database. Instead create separate monitoring and evaluation databases for the same project. Monitoring and evaluation databases have quite distinct functions and set ups. Merging both databases will create an overly complex database and yield little benefit. Monitoring and evaluation data (taken from each database) can be combined in a separate database if needed for analysis.*

Monitoring databases: Monitoring databases capture data collected in your monitoring and track outputs, activities, and progress of the project. A monitoring database will house repeated data entry (for different months or locations, etc) in different columns or different sheets (in Excel). It should create a summary sheet which is automatically updated and sums the current progress towards targets (from different months or locations, etc). The summary sheet should present, for each activity and/or output indicator, the number completed during this reporting period, the cumulative number completed to date, the overall target number, and the percent of target completed to date.

Consider using Microsoft Excel or Access for monitoring databases. Each of these software programs includes a simple function to create summary sheets for use in monthly and/or quarterly reporting.

Evaluation Databases: An evaluation database should store all information included in the evaluation's quantitative questionnaires and should be designed for one data entry event. Baseline and evaluation data should be housed in separate databases; they can be linked at a later date if necessary. Consider using SPSS for your evaluation databases. SPSS allows for both simple and complex analyses.

- ➔ *Databases can be converted between Excel, Access, and SPSS, with only minor readjustments required. For example, you can decide to enter data in Excel and conduct the analysis in SPSS.*

#2. Project databases make data accessible for timely and efficient decision-making

The database should be user-friendly for both data enterers and data analysts by ensuring that the data entry and analysis processes are as simple and straightforward as possible. In order to be user-friendly for data enterers, the database should have clear labels and numbers for each variable. This will minimize data entry error and ultimately reduce the amount of time required for data entry and cleaning. The database should also be designed to be as simple as possible to conduct the necessary calculations and analysis. Refer to Annex C for guidance on creating the database.

- ➔ *Make sure you determine how to utilize your data and to transform your data into information prior to developing your database. Refer to your M&E plan. Without a clear plan for data use, it is likely that your database will be overly complex. **Complex databases are less likely to be used.***
- ➔ *Provide **in-depth training and practice sessions for data enterers** prior to the start of the data entry process. The practice sessions are a good opportunity to conduct a final review of the database and catch any remaining gaps or errors in its format. Refer to M&E Guidance on [Data Entry and Cleaning](#) for more information on training data enterers.*
- ➔ ***Results must be timely** in order for M&E information to feed into project management and learning. Ensure that the database allows for an efficient data entry, cleaning, and analysis process and, by design, will not result in bottlenecks due to complexity or structural error.*

Include instructions for using the database in your M&E Operations Manual, explaining all variables, functions and calculations in such a way that new staff can easily understand and utilize the database. Also document the data entry and cleaning process so that it may be externally validated.

➔ *Prepare for an audit at the outset of your project by documenting all processes and systems. Not only will this help you to prepare for an audit (if an audit should occur), but project staff will benefit throughout the life of the project by being able to reference clear instructions and records of initial decisions and plans that were made.*

Additional Guidance for Monitoring Databases

1. Check with other staff in your country program to see if there are well-functioning and efficient **monitoring databases currently in use**. If the structure of this database is appropriate for your program, use the database format as a starting point.
2. Design **monitoring databases** to create summary sheets or to allow staff to run simple calculations to produce these summaries. Depending on your monitoring plan, the data may be summarized in multiple ways including by month, by region, and by type of community

Revisit your monitoring database at the project mid-term (or after multiple data entry sessions) to determine if there are any ways of simplifying the database or making it more user-friendly. Refer to questions under [Step #6](#) in the M&E System Review Tool to guide this review.

For more information on developing quantitative databases, refer to *Guidelines for Planning, Implementing, and Managing a Project DM&E Information System*, (Siles 2004)

Annex A. Advantages and Disadvantages of Software Programs

Software Program	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommended Use
Microsoft Excel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The software is readily available. Most staff have Excel on their computers. -Staff are more likely to be familiar with the basic functions of Excel than with the other software programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Few staff are familiar with the Excel functions for more complex analyses (comparisons between groups, etc.) -Excel allows for more error in data entry or while analyzing / using data 	Monitoring databases
Microsoft Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The software is readily available. Many staff have Access on their computers. -Access can be set up to print regular summary reports. -Access can create a data mask so that the data entry page mirrors the forms or questionnaires and only approved options can be entered for each variable. This can reduce data entry error. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Programming for Access is relatively complex. -Fewer staff have expertise in creating and maintain databases than with Excel. 	Monitoring databases
SPSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SPSS is capable of higher-level analyses. - Data analysis in SPSS is user-friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SPSS must be purchased separately and thus requires additional funds. -SPSS allows for more error in data entry. -Few staff have expertise in creating databases and analyzing data in SPSS. 	Evaluation databases

Annex B. Summary of Monitoring and Evaluation Databases.

	Monitoring Databases	Evaluation Databases
Description	A monitoring database tracks project activities and outputs completed and progress towards objectives and houses project management information.	An evaluation database is useful for analyzing assessment or evaluation data and can track progress towards the project's strategic objectives and intermediate results.
Frequency of use	Often on a monthly basis or more frequently. In an emergency response, information may be needed on a daily or weekly basis	Based on the frequency of assessments and evaluations. Often used at project baseline, midterm and end.
Common source(s) of data	-Monthly activity report -Project records -Field monitoring reports	-Household surveys (baseline, mid-term, final) -Community-level surveys (baseline, mid-term, final)
Type of analysis	Sums, frequencies, percents, mean values. For example: -# of community-wide meetings held -% of communities that have elected committees -# of trainings conducted -Average # (or mean number) of attendees at the community meetings	Frequencies, percents, mean values, statistical significance tests, comparisons between sub-groups. For example: -Comparison between the average # of meals per day for female-headed households and the average for male-headed households. -Comparison of sources of loans (in %) for households in the lowest socio-economic group, the middle socio-economic group, and the highest socio-economic group.
Technical considerations	Can require minimal technical expertise or advanced technical skills in order to set up and utilize the database, depending on the complexity of the system.	Generally requires advanced analysis skills to utilize the database.

Annex C. Guidance for Database Creation

These guidelines and the following examples can be applied to SPSS, Microsoft Excel or Access.

1. Create a variable for each question and/or response. The structure of the question will determine if each question requires one variable or multiple variables in the database. Create a single variable for questions that allow for only one answer. 'Yes' or 'no' questions require only a single variable in the database. Similarly, you would create one variable for question A5 below.

A5.	How far is the nearest drinking water source from your home (in minutes)?	___ minutes
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The number of minutes will be entered in this variable. You could name this variable 'A5' or 'watmin'. If you are using SPSS, you may choose to use 'A5' in the *name* column and 'watmin' in the *label* column.

➔ *Use a standard approach in naming your variables which can be easily understood by team members who work with the database.*

If there are *multiple responses* allowed for a question, as in question B16 below, create one variable for each possible response. For question B16, create a total of 5 variables: one for each possible option ('canal', 'spring', 'well', and 'other') and a variable to enter the 'other' information specified.

B16.	Where do people in your community collect water (<i>circle all that apply</i>)?	5. Canal 6. Spring 7. Well 8. Other (<i>specify</i>) _____
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➔ *Each of the first four variables essentially becomes a 'yes/no' variable, with 'yes' recorded for each option selected by the respondent. 'Yes' should be recorded as '2' and 'no' should be recorded as '1'. Each of these is a numeric variable.*

➔ *The variable used to record the specific 'other' information will be a "string variable", that is a variable which contains letters instead of numbers. String variables are not coded and can house any information provided by the respondent.*

In SPSS, numerical variables only allow for numerical data to be entered. Create *string variables* if you want to include letters or words in a particular variable.

'Other' data allows us to learn more about community perceptions, knowledge and behaviors. The response 'other' does not directly provide us with information. The specific response provided by the respondent and written in by the enumerator provides us with this information and is therefore particularly important.

➔ *Always include an additional 'other' variable (a string variable in SPSS) in the database to capture these responses. The specific responses entered after 'other' can be used in analysis and in designing future coded responses for quantitative questionnaires.*

- 2. Record the coded responses in the database.** Many of the questions in the questionnaire will likely have coded responses (i.e. 1 = canal, 2 = spring, 3 = well, 4 = other or 1 = no, 2 = yes). The data enterers will enter the number corresponding to each response (i.e. '2' for 'spring' or '2' for 'yes'). For data analysis, it will be useful to have the description for each code included in the database. In SPSS, enter the code for each response in the *value* column. In Excel, include a list of coded responses on a separate sheet to be used in data analysis.
- 3. Account for non-response, or missing data.** It is important to differentiate between a nil response and missing data. **Nil** is a zero (0) value. **Missing data** are data that were not recorded in the questionnaire. Missing data may occur if each question does not apply to every respondent (due to skip rules), if respondents chose not to answer a question, or due to human error during data collection.

It is standard practice to designate '999' to represent missing data. Data enterers can input '999' to indicate that questions or data were not included in the questionnaire. If you are using SPSS, enter '999' in the *missing* column so that SPSS will not include these values in calculating valid responses. With an appropriate database design, the person(s) analyzing the data will be able to identify which respondents reported that it took '0 minutes' to reach the nearest drinking water source and which respondents did not answer this question.

By creating a value (i.e. 999) for missing data, data enterers will enter information into each column of the data base for each case. This will help to keep data enterers from losing track of where they are in the database (and entering data into the wrong column) and help the person(s) analyzing the data to easily differentiate between '0' values and missing data.

In questions D5 and D6 and the corresponding database provided below, we can easily identify households for which the data is missing from those with nil values.

D5.	Does your household have access to a latrine?	1 = yes 2 = no → <i>if no, skip to D7</i> 3 = don't know
D6.	How many people have access to the latrine?	___ persons

Household ID	D5. Latrine	D6. LatNumUse
201	1	5
202	1	999
203	0	999

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Data Entry & Cleaning

Data Entry and Cleaning Standards

- #1. M&E staff minimizes and checks for data entry error*
- #2. Data entry is time efficient to ensure timely availability of information*

#1. M&E staff minimizes and checks for data entry error

The data entry process is the transfer of the data from the questionnaires to the database. Ideally the database will accurately reflect all of the data captured in the questionnaires. Any difference between the data recorded in the questionnaires and that in the database is considered data entry error. In order to minimize data entry error conduct a thorough training of the data entry team, supervise the data entry process and conduct spot checks, and, lastly, clean the data once entered.

Train the data entry team, enterers and supervisors on the survey objectives and the layout of the questionnaire and on the database and the protocol for data entry. The data enterers should be comfortable with the questionnaire layout, any skip rules included, and aware of any potential errors in data collection.

- ➔ *If possible, include the data entry team in the training given to the data collectors on the survey tools. If this is not possible, conduct a separate training for the data entry team to ensure that they are familiar with the tools used and the objectives of the survey.*

Assemble the Team

Determine **the number of data enterers** needed based on the volume of data and the timeline for completing data entry. Select data enterers that have a background in data entry and who are comfortable using the data entry program you have selected. **Identify a supervisor**, perhaps one of the data enterers with additional experience, to oversee the data entry process. The supervisor will enter data like the rest of the team, but he/she is also responsible for checking the work of others and for backing up the data each day.

Train the data enterers on the structure of the database and on the protocol for data entry. Go through the entire database during this portion of the training.

- ➔ *Give the data enterers an opportunity to enter at least two test questionnaires (possibly those completed during the field test) during the data entry training and to raise any questions based on these trials.*

The data entry protocol includes the procedure for spot-checking (*see below*) and quality control measures. Thoroughly document these procedures to support quality control and audits (should they occur). Train the data enterers to frequently recheck their data.

Supervision and spot checks are important steps in the data entry process for reducing error. The supervisor should spot check approximately one in every ten questionnaires entered. He or she should randomly select the questionnaires for spot check and closely compare the data in each questionnaire with that entered in the database. He or she should discuss any problem encountered with all data enterers, in case multiple enterers are making similar mistakes.

- *The data enterers should **raise any question with the supervisor** so they can be addressed immediately. The supervisor should coordinate with the project manager or M&E advisor to address systematic problems in data collection or in data entry. If data collection is still occurring, the project manager or M&E advisor should discuss the systematic or common data collection errors with the teams in the field.*
- *The data enterers should **initial each questionnaire** after it has been entered (or initial their specific section once it has been entered).*

Ask that data enterers **save the data** after completing each questionnaire (or section). The supervisor should **back up the data** at the end of each day with external memory and record the identification numbers of the questionnaires that have been entered. Create different file names for the database on each computer so that they won't copy over each other during the back up.

Data cleaning ensures that data is accurate before conducting an analysis. Unclean data can ultimately distort your results. Data cleaning aims to identify mistakes made during data collection or during data entry. The mistakes made during data entry can be corrected at this stage. Data cleaning involves running preliminary analyses and cross-checking any unexpected results against the data in the questionnaires. Key steps in data cleaning are provided in Annex A.

- ➔ *Data cleaning can be conducted by either the data entry supervisor or by the data analyst. This depends on the level of experience of the data entry supervisor. Data cleaning requires a sharp eye and experience with common data entry errors, as well as a solid understanding of the survey population and context.*
- ➔ ***Document** the data cleaning procedure to inform external quality checks or audits. Documenting the data cleaning method and schedule will also help to reduce duplication of efforts by other staff involved in the process.*
- ➔ ***Record all recommendations for the next survey** based on common problems with data collection or data entry found during cleaning.*

Conduct periodic reviews of the data collection process to make sure that no common error is continuing unnoticed. Review incoming questionnaires for completeness and clarity and address any recurring problem with the data collection team. For guidance refer to [Step #5](#) in the M&E System Review Tool.

#2. Data entry is time efficient to ensure timely availability of information

Data entry should be timely and efficient so that the analysis and results can quickly feed into project management and decision-making. Structure the data entry process to be most time-efficient. The data entry process can be structured in one of two ways: data enterers can each enter the entire questionnaire or they can enter only a section of the questionnaire. With a shorter questionnaire, it is easier and more time-efficient for data enterers to complete a full questionnaire before moving on to the next.

With a long, complex survey, it may be preferable to assign each data enterer a section of the questionnaire. This method allows data enterers to become more familiar with the data they enter and may ultimately reduce data entry error. If you proceed with this method, make sure that the data enterers input each questionnaire's identification number into their appropriate section of the database each time they input data. The data can later be linked through these identification numbers.

- ➔ *Create a coherent filing system for the entered questionnaires. The questionnaires can be filed by identification number or placed into numbered folders by cluster. You will need to access individual questionnaires during data cleaning and an organized filing system will save time and frustration.*

Annex A. Steps for Data Cleaning

Check the questionnaire identification numbers entered in the database to make sure that each case has an identification number and that no identification number has been repeated in the database. If any identification number is missing, go back to the paper questionnaires to find the correct number and enter this into the database. If any identification number is repeated, check to see if these cases are duplicates and delete one of the duplicated cases. If these cases are not duplicates, check for the correct identification numbers in the paper questionnaires.

➔ *Refer to the paper questionnaires as often as needed during the data cleaning process. Every issue raised during data entry should be checked against the paper questionnaires whenever possible.*

Run the frequencies and means of numerical variables. Is there anything that is unexpected? Are there any outliers that are greatly above or greatly below the average value? Check any questionable data against the questionnaires and correct any errors in data entry.

Look for missing data and check to make sure these are not a result of data entry error.

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data Analysis and Interpretation Standards

- #1. M&E staff analyzes all data collected*
- #2. M&E staff interprets data within its level of representation*
- #3. M&E staff interprets qualitative and quantitative results together*

#1. M&E staff analyzes all data collected

All data collected should be included in the analysis. By building the data collection tools (both for monitoring and for evaluation) directly from the M&E plan, we ensure that 1) no additional data will be collected that is not required for analysis and 2) all required data will be collected.

- ➔ *Refer to your analysis plan often during analysis (Refer to M&E Guidance on [Creating an Analysis Plan](#)). You may revise or expand your analysis plan based on preliminary findings. Discuss any proposed changes to the analysis plan with the project manager, M&E staff, and any other relevant stakeholders.*

If you collected both quantitative and qualitative data, analyze each type of data separately and then interpret the results together. Key steps for analyzing quantitative data are provided in Annex A and key steps for analyzing qualitative data in Annex B.

- ➔ *The analysis process should be efficient and organized in order to produce timely results and feed into programmatic decision-making. Ensure that there is adequate capacity (either internal staff or external technical assistance) in place well in advance. Refer to M&E Guidance on [Reflection Events](#) to plan for reflection on both project progress and the M&E system itself.*

#2. M&E staff interprets data within its level of representation

Each sampling methodology has a certain level of representation and the data collected should be interpreted within the boundaries of this representation. Random sampling methods (discussed in M&E Guidance on [Random Sampling](#)), used for quantitative data collection, allow data to represent the larger population from which the sample was selected. Conversely, purposeful sampling methods (discussed in M&E Guidance on [Purposeful Sampling](#)), used for qualitative data collection, collect data which cannot be generalized to a larger population but that can be used to better understand the specific context or situation of the participants.

- ➔ *Generalizing either quantitative or qualitative data outside its level of representation will likely result in incorrect conclusions or assumptions.*

For quantitative data, consider the population which the sample was designed to represent. If your analysis plan includes comparisons between sub-groups, refer to your sampling methodology to ensure that the sample was designed to include stratification (statistical comparison of sub-groups within the data). If your sample was not designed to include stratification, any comparisons between sub-groups within the data are not considered statistically sound and can be viewed as suggested differences only. Also consider the level of standard error used in determining the sample size when interpreting quantitative results.

- ➔ *The level of standard error determines the range in which the actual value in the population falls. For example, when using a 7% standard error, a value of 48% (e.g. of households that report boiling their water before drinking) from the sample data actually means that the value in the population is between 41% and 55%.*

For qualitative data, interpret the data as only representing the contexts and/or characteristics of the participants in each qualitative exercise. Refer to the purposeful sampling methodology used to determine which types of comparisons the data will allow. For example, if you collected data from males and from females (with other characteristics staying relatively similar) then the data will allow for a gender comparison.

- ➔ *Qualitative data can only represent the types of individuals, households, and communities which participated in the data collection activity. Refer to your analysis plan which should provide the specific perspectives or insights needed from qualitative data.*

Recognize any limitations or bias in the data collection methods when interpreting the results. Note these limitations or possible biases in the monitoring or evaluation report.

- ➔ *Limitations are nothing to hide! The majority of data collection exercises experience one type of limitation or another due to logistics constraints or other factors. The best approach is to be upfront about limitations and to consider these limitations when interpreting the data.*

#3. M&E staff interprets qualitative and quantitative results together

After qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed separately, interpret the results together. When interpreted together, qualitative and quantitative results will complement each other and enhance your understanding of both the prevalence and reasoning behind the practices, knowledge and attitudes of the surveyed population.

Annex A. Steps for Analysis of Quantitative Data

1. **Run descriptive statistics.** Descriptive statistics include frequencies, percentages, median and mean values.

Frequencies and Percentages

For non-coded responses (e.g. *value in local currency for monthly income or minutes to nearest water source*):

- What were the maximum and minimum values? Any values that do not seem feasible should be cross-checked with the data included in the questionnaires (Refer to M&E Guidance on [Data Entry and Cleaning](#)).
- What is the spread of these responses? Are the responses clustered in any way? What does this tell us about the target population?

For coded responses (e.g. *1 = less than 15 minutes, 2 = 15-30 minutes, 3 = 30 minutes or more*):

- What were the most common responses to questions with coded responses? What were the least common responses?
- Was the frequency of any of these responses unexpected?
- What proportion of respondents cited 'other' for these questions? What were the other responses they provided in addition to the coded list?

➔ *If many of the responses included in the 'other' data have the same meaning (outside of slight variations in wording), create additional responses or categories with these data and include them in your results.*

Missing data: If 30% or more of the questionnaires do not have a response for one of the questions, then the information for that question may give you a false understanding of the situation.

- If there is a high proportion of missing data, do you still have enough data to accurately represent the situation? Consider not including results for indicators with a high proportion of missing data.
- What could explain this high percentage of missing data? Consider any problems encountered during fieldwork as well.
- In future surveys, could questions be asked in a different way to reduce missing data?

Mean and Median Values

- What were the **mean values**, or average values, for the survey population?
- Determine as well the **median value**, that is, the value in the middle of the range.

- Are the mean and median values quite different? If the mean and median values are quite different, this suggests that there are clusters of values within the spread of data. What are possible reasons for this?

2. **Run inferential statistics.** Inferential statistics include comparisons between sub-groups and tests for statistical significance in results.

Statistically significant results are “probably true” or, in other words, the difference(s) found between sub-groups in the data actually reflect the differences existing in the overall population and were not due to chance.

→ *Run a chi-squared test to determine if values are statistically significant between sub-groups.*

The results of chi-squared tests are given in p-values. A p-value of less than 0.05 is statistically significant and means that you can be 95% confident that this difference exists in the surveyed population.

Compare key sub-groups. Common sub-groups include wealth groups, as well as male-headed and female-headed households.

- **Create the variables** required by your analysis plan. For example, you may need to sum the amounts received from different sources of income to calculate the total monthly household income in order to create wealth groups. Indicate that these variables are “created” in their names (i.e. including ‘c’ for ‘created’ in ‘c_income’).
- **Run frequencies and percentages** for each sub-group. What could account for differences in minimum and maximum values and/or in percentages between groups? What could account for similarities? Are the percentages statistically significant?
- **Identify mean values** for each sub-group. Again, look for significant differences between groups.

*When calculating means, the characteristics used to identify your sub-groups (low wealth group, female-headed households) are considered *independent variables* and the variables you would like to compare (monthly income, minutes to nearest drinking water source) are considered *dependant variables*.*

→ *If comparisons between sub-groups were not statistically significant (i.e. chi-squared tests had p-values of more than 0.05), state that the results were not statistically significant in your report, to inform your readers that you ran significance tests. This way you won’t receive requests for significance values.*

3. **Revisit your analysis plan.** Have these initial results raised additional questions? Can these questions be answered with your existing quantitative data? If so, run additional frequencies, comparisons, or tests to answer these questions. It is likely that the initial quantitative results have also raised questions which cannot be answered by further quantitative analyses and instead require analysis of qualitative data.
4. **Produce a summary report of your quantitative findings,** including data analysis tables and any initial interpretation from the team. Combine this summary report with your qualitative findings (if available). Once you have finished your quantitative analysis, proceed with qualitative analysis.

For additional information on quantitative data analysis, refer to:

- [Analyzing Quantitative Data](#) Taylor-Powell (1989) and
- [Using Excel for Analyzing Quantitative Surveys](#) (Leahy 2004)

Annex B. Steps for Analysis of Qualitative Data

Qualitative Data Analysis will provide more in-depth understanding of the key study questions and of your quantitative findings. Qualitative data should be analyzed with field staff, data collectors and/or relevant stakeholders to include their interpretation in the results. If feasible, a portion of the qualitative data analysis may be conducted with community members to include their interpretation and perspective.

➔ *For qualitative monitoring data, which are often generated more frequently and must be analyzed more quickly than evaluation data, follow these steps but feel free to condense steps when necessary to shorten the analysis process.*

1. Translate all qualitative data. Each set of qualitative notes, or data, should be translated into the language in which the analysis will be conducted and in which the report will ultimately be written (if the survey was conducted in a different language than the analysis).

2. Create a matrix of the qualitative data which shows the various responses to each question by location similar to the matrix provided below. Also record the various characteristics of each data source (i.e. focus group or key informant) in the matrix so that you can compare sub-groups. Place the questions in the column headings and the data source location/description in the row headings and record the data in the corresponding squares.

Type of Focus Group / Location	How does the current level of water availability compare to this time last year?	How can you tell that the water situation is different?
Female Focus Group / Tacama Village		
Male Focus Group / Olindia Village		
Female Key informant / Tacama Village		
Male Key informant / Olindia Village		

Create the matrix in either Microsoft Word or Excel. Copy all relevant qualitative data into the corresponding matrix cell. Share these matrices with all persons involved in the data analysis.

➔ *Do not paraphrase the data in the matrix, use the respondents' actual words. Once you have analyzed the data and pulled out all relevant themes, you may then paraphrase or summarize the results.*

3. Read through all of the data presented in the matrix. What phrases or key ideas are repeated in more than one data source? What phrases or ideas are unique to a

particular sub-group? Once you have identified common phrases or ideas, **code the data** to determine how often and by which groups these ideas were cited. Highlight or circle these ideas where they are mentioned in your matrix.

Create a separate table in which you can record the number of times that key ideas were cited. Create a row for each theme or idea as shown in the example below. Also record the characteristics of each group that cited each idea.

Key themes / ideas	Location	Characteristics
Water availability is less than last year	Tacama Village	Female focus group Male focus group Female key informant interview
Water availability is more than last year	Olindia Village	Female focus group Male focus group Female key informant interview
There is more waiting time at the pump	Tacama Village	Female focus group
We have more water to give to our livestock	Olindia Village	Male focus group

- ➔ *Different groups may refer to similar ideas with slightly different terms or words. Be sure to search through the data and connect these various terms and ideas.*
- ➔ *If you have a large amount of data, use Excel or another program to house the qualitative data. Use the COUNTIF function in Excel to identify where certain ideas or themes are mentioned.¹⁵*

With qualitative data, you can make statements such as ‘7 of 10 focus groups stated that improved hygiene practices were among their community’s top priorities’. **Refrain from referring to percentages when analyzing qualitative data.** With qualitative data, each group or interview is a unit and the number of units (focus group discussions) is often too small to support percent statements.

- ➔ *It is often best to refer directly to quotes from the data during interpretation. Include direct quotes in your report as well.*

4. Comparisons of sub-groups. Does your analysis plan require any comparisons between sub-groups? If so, did sub-groups cite similar or different ideas for key questions? What would account for these differences?

5. Additional analyses. Based on your initial quantitative data analysis, what additional questions have arisen? Which of these can be answered by further analysis of your qualitative data? Read through the data again with these questions in mind.

¹⁵ Refer to *Using Excel for Analyzing Survey Questionnaires* (Leahy 2004) for more information.

6. Discuss the findings with the analysis team. Record all ideas and interpretation provided by the analysis team. Produce a summary qualitative report which can serve as a reference during the discussions. Include quantitative data and findings in the summary (as applicable). Refer to M&E Guidance on [Reflection Events](#) for questions to guide these discussions.

For additional information on qualitative data analysis, refer to [Analyzing Qualitative Data](#) (Taylor-Powell and Renner 2003).

Annex C. Steps for Interpreting Data

- 1. Review the summary report(s)** with field staff and/or data collectors, and other key stakeholders. Hold a workshop or meeting and allow adequate time to interpret these results. Refer to M&E Guidance on [Reflection Events](#) when planning these workshops and meetings.
 - What is the significance of these findings? What are some possible explanations for these results?
 - In what ways are these results positive or negative given the project objectives?¹⁶
- ➔ *In these discussions, you may again raise additional analysis questions or necessary clarifications. Return to the analysis phase if current data can answer these questions. If the data cannot answer these questions, make sure to include these questions in future data collection activities.*
- 2. Develop a series of recommendations and a corresponding timeline** to address these recommendations.
 - How will you alter current activities based on these results? How will you incorporate these results into future project design?
- ➔ *Reflect on the data collection exercise. After analysis, we often have more insight into the successes and limitations of the data collection exercise. What did you learn from the data collection exercise itself? What were the successes and limitations of the survey design and methodology? What would you recommend changing for future surveys? M&E staff persons should record all lessons learned and recommendations so they can be incorporated into future survey design.*

For additional information on interpreting data analysis and results, refer to ProPack II, pgs. 240-241 (Stetson et al. 2007).

¹⁶ Adapted from pg. 241 in ProPack II (Stetson et al. 2007).

Reflection Event Standards

- #1. M&E systems include a plan for reflection events*
- #2. M&E staff and stakeholders reflect regularly on project progress*
- #3. M&E staff and stakeholders reflect on the appropriateness of the M&E system*

#1. M&E systems include a plan for reflection events

Scheduling reflection events allows CRS and project staff to better plan for data use and is a step towards the integration of data use and reflection with the M&E system in the minds of staff. Each project should plan for reflection events; however, the type of events and their frequency should be tailored to the project's needs.

Two topics should be included in the plan: project progress and M&E system effectiveness. Within each topic, there should be multiple types of events included at different frequencies and with different groups.

- ➔ *These two topics may be discussed together or separately; however, the effectiveness of the M&E system does not need to be discussed as often as project progress. Instead, discuss the effectiveness of the M&E system at key junctures such as following an evaluation, after a significant amount of monitoring data have been collected, or if gaps in monitoring data have been identified while reviewing project progress.*

Reflection events can be included as part of regular meetings or workshops. However, if appropriate meetings or workshops are not scheduled at the time necessary for reflection on the project or with the appropriate group of people, schedule stand-alone events. These events can as often as monthly but should definitely coincide with report deadlines (since a critical amount of data will presumably have been collected and analyzed for these reports) or any opportunity to reorient planned interventions (during the life of the project or ahead of new funding cycles).

- ➔ *The frequency of reflection events will depend on the nature and timeline of the project. Generally, reflection events should occur more often for shorter projects. Short-term emergency projects, for example, may set aside time for reflection on project progress during daily meetings.*

#2. M&E staff and stakeholders reflect regularly on project progress

The process of using monitoring and evaluation results to inform project decisions should be guided by a series of key reflection questions. While these questions will vary for each project, Annex A provides a list of common reflection questions to guide data use. Engage CRS and partner staff, as well as other key stakeholders, in reflecting on project progress.

- ➔ *Also reflect on the project's critical assumptions. Are the critical assumptions still holding true? If not, what project activities should be altered to account for these changes?*

#3. M&E staff and stakeholders reflect on the appropriateness of the M&E system

In addition to the more frequent review and discussion of the data results, set aside time to reflect on the appropriateness of the M&E system. It is not necessary to reflect on the system's appropriateness during every data use event. Instead, identify key junctures when sufficient data collection activities will have occurred and/or when decisions related to M&E will need to be made. For many projects, a quarterly reflection on the appropriateness of the M&E system is adequate.

Include and engage CRS and partner project staff and managers, key stakeholders, and M&E staff in this reflection process. A list of M&E system review questions is provided in Annex B. Plan to adjust your M&E system (as feasible) based on any weakness identified in this review.

If you have established data use and reflection events, refer to the questions in [Step #8](#) of the M&E System Review Tool to check the quality and appropriateness of these events.

Annex A. Common Project Progress Reflection Questions

Examples of Monitoring Data Questions

- What has the project accomplished in the last month (or since the previous meeting)?
 - How does this compare with the planned targets for this month?
 - If the project is behind on some targets, what are the reasons for this and how can they be addressed?
 - Did anything go particularly well during this period, are some results better than we had expected (targets for the month well exceeded)? If so, what can we learn from it?
 - Does the level of progress vary for different types of communities or households and for male and female participants? If so, why? How can communities or households who have had less progress be supported?
- What indicators (at the output level and IR level) have been achieved, partially or fully?
 - Is this the same for all types of communities and households and for men and women? How can communities or households or individuals who have made less progress be supported?
 - If not, what additional support or inputs are needed from the project for communities or households to have the planned change or impact? Do we need to make changes to any of the project activities and/or consider adding activities?
- What are other informal staff observations from the field?
 - Were any other problems encountered?
 - Were any other insights gained by informal observations?

Examples of Evaluation Data Questions

- Has the program achieved its planned impact?
 - Does the level of success in achieving our targets differ among the SOs? (and IRs?) If so how? And why? If some impact-level (SO) targets have not been achieved, what could be reasons for this? If some impact-level targets have been exceeded, what can we learn from it?
 - Does the level of impact differ for different communities? If so, how? And why?
 - Does the level of impact differ for different types of households (e.g. based on socio-economic status)? If so, how? And why?
- Has the program resulted in any other positive impacts?
 - Does this differ for different types of communities or households? If so, how? And why?
- Has the program resulted in any negative impacts?
 - Does this differ for different types of communities or households? If so, how? And why?
- Was / is the program strategy appropriate to meet community and household needs? Is any adjustment to the strategy required – either for the remainder of the project (mid-term evaluation) or for future projects (final evaluation)?
- What are the remaining needs and priorities of targeted households and communities?
- What were / are the program's main successes? What best practices would you recommend sharing with other staff / offices / stakeholders?
- What were/ are the program's main challenges? What would we suggest doing differently next time?

Annex B. M&E System Reflection Questions

1. Do you have all of the information and results required to make project-related decisions and track project progress? If not, how can you adjust the M&E system to meet all information needs?
2. Is the M&E system currently collecting data that you are not using? If so, what can be removed or simplified so that no data are collected that are not used?
3. Are you able to track the progress and impact separately for key comparison groups (communities, households, men/women) as required? If not, how can this be built in to the M&E system?
4. Does your M&E system provide a useful balance of qualitative and quantitative data? If the results are too numbers-focused and don't provide enough contextual information or explanation, how can more qualitative data be collected? If the results don't provide enough numbers to meet your information and reporting needs, how can more quantitative data be collected?

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Community Participation in M&E - DRAFT

Community Participation in M&E Standards

- #1. M&E Systems track the changes most important to communities.*
- #2. Communities participate in data collection for monitoring and for evaluation.*
- #3. Communities contribute to the interpretation of M&E data.*

Community participation in M&E is widely viewed as an important contribution to quality programming. Community participation is included in the [CRS Global M&E Standards](#) (CRS 2009) ¹⁷ and the basis for [Sphere common standard](#) #1 which states that the disaster-affected population actively participates in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the assistance program (The Sphere Project 2011). In both standards, community participation is associated with increased relevance of programming, transparency and accountability, and sustainability and ownership of impact.

CRS Global M&E Standard #2

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

What is community participation in M&E? While it can take a variety of shapes, community participation refers to increasing the communities' voice throughout the M&E cycle of design, collection, analysis, and use of data. This guidance describes some good practices associated with community monitoring and how they contribute to improved outcomes and program quality.

Consider what resources or support if any the community will need to fulfill their roles in data collection and interpretation. Plan to provide this support at the beginning of the project and throughout the project as needed. The community's support needs should be included in the 'planning for M&E support and resources' document presented in ProPack III (Hahn and Sharrock 2010).

#1. M&E systems track the changes most important to communities.

To increase community participation in M&E design, project teams ask communities to identify the changes that will be most valuable to them throughout the project.

¹⁷ Community participation is the focus on CRS Global M&E Standard #2 and referenced in the support tool for Standards #4, #5, and #6.

These changes then become indicators which help the team measure project success through the eyes of the community. It is often surprising how close the changes selected by the community are to the existing project indicators.

➔ *The closer these changes selected by the community and pre-existing project indicators are to each other, the stronger the needs assessment was in identifying community priorities and understanding the community's perspective about their current challenges.*

In the discussions with the community to identify these changes, it is important to use concepts and terms that the community are familiar with. For example, instead of referring to indicators, refer to changes that will show project success. In many places, communities are more comfortable thinking in numbers or directions of change and less comfortable with percentages. Build the conversation around the terms and concepts that the community chooses.

What does this look like? Selecting the changes most important to communities can often be done through a series of focus groups. The project team simply asks the community about the types of changes they hope to see and which they think will be most important to track to learn about project success. Focus on higher level changes in these discussions related to behavior change and to the impact at the household, community or individual level.

➔ *Remember to hold separate FGDs to reflect the diversity of the community. At minimum, holding separate FGDs with men and women will be necessary. For an education project, it may be important to hold separate FGDs with parents, teachers, and students for example. In a food security project, FGDs would be organized by main livelihood activity or key vulnerability characteristics.*

For these discussions to be effective, the community needs to fully understand the project strategy and activities. Develop a simply summary of the project strategy to share with communities or ensure that the sensitization process has been completed. Only then will the community be able to discuss the changes that will occur. Annex A provides a suggested approach for holding these discussions. Make sure the staff that lead these discussions have been well-oriented to the process and importance of the community participation in M&E and that they possess strong facilitation skills.

➔ *After identifying the indicators through FGDs, seek confirmation of the indicators from the broader community and to share the basic premise of community monitoring in an upcoming community meeting or in a similar event.*

These discussions should be held prior to finalizing the M&E plan for the project, i.e. within the first quarter of the project. The indicators selected by the community

should be included in the M&E plan template. Where they differ from existing project indicators, these can be noted in italics, for example, so that it's clear which were selected by the project team for donor reporting and which were identified by the community.

➔ *It is important that the project team views the community selected indicators as part of the M&E plan and not a separate system. Including the indicators in the M&E plan template, along with how they will be measured and evaluated, will help with this.*

Community vs. Donor-driven M&E

Many project teams feel that they are stuck in between donor-driven M&E systems and systems that are community-based. While it is true that many of our past M&E systems have been only one and not the other, this is a false division. It is possible for our M&E systems to include donor-required indicators and indicators that are valued by the community and other local stakeholders.

We commit to indicators for our donors in the project proposal. It is only after the project is approved and we begin project start up that we have an opportunity to select additional indicators with the community. At times we can include general indicators in the proposal which will be further defined by the community during start up, specifying the type of changes that they'll see or which behaviors changes are most important to achieve the greatest household impact. This is a good practice and an optimum way to integrate the two approaches to M&E.

Most donors will also be interested to learn from the community-selected indicators. Include these findings in your report and document the process of community-based design. It is our role to demonstrate the importance of this to any donor who does not yet value this process.

#2. Communities participate in data collection for monitoring and for evaluation.

Community participation in data collection has shown to contribute to the ownership of monitoring results and of overall project impact. Providing communities with an opportunity to track the changes they value most, to reflect on why changes have or have not occurred, and to discuss their ideas with the project team all contribute to greater ownership and can, in turn, reinforce positive behavior change throughout the community.

Community monitoring processes can also contribute to more reliable monitoring results given that communities often readily know the scope and depth of changes among all households. In comparison, household monitoring visits by project staff,

for example, collect data from only a few households and thus offer a more limited perspective of the overall change.

What does this look like? Community participation in data collection can consist of a small community committee who is tasked with observing changes for different households and individuals. These can be monthly or quarterly meetings and can be discussion-based or use a standard monitoring form. Some communities will be comfortable recording data, simple counts, etc in basic forms or tables. Communities with low literacy, however, will not be comfortable completing a form. In this case, orient the community to the types of changes that they would monitor (those selected by the community) and the staff can record the answers during the monitoring meetings. The data collection should always include some close-ended questions around the indicators (# of households, etc) and then open-ended questions to interpret and explain these results (why changes have or have not happened). An example of a community monitoring tool is included in Annex B.

➔ *Involving the same individuals in these monitoring meetings will help with reflection on longer-term changes and progress in the community.*

It is important that community monitoring captures diverse perspectives and experiences within the community. In order to determine which different perspectives and experiences it will be most important to capture in monitoring data, refer to the findings from the project needs assessment. The needs assessment findings will likely identify the important comparison groups (or different perspectives) which may have different impact during the project. Ensure that these different groups and, at minimum, male and female community members will have an opportunity to provide input and feedback in the monitoring system.

During the mid-term and final evaluation, it is often very helpful to talk to non-beneficiaries (those in targeted communities who did not participate in the project). Non-beneficiaries can provide important information about the overall impact of the project in the community, including any potentially negative impacts that beneficiaries may be more reluctant to share. Two focus groups with male non-beneficiaries and two focus groups with female non-beneficiaries should be sufficient to providing this information.

➔ *Non-beneficiaries can also provide very useful information about the appropriateness of targeting criteria and selection methods. We do not want to wait for the mid-term or final evaluation for this input. It is important to establish a feedback mechanism, such as a complaints desk or hotline, where non-beneficiaries can voice any concerns about targeting soon after beneficiary selection is completed.*

The use of existing community committees in monitoring.

It is often convenient to use existing community committees or structure in the community monitoring process. This is appropriate only if the project team is confident, based on input from diverse community members, that the existing committee will be able to represent the various voices and perspectives in the community. In addition, the project team should consider the current responsibilities of these existing committees and avoid over-burdening the participants. If it is not appropriate to use existing committees, talk to a range of community members about who they would like to collect monitoring data and what format they would prefer for this.

#3. Communities contribute to the interpretation of M&E data.

Involving community members in interpretation of M&E data contributes to the project's accountability to beneficiaries, increases the relevance of our programming, and often helps project teams to identify lessons learned. We are accountable to meet the priority needs of the people we serve and discussing project results, both successes and failures, with beneficiaries and soliciting their feedback and level of satisfaction is an important step towards increased accountability. In addition, sharing and interpreting the results with beneficiaries helps us to further learn how relevant the project strategy was in meeting community needs. We may learn that the project resulted in changes that were very important for beneficiaries or we may learn that they would have preferred a different approach to contribute to a slightly different impact in the end. Lastly, interpretation of results with beneficiaries allows us to understand why different approaches were or were not successful. The underlying reasons for success and for failure provide the in-depth understanding needed to identify strong lessons learned.

What does this look like? Hold a community meeting to share the results of a baseline survey, mid-term survey or review and end-line survey or evaluation with the community. If there is already a community meeting planned, it is ideal to include the M&E discussion here in order to limit the number of new meetings needed or planned. Share the successes and challenges of the project openly. The honesty of the team in presenting challenges is necessary to identify underlying causes for challenges or a general lack of project progress or impact.

For discussion about the baseline, share the key findings and confirm that they are accurate. If needed, ask for further explanation regarding different findings. For discussions about the mid-term or final evaluation, present the key successes of the project and ask why these elements were more successful than others. Present the key challenges or failures or failures and ask why these occurred. It is often necessary to ask a series of 'why' questions in order to provide the full depth of understanding needed to generate good lessons learned.

- ➔ *As recommended for the Standards #1 and #2 above, hold separate discussions with men and women in the community and with key groups who will likely have had different experiences during implementation, achieved various levels of impact, and formed a unique perspective on the project.*

If the project's M&E system includes a community monitoring process, it is usually not necessary to share the monitoring results for interpretation because this is already done on a regular basis with the community monitoring committee. If, however the project has not yet established a community monitoring process (as stated in Standard #2), the project team should find an opportunity to share key monitoring findings and challenges with the community on a quarterly basis. Again, it is ideal to build this into an existing meeting instead of having separate monitoring meetings for this.

- ➔ *The SOW for a baseline or an evaluation should reference how the community will participate in the interpretation of results. By including this in an SOW, it will be clear to the evaluator that the project team values the community's input into this process.*

Annex A. General Process for Identifying Community Indicators

Begin the session by sharing the objectives of the session. State that the meeting was held to understand more about the changes that will occur from the project. State that participation is voluntary and that any input from the community will be very helpful for the project team.

Part I: Share the project strategy and activities.

Note: sharing the strategy and activities is not necessary if the community has already been fully sensitized to the project strategy and approach. If this is the case, ask instead for the participants to share what they remember from this sensitization session. This can be a good check to see if the earlier sensitization was successful. Make sure that all participants understand the project before proceeding.

Refer to the project objectives and the support that will be provided as part of the project. Refer to the key behavior changes that are intended by the project. Use visuals or pictures if appropriate. Describe the type of knowledge that the project aims to increase. Allow time for any questions before proceeding.

Part II: Ask about important changes that will result from the project.

Ask participants to share what changes they would anticipate will occur from the project. In the discussion probe to determine if there are additional changes that should be monitored related to:

- Attitudes of different community members;
- Additional behavior changes;
- Outcomes for individuals, households, and the community; and
- External or contextual factors.

Ask of all of the changes that will likely occur, which will be most important to them and why. Discuss with participants if this response would be different for other individuals or households in the community and why. Lastly, ask if the project is very successful would any other changes occur and, if so, what those changes would be.

Part III: Ask if the community is interested in participating in monitoring.

If respondents do not have an understanding of basic monitoring concepts, take some time to explain the purpose and process for data collection and use. Make sure that it is clear that we only collect data to learn from and improve the projects.

Ask respondents if they think that some community members could help to track the changes identified in Part I. Explain that we would like these community members to keep track of the changes that result from the project and then discuss these with the project team. Ask which community members would be best for this and why. Check to make sure that those members would be able to represent the perspective

and ideas of different groups. Follow up, for example, by asking who should participate in monitoring to make sure we understand the women's perspective and the perspective of different livelihood groups.

Ask if it would be possible to meet with these community members either monthly or quarterly and where and when it would be best to hold the meeting.

Note: If the community members recommended to participate in monitoring are not present in this session, the next step will be to meet with the recommended community members to orient them to the concept of monitoring, the changes or indicators identified, and what the monitoring process will look like.

Part IV: Share back your understanding of the suggestions for community monitoring.

Before concluding the session, repeat back the changes identified in Part II, noting which were most important and which would be the signs of high project success. Summarize your understanding of the group's recommendations for what the community monitoring process should look like and who should participate. It is important that we understand all of the input from the community correctly at this stage. Ask for feedback on these ideas. Make time for any questions or comments the group has.

Conclude the session by thanking the respondents for their time and letting them know that the project team is going to act on their ideas in developing a community monitoring system.

Annex B. Example of a Community Monitoring Form

Union _____

Ward No _____

Name of Village: _____

Total Number of HHs _____

Number of HHs participated _____

Step 1. Complete the following table with the numbers/answers provided by the community.

	Indicators	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
	Enter date completed												
1	How many HHs earned income in your village/hamlet last month?												
2	How many HHs have purchased additional livelihood assets with the income from the main asset?												
3	How many HHs sold assets and not repurchased												
4	How many livestock/cows died last month?												
5	How many HH saved any this month?												

Step 2. Record the discussion about the following questions:

1. What has been the most important change in the community in the last _____ (month)?
2. Are the positive changes in the last _____ (month) in your community sufficient? Why or why not?

Notes: _____

CRS/ASIA M&E GUIDANCE

Designing and Conducting an Evaluation

Designing and Conducting an Evaluation Standards

- #1: Evaluations use specific evaluation questions to address each of the standard evaluation criteria.*
- #2. CRS project team members, partner staff, community members and other stakeholders participate in analysis and interpretation of evaluation results.*
- #3. Evaluation findings are documented and used to improve the quality of programming.*

There is a growing emphasis among international organizations in improving the quality of evaluations and better use of evaluations to improve the quality of our work. The CRS Global M&E Standard #6 states that *CRS and partner staff jointly design, implement evaluations that assess **relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability**; and use evaluation findings to improve programs* (CRS 2009). The guidance provided here is designed to help project teams better meet CRS' Global Evaluation standards and applies to both emergency and non-emergency programming.

#1: Evaluations use specific evaluation questions to address each of the standard evaluation criteria.

The five evaluation criteria, referenced in the CRS Global standard on evaluation, are: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. These criteria were created by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1991 as part of general evaluation principles (OECD 1991). Together these five criteria are widely viewed as the cornerstones for quality evaluations of development programming, particularly for mid-term and final evaluations. Additional information is available on these criteria in ProPack II pg 219 (Stetson et al. 2007).

Each of the criteria covers multiple concepts and ideas which need to be addressed in the evaluation. The evaluation team should develop project-specific evaluation questions under each of the criteria to ensure that all of the important concepts are covered. These evaluation questions are then used to design the evaluation methodology, draft the data collection tools, and structure the analysis of the findings. Examples of these evaluations questions are included in Table 1. Note that these examples are generic and should be made more specific to better fit the project's context.

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria and Key Words and Concepts

Criteria	Examples of Evaluation Questions
Relevance	<p>Did the initial needs assessment identify priority community needs? Did the assessment differentiate between needs for men and women and for more vulnerable and less vulnerable households? If so, how? If not, why not?</p> <p>Is the project design appropriate for meeting the community priority needs? <i>Consider the project's objectives, activities, and timing.</i> Why or why not?</p> <p>Did the targeting strategy allow the project to meet the greatest need in the community (i.e. the most vulnerable households or individuals)? Why or why not?</p> <p>Was community participation sufficient throughout the needs assessment, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the project? Why or why not? If not, how can participation be increased during the remainder of the project (for mid-term evaluations) or in a future project (for final evaluations)?</p> <p>Has the project met the specific needs and priorities of women? Why or why not?</p>
Effectiveness	<p>Did the project achieve its planned outputs (as per the DIP) on the planned timeline? Why or why not?</p> <p>Did the M&E system provide the right information at the right time to allow for timely project management and decision-making? Why or why not?</p> <p>Has working in partnership increased the effectiveness and quality of the project? Why or why not?</p> <p>Has the project been effective in building partner capacity? If so, how has partner capacity been built? If not, why not? If not, how can this be improved for next time?</p>
Efficiency	<p>Are the project's staffing and management structures efficient? Why or why not?</p> <p>Did the project staff have the right capacity to implement a quality project? Why or why not?</p>

	What was the cost per beneficiary for the project? Is this reasonable given project impact? Why or why not?
Impact	<p>Has the project achieved its planned impact (<i>refer to proframe indicators to determine planned impact</i>)? Why or why not?</p> <p>Did impact vary for different targeted areas, households or individuals (ie. men and women)? If so, how and why?</p> <p>Was there any unintended impact from the project, either positive or negative?</p> <p>What impact was most valuable to participating communities? Why this?</p>
Sustainability	<p>What is the likelihood that the community will be able to sustain the impact of the project? How do we know?</p> <p>What has the project done to support community structures or groups to be able to continue to address community needs and sustain project impact? Is this sufficient?</p>

➔ *How do we use the proframe in the evaluation? The 'impact' evaluation criterion asks that the project team measure progress against all of the SO-level indicators and IR-level indicators included in the proframe. In addition, under the 'impact' criterion, the project team should determine if there has been any unanticipated impact from the project, either positive or negative.*

Evaluation questions are important for mid-term evaluations, final evaluations, and real-time evaluations of emergency responses. In addition, questions should be developed for mid-term reviews¹⁸ although they would be called review questions in this context. For a mid-term evaluation or review, the questions should include a focus on how the particular activity or process can be improved for the remainder of the project. For final evaluations, the questions should encourage project teams to think about an activity or element can be improved for similar project in the future.

¹⁸ A mid-term review is a learning event conducted in the middle of the project with the objective of improving project impact and quality. A review differs from an evaluation in that it may cover only some of the standard evaluation criteria or use only light qualitative methods to understand project impact to date.

Real-Time Evaluations of Emergency Responses

A real-time evaluation (RTE) is a light evaluation conducted early (approximately 6-8 weeks) in an emergency response. The purpose of an RTE is to reflect on the progress and quality of the response and to produce a set of actionable recommendations to improve the on-going response. Due its nature and timing, slightly different criteria are used in an RTE. The standard RTE criteria are: relevance, effectiveness, coordination, coverage, and sustainability/connectedness. Additionally, RTEs may look at the early impact of the response. For more information on RTEs, refer to the [CRS Guidance on Real-Time Evaluations](#) available on CRS Global (Ishida and Wilson 2010a). The final evaluation of an emergency response would use the standard evaluation criteria.

Without tailored evaluation questions that reflect the context and focus of the program, the evaluation is likely to produce fairly generic results and be void of relevant lessons learned and useful recommendations for future programs. Tips for developing quality evaluation questions include:

- Engage the project field team and partner staff in developing evaluation questions which reflect the project context;
- Review the monitoring data collected to see if the findings raise any additional questions to be answered by the evaluation;
- Refer to the proframe and/or M&E plan to make sure that all of the SO-level and IR-level indicators will be covered by the evaluation. In addition, ensure that any cross-cutting themes included in the M&E plan are addressed by the evaluation;
- Refer to donor guidance to ensure that donor-required indicators and general information needs are met by the evaluation;
- Draw upon the project's analysis plan, if available, in developing the questions. The analysis plan should include draft evaluation questions; and
- Review other evaluation reports for similar projects for ideas about how to phrase questions. However, it is not advisable to simply copy questions from other evaluations as they will rarely be a good fit 'as is' for your project.

Annex A provides evaluation planning tables and presents eight steps for good evaluation planning. Step 1 is to create specific evaluation questions for your program under each of the standard evaluation criteria. These tables provide guidance on how to use questions to structure the evaluation methodology and data collection tools and should be the basis for evaluation planning.

➔ *It is often appropriate to consult non-beneficiaries during mid-term and final evaluations to solicit their input on the appropriateness of targeting and the overall impact, positive and negative, of the project. Consider which evaluation questions*

should take input from non-beneficiaries into account and include non-beneficiaries as respondents where needed in the evaluation planning tables (Annex A).

#2. CRS project team members, partner staff, community members and other stakeholders participate in analysis and interpretation of evaluation results.

Participatory analysis and interpretation are necessary for contextualizing results, in-depth analysis, and engaging project and partner staff and community members with evaluation findings. Additionally, participatory analysis is often an effective means for building staff capacity in evaluation concepts and processes. Project teams are often able to identify key recommendations and lessons learned as part of participatory analysis and interpretation sessions, which represents a good step to utilization-focused evaluations.

- ➔ *Participatory analysis includes project and partner staff, community members or other stakeholders in determining the evaluation findings based on the data. This is particularly important for qualitative data.*
- ➔ *In participatory interpretation, participants consider the project context and use their local knowledge to identify lessons learned, best practices and recommendations based on the evaluation findings. For greater clarity on these terms, refer to Table 2.*

Separate sessions are held for staff (both project and partner staff) and a community members. The sessions differ in content and structure for each group.

- With project and partner staff, the session is often a ½ to 1 day meeting led by a project team member. The purpose of this session is to share the data and findings with staff and allow time for interpretation and discussion about what, if anything, the project team should do differently based on these results. This session with staff may include participatory analysis of focus group discussion (FGD) data. For more information on analysis of FGD data, refer to the M&E Guidance on [Data Analysis and Interpretation](#).
 - The analysis session with communities is often a short meeting (1-2 hours) in which staff share the main findings with the community and ask for the community to explain and interpret why different changes did or did not occur. This session is often very effective when staff is able to share specific quantitative or qualitative findings with the community and then allow time for open-ended discussion. It is important that the findings are presented in a very accessible way during these meetings and the team should consider using visual or other creative presentation methods.
- ➔ *Refer to the initial stakeholder analysis for your project to determine which other stakeholders should participate in the analysis session(s).*

Table 2. Comparison of Best Practices, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations.¹⁹

Best Practice	Lesson Learned	Recommendation
<p>-An intervention, approach or process that is proven to contribute to the 'best' outcome in program quality and impact.</p> <p>-Identified through the rigorous evaluation of promising practices.</p> <p>-Can be applied in similar settings / contexts.</p>	<p>-Based on observations and experiences during project implementation; related to project success, challenge <u>or</u> failure.</p> <p>-Identifies 'why' a success or failure occurred.</p> <p>-Generally applicable in similar contexts.</p> <p>-Has not been evaluated or proven.</p> <p>-Can lead to identification of promising practices.</p>	<p>-A specific change recommended for an on-going project.</p> <p>-Not broadly applicable in other contexts.</p> <p>-What to do differently based on evaluation results.</p>

#3. Evaluation findings are documented and used to improve the quality of programming.

An important principle of utilization-focused M&E is that evaluation findings are used to improve the quality of the current program and of related future programming. In order for evaluation to contribute to increased program quality, evaluations findings should be clearly documented and circulated broadly with CRS and among other stakeholders, as appropriate. The evaluations reports should include evaluations methods, findings, recommendations and lessons learned. The report should directly answer the evaluation questions and convince the reader with findings, quotes and numbers and further interpretation and explanation as needed. It is important to document challenges and even failures in the evaluation report. Only an honest reflection by the project team will make a good contribution to learning and program quality within the country program, within the region, and across CRS globally.

➔ *Evaluations conducted during the life of the project, both mid-term evaluations and real-time evaluations, should provide actionable recommendations for improving the quality of the project in the time remaining. Final evaluation findings should be incorporated into the strategy design for subsequent programming.*

To contribute to greater learning, the evaluation reports must be easily accessible to project teams during project design and strategy discussions. The evaluation reports should be circulated within the country program, the region and posted on CRS

¹⁹ The definitions for best practice and lesson learned are based on the CRS [HIV and AIDS Best Practices Fact Sheet](#) (Senefeld et al. 2007).

Global. The evaluation report should be posted on the CP page on CRS Global and posted to the ALNAP evaluation database, is appropriate. Consult your M&E team members or RTA for assistance in uploading the report to both locations.

➔ *When posting the report to the CRS Global sharepoint site, be sure to tag the report with the word 'evaluation' so that others will easily locate your report with a key word search. In addition, tag the report with key words related to your sector and type of intervention.*

The [ALNAP Evaluative Reports Database](#) is a growing resource with examples of evaluations across sectors and regions. Posting both mid-term and final evaluations to ALNAP will allow other organizations to learn from the evaluation findings and contribute to a larger body of organizational knowledge.

Posting and sharing the evaluation report is, however, likely not sufficient for engaging a range of stakeholders with the evaluation findings. To communicate the evaluation results with other project teams the country program, it is a good practice to hold a learning event. A

learning event can be as simple as a 2-hour session for sharing key results and discussion with the team. Learning events can also be more extensive depending on the scope of the evaluation and the strategic learning needs of the team. Remember to invite different project teams to the learning event as some of the findings are likely to be useful to staff in other sectors.

➔ *For larger and more strategic learning events, consider inviting staff from other CRS country programs and other organizations to participate.*

In order to make the evaluation findings more accessible, identify creative ways to communicate findings and increase interest in reading the evaluation report. Consider circulating a one-page document with key findings that would be useful for different audiences or developing a short narrated presentation which can be circulated as an audio-visual complement to the report. Examples of such communication pieces are posted on the Asia PQ site ([click here](#) to access examples from the real-time evaluation of the 2010 Pakistan floods).

For additional information:

[CRS Real-Time Evaluation Guidance](#) (Ishida and Wilson 2010a).

[Preparing for the Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Pre-Evaluation Planning](#). (McMillan and Willard 2007).

Annex A. Eight Steps for Evaluation Planning

Step 1: Create specific evaluation questions for your program under each of the 5 standard evaluation criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability.²⁰ Enter these questions in the first column of Table 1 below.

→ Make the questions specific, including the 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'when' as applicable.

→ Under *impact*, Include questions about whether the project achieved the impact stated in the indicators included in your M&E plan.

→ If your project has an analysis plan, include any evaluation questions included. *Note: questions in the analysis plan are generally considered to be drafts and can be revised as needed.*

→ Key concepts and issues associated with each evaluation criterion are presented after each of the criteria in Table 1. More information on the evaluation criteria is available in ProPack II, pg. 219 (Stetson et al. 2007).

→ There is no set required number of evaluation questions. Generally programs have 3-5 questions under each of the criteria. Add or delete rows based on the number of questions needed.

Step 2: Identify the appropriate tools and respondents for each evaluation question. Include these in Table 1.

→ Determine which tool(s) will give the most reliable data or information for the question. Common evaluation tools include: HH surveys, key informant interviews with community/ government stakeholders, focus group discussions with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, observations, staff interviews with CRS and partner staff, and review of project records or meeting notes.

→ For HH surveys, FGDs, KIIs, and staff interviews specify who the respondent group will be: beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, CRS staff, partner staff, etc. This will help in outlining the tools in Table 2.

→ There is no fixed number of tools or respondents required. Consider where it is appropriate to triangulate information from different methods or different perspectives with the same method for a given evaluation question. Add and delete columns for tools as needed.

Step 3: Create an outline for the tools in Table 2. Enter each tool in Table 1 in the first column of Table 2. Copy all of the evaluation questions that the tool will be used to answer in the next column.

²⁰ Note that evaluations for emergency response projects generally use different criteria: Relevance / appropriateness; Effectiveness; Connectedness / sustainability; Coverage; Coordination. For more information on evaluations for emergency responses, refer to the [M&E Toolkit for Emergency Response](#) on CRS Global (Ishida and Wilson 2010b).

→ List separately the tools that will be used with different respondents (ie. FGDs with beneficiaries and FGDs with non-beneficiaries).

→ Refer to the M&E plan. Make sure that all of the methods included in the M&E plan are reflected in the list of tools here. Include any missing tools and list the indicators that each tool will answer in the second column.

Step 4. Specify any comparison groups needed for each tool in Table 2.

→ Determine whether there are any relevant comparison groups needed for surveys, focus groups, key informant or semi-structured interviews or observation tools. Refer to your M&E plan and analysis plan. Comparison groups are often needed for where the context is very different within the project area or where different groups have had different experiences or perspectives during the project. Include triangulation as appropriate.

Step 5. Determine the sampling strategy and selection methodology for each tool. Enter this in Table 2.

→ Use random sampling for quantitative tools and purposive sampling for qualitative tools. Refer to the M&E Guidance on [Purposeful Sampling](#) and [Random Sampling](#). Include all information relevant for the sample here: clustering, stratification, level of error, and # needed for random sample; perspectives and number needed for purposive sample. *Note: The number needed will be # of respondents for random sampling. The number needed for purposive sampling will be the number of groups or interviews*

Step 6. Create draft tools from the outline of information needs included in Table 2.

→ Refer to the M&E Guidance on [Developing Qualitative Tools](#) and [Quantitative Tool Development](#).

→ Allow enough time for feedback on the tools from M&E / project team members. Revise them during training or field-testing if needed.

Step 7. Determine staff needs for data collection

→ Determine the number of staff needed for data collection. Make sure that female staff are adequately represented on the team to collect data from female community members.

Step 8. Develop a timeline for the evaluation

→ Make the timeline as specific as possible. Include finalizing the data collection tools, training the data collection, field testing the tools, data collection, analysis, a staff reflection workshop, and report writing.

Table 1. Evaluation Questions, Tools, and Respondents

Evaluation Questions	Tools	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3
Relevance (<i>relevance of objectives to community, needs assessment, gender strategy, community participation, targeting criteria and selection methods, timeliness</i>)				
Effectiveness (<i>met planned outputs on time, M&E system, incorporation of learning from mid-term, enhancing partner capacity</i>)				
Efficiency (<i>cost per beneficiary, ratio of programming to admin costs, staffing structure, human resources, coordination</i>)				
Impact (<i>achievement of SO and IR impact indicators, positive and negative impact, planned and unplanned, differential impact on different community, HHs, individuals</i>)				

Sustainability (<i>capacity of community organizations and committees, value in community of continuing behaviors, other proxies of sustainability</i>)				

Table 2. Tool Outline and Methodology

Evaluation Tool	Information needs: Questions/topics/indicators to be included	Who? Respondent (s) / comparison groups	How: # and strategy for random sample; # and perspectives needed for purposive sample.	Notes: for selection of respondents, etc.

The CRS Asia M&E Guidance Series

ANNEX I:

M&E System Review Tool

Revised August 2009

CRS Asia M&E System Review Tool

Introduction

This tool provides guidance for a thorough review of your project's monitoring plan. This tool begins with a review of your existing monitoring plan and walks through the key steps of operationalizing your plan including tool development, developing a monitoring database, and use of the monitoring data. The review tool is intended to generate discussion among project team members and to culminate in an action plan for revisions or addressing any gaps in the current monitoring plan. This review tool is organized into 8 main questions as follows:

1. Does your project have an **M&E plan**?
2. Does your project have an **M&E binder**?
3. Have you developed all **monitoring forms**?
4. Have you trained staff and partners on **using the monitoring forms**?
5. Have you conducted a **quality check** of the monitoring data?
6. Have you created a **monitoring database**?
7. Have you trained staff and partners on **data entry and analysis**?
8. Have you planned for **M&E meetings** or other events?

If the answer is 'no' to any of the above questions, the project team should work to complete this step. This review tool was not designed to be used in isolation and refers to ProPack I (Stetson et al. 2004) and ProPack II (Stetson et al. 2007) and to the CRS Asia M&E Guidance Series for further guidance at each review stage.

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the 8 above questions, the review tool provides sub-questions for the project team to assess the quality of the current plan or component. These quality-related questions serve as a checklist in that each should be addressed by developing an action plan for revision if the answer is not yet 'yes'.

This is an internal review tool. Engage your project team members in this process and call upon M&E team members for specific technical questions or in refining your action plan. Where you identify gaps in your monitoring plan or areas where quality should be improved, develop an **action plan** (refer to template in Annex A) which outlines:

- the specific next step(s),
- the person(s) responsible, and
- the intended timeline for completion.

1. Does your project have an M&E plan?

- ⇒ *If no*, refer to the ProPack I pg. 97-148 (Stetson et al. 2004), ProPack II pg. 83-130 (Stetson et al. 2007), and the M&E Guidance on [Creating an M&E plan](#) when developing the M&E plan.
- ⇒ *If yes*, consider the following questions to review the quality of your M&E plan.

Yes	No	Review Questions
		Do your indicators provide information that is useful for decision-making and tracking progress?
		Are the intensity and the frequency of monitoring activities appropriate for the scale of your project?
		Is the sample size and methodology appropriate for your project? Refer to the M&E Guidance on Random Sampling and Purposeful Sampling .
		Is there a good balance of qualitative and quantitative data included in your monitoring plan?
		Are the data for activity-level and output-level monitoring collected and analyzed on a more frequent basis than data at the IR-level? Similarly, are data at the IR-level collected and analyzed more frequently than data at the SO-level?
		Are data systematically analyzed after they are collected?
		Do your monitoring data vary seasonally? If so, has this been taken into account by your monitoring plan?
		Does your plan include any comparisons between different groups (women, more vulnerable groups, etc)

- ➔ If you answer 'no' (or 'not yet!') to any of the above questions, develop an action plan for revising your M&E plan.

If you have conducted a recent evaluation for your project, what were the evaluation recommendations, if any, for revising the monitoring plan? Did the evaluation find that important information is currently not being captured by the monitoring plan? Or that any information currently being collected is not required for monitoring your project?

2. Does your project have an M&E binder?

⇒ *If no*, create an M&E binder to house all of your M&E documents and templates.

⇒ *If yes*, make sure your M&E binder includes the following:

General

- Results framework
- ProFrame (revised if applicable)
- Detailed Implementation Plan
- Milestone planning sheet/ IPTT
- Additional formats or information needs of stakeholders (if applicable)
- M&E plan template

Baseline

- Methodology for the baseline
- Baseline questionnaire(s) / tool(s)
- Baseline analysis plan
- Baseline report (if complete)

Mid-term

- Methodology for mid-term survey and/or evaluation
- Mid-term questionnaire(s) / tool(s)
- Mid-term analysis plan
- Mid-term report (if complete)

Monitoring

- Monitoring forms
- Narrative instructions for use of monitoring forms
- Monitoring database guide
- Monitoring reports (when completed)
- Quarterly project reports (when completed)
- Mid-term project report (when completed)
- Final project report (when completed)

M&E Review

- M&E review summary sheet
- Plans for M&E reflections events

Final Evaluation

- Methodology for final evaluation
- Final evaluation / survey questionnaire(s)/tool(s)
- Final survey analysis plan
- Final report (if complete)

For guidance on completing any of these M&E components refer to the CRS Asia M&E Guidance and to ProPack I pg: 97-148 (Stetson et al. 2004) and ProPack II pg: 83-130 (Stetson et al. 2007).

Make your M&E binder user-friendly by including a table of contents, and organizing all items in a sequential order, with each component clearly labeled.

3. Have you developed all monitoring forms?

⇒ *If no*, refer to M&E Guidance on Developing Quantitative and on Developing Qualitative tools when developing monitoring forms.

⇒ *If yes*, consider the following questions to review the quality of your monitoring forms.

Yes	No	Review Questions
		Do your monitoring forms capture all of the monitoring indicators from your ProFrame?
		Do your monitoring forms capture data which will allow for comparisons between specific groups, such as women or other key vulnerable groups?
		Do your monitoring forms include additional information not required by the ProFrame? <i>-If no, consider what additional information is required for monitoring the programmatic context, implementation, and early indicators of desired change in the target population.</i> <i>-If yes, consider if this information is required for monitoring the project. Remove all monitoring information that is not required.</i>
		Do your monitoring forms collect both qualitative and quantitative information? <i>-If so, are the questions for each separated to avoid confusing questions which mix both types of data?</i> <i>-Do your monitoring forms allow you to link quantitative and qualitative data so the results support each other?</i>
		Do monitoring forms have clear instructions specifying purpose, frequency, and tips for completion to improve the quality of data collected?

→ If you answer 'no' (or 'not yet'!) to any of the above questions, develop an action plan for revising your monitoring forms

Ensure your completed monitoring forms are filed in an organized manner so that staff and partners can easily find them to review both the content and quality of completed forms.

4. Have you trained staff and partners on using monitoring forms?

⇒ *If no*, plan a training session to orient staff and partners on the rationale behind the tools and questions and on the use of each tool. Be sure to include an opportunity to field test the tools, both for staff and partner experience and to identify any weaknesses in the tools or confusing questions that should be addressed before they are finalized. Refer to M&E Guidance on [Training and Field-Testing](#).

⇒ *If yes*, consider the following questions in reviewing the quality of the staff and partner training.

Yes	No	Review Questions
		Have staff and partners been trained on any new or revised forms that were not included in the initial training (if applicable)?
		Have staff and partners been trained on reporting formats?
		Have you revised your monitoring forms to incorporate feedback from the staff and partner training and field testing?
		Have you revised your monitoring forms since they were first used to incorporate feedback after use?

➔ If you answer 'no' (or 'not yet!') to any of the above questions, develop an action plan for providing further training for staff and partners.

5. Have you conducted a quality check of the monitoring data?

- ⇒ *If no*, thoroughly review the data collection process and a selection of completed monitoring forms in order to identify any gaps in data quality.
- ⇒ *If yes*, ensure the following questions were answered in your quality check.

Yes	No	Review Questions
		Are there any common mistakes by data collectors? <i>-If yes, how can these problems be addressed?</i>
		Are there questions included which often yield unclear data or data which were not directly related to the question? <i>-If yes, how can these questions be rephrased?</i>
		Are there questions which were often left blank? <i>-If yes, is this due to lack of responses by participants or error by data collectors?</i>

- If you answer 'no' (or 'not yet!') to any of the above questions, develop an action plan for conducting a quality check of your monitoring data.

6. Have you created a database for your monitoring data?

➡ *If no*, create a database for your monitoring data following the guidance provided in the M&E Guidance on [Creating a Quantitative Database](#).

➡ *If yes*, consider the following questions in reviewing your database.

Yes	No	Review Questions
		Does your database allow you to record and track just the main ideas from the qualitative monitoring data collected? <i>*Only the main ideas or points from qualitative data need to be entered into a database. Store the completed monitoring forms in a central location where they can easily be referred to during analysis or if any additional questions arise.</i>
		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 link activity, output, and IR data when necessary? <i>*Assuming that separate databases for activity / output and for IR data are appropriate for your program</i>
		Is the process of data entry and analysis providing timely results and summaries? <i>-If no, how can this time period be shortened by revising the database format?</i>

➔ If you answer 'no' (or 'not yet!') to any of the above questions, develop an action plan for revising your database.

7. Have you trained staff and partners on data entry and analysis?

⇒ *If no*, train designated staff and partners on the data entry process and (either the same or different) staff members and partners on the analysis required for the monitoring data.

⇒ *If yes*, consider the following questions in reviewing the data entry and analysis processes.

Yes	No	Review Questions
		Does the time required for entry and analysis allow for timely results and summaries? <i>-If not, how can this time period be shortened by retraining the data entry or by retraining those that conduct the analysis?</i>
		Do you receive monitoring reports in adequate time for meetings or other critical reflection events? <i>-If not, how can the time required for writing reports be shortened?</i>
		Do you conduct regular quality checks on the data entry process? <i>-Are there common mistakes which can be addressed through additional training?</i>

➔ If you answer 'no' (or 'not yet!') to any of the above questions, develop an action plan providing staff and partners with additional training.

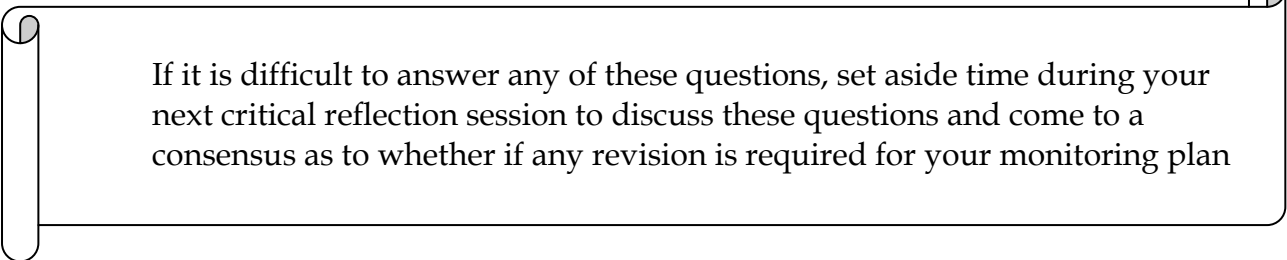
8. Have you planned for M&E meetings or other events?

➔ *If no*, develop a schedule for M&E meetings (reflection or other data use events) with relevant staff, partners, and stakeholders who will utilize the monitoring data and analysis results. These can be separate meetings or workshops or reflect time allocated specifically to M&E within other meetings or events. Refer to M&E Guidance on Reflection and Use Events when planning and structuring these sessions.

➔ *If yes*, review the appropriateness of your M&E meetings and other related events by considering the following questions.

Yes	No	Review Questions
		Do these events occur frequently enough to allow for timely review of the monitoring data? And for timely programmatic decisions? <i>-If not, schedule these meetings and events more frequently.</i>
		Is enough time allocated for M&E during each meeting or event to cover all relevant information?
		Does your monitoring system provide enough information to identify progress and challenges related to your project? <i>- If not, adjust your monitoring plan to provide more contextual data (qualitative and quantitative) and rely more on staff and partner observations and informal monitoring.</i>
		Do you use all monitoring data collected during these reflection and M&E use events? <i>-If not, consider collecting these data less frequently or removing them from the data collection forms if appropriate.</i>
		Are all of your information needs met during each meeting and use event to make programmatic decisions and monitoring progress? <i>-If not, revise your monitoring plan and forms to include the necessary additional information.</i>
		Do your monitoring data present enough contextual information to explain the quantitative data collected?
		Do your monitoring data present enough quantitative data to track progress of the project?
		Do reflection and M&E events focus on what is going well and why? <i>-If not, include more of a focus on the project's achievements and successes. Acknowledge the staff and partners' hard work and accomplishments. Take time to understand why the project has been successful and in which contexts or among which groups it has been more successful.</i>

➔ If you answer 'no' (or 'not yet!') to any of the above questions, develop an action plan for future use and reflection events.



If it is difficult to answer any of these questions, set aside time during your next critical reflection session to discuss these questions and come to a consensus as to whether if any revision is required for your monitoring plan

Annex A. Action Plan Template

Project Name: _____

Date Review Completed: _____

List of Review Participants:

1. What is going well and why?

2. What is challenging (gaps, weaknesses) and why?

3. Action Plan for Revisions and Next Steps

Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Anticipated date of completion
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

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