AN INTRODUCTION TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Rainier Almazan

This article emphasizes monitoring and evaluation of projects—but lessons can easily be applied to monitoring using Land Watch Asia land reform monitoring indicators on land tenure and access to land.

MONITORING

What is monitoring?

- Monitoring is the built-in mechanism to check that things are going to plan and enable adjustments to be made in a methodical way (Oxfam, 1995).
- Monitoring is a systematic and continuous assessment of progress of a piece of work over time (Save the Children, 1995).

What is the purpose of monitoring?

We monitor to:

- Assess quality and quantity of work done in relation to each objective
- Rectify, improve, adapt, and derive lessons

Monitoring for Land Watch Asia

Specific to the Land Watch Asia campaign, we are monitoring the implementation of land reform, mainly looking at access to land (land ownership) and land tenure (disputes and evictions, land conflicts), as well as inputs (laws and policies, budgets).

We seek to enhance our capacities to monitor and evaluate to **inform our policy advocacy** not only at the national level, but also at the regional and global levels.

What do we monitor?

If you have a project design, you decide on the activities, expected outputs, and results.

Activities

- Things a project or program (e.g., land reform) does

Outputs

- Products or consequences of project activities
- Tangible deliverables i.e. goods (e.g., manual), services (i.e. computer repair shop) or desired behavioral manifestations (e.g., can demonstrate, through exercise, computer typing); products or consequences of a project

Results

- Things that happen because of what the project or program does
- Effects of outputs

We use data and information from monitoring to

- Plan/act on issues or concerns
  - Inform the development of strategies and tactics
  - Inform design of specific activities
- Mobilize/manage
  - Move resources (people, materials, money, information, time)
  - Identify and adjust poorly performing components or pressure concerned agency
- Communicate, report, and replan
  - Share information
  - Report on project performance to the stakeholders and donors

Guiding principles of monitoring

- Focus on minimal but key information from critical areas to avoid being overwhelmed by reports and unnecessary data.
- Include all forms of communication: (verbal, written, formal, informal) to create opportunities to cross-check information
- Use verifiable evidence (e.g. indicators) to assess progress.
- Enhance the quality of actions through learning and accountability. Receiving information creates an obligation to act on the implications (both operational and strategic).

WHAT ARE INDICATORS?

Indicators are information needed to help determine progress. An indicator provides, where possible, a clearly defined unit of measurement and a target detailing the quantity, quality and timing of expected results.

Use SMART criteria.

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Results-based
- Timebound

Quantitative vs. qualitative indicators

Quantitative

- Number—raw number of cases (counting)
- Percentage—% of total cases (proportion)
- Rate—based on population (denominator) usually represented per 100,000 (magnitude vis-à-vis population size)
- Ratio
- Proportion
- Rating

Computing for rate

$$\text{Rate} = \frac{\text{No. of cases (numerator)}}{\text{Population size (denominator)}} \times \text{constant value (e.g. per 100,000 population)}$$

$$\text{Rate} = \frac{50}{50{,}000} \times 100{,}000$$
$$= 0.001 \times 100{,}000$$
$$= 100 \text{ per } 100{,}000$$

Qualitative

▷ Description of the status of an intended result, analysis of documents, opinions, documented observations

A performance indicator clarifies what we intend to measure. *It does not tell us what level of achievement signals success.* That is why we need **baselines** and **targets.**

REMEMBER

- ➲ Indicators should complement one another in terms of cross-validation, and point problems with each other.
- ➲ Indicators should as much as possible be disaggregated by gender, age, or whichever category desired.
- ➲ The number of indicators should be small; as a rule of thumb, maximum of six per objective.[1]
- ➲ Indicators may be relevant to stakeholders based on different needs and interests.

[1] The CSO Land Reform monitoring framework developed by the Land Watch Asia campaign has more indicators, as a full-scale monitoring effort.

How can we verify that the planned level of performance has been achieved?

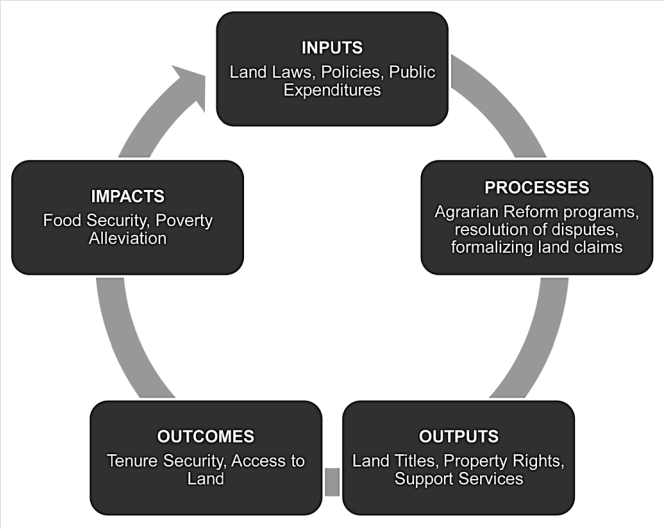
We can verify that we have achieved the planned level of performance through **data.** We ask the following questions:

1. In what units of measurement do we collect the data ?
2. Who has the data (who is your source of data)?
3. How will we gather the data?
4. How frequently?
5. Who will gather the data?
6. How do we interpret the data?
7. What will it cost?

Specific typologies of indicators

Indicator type	Definition	When to use	Examples
Risk/Enabling	Measures influence of external factors on project	During project designing usually.	Socio-economic, legal, political, weather using scoring or ranking method
Input	Measures resources devoted to project	At start of Project, at which point baseline data are collected	Credit disbursed; fertilizer purchased
Process	Measures delivery activities; monitor achievements through time	While Project is ongoing	Views of landless farmers re: land tenure rights; participation rate of farmers
Output	Measures immediate results	Used near the end of donor involvement	No. of land tenure cases filed in court; compliance rate increase among landowners
Outcome/ Impact	Measures long-term effects of project	Used after donor involvement. Usually 3–5 years after the project ended (or was concluded, completed).	No. of landless farmers decreased by X% Farm income increased by X%

MONITORING CYCLE FOR LAND REFORM



Criteria in selecting indicators

Reliability

▷ Information is accurate and consistent. How do we determine accuracy or reliability? Multiple uses of same instrument (interview, survey,etc.) yield similar results and can be tracked through time.

Disaggregation

▷ e.g., male-female, young-old, by crop, farm size, education

Validity

▷ Information provided is close to the reality being measured.

Easy to understand and clearly defined

REMEMBER!

"Not everything that counts can be counted… and not everything that can be counted… counts."

Albert Einstein

LAND REFORM MONITORING INDICATORS

Land disputes

- Number of people killed(per 100,000 population)
- Number of people detained(per 100,000 population)
- Number of people harassed(per 100,000 population)
- Number of cases received(per 100,000 population)
- Number of cases investigated(per 100,000 population)
- Number of cases adjudicated(per 100,000 population)
- Number of cases of land grabbing
- Percentage of area of land grabbed
- Average time in years for dispute resolution

Access to land

Ownership

- Land ownership distribution by size
- Gini coefficient/bottom-to-top ratio (for analysis)

Tenancy Rights

- Number of sharecroppers
- Percentage of sharecroppers with legal documents
- Percentage of contract farmers' area in relation to total agricultural area

Landlessness

- Gini coefficient (for analysis)
- Number and percentage of landless persons among rural population

Basic monitoring sample format

Activities	Target outputs	Actual outputs	Score or % of accomplishment	Reason for deviation

EVALUATION

What is evaluation?

- Evaluation looks at the *impact* of the project and the *appropriateness* of the action. Monitoring and evaluation collect information to improve projects after they have started.
- Evaluation can occur during implementation, at the end, or even a few years after the project is completed, and draws conclusions about whether the right job is/was done well.

Types

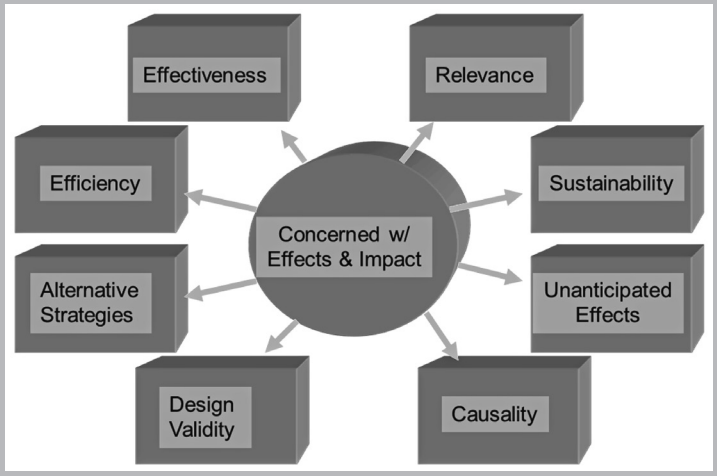
According to evaluator

- Self-evaluation (participatory)
- Independent evaluation: Internal; External

According to timing

- Interim/mid-term
- Terminal
- Ex-post (impact)

Core evaluation concerns



Information sources for evaluation (or "means of verification" in monitoring parlance)

- Project documents and subsequent revisions
- Progress reviews and self-evaluation reports
- Reports of previous independent evaluations
- Major project outputs
- Minutes of management committees and other relevant committees
- Organizational charts, by-laws
- Annual reports of partner organizations such as NGOs, CBOs, government
- Socio-economic profiles and other development indicators of groups, communities, regions, or countries
- Relevant national policy documents
- Lessons from similar projects in the country concerned or in other countries
- Interviews with relevant stakeholders
- Survey results

MONITORING ⟷ EVALUATION

Results	Impact
➲ What happened?	➲ Why did it happen or not happen?
➲ Accepts design as given	➲ Focus
➲ Focus	➲ Causality
➲ Efficiency	➲ Unplanned change
➲ Execution	➲ Net impact
➲ Compliance with procedures	➲ Causal relationship between outputs and objectives
➲ Achievement of outputs	➲ Challenges design
➲ Feedback	➲ Replanning
➲ Replanning	

Are we doing things the right way? **Are we doing the right things?**

Tools for evaluation

- Participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) and other related tools: e.g., community profiling, mapping, interviews, sampling
- Quantitative tools: e.g., financial analysis, statistics
- Tools from anthropological traditions: e.g., participant observation

Our choice of evaluation tools depends on

- How much it complements the project (or program) philosophy and approach
- Perception of stakeholders as a way of addressing their needs/problems
- Involvement of end-users in data identification, gathering, analysis, and results
- Matching with capacity of stakeholders
- Adaptability to stakeholders' daily activities
- Capacity to provide timely information
- Reliability of results generated
- Consistency with complexity and cost of evaluation level (i.e. simple, comprehensive)
- Reinforcement of community solidarity
- Sensitivity to gender considerations

Sometimes, people confuse objectives with outputs!

EXERCISE

PROVERB: One can lead a horse to water, but one cannot make it drink.

Convert it into a project design. There are activities, outputs and results.

Translated into design

- A thirsty horse is the problem.
- The fountain, the rope, and the man are inputs.
- Leading the horse to the fountain is an activity.
- The horse should have drunk from the fountain is an output. The horse drinking from the fountain is an output.
- Addressing the thirst of the horse by letting it drink from the water fountain is an objective.
- To improve the health of horses is the purpose.
- A herd of happy horses is the overall goal.

The drinking behavior and the fountain are the outputs. Access to such fountain and benefits derived from such access (i.e., improved health of the horse) are the results.

PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION (PME):
TRANSLATING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Rainier Almazan

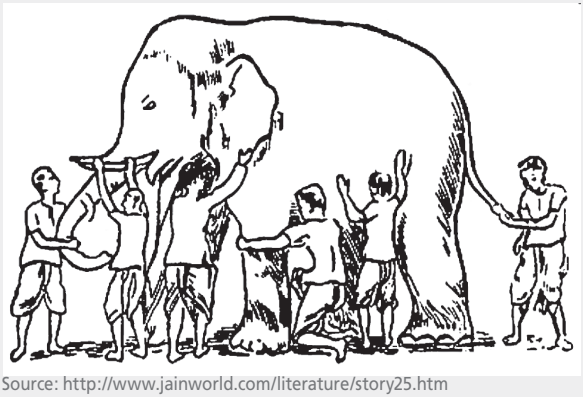
Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) adds the important element of "people's participation" to the monitoring and evaluation mix.

PARTICIPATION

There are two major ideas when we talk about participation:

- *Whose Reality Counts?* (Robert Chambers, 1997)
  - Starts with people's knowledge as basis for planning and change
- *Who Counts Reality?* (Marisol Estrella and John Gaventa)
  - Raises questions of "who measures" and "who defines" the indicators and measurements—is it the researcher? or the people being observed?
  - A follow-up to Chambers' book

Once again, the elephant...



Source: http://www.jainworld.com/literature/story25.htm

Eight blind men are debating on what an elephant looks like. To the one touching the …, the elephant is a…

- Snout … a snake
- Tusk … a spear
- Ears … fan
- Leg … tree trunk
- Body... big wall
- Tail … rope.

Everybody is actually telling the truth. (But they are only describing one aspect of the whole.)

That is the point of participation: when people participate, you are getting everyone's perceptions of reality. If we put together all the findings, then we will come up with a relatively accurate image of the elephant.

WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?

Participation is formally defined as: *"people's involvement in decision-making processes, their sharing in the benefits of development programs and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programs"* (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977).

Participation is also: *"[T]he organized efforts to increase the control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control"* (UNRISD).

Food for thought

These definitions talk about sharing—but actually they talk about benefits and never about risks. But risks should also be shared by the beneficiaries.

INCREASING INTEREST IN PME

On a global level, interest in PME is stimulated by the following:

- Performance-based accountability
- Management by objective (MBO) or management by results (MBR)
- Scarcity of development funds
- Demand for development success
- Movement towards decentralization and devolution
- New forms of oversight
- Improving capacity of NGOs and CBOs

But regardless of labels and definitions, PME's common feature is "participation"—"empowerment" of the "object" and "subject" of change, that is—the people concerned.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PME?

PME is used for

- Assessing impact
- Project planning and management
- Organizational strengthening or institutional learning
- Understanding/negotiating stakeholder perspectives
- Increasing public accountability

CRITIQUES OF CONVENTIONAL M&E

- It tends to be costly and ineffective in assessing real project achievement. You have to buy expensive equipment or software, or tap consultants.
- It fails to involve project beneficiaries or the end user of the program
- Project evaluation becomes an "external specialist's playground" removed from beneficiaries' day-to-day reality.
- It becomes a donor-driven tool to control projects and developments.
- It emphasizes quantitative measures that are difficult to understand, especially for "ordinary" people.

BENEFITS/ADVANTAGES OF PME

PME…

- Enhances participation and involvement of beneficiaries and other stakeholders
- Improves stakeholders' understanding of the development process
- Increases the reliability of findings that are locally relevant
- Improves the sustainability of project implementation (as ownership of the project becomes localized)
- Increases local capacity for M&E ("ordinary" people become more adept at monitoring their own programs)
- Allows sharing of experiences through systematic documentation and analysis based on broad-based participation
- Strengthens people's negotiating position and accountability to donors
- Allows more efficient allocation of resources

CONVENTIONAL M&E VS. PME

	CME	PME
WHO?	external experts	local people, the project staff and the facilitator
WHAT?	predetermined indicators	stakeholders define objectives and indicators
HOW?	scientific objectivity; standardized process; complex; limited access to results (results are not shared widely; sometimes only shared with donors, with project management, or the board of directors)	self-evaluation, simple methods, open sharing of results
WHEN?	upon project completion	more frequent, small scale evaluations
WHY?	accountability, summative, funding decision	empowers local people

Case 1—Land reform using CME

Every month, field staff collect the number of land transferred to landless farmers and report those figures to their branch manager.

↓

Every month, the branch manager adds up the total number of land transferred by type of crop and sends the report to the central office.

↓

The central office enters the figures into a computer, and generates a report to the Minister of Agrarian Reform.

↓

Very few people actually look at the data to see what these are saying. Is land distribution increasing or decreasing? Will the program reach its objective of reducing landlessness and poverty? How can field staff and landless farmers work together to make the program a success?

Case 2—Land reform using PME

Every month, field staff collect the number of land transferred to landless farmers. Peasant representatives and program field staff discuss and validate this information during their monthly review meetings.

↓

These data are then sent to central office for forwarding to the office of the minister.

↓

When the number of land distributed slowed down, the local staff tried to figure out why by asking farmers and other stakeholders. With a simple change in strategy, they were able to once again speed up the number of lands distributed.

↓

Monitoring information was used within the organization to improve the program and to report to the Minister.

Using PME, the farmers themselves are involved in the process, whereas CME is more indirect and controlled.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON PRINCIPLES FOR PME?

1. It promotes participation
2. It promotes self and group learning (awareness)
3. It promotes principled negotiation among stakeholders
4. It recognizes flexibility

Principle 1: Participation

▷ When you say participation, the first question is *M&E by whom?*

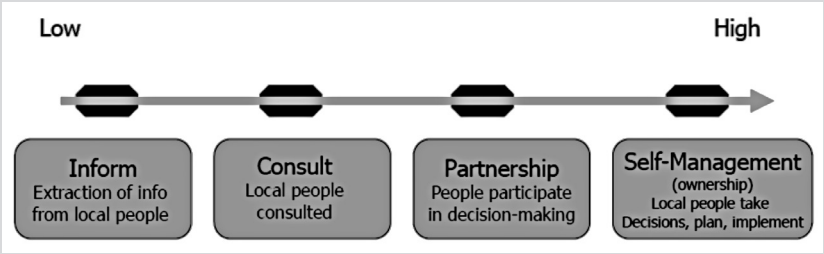
- ➲ Who initiated and conducts the M&E? Is it going to be internally led (Will it be led by the project staff, by the farmers?) Are you going to hire external evaluators? Or will it be jointly led?
- ➲ As a corollary: Will it be institution-based (e.g., ANGOC as the institutional anchor or mechanism) or community-based (e.g., a local organization of farmers who will conduct the evaluation)?

▷ The second question is: *Whose perspective?*

- ➲ Whose perspective are you going to take in the monitoring and evaluation?
- ➲ Which stakeholder is given importance?
- ➲ In any land transfer program/ land monitoring program, the farmers are not the only main stakeholders; there are others, including the landowners, government. Everybody is a stakeholder. You need to define which stakeholder is given more importance in the PME. Is it the perspective of the farmers, the perspective of the agency who is conducting the PME, or the perspective of government?
- ➲ The answer always depends on who is the end user of the information.

Levels of participation

THE PARTICIPATION CONTINUUM



Source: World Bank (1976). The World Bank participation sourcebook. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

- **Inform**—The lowest form of participation, it simply means informing people and extracting information from them.
- **Consult**—You consult local people, but it does not necessarily mean you will follow their recommendations.
- **Partnership**—You group together with the people concerned, and make decisions together.
- **Self-management**—In this highest form of participation, local people make the decisions and plans, and implement them. This is the most ideal situation.

Participation matrix

The participation matrix below can be used as tool by any NGO or community-based group planning to initiate projects such as participatory action research. Any research designer might want to determine what type of participation he or she wants to see from the people involved in the different stages of a research project.

Steps in the research cycle	Inform	Consult	Partnership	Self-Management
Problem identification		X	X	
Research planning and design		X		
Data collection proper		X	X	
Data analysis and interpretation		X	X	
Result dissemination			X	X

For example, if you plan to initiate a participatory research project, you might want to see that in the identification of the research topic or problem, the community must be consulted and should be a part in this crucial first step. After all, they will be the main beneficiaries of the study's findings. In the design stage, you will probably want to employ the consultative type of participation primarily because of the technical nature of the task at hand.

Ultimately, the level of participation will depend on the situation, your objectives, and the stage in the project cycle. Define the level of participation you want while undertaking monitoring work. What kind of work do you want them to do? Do you just want them to be informed? Or do you want them to be consulted? Do you want to partner with them? Or do you want them to run the whole show?

Some thoughts on participation

- Participation is easier said than done. It is easy when we're talking here, but implementation is very difficult. I have experienced doing it. Here, in my experience, when I identify problems, it is possible and relatively easy to do partnership with people. But the planning of the research is a bit difficult since designing requires technical skills. So we consult people and we inform them—but we cannot involve them at the partnership level because they cannot engage in design and other technical aspects. But sometimes they can do data collection, for as long as they can understand the design. In my experience, data management is already being done by the people themselves. In data analysis, we consult them. But in result dissemination, it is up to you.
- Participation requires money. For example, if data will be disseminated only in the community, you don't need money. But if you are going to present data in a public forum, then that will require money as you need to rent a venue. Even in data collection, even if they are volunteers, you will need to give them some amount of money for coffee, for transportation.

Principle 2: Self and group learning

- *How can you use PME to enhance people's learning?* The process of PME should promote adult learning and awareness-building based on liberation education framework.
- The question is whether to conduct the PME in a community or institutional context.

Principle 3: Principled negotiation

- Development process involves everyone; therefore, M&E should be multi-stakeholder.
  - Because there are many stakeholders in the land transfer process, you can use the PME as a point of entry for the different stakeholders to negotiate with one another. It becomes a tool of communication and even conflict management.
- Negotiation is essential to develop trust and consensus among stakeholders.
- However, this is easier said than done, because negotiation is a "socio-political exercise"
- As a socio-political exercise, PME is affected by factors such as power, equity and social change: *who creates and who controls knowledge and its production?*
  - e.g., If I am a landowner, I would be in a more powerful position than the farmer, because I am rich. You have to be conscious of that relationship in process and negotiation. If the relationship is not equal, then the negotiation will not be equal. Make sure that in negotiations between the farmer and the landowner or government, there is some leveraging that takes place.
- Depending on the balance of forces, a PME process can either enfranchise or disenfranchise; empower or disempower.
- This becomes evident in the development or choice of project objectives and indicators.

Principle 4: Flexibility

- ▷ Flexibility and experimentation are regarded as integral aspects of PME. When we talk about people's participation, remember that people are not predictable. Because people are unpredictable, you must allow for changes in designs if necessary—you have to be flexible. Listen to the feedback of the people.
- ▷ There is no blueprint or precise set of approaches.

THINK ABOUT IT

Unequal power relations

"Multi-stakeholder bodies are not always the benevolent force they purport to be, especially for indigenous peoples. There are stories of unequal power relations being extensively used to marginalize indigenous peoples. For instance, multi-sectoral bodies aim to engage indigenous peoples' governance of territories, but this has led to drastic results. Multi-stakeholder bodies only marginalize indigenous peoples; in reality, control and access of the land were never with the people. They will just sit there as exhibits rather than substantive partners of governance of territories."

CRITICAL ELEMENTS IN GENERATING DATA AND USING INDICATORS

Tim Bending

3 ways of gathering information

1. Research
2. Journalism
3. Monitoring

These 3 ways serve different purposes. They gather different things, and can be complementary. For example, you might periodically report on a small number of indicators, but also carry out in-depth research to understand what the monitoring results mean. You can also communicate that information journalistically—why the issue matters—through film or other media.

WHAT IS MONITORING?

Monitoring means making a series of observations over time to assess compliance with, or the achievement of, certain standards or objectives.

WHAT IS AN INDICATOR?

- A selected, pre-defined, measure of success (or failure)
- Indicators are useful in assessing the achievement of pre-defined goals or ideas of progress.
- Indicators come from program monitoring and evaluation. There's no point waiting for the end of a program before deciding what success looks like. For purposes of accountability, you have to define those in advance using indicators.
  - e.g. MDGs—it was necessary to define indicators of success

WHAT IS AN INDICATOR? (con't.)

- Indicators are not always used in relation to specific goals.
  - e.g. the Human Development Index (HDI) uses existing data to define development progress in a different way; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which developed the HDI, sought to reject the idea that development success was based only on economic growth. The HDI has also served as an advocacy tool.

Do I need indicators?

Not all monitoring has to use indicators. Indicators are not always essential.

- ILC's Land Matrix, which collects data on large-scale land acquisitions and present these in graphs, tables, etc. They do not have land grabbing indicators per se or an index.
- A study on land conflicts in Indonesia could be a one-off study or an ongoing data gathering exercise using crowdsourcing—and this would be monitoring. Land conflict indicators are not necessary; rather, you can say these are the many conflicts. Identify them.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD INDICATOR? WHAT MAKES A GOOD DATA SOURCE?

Considerations of **relevance**

- Does it have anything to do with what you want to assess?
- Does it reflect all aspects of what you want to assess? Or would you need multiple indicators to get a better overview?
- Does it reflect other things that you don't want to assess? Is the result going to be affected by things you're not interested in which can make interpretation difficult?
- Is the timing relevant/is it up-to-date?
- Is the information sufficiently disaggregated (e.g. gender)?

Practical considerations

- Are data available? (and how much does it take to get hold of that data?)
- Are data collectible? (how much work will that involve?)
- Is the range of selected indicators manageable? (We may have a long list, but is that manageable?)

Design considerations

- Can you make the desired comparisons (over space/time)?
- Is it precisely defined? (i.e., are any 2 people going to use the indicator and interpret it in the same way)?
- Do indicators triangulate/cross-check?
- Can everyone understand it?

Process considerations

- Participatory or top-down?
- Reflects dominant voices or marginalized?
- Who owns the selection of indicators/information sources?
- Is indicator selection an empowering process?

The way we develop indicators can be valuable in itself. Defining what is success or failure, what problems need to be addressed; this process can be empowering for people.

USING EXISTING INFORMATION SOURCES

Examples: Official statistics and government records, published and unpublished research, media reports, company reports, records held by CSOs, etc.

What we need to know

- Is it relevant?
- Is it disaggregated by gender?
- Is it up-to-date?

What we need to know (con't.)

- Is it comparable?
- Is it biased?
- How available is it?
- Who owns the data?

Food for thought

- Initiatives often over-estimate the availability of *useful* data. The data are out there (available)—yes, but how much can really be used?
- Are they surveying mostly men? Are they looking only at easy-to-reach places? Who decides what gets reported in media? We have to think about how available data really are. *Even finding out what data there are can be time-consuming.* Sometimes you need political capital to get data.
- An organization might put a lot of work in generating data, but you have to be careful. If you're using just government data, the public may not trust the data. The question remains—whether people really feel ownership over data.

How do we know if it's biased?—Assessing data

"When we are looking at a data source, we cannot assume it is unbiased, nor can we take it at face value. Instead, we try and find out about the methodology used to produce that data. We ask: Where did it come from? Who surveyed? Who was involved? What types of media? We can try and identify areas of bias and we take that into account.

The problem with data collection is that it is also subject to bias; we must take that into account. What's being reported in media, what's not? Don't overstate, don't add interpretation, and identify the source of information.

GETTING NEW DATA

How: Surveys, surveys of experts, CSO records, satellite imagery, crowd-sourcing, action-research, etc.

Disadvantages	Advantages
➲ Cost, time	➲ You define what is measured.
➲ Need expertise	➲ The value of new information.
➲ Value of data only as good as your methodology	➲ Allowing the "other side of the story" to be told.
➲ The "credibility issue" for CSOs: convincing others your methodology is sound, unbiased, and representative may be difficult.	

However, despite these disadvantages, collecting new data can be powerful and valuable. At the end of the day, if we are completely reliant on data other stakeholders are collecting, it limits what we can do and say. Often, the information we feel we need is simply not collected and the only way it can enter the public sphere is for someone to go out and try and collect it in some way. If we only use existing data, what's new? New data are something no one else has—this becomes the reason why people can notice our initiative. **#**