MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

Revision Sheet

Date	Description	Version
December 2013	The document created (EAC M&E Plan)	1.0
September 2023	The document revised and updated	2.0

This is the second version of EAC's Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, now called EAC M&E System.

The present dynamic Monitoring and Evaluation System for Educate A Child global program is anticipated to undergo gradual evolution, modification and adaptation over time in response to emerging and occasionally unforeseen factors that become pertinent. Moreover, this M&E System is complemented by four distinct and separate companion documents known or titled as follows:

1. EAC Monitoring Framework
2. EAC Evaluation Framework
3. EAC Data Quality Assurance Framework
4. EAC Technical Guidelines on Key Performance Indicators.

The M&E System serves as the foundation for analysis of promising practices and assimilation of knowledge and learning derived from the field experiences. It also enables the adjustment of program priorities and goals over time and facilitates evidence-led management of EAC's global portfolio.

This document will be reviewed and updated periodically, as necessary, with each update incorporating global best practices or standards and the additional learnings gained from the utilisation of this and the complementary EAC M&E Frameworks and Guidelines.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

DAC   Development Assistance Committee
DQA   Data Quality Assessment or Audit
EAA   Education Above All
EAC   Educate A Child

KPIs   Key Performance Indicators
M&E   Monitoring and Evaluation
OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOSC   Out Of School Children

SMV   Site Monitoring Visit

Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present to you our revised Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System, a significant milestone in the EAC's quest for evidence-based decision-making and continuous enhancement. This system serves as a vital instrument in assessing the effectiveness and impact of our programs and projects. It serves as a guidebook for our staff, partners, and stakeholders, fostering a shared understanding of our M&E approach and promoting consistency in our practices.

In today's fast-paced world, organizations must efficiently achieve their goals and objectives. To accomplish this, a robust M&E system is indispensable. It provides us with a framework to monitor progress, evaluate outcomes, and make informed adjustments to our strategies and interventions.

The development and revision of this M&E System has been a collaborative endeavour, with dedicated contributions from individuals and organizations alike. I extend my sincere gratitude to the EAC team members for their expertise and unwavering commitment in crafting a comprehensive system. Their meticulous attention to detail ensures that this document encompasses all the essential components required for our monitoring and evaluation endeavours.

I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support and guidance provided by our senior management and executives. Their visionary leadership has been instrumental in driving the development and implementation of this M&E System. By integrating monitoring and evaluation practices into our daily operations, they have established a solid foundation for a culture of learning, adaptation, and accountability.

Furthermore, I express my sincere appreciation to the external experts, partners, and stakeholders who have contributed their insights and best practices. Their inputs have enhanced the comprehensiveness and relevance of this document, aligning it with international standards and industry best practices.

As we embark on the implementation of this M&E System, it is important to note that it is not a static document but a living framework that requires continuous refinement and adaptation. Our M&E efforts rely on the collective commitment and engagement of all staff members. By utilizing the tools and methodologies outlined herein, we will measure progress, identify areas for improvement, and optimize our impact on the communities we serve.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved in the development and realization of this M&E System. It reflects our unwavering dedication to evidence-based decision-making, learning, and accountability. I strongly encourage all stakeholders to embrace this framework, actively engage in its implementation, and leverage its insights to guide our collective efforts towards sustainable and transformative change.

Together, let us continue this journey of monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement as we strive to make a positive and lasting impact on the individuals and communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Mary Joy Pigozzi, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Educate A Child Program

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

1.1.   Educate A Child Programme

Educate A Child, a global programme of Education Above All Foundation launched in 2012 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar aims to trigger significant breakthroughs in making a material difference in the lives of children who have no access to primary education. EAC has been helping millions of out of school children all over the world, through partnerships and innovation, to overcome the access and retention barriers blocking their path to education. Playing a key role in the field of OOSC and quality primary education, EAC strives to achieve individual and social outcomes for these children and their communities, resulting in a more sustainable world for everyone. EAC, at its heart, is a commitment to children who are out of school to help provide them with opportunities to learn and as such, it contributes to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4: to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

The implementation of EAC programme has been through partnerships and an orientation towards scale, innovation and sustainability. EAC utilizes the partnership model to leverage not just financial resources but also the expertise, experience, capacity and relationships of its partners. EAC supports interventions to ensure OOSC are retained and complete a full cycle of quality primary education.

EAC works through a diverse set of strategic, implementing, advocacy, and resource partners, which include major international organizations as well as smaller, locally-based groups. Strategic partners hold a similar mission and vision to EAC and provide advice and access to resources and networks through their reputation and worldwide presence. Implementing partners are on-the-ground organizations with a demonstrated understanding of, and practical approach to, helping OOSC access and complete a quality primary education. Advocacy partners bring their expertise, energy, and persuasive influence to bear, with the goal of changing the situation for the millions of OOSC around the world. Resource partners contribute to EAC's mission by providing evidence of what works in reaching OOSC, innovating the most practical, appropriate, and affordable means to addressing the obstacles faced by OOSC, and providing financial resources to close the funding gap for primary education.

M&E is a foundational component of the entire Educate A Child program. While the EAC M&E department is the hub, other departments or units are essential spokes on the wheel. The data quality assurance is a shared responsibility among EAC staff. Every department within EAC monitors project progress, engages in quality assurance, contributes to data compiled in the database, and utilizes results from M&E.

1.2.   Purpose of the M&E System

The purpose of this Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System is to offer comprehensive support to the EAC team and the partner projects across all aspects of project monitoring and evaluation. Its primary focus is to facilitate the reporting of data derived from the EAC partner projects, ensuring that they meet their targets and achieve desired results. Moreover, the EAC M&E System aims to promote learning at various levels, encompassing the project, country, EAC and EAA levels.

At the core of EAC's commitment to effectiveness and accountability lies the M&E System. Building upon a decade of successful implementation of M&E System 1.0, we embark on a new chapter with M&E System 2.0, inspired by strategic shifts that promise to amplify our impact and align our efforts with high-level priorities.

1.2.1. Overall objective: Enhancing Quality and Effectiveness

The primary objective of M&E System is to elevate the quality and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation practices both within the EAC and among our partner projects, ultimately contributing to improved program outcomes and heightened impact. By deploying a robust M&E framework, the system will play a pivotal role in ensuring that our actions translate into tangible results and positive outcomes.

1.2.2. Multiple Purposes for Greater Effect

The M&E System serves multiple purposes, each reinforcing our commitment to EAC's excellence and evidence-based decision-making:

1. **Facilitate Data Reporting and Target Achievement:** A key objective of the M&E System is to streamline data reporting processes and support our partner projects in meeting their targets. By deploying efficient data collection and reporting mechanisms, we strive to ensure the accurate and timely submission of project data, enabling us to track progress and make informed decisions.
2. **Promote Learning and Adaptive Management:** At the very core of EAC's program, lies a thirst for continuous learning. M&E System serves as a catalyst for ongoing improvement, fostering a culture of learning at every level. Embracing adaptive management practices, we empower our teams to respond proactively to challenges and seize emerging opportunities.
3. **Establish an Overarching Framework:** Clarity and coherence are paramount to our success. M&E System establishes an overarching framework that instils a shared language, understanding, and consensus on the essential components of M&E. This unifying structure promotes seamless alignment across diverse projects and components within the EAC.
4. **Articulate Theory of Change and Metrics:** An evidence-based approach drives our strategic direction. Through M&E System, we periodically articulate a comprehensive theory of change, guiding our programmatic interventions and projects. By defining clear metrics and indicators, we objectively measure progress and impact, fortifying our commitment to evidence-driven decision-making.
5. **Facilitate Systematic Implementation:** To ensure the systematic adoption of best practices, M&E System offers a structured roadmap for the development, implementation, and management of M&E processes. This empowers our teams to leverage data effectively, generating actionable insights for continual improvement.

2. EAC Monitoring and Evaluation

It is a strategic focus of EAC and EAA to enshrine project and program monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in a comprehensive manner in the project cycle management. Therefore, M&E is incorporated in the program/project design, development, implementation, and close out. The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that EAC has at its disposal are crucial to improve program or project design and its implementation for transparency, accountability, quality, and results towards ensuring our commitment to the right to education for the most marginalized.

An integrated and aligned M&E system, as at EAC, often needs to interact with and complement many other functions and processes within EAC and across EAA Foundation. For instance, these include quality assurance, program and knowledge management, financial management, compliance, IT and data

storage, advocacy and communications, and research. The EAC M&E system covers some of these areas and merely interacts with others. The staff involved in EAC M&E system needs to rely on processes or functions such as IT or program management which are essential to the operation of their system, but which might lie under the control of other departments. Hence, a smooth collaboration and synergy across different departments or functions then becomes essential to the effective operation of the M&E system.

For instance, the operations department is responsible for ensuring the integrity and accuracy of financial reporting in accordance with budgetary constraints and compliance with legal agreements. In certain instances, operations personnel conduct on-site visits to monitor project financial systems and verify expenditures. The technical department plays a crucial role in conducting comprehensive due diligence field visits and on-site monitoring visits to ensure adherence to project requirements.

The engagement department oversees the tracking and handling of incoming Expressions of Interest (EOIs), while maintaining records of the proposal development status. Additionally, the technical team monitors project implementation progress by reviewing technical reports submitted by partners, meticulously examining the accuracy and validity of the data contained within. This thorough scrutiny ensures data quality for communication and publication purposes, serving as an additional safeguard.

The M&E Department collaborates closely with the Technical Department to design robust M&E systems for project data collection, monitoring, and reporting. Furthermore, the M&E Department conducts data cleaning and reconciliation for project online reports, ensuring the accuracy of information entered into the EAC database. Regular management reports are compiled using the data collected from this database. The M&E department also provides comprehensive guidance to partners regarding the design of data collection systems and reporting practices.

The M&E team is responsible for organizing project site monitoring visits and conducting assessments to evaluate data quality. These activities involve both internal staff and external service providers. The M&E department liaise on external post-award reviews and the internal audits of EAA. Additionally, the M&E unit develops scopes of work for consultants engaged in case studies, external evaluations, and research initiatives[1].

2.1.   M&E System 1.0: A Decade of Reflections and Learnings

Over the past ten years, the implementation of M&E System (version 1.0) has been a pivotal journey for EAC program, marked by notable achievements and opportunities for improvement. The system's core focus on monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning has significantly enhanced our programmatic endeavours. Foremost among its achievements was the establishment of a robust framework for accountability, ensuring that monitoring and evaluation were integral components of all initiatives. This led to increased transparency in reporting results, garnering trust from stakeholders, and reinforcing our credibility with both partners and beneficiaries.

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[1] **Note:** For specific details on the EAC M&E components and processes, please refer to the following distinct companion documents known or titled as: (1) EAC Monitoring Framework; (2) EAC Evaluation Framework; (3) Data Quality Assurance Framework; and (4) EAC Technical Guidelines on Key Performance Indicators.

Despite these successes, the M&E System exposed several areas that warranted attention and strategic improvement. Notably, while the system excelled in data collection and routine reporting, stakeholders more recently are seeking a stronger emphasis on impact and outcome reporting to showcase the EAC's long-term effects. Additionally, the incorporation of comprehensive evaluations, which evaluate program and projects effectiveness and efficiency, was an identified gap. Responding to such feedback, the current M&E System (version 2.0) will prioritize these aspects, elevating our ability to demonstrate the true extent of our impact and make data-driven decisions.

Further reflections illuminated the need for heightened focus on data quality verification. Stakeholders rightfully urged for stringent mechanisms to ensure the accuracy and reliability of reported results, underpinning our commitment to excellence in data management. Moreover, we realized the imperative of highlighting our contributions to policy changes resulting from our interventions, forging stronger links between our efforts and broader systemic impacts.

M&E System 1.0 also shed light on the importance of alignment across EAA programs. By fostering consistency and synergy in M&E processes and standards, we can maximize our collective impact and streamline efforts organization-wide. In pursuit of this cohesion, M&E System 2.0 will encourage the adoption and operationalization of an organization-wide Management Information System (MIS), harnessing technology for enhanced data management and analysis.

The critical aspects of gender and inclusion integration emerged as significant considerations during M&E System 1.0's journey. Although progress was made, M&E System 2.0 will place a heightened emphasis on mainstreaming gender and inclusion across all activities, aligning with our values of equity and responsiveness.

Lastly, adapting to evolving funding modalities became an imperative to remain agile and adaptive. To address this, M&E System 2.0 is designed with flexibility in mind, enabling us to meet the unique requirements of diverse partnerships and funding streams.

In conclusion, the reflections and learnings from M&E System 1.0 have illuminated our path forward. M&E System 2.0 is defined by increased focus on impact and outcome reporting, extensive evaluations, quality assurance, policy influence tracking, alignment across EAA, MIS adoption, gender and inclusion mainstreaming, and adaptability to funding modalities. Equipped with this comprehensive understanding, we are poised to embark on the next phase of our journey, setting the stage for a more responsive, accountable, and impactful program.

2.2. Definitions

There is no single agreed definition of M&E. Monitoring and Evaluation are synergistic and interdependent. At EAC, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are understood to mean a systematic and ongoing process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data and information to assess the progress, performance, and impact of a strategy, program, project or intervention. It involves the systematic tracking and measurement of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts to provide evidence for decision-making, learning, and accountability. For EAA Glossary of terms and concepts, refer to the following additional resources:

- EAA Glossary (Part – I) Monitoring and Evaluation Terms and Concepts.
- EAA Glossary (Part – II) Programme Management Terms and Concepts.

2.2.1. Monitoring

Monitoring is a continuing function which involves systematic collection of data to provide management and the main stakeholders of an on-going program, project or initiative with indications of the extent of implementation progress, achievement of intended results (outputs, outcomes, and the ultimate goal), occurrence of unintended results, use of allocated resources or funds and other important intervention and context related information [OECD-DAC]. Monitoring provides real-time and on-going information on project performance, identifies challenges, and allows for timely adjustments to keep a program or project on track towards delivering on its objectives.

2.2.2. Evaluation

Evaluation is the periodic, systematic and objective assessment of a planned, ongoing or completed intervention (strategy, program, project or initiatives), its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an intervention. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into decision-making processes [OECD-DAC].

Note: Evaluation in some instances involves the definition of appropriate standards and criteria, the examination of performance against those standards, an assessment of actual and expected results and the identification of relevant lessons and recommendations. Though evaluation deals with the assessment of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, not all evaluations will cover all of these criteria to the same degree or at all.

2.3.   Monitoring at EAC

The primary purpose of Monitoring at the EAC is to collect periodic information on progress and results, and then use this to inform decision making and constant adjustments in strategies and approaches to support the management of a project or overall program. The EAC utilizes a diverse range of monitoring types, methodologies and strategies, tailored to the specific objectives, emphasis, timeframe, and intended recipients of the evidence produced through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. Monitoring is done to ensure that all the people who need to know about a development intervention are properly informed about it. It is also done so that management decisions can be taken in a timely manner.

Key aspects of EAC monitoring component include:
- Tracking performance against planned activities and timelines; and to track progress towards intended results
- Collecting and analysing data on inputs, processes, and outputs
- Identifying deviations, risks, challenges, and bottlenecks
- Providing timely feedback to stakeholders
- Learning, improvement and adapting to change
- Facilitating early course correction and adaptive management
- Integration with evaluations

2.3.1. Types of Monitoring

Monitoring is classified into different types based on the purpose, focus, timing and audience of the evidence generated by M&E. We have listed some common types of monitoring that are frequently utilized by EAC:

Process or performance monitoring

Process monitoring is implemented to track the use of inputs and resources, along with examining how activities and outputs are delivered. Process monitoring is designed to provide the information needed to continually plan and review work, assess the success or otherwise of the implementation of projects and programmes, identify and deal with problems and challenges, and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Compliance monitoring

This ensures compliance with EAA/EAC regulations, contract requirements/obligations, ethical standards, and most importantly compliance with the expected results of the project and alignment with EAC/EAA mandate.

Financial monitoring

Tracks the actual expenditure involved in a project in comparison to the allocated budget and helps to assess the progress made against EAC/EAA investment.

Results monitoring

This is where monitoring entwines with evaluation. It gathers data to demonstrate a project's overall effects and its impacts on the target population. It helps to determine if the project is on the right track towards its intended results and if there may be a need to make project adjustments.

2.3.2. EAC Monitoring processes

EAC undertakes monitoring in a number of well-designed and standardised processes. These include, Site monitoring visits, semi-annual progress reporting, partner project performance assessment, post award reviews, periodic review meetings etc. Each of these monitoring processes are elaborated in the companion operational frameworks to guide in their execution.

2.4. Evaluations at EAC

The EAC recognizes the critical role of evaluations, as defined by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, in fostering learning and improvement. Evaluations play a pivotal role in continuously enhancing the quality of EAC program and projects, informing policy decisions, and advocating for positive change. By conducting well-executed evaluations, valuable insights are gained into the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the EAC's initiatives, paving the way for program scaling and global best practices.

At EAC, the Evaluation function focuses in part at the systems level, using a meta-evaluation[2] approach. Moreover, the determination of the program's overall impact at specific intervals is also informed by specifically designed evaluations, case studies and performance monitoring data. A complimentary companion document, namely the EAC Evaluation Framework, provides a comprehensive outline of the proposed evaluation framework and approach.

The combination of monitoring and evaluation provides a comprehensive approach to project management and assessment. Through monitoring, EAC ensures that projects are on track and implemented as planned, while evaluation provides a more comprehensive assessment of the project's overall effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Together, monitoring and evaluation contribute to learning, accountability, and the continuous improvement of strategies, programs, project or initiatives.

Key aspects of EAC evaluation component include:
- Determining the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the intervention.
- Assessing the design, implementation, outcomes and impact of the intervention
- Collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Providing actionable recommendations for improvement
- Documenting lessons learned to inform future projects and enhances organizational learning
- Informing evidence-based decision-making and learning.

2.5. EAC M&E Questions

Effective implementation of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system necessitates the inclusion of clear and directive inquiries. These inquiries serve as indispensable tools in empowering stakeholders with pertinent, situational insights. By offering context-specific information, they enable stakeholders to discern the contributions of the EAC program. Consequently, this facilitates the formulation of informed judgments, decisions, and strategies for enhancing the EAC program, aligning it with its long-term vision and mission. Furthermore, the inclusion of such questions guarantees the comprehensive utilization of findings derived from both the monitoring and evaluation components of the M&E system. T the following key questions form the foundation of the EAC M&E System:

1. To what extent does EAC demonstrate effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, impact and sustainability in its program endeavours and strategies?
2. To what extent has EAC contributed to increased enrolment and retention of out of school children in quality primary education?
3. How robust are the data management systems at local or national level to collect and report individual-level data, informing policies and decision-making?
4. To what extent do the data on OOSC comply with global quality standards?
5. To what degree are the lessons learned and generated knowledge derived from the EAC program endeavours effectively harnessed to enhance programmatic interventions targeting out-of-school children?

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[2] Meta-evaluation is one form of evaluation and is often used as a means of identifying trends and quality in education. Our definition of meta-evaluation, adapted from Lipsey (2000) is: 'Meta-analysis and other forms of systematic synthesis of data and information that provide us with empirical evidence that is used for a continuous improvement of EAC program, policies and practices.'

2.6.   EAC Key Performance Indicators

A distinct companion document comprehensively describes the *EAC Technical Guidelines on Key Performance Indicators* (KPIs) for collection and reporting of data in support of monitoring the performance of EAC program and its partnership projects. The technical guidelines on KPIs encompasses several critical aspects of the EAC monitoring function, including:

- Ensuring adherence to data reporting and financial reporting obligations, specifically the Key Performance Indicators established by the EAC/EAA.
- Assisting EAC partners by providing formative feedback on the progress towards the set targets, thereby facilitating ongoing improvement and development.
- Facilitating informed decision-making during the implementation and expansion phases of the EAC program and its partnership projects.
- Assessing and evaluating the contributions and impacts of the EAC on Out-of-School Children through meticulous measurement and analysis.

Based on the EAC Theory of Change or logic model and in alignment with the strategic objectives of the EAA, a set of pivotal indicators has been delineated for the purpose of M&E of the program and projects. A truncated list of the most important KPIs[3] is presented here below:

OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN
1. Number of out-of-school children identified.

ENROLMENT AND RETENTION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION
2. Number of OOSC enrolled in programs at a primary level of education.
3. Survival rate among cohort(s) of OOSC enrolled in programmes at a primary level of education.

EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE
4. Number of classrooms newly constructed.
5. Number of schools/learning sites newly constructed.
6. Number of existing classrooms refurbished.
7. Number of existing schools/learning sites refurbished.
8. Number of improved sanitation facilities provided at or for learning sites/schools.
9. Number of improved drinking water facilities provided at or for learning sites/schools.
10. Number of *improved hygiene facilities* provided at or for learning sites/schools.

STRENGTHENING HUMAN CAPITAL
11. Number of individuals *successfully trained* or who received intensive coaching/mentoring.

IDENTIFYING AND TRACKING CHILDREN AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT
12. Number of students or learners identified who are "at risk" (high-at-risk and most-at-risk) of dropout from programmes at a primary level of education.
13. Number of students or learners, "at risk" (High-at-Risk and Most-at-Risk) of dropout from programmes at a primary level of education, exposed to interventions implemented in school settings and designed to address the "risk" factors.

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[3] For details, see the companion document *"EAC Technical Guidelines on Key Performance Indicators"*

14. Number of students or learners, "at risk" (High-at-Risk and Most-at-Risk) of dropout from programmes at a primary level of education, exposed to interventions implemented <u>beyond school settings</u> and designed to address the "risk" factors.
15. Survival rate among cohort(s) of "at risk" (High-at-Risk and Most-at-Risk) students or learners in primary education who were targeted with the interventions designed to address the "risk" factors.
16. Change in individual scores against the identified risk factors, plausibly attributable to the interventions designed to address these factors.

2.7. Data Management, Analysis and Reporting

At EAC, the utilization of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) data is a customary practice among diverse stakeholders situated in various locations, each with unique objectives. Consequently, it becomes imperative to ensure its meticulous storage, processing, and dissemination, whether in physical or electronic form. The primary objective of implementing a data management system revolves around generating and facilitating the distribution of actionable knowledge derived from the M&E data.

The overall EAC M&E function depends on quality data and seamless information flow particularly on all the five Program or Project Life cycle (PLC) phases – Initiation, Proposal, Project Award, Project Implementation, and Project Close-Out – as presented in the following graph.

2.7.1. EAA – Management Information System (EAA-MIS)

In early 2020 EAA commissioned the Synergy International Systems – a global software development firm – to design, develop and launch an integrated Management Information System. The EAA Management Information System (EAA-MIS) is a web-based integrated system with dedicated components for each programme of EAA: Educate A Child (EAC), Reach Out To Asia (ROTA), Al Fakhoora, and Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC). The key features of the system include:

- **Programme and project portfolio management:** This feature enables EAA to manage its portfolio of projects and initiatives to make the strategy execution fundamentally result-based.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** With the new system fully operational, EAA can monitor the execution of any kind of strategy, objectives and value. EAA can define key performance indicators (KPIs) at any level of strategy framework, setup targets and actuals; and monitor progress at implementation level; and aggregate results towards national or global as needed.

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** and disaggregation: The EAA-MIS equips EAA management with robust capabilities to create and manage KPIs in two ways: a) core-organization-wide indicators that are tracked and aggregated across projects or initiatives; and b) project-level indicators.

- **Online Data Entry:** The EAA-MIS essentially is a system-of-record designed to be the source of truth about EAA's portfolio of projects and performance data. Project records (or data entry forms) can entirely be adapted to reflect information that organization wishes to collect.

- **Data Validation:** To minimize human error in data entry and thereby enhance or improve data quality and completeness the EAA-MIS provides various types built-in data validation functions, including: field-level validation, form/screen-level validation, server-side validation logical validation, and data elements as part of relational database.

- **Mobile and offline Data Entry:** The responsive design of the system can enable M&E system to be accessible through smartphones and tablets. While it can work with poor bandwidth condition, the system can also have offline module.

- **Workflow designer:** A strong workflow engine of the system facilitates a complete automation of EAA's data management and business processes. The workflow allows for visualization and customization of highly complex institutional process in an intuitive manner, facilitating automation of program management activities across various aspects of program/project management cycle, such as formal approvals, data validation, monitoring of funds disbursement.

- **Reporting and Analytics:** One of the cornerstones of components of the EAA-MIS is its built-in reporting module. This includes a suit of powerful and user-friendly tools for on-demand data visualization, analysis, monitoring, and reporting interpreting project or portfolio data for any level of results hierarchy. This allows users to easily generate various kinds of analytics, such as pre-defined ad-hoc reports; charts; matrixes; lists or tables; geo-spatial analysis; and dashboards by using any data category and publish them for general use.

- **GIS/Maps:** The EAA-MIS can contain a robust GIS mapping interface for analysis and visualization of project-level and global data on interactive user-friendly geo-indexed maps.

- **Dashboards:** With the new MIS, particularly when integrated with other analytical tools or application, EAA programmes can be able to create both predefined and custom dashboards. Users can combine various types of analytical views (charts, reports, maps) on single dashboard to provide a meaningful snapshot of some aspects EAA's global performance.

Previously, the EAC has been using a customized version of SIMEC, the Brazil Ministry of Education Information System developed by MESOTECH, as a primary source of comparable M&E data across all partner projects.

Additionally, EAC M&E team maintains a functional database on a select number of key performance indicators in MS Excel. This database serves as a valuable complement and supplement to both systems - the MESOTECH SIMEC and EAA-MIS.

2.7.2. Analysing the data

The process of analysing the M&E data encompasses various techniques, ranging from the creation of tables and graphs to summarize statistical data, to extracting insights and trends from substantial qualitative data sets. Many straightforward monitoring tools are designed to facilitate basic data analysis. For instance, Gantt charts and other simplistic monitoring charts are devised to track the progress of project and program activities over time, enabling a comparison with the planned or predicted advancements. Analysis within EAC monitoring system can be conducted by individual experts or facilitated by the partner projects to allow collaborative examination and interpretation of data, a process commonly referred to as sense-making. Sense-making can be achieved through various methods, such as staff meetings, partner meetings, community meetings, stakeholder reviews, and workshops. It can be a continuous process or carried out periodically. For instance, EAC organizes cross-departmental reviews of the partner projects' semi-annual reports to assess their status and determine necessary actions.

In the context of EAC M&E, analysis is often straightforward and revolves around a set of common questions, as outlined below. Additionally, EAC defines specific monitoring or learning questions tailored to individual projects, interventions or initiatives, or questions that are applicable across multiple projects, interventions or initiatives.

Fundamental Analysis Questions:
- What tasks or activities have been completed?
- What planned work was left unfinished?
- What were the reasons for not completing the planned work?
- What challenges or problems have been encountered?
- How were these challenges or problems addressed, if at all?
- If they were not addressed, what were the underlying reasons?
- What opportunities have been identified?
- Have there been any changes in the target populations?
- Is the project or program progressing towards achieving its objectives?
- Are the current objectives still relevant?
- What lessons have been learned throughout the process?
- How can these lessons be applied to future endeavours?
- How has the external landscape changed (e.g., political, socio-economic factors)?
- What immediate adjustments need to be made to the plans?
- What potential long-term adjustments might be necessary?

2.7.3. Reporting and Using the M&E Information

Reporting serves as a means of effectively disseminating the M&E information. The EAC and its partner projects are obligated to generate regular reports for various recipients, including partners, government agencies, and internal leadership or management. Consequently, a significant amount of time is devoted to produce diverse reports tailored to different audiences.

The M&E information encompasses multiple applications or uses. Its primary objective is to facilitate necessary adjustments to plans, budgets, targets, or operational approaches, particularly when projects and programs operate within challenging or dynamically evolving environments. The EAC considers it important to provide opportunities to engage in discussions about M&E findings with all relevant stakeholders, including partner projects. This approach enables EAC to ensure accountability to its own

partners, the populations it serves, as well as, to the relevant government ministries and international agencies. The M&E data support institutional learning, contribute communications efforts, provide substantiated evidence for advocacy initiatives, and inform decisions related to resource allocation.

Furthermore, multiple data sources are leveraged to support various organizational functions such as learning, knowledge management, advocacy, communications, and internal business processes like disbursing payments to partner projects. The range of data sources employed encompasses the following:

In addition, the data from several different sources are utilized, in particular for learning, knowledge management, and advocacy or communications, as well as, to inform internal business process (e.g., releasing payments to partner projects). These include:

- Partner Projects Performance Assessment (3PA) reports, based on a methodical review of the semi-annual Technical, M&E, Financial and Communications reports.
- Case Studies that are part of the evaluation activities
- Formative or Summative Evaluations of the partner projects and initiatives
- Commissioned Research Studies
- Policy Briefs and Occasional Papers
- EAC Site Monitoring Visits (SMVs)
- Data Quality Audits, including assessing the robustness of partner projects' M&E system

The EAC team conducts partner projects performance assessments (3PA) during semi-annual reporting cycles to identify projects demonstrating successful enrolment and retention of out-of-school children (OOSC) in primary education. Case studies are conducted to identify noteworthy practices in this regard. The resultant promising practices are disseminated globally through official websites, conferences, events, and various publications such as newsletters, policy briefs, and reports. The objective behind this dissemination is to facilitate the development of effective interventions aimed at addressing the issue of OOSC.

Lastly, the monitoring information collected throughout a project or program often proves invaluable during subsequent evaluations and formal reviews. Unfortunately, evaluations and reviews frequently fall short of expectations or fail to achieve their intended objectives due to inadequate availability of reliable monitoring data. Insufficient monitoring data hampers the ability to accurately assess the progress made or determine the extent of EAC's contributions to any identified changes.

2.8. Data Quality Assurance

EAC attaches a lot of value to data, as it is the primary tool of operational, management and strategic decision-making. As such, quality of data is central to EAC's programming. EAC therefore requires its partners to ensure reported data meets these standard dimensions of quality. EAC Data Quality Assurance is grounded in the globally recognized dimensions of data quality, namely: Accuracy/validity, Precision, Completeness, Consistency, Timeliness, and Integrity.

EAC conducts Data Quality Assessment (DQA) of selected partnership projects. The DQAs help EAC have increased confidence in the quality of data reported by the partner projects. Moreover, the DQAs ensure that EAC team and management are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the data (as determined by applying the globally recognized data quality standards); and aware of the extent to

which the data integrity can be trusted in strategic or program planning and decisions. The specific objectives of DQA are:

1. Determine the robustness of project's M&E/data systems;
2. Determine the quality of project's data reported to EAC;
3. Identify practical solutions and strategies for possible improvement of the project's data quality.

2.8.1. Data quality challenges and EAC special considerations

Together with partner projects, EAC continues to strive to collect the most accurate, precise, verifiable, timely, and attributable data possible. However, EAC may accept a waiver for data collection in the following situations after discussions with the partner on what is feasible:

- Foreseeable and probable risk to the individuals responsible for data collection and reporting or to the beneficiaries;
- Data collection is hindered due to mobile populations;
- Access to the data is barred or hindered due to conflict, insecurity or natural disasters.

In the circumstances listed above, EAC may accept delays in reporting data given the context of project implementation. However, any delays must be reasonable and reported to EAC with an explanation for the delay including a plan for collecting appropriate data to EAC within a reasonable and mutually agreed-upon time period. Whenever possible, EAC expects partners to inform it in advance of any potential delays or challenges in order to work out a plan for reporting.

EAC takes very seriously any potential challenge to data quality and the repercussions of said challenge. EAC works with all potential partners at the pre-award/proposal stage to identify any potential challenges the project may face in collecting the level of precise and verifiable data that EAC requires. EAC and the partner should come to an agreement on acceptable levels of data quality prior to signing a project agreement so that the terms may be worked into the agreement and avoid any potential issues later. Once the project agreement is executed, EAC continues to monitor the quality of partner projects' data through regular reporting reviews, third party data verification and selected site monitoring, EAC assesses all potential data quality issues.

2.8.2. Estimated data

EAC expects partner projects to go to reasonable efforts to collect individual-level data without putting staff lives at risk. In high risk, dangerous, or crisis situations (natural disaster, political upheaval, etc.), or where data collection processes are so complex and difficult as to be cost-prohibitive (often in conflict-affected situations), EAC staff work closely with the partner to develop a plan for using the most appropriate methods for data collection and reporting, including generating best-possible estimates, along with a schedule for verifying the data.

Depending on the circumstances of the project and the agreement that is made between the partner project and EAC, these estimates could either serve as good enough data in an extreme situation or could be used as an acceptable placeholder for the actual data until such a time as the project

> ***Estimated data*** are only accepted on a case-by-case basis and it is contingent on an agreed-upon plan that provides a high level of confidence in the methodologies and what is feasible in the context of the project.

can gather the precise data within mutually agreed timeframe. If there is not a plan in place with EAC prior to reporting with estimates, estimated data is not accepted. In any case, estimated data from EAC partner projects is not considered as a permanent solution or a replacement to the actual precise data. The idea is to make all possible efforts to an increased confidence in the reported data. For example, other data sources may be collected to increase confidence that the estimates are accurate. Further, the partner projects and EAC agree on a plan for future verifiable data collection. Given the specific circumstances, when partners have to request a concession to submit estimated data, EAC would expect to have supporting documentation for the request; supporting sources of data to indicate that their estimates are reliable. Supporting documentation might include National EMIS data, third party verified data, sample studies, proxies, pre- and post-evaluation studies.

2.9.   Measuring EAC advocacy component of programming

The monitoring and evaluating for the advocacy work pose significant challenges due to the inherent nature of change, the involvement of multiple stakeholders, and the ever-changing operational environment. Noteworthy specific challenges encompass:

- **Language and terminology:** The adoption of specialized jargon and technical language within advocacy work, primarily focused on power dynamics and strategies for change, can hinder effective communication during M&E activities.
- **Complexity of change and advocacy interventions:** Advocacy work entails numerous unknown factors, and the application of complexity theory is increasingly employed to comprehend and navigate the intricacies associated with these interventions.
- **Alignment issues within advocacy M&E systems:** The diverse range of approaches to advocacy planning, varying levels of organizational understanding and support for M&E, and the delicate balance act between accountability and the unique requirements of the advocacy sector give rise to tensions within M&E systems.
- **Causality and attribution:** Establishing a clear causal link between an organization's actions and the observed change proves challenging. Determining the extent to which the organization's efforts directly contributed to the outcome becomes an intricate task.

Hence, monitoring and evaluating advocacy work continues to present a relatively new challenge for organizations, as it possesses distinctive characteristics and opportunities that make it difficult to assess. Almost all monitoring and evaluation efforts in advocacy work are predominantly cantered around gathering qualitative data to substantiate perceptions and impressions of the advocacy change or impact.

From the onset, advocacy initiatives are categorized as part of EAC partnerships under consideration. Assessing the contributions of advocacy initiatives to EAC goals becomes crucial for several reasons.

- One reason is to produce credible funding reports. EAC must generate reliable reports for the EAA, demonstrating that the resources and inputs were effectively utilized to accomplish identified goals. Since the effects of advocacy work often have indirect implications for the target population, the evaluation of project outputs becomes necessary to determine the contribution of advocacy work towards the overall strategic objectives of EAC.
- Another reason is to illustrate that advocacy represents a cost-effective method for raising awareness about out-of-school children (OOSC) issues. While this awareness-building endeavour

may lead to policy changes, attributing specific policy or practice shifts to any single intervention proves challenging. Analysing actions associated with increased outreach to OOSC can serve as an indicator of the potential impact of the intervention.

- Additionally, monitoring and evaluation facilitate learning from experience. Regular reflection on whether the program achieved its intended outcomes, along with the collection of anecdotal and other evidence to support underlying assumptions, enables EAC, through advocacy initiatives, to recognize and document external factors that may have influenced the target audience.

Each advocacy initiative requires a tailored approach and design to measure its contributions to EAC goals. The development of a clear methodology for quantifying target beneficiaries are undertaken for each initiative, based on its nature, structure, and focus. Possible indicators for advocacy projects may encompass the reach and frequency of messaging, the dissemination of publications addressing OOSC issues, the number of community capacity building events focusing on OOSC awareness, funds raised attributed to advocacy campaigns, the number of local, regional, and national policies influenced or modified as a result of the campaign, indications of attitudinal changes in the target audience through testimonials, and press coverage and citations in digital media. The selection of specific indicators for each advocacy initiative is a collaborative effort involving the EAC partners.

3. Guiding Principles for EAC M&E System

Principle 1 *Utilization-focused:* The EAC M&E system takes a utilization-focused approach that ensures the findings from M&E activities are reported to and optimally used by partners, stakeholders, and other relevant audiences to inform decision making, learning, and program quality improvement.

Principle 2 *Capacity and ownership:* The EAC M&E system is designed, planned, and implemented in close collaboration with key stakeholders, including the implementation partners, to improve capacity and enhance ownership.

Principle 3 *Designed from a systems perspective:* As performance measures and evaluation questions are developed, a systems perspective helps M&E activities measure the technical, institutional, cultural, social, economic and political dimensions of change.

Principle 4 *Responsive to the needs:* As an integral part of the EAC M&E system, on-going performance monitoring responds to the needs of EAC program and the partner projects in addition to the reporting requirements.

Principle 5 *High quality:* The design of EAC M&E system meets the highest quality standards, resulting in systems that are reliable, valid, and robust.

Principle 6 *Cost-effective:* EAC determines the budget allocation for M&E activities relative to the program portfolio budget, or the total cost of a partner projects, to ensure adequate resources devoted to M&E.

4. EAC M&E Functions, Structure and Roles

Over the course of time, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) functions within the EAC, aligned across EAA, has undergone significant development, resulting in the establishment of a well-structured framework and clearly defined roles. This evolution aims to facilitate the efficient implementation of an M&E system. By formulating a robust M&E structure and assigning appropriate responsibilities, the EAC

has effectively integrated monitoring and evaluation activities into its overarching strategic and program management framework. Moreover, the EAC has embraced a data-driven approach to decision-making, which has increasingly become an essential element of the EAC's organizational culture.

4.1.   Functions of the EAC M&E

The M&E plays a critical role in ensuring the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of EAC program and its partner projects. The EAC's comprehensive M&E system involves various functions that collectively contribute to informed decision-making, accountability, learning, and adaptive management. Here are the essential functions of the EAC M&E:

- **Design and Operationalization of M&E Framework**
  Develop and facilitate implementation of a robust M&E framework for EAC and its partner projects that outlines the goals, objectives, outcomes, indicators, data sources, methods, and reporting timelines. This framework serves as the blueprint for all M&E activities.

- **Indicator Development**
  Identify and advise on relevant and measurable indicators for each component and outcome of EAC program and its partner projects. Ensure that indicators are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) and aligned with program goals and the EAA strategy.

- **Baseline Data Collection**
  When necessary, conduct a thorough baseline assessment before program or project implementation to establish a starting point for measuring changes over time. This provides valuable insights into the program's impact.

- **Monitoring Activities**
  Regularly collect, review, and analyse data on EAC program and its partner projects' activities, outputs, and outcomes. This ongoing monitoring helps track progress and identify any deviations from the intended trajectory.

- **Data Quality Assurance**
  Implement measures to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and validity of collected data. This involves proper data collection tools, training of data collectors, data validation procedures, and addressing data quality issues.

- **Evaluation Planning and Implementation**
  Plan and conduct periodic evaluations (formative, summative or impact evaluations) to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, impact and sustainability of the EAC program and its partner projects. These evaluations provide in-depth insights into the performance of EAC program and its partner projects, as well as inform strategic decisions and adaptive management.

- **Data Management and Analysis**
  Establish a data management system that organizes, stores, and secures data collected throughout the program or project life cycle. Conduct data analysis to generate meaningful insights, trends, and patterns.

- **Reporting and Communication**
  Regularly communicate M&E findings to stakeholders through comprehensive reports, dashboards, and presentations. Ensure that the information is accessible, transparent, and tailored to the needs of different audiences.

- **Learning and Adaptation**
  Contribute to fostering a culture of learning within the program and its partner projects by encouraging reflection on M&E findings. Use lessons learned to adapt strategies and approaches in response to emerging challenges or opportunities.

- **Feedback Mechanisms**
  Facilitate the mechanisms for beneficiaries and stakeholders to provide feedback on program or project implementation and impact. This helps improve accountability, responsiveness, and relevance.

- **Capacity Building**
  Strengthen the M&E capacity of program staff, partner projects, and stakeholders through tailored orientations or training, teamwork, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Building skills ensures effective M&E implementation.

- **Continuous Improvement**
  Regularly review the M&E system's performance and effectiveness. Identify areas for improvement and adjust the M&E functions, methods, and tools accordingly.

- **Safeguarding and Ethics**
  Integrate ethical considerations into M&E activities, ensuring the protection of participants' rights, confidentiality, and informed consent throughout data collection and analysis.

- **Risk Assessment and Management**
  Identify potential risks and challenges that could impact the M&E process and program or project outcomes. Develop strategies to mitigate these risks and ensure the validity of results.

- **Alignment with Program or Project Life Cycle**
  Integrate M&E functions seamlessly into the program or project life cycle, from designing, planning, and implementation to periodic or final reporting, closeout and impact evaluation. This enhances the overall effectiveness and impact of the program or its partner projects.

The EAC M&E system serves as a cornerstone for the effectiveness of EAC's operations by fulfilling essential functions. Firstly, it ensures accountability by providing accurate and reliable performance information on strategic priorities and outcomes, fostering trust and integrity among stakeholders, beneficiaries, and funding partners. Secondly, the system facilitates learning and adaptive management, enabling evidence-based decision-making through data analysis and valuable insights that optimize program efficiency, responsiveness, and overall impact. Lastly, guided by empirical evidence and rigorous analysis, the M&E System contributes to policy and systems changes, positioning itself as a potent tool for advocating evidence-backed recommendations and driving positive societal transformation.

At EAC and its partner projects, the M&E system is not static; it evolves in response to changing dynamics and external factors. EAC and its partner projects regularly review and refine the M&E functions to ensure they remain aligned with the overall goals and evolving needs.

The M&E System stands as a testament to EAC's unwavering dedication to continuous improvement and transformative impact. As we embark on this new chapter, we pledge to harness the power of data and learning, advancing our collective mission, and leaving an enduring legacy of positive change. With M&E System as our compass, we stride confidently into the future, resolute in our pursuit of sustainable growth and meaningful contributions to the populations we serve.

4.2. The EAC M&E Department

The EAC Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) department has been instituted to assume comprehensive oversight of all M&E endeavours. Functioning as the central hub for M&E operations, this department bears the responsibility of orchestrating, executing, and administering the M&E system. Comprising adept professionals well-versed in data analysis, research methodologies, and evaluation techniques, the department's purview encompasses the development and implementation of robust M&E frameworks, the design of data collection instruments, the analysis of gathered data, and the generation of comprehensive M&E reports.

4.3. Other EAC departments or units

Other EAC departments (i.e., Technical, Operations, Engagement, and the Executive Director's office) play a crucial role in the M&E process. They are responsible for incorporating M&E considerations into program design, setting realistic targets and indicators, and ensuring that data are reported as per the defined schedule. All EAC departments collaborate closely with the M&E department to review progress against targets, identify bottlenecks, and take corrective actions based on M&E findings. They also use M&E data to inform programmatic decision-making, resource allocation, and strategic planning.

4.4. The EAC Partner projects

The EAC partner projects are mainly responsible for gathering and reporting data on their project activities, outputs, and outcomes. They collect data through various methods, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observation. The partner project teams receive technical support and guidance to establish and implement project-level robust M&E systems.

4.5. External M&E experts

In certain cases, EAC engages external M&E experts or consultants to conduct data quality assessments (DQAs), case studies, and independent evaluations of programs or projects. They provide an unbiased perspective and bring specialized expertise in implementation of EAC M&E system. External M&E experts work closely with the EAC M&E department and other departments to define comprehensive scope of work for the M&E consultancy assignments.

5. EAC Organizational Chart 2023

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                          EAC
                   Eexecutive Director

      Executive
      Assistant

   Technial          Operations      M&E Lead      Engagement
   Director          Director                      Director

Tech Head  Tech Head  Tech Head    Head of        Data Analyst   Web &
                                   Finance                       Comms Sp

   Ed Sp     Ed Sp      Ed Sp      Head of        M&E Sp         Eng Officer
                                   Agreements

 National     Ed Sp    Ed Officer  Head of Cost   M&E Officer    Eng Officer
 Trainee                           Analysis
```
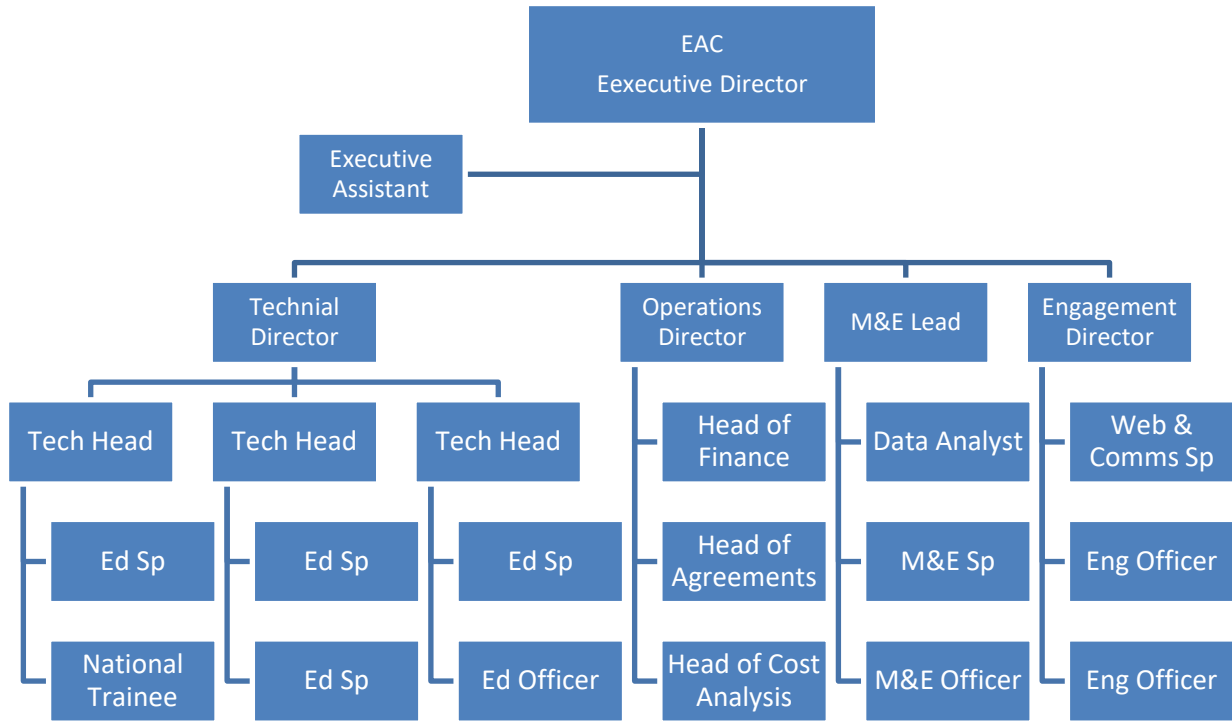
6. Establishment of EAA-wide M&E Functions

In April 2021, EAA initiated a comprehensive organization-wide M&E functions. This strategic initiative aims to facilitate the seamless availability of data, encompassing projects, programs, and the overarching EAA entity. The purpose is to enable the synthesis of results across the organization, ensuring effective M&E across all levels. This section outlines the core components of the established EAA-wide M&E functions, highlighting their significance in fostering alignment and informed decision-making.

6.1. Enabling Comprehensive Data Synthesis

The central objective of the organization-wide M&E functions is to establish a cohesive mechanism for capturing, collating, and disseminating data at all levels. By streamlining data flow from project execution through program implementation to the EAA level, this initiative ensures that pertinent information is accessible for analysis and strategic planning. The seamless integration of data supports the organization's ability to consolidate results, identify trends, and evaluate performance holistically.

6.2. Cross-Level Alignment

At the forefront of this endeavour, the EAC-led programmatic Steering Committee has spearheaded the coordination of M&E efforts across various levels within the organization. This collaborative approach has culminated in the establishment of a harmonized framework that outlines the specific functions to be executed at distinct organizational tiers: project, program, and EAA. This alignment is pivotal in minimizing redundancy, enhancing efficiency, and facilitating a synchronized approach to M&E practices.

6.3. Agreed-upon Functions

The collaborative efforts of the Steering Committee have led to the formulation of a set of universally endorsed M&E functions. These functions serve as the foundational blueprint for the development of comprehensive M&E policies, procedures, and activities. The agreed-upon functions encompass a range of activities designed to capture data, assess progress, and enable evidence-based decision-making.

The Table 1 below presents the M&E functions across all levels of the EAA Foundation.

Table 1: EAA-wide M&E Functions

Level	Functions	Description	Risk Analysis	Risk Rank
EAA Foundation	Systems strengthening	Develop and operationalize organization-wide standardized M&E function, policies/strategies, guidelines, tools, procedures and foundation-wide Theory of Change	Absence of organization level standardised policies, procedures, tools and guidance results in each EAA programme developing their own which may lead to misalignment.	Medium
		Provide quality assurance at EAA organization level.	Lack of a quality assurance mechanism may compromise the credibility of consolidated data and results putting EAA's reputation at risk.	Medium
		Establish and manage EAA MIS.	Lack of a coordinated and coherent EAA M&E information system could lead to inability to readily produce important organizational data and information for reporting and management use.	Medium
		Provide technical support and/or guidance to M&E function programmes as appropriate.	Without strong M&E capacity programmes may lack the ability to track the performance of EAA partner projects, gather and analyse appropriate, and/or provide correct information to EAA.	Low
	Organizational level management	Lead EAA organization level designing, planning and managing EAA level programmatic evaluations (internal and external).	Lack of EAA level evaluations can result in key lessons being missed to support strategic planning and/or ability of EAA to demonstrate organizational level achievement.	Medium
		Lead EAA organization level programmatic performance monitoring.	Lack of organizational level monitoring of the cumulative performance of programmes may make it difficult to aggregate data and consolidate results of all EAA programmes to demonstrate organizational level progress and results.	Medium
		Manage, analyse and report on organization level aggregated programmatic data internally and externally.	Without organizational level progress and results, the overall impact of EAA programmatic work cannot be properly communicated.	Low

Level	Functions	Description	Risk Analysis	Risk Rank
	Accountability	Develop and operationalize mechanisms to ensure compliance with organizational M&E systems requirements.	Noncompliance with agreed upon organizational practices may result in non-alignment with organizational level strategic directions and policies as mandated by the board.	Low
		Facilitate EAA's upwards reporting responsibilities to Management and other key stakeholders.	If reporting is not undertaken appropriately, it could lead to compromising EAA's overall performance or delay management response to potentially critical issues and challenges.	Medium
		Be accountable to EAA programmes in regard to M&E related technical and operational support.	If programmes require, but do not receive, necessary backup support their M&E function may become ineffective.	Low
	Learning & improving	Lead design, planning and operationalization of EAA learning agenda and knowledge management.	Without a clearly set organizational learning agenda, there could be a) missed opportunities, b) organizational stagnation and c) EAA's inability to achieve the objective of being seen as a thought leader.	Low
		Work with EAA programmes to develop and operationalize mechanisms for the effective utilization of learning and knowledge products for strategic and operational improvement.	Lack of appropriate support for utilization of learning and knowledge products when needed may result in a loss of lessons learned, opportunities, innovations, and knowledge construction.	Low
EAA Programmes	Systems strengthening	Support operationalization of programme level M&E functions that are aligned with EAA organizational level M&E framework and Theory of Change	Without a clear and aligned M&E function at the programme level, programmes may be unable to align with the organizational strategic objectives and demonstrate their results.	High
		Provide M&E technical support to partner projects.	Lack of robust M&E systems at the project level may compromise the quality of data and evidence generated by partners. This may lead to EAA being unable to demonstrate reliable results.	Medium

Level	Functions	Description	Risk Analysis	Risk Rank
		Develop and operationalize mechanisms to ensure programmes and projects comply with EAA M&E policies and procedures.	Noncompliance with agreed upon organizational practices may result in errors in data use and reporting which may lead to contractual implications and potential punitive measures.	Medium
	Programme level management	Monitor project performance (collect, analyse and report on project and programme level activities, results, and deliverables), and facilitate EAA level M&E.	Without mechanisms to monitor project performance, there may be lack of quality data that contribute to EAA overall performance.	Medium
		In consultation with EAA M&E, lead the design, planning and management of programme and project level evaluations (internal and external).	Lack of strong programmatic evaluations may lead to inability to demonstrate impact and missed opportunities for lessons learned, innovation, and knowledge generation.	Medium
		Manage and implement quality assurance mechanisms (e.g., DQA, SMV).	Weak quality assurance mechanisms may lead to poor quality of data emanating from partner projects and programme reports.	Medium
	Accountability	Be responsible for Tracking and reporting of programme results.	Lack of a robust programme M&E system may compromise its ability to demonstrate its contribution toward achievement of the EAA organizational mandate.	Medium
		Demonstrate horizontal accountability to sister EAA in line with the objective of aligning and harmonizing EAA programmes.	Lack of synergy and collaboration among EAA programmes could inhibit harnessing the collective potential of programmes or in redundancies.	Low
	Improving and Learning & Improving	Develop systems and processes to enable the generation, capture, synthesize, and use learning from partner projects.	Weak or underdeveloped systems for learning and KM compromise the ability to generate, capture, synthesize, and use learning from partner projects for improvement.	Low

Level	Functions	Description	Risk Analysis	Risk Rank
		Manage learning and knowledge development at programme level including case studies, syntheses, position papers, research, etc.	Lack of learning and knowledge management may result in lack of coherence, missed opportunities and/or wrong conclusions about success or failure of projects.	Low
EAA Partner Projects	Systems strengthening	Establish project level M&E functions aligned with programme M&E framework.	Without these functions, systematic data and results may not be available for EAA programme use.	Medium
		Operationalize project level M&E plans, guidelines, tools and procedures.	Without these functions, systematic data and results may not be available for EAA programme use.	Medium
		Establish data systems and/or databases to capture and report project data.	Lack of data may lead to project failures, loss of investment and compromised quality and reputation.	Medium
	Project Management	Manage performance monitoring at project level to track activities, results and deliverables.	Absence of a well-managed data system could compromise results.	Medium
		In consultation with EAA programmes, design and implement Facilitate and support project specific evaluations as applicable.	Without evaluations or assessments, there is a risk of losing lessons learned and opportunities for scaling.	Low
	Accountability	Be accountable to its beneficiaries, to any partners it funds or supports, or to other stakeholders that might be affected by its work.	Without these functions, systematic data and results may not be available for EAA programme use.	High
		Be accountable to its public or private funders and other partners.	Lack of partner accountability could affect EAA reputation	Medium
		Demonstrate self-accountability	Lack of self-accountability could result in personnel, financial or audit problems	Medium
	Learning & improving	Develop systems and processes to enable generation, capture, synthesis and use of learning/knowledge management.	Failure to use lessons learned could result in less effective future work.	Low

The establishment of EAA-wide M&E functions represents a significant step toward enhancing organizational transparency, effectiveness, and impact. By ensuring consistent data availability and aligning M&E efforts across all levels, the EAA is poised to make informed decisions, optimize resource allocation, and ultimately achieve its mission more efficiently. The collaborative process of defining and adopting these functions underscores the organization's commitment to evidence-based practices and continuous improvement.

7. EAC Theory of Change

EAC's mission is to contribute to significant breakthroughs in providing out of school children in poverty, crisis, and conflict-affected environments with a full course of quality primary education. EAC brings new resources to the table – including technical, financial, advocacy, and a commitment to partnership and "adding value." EAC supports the hardest-to-reach out of school children (OOSC) around the world facing barriers to education including poverty, discrimination, conflict, challenging geographies and climate change. EAC and its partners scale up existing education projects in support of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal of achieving quality education for all by 2030.

Based on its mission and vision, EAC's Theory of Change[4] entails making significant contributions across multiple impact domains through the successful attainment of program outcomes via the implementation of a carefully curated blend of targeted interventions or strategies. The Theory of Change is represented in the following Table 2:

Table 1: EAC THEORY OF CHANGE		
Domains of Impact	**Program Outcomes**	**Examples of Specific Interventions**
ACCESS	Improved education infrastructure and WASH facilities	• Construction • Refurbishment • Disability friendly construction/refurbishment
	Expanded alternative learning programs	• Accelerated/alternative Learning Program • Distance learning • Satellite centers
	Enhanced transportation	• Provision of bicycles • Boats schools
	Improved nutrition	• School feeding programs
	Improved learning environment	• Disability/Gender friendly school furniture, equipment, etc. • Use of ICT in teaching and learning • Disability/gender friendly resources
	Enhanced community engagement	• Advocacy • Community engagement • Enrollment Campaigns • Bringing nearby communities together • Supporting local governance structures (SMC/PTAs, Women/Parents groups, Students clubs)
	Improved child protection	• Child safety and security mechanisms • Safe commute to school

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[4] Note: Throughout the life of the EAC program, the theory of change will be revisited regularly to test validity based on information gathered through monitoring, evaluation, and case studies on best practices. This process of revision will ensure that the EAC program remains flexible and addresses on-going opportunities and challenges.

Table 1: EAC THEORY OF CHANGE		
Domains of Impact	**Program Outcomes**	**Examples of Specific Interventions**
QUALITY	Improved livelihoods	• Income Generation Activities • Cash transfers • Community Saving Groups
	Improved quality of teaching	• Language of instruction • Use of bilingual classroom assistants • Special Ed teachers • Psychosocial support or counselling • Education & Sports activities • Safe spaces
	Increased availability and use of teaching and learning materials	• Use of ICT in teaching and learning • Digital resources/materials • Self-learning materials/programs • Textbooks/school bags • Separate/Integrated classes for children with special needs. • Bursaries and scholastic materials and assistive devices for CWSN
	Improved disability/gender friendly WASH facilities and Hygiene	• Disability/gender friendly WASH facilities • Reusable menstrual sanitary pads
	Improved learning environment	• Use of ICT in teaching and learning • Disability/gender friendly resources • Disability/Gender friendly school furniture, equipment, etc.
EQUITY and EQUALITY	Enhanced inclusion in education	• Reaching the most marginalized; small or remote communities (e.g., ethnic and linguistic minority) • Separate/Integrated classes for children with special needs • Bursaries and scholastic materials and assistive devices for CWSN
	Improved gender parity	• Volunteers • Community engagement • Focus on and incentives for girls
	Improved child agency	• Peer-to-peer • Students' clubs
	Improved livelihoods	• Income Generation Activities • Cash transfers • Community Saving Groups
	Improved policies	• Policy dialogues • Advocacy
	Enhanced civil registration	• Collaboration with multi-sector ministries/departments
EFFICIENCY	Improved data systems/M&E	• Alignment with SDG4 Indicators • Development of software, application, databases • Integrating data systems with EMIS
	Improved utilization of resources	• Financing Ed/Tuition waiver + cash transfer) • Community Saving Groups

Table 1: EAC THEORY OF CHANGE		
Domains of Impact	**Program Outcomes**	**Examples of Specific Interventions**
	Improved policies and systems	• Policy dialogues • Advocacy • Networking
	Enhanced institutional capacity	• Strengthening systems and governance structures • Trainings of targeted groups • Regional/local networking
	Enhanced individual capacity	• Training/coaching of individuals
SUSTAINABILITY	Improved institutionalization or localization	• Integration with existing systems • Formal ownership of initiatives • Policy reforms
	Enhanced recognition of alternative education programs (accreditation and certification)	• Integration with existing systems • Formal ownership of initiatives • Policy reforms
	Enhanced institutional capacity	• Strengthening systems and governance structures • Trainings of targeted groups • Regional/local networking
	Enhanced individual capacity	• Training/coaching of individuals
	Improved policies and systems	• Policy dialogues • Advocacy • Networking
	Increased allocation of resources	• Formal ownership of initiatives • Policy reforms • Budget allocations

Additionally, operationalization of the theory of change entails the following key strategies employed by the EAC:

1. Establishing partnerships to effectively enrol and retain out-of-school children in primary education.
2. Advocating for OOSC at both national and global levels, thereby raising awareness and garnering support for their educational needs.
3. Enhancing funding initiatives specifically aimed at addressing the challenges faced by OOSC.
4. Establishing a comprehensive evidence and knowledge base that highlights innovative and successful approaches for enrolling and retaining OOSC.
5. Implementing the Zero OOSC strategy

Consequently, international and national partners will utilize the allocated funding and leverage knowledge regarding best practices to expand their programming efforts. This expansion will ultimately contribute to supporting enrolment and retention of OOSC's in primary education.

7.1. Establishing partnerships

The primary objective of the EAC is not to implement its own programs, but rather to provide support to organizations that have proven their capacity to offer educational opportunities to underprivileged and marginalized children. The EAC is willing to assume certain risks in order to back untested innovations that

show promise. Consequently, the EAC collaborates with expert and innovative partners across a spectrum of organizations, including major international educational, development, and humanitarian entities, as well as locally-based groups. These partnerships take the form of advocacy, resource sharing, and co-funded implementation. It is only through the collective and concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders and a comprehensive approach that we can ensure the delivery of relevant quality education to even the most disadvantaged and marginalized children.

7.2.   Advocate for OOSC

The key to ensuring that children who have been deprived of their right to receive a quality primary education is receiving the attention of the general population, as well as relevant government bodies and other responsible stakeholders. Recognizing that each situation possesses its own distinct political, social, and economic context, the EAC acknowledges the necessity of engaging a wide array of advocacy partners who can contribute their expertise, energy, and persuasive influence to draw attention and prompt action in addressing the plight of the millions of children who are currently out of school. To effectively advance its advocacy endeavours, the EAC collaborates with the following entities:

- International advocacy organizations
- National advocacy organizations in EAC priority countries
- Local advocacy organizations operating in regions that receive direct support from the EAC funds.

7.3.   Enhance funding

The EAC acknowledges that employing the same approaches will not yield positive outcomes when attempting to reach the most marginalized out-of-school children. This realization holds true when it comes to funding initiatives for out-of-school children as well. National education budgets often fall considerably short of the required funding to ensure a quality education for all. Additionally, the current global economic situation is placing strain on international aid budgets. In light of these challenges, the EAC aims to mobilize supplementary resources, including those from non-traditional sources, and forge partnerships with new stakeholders to facilitate education provision for all. The EAC is committed to developing or identifying innovative funding mechanisms to augment its efforts. Moreover, through its "cost-match" approach, the EAC endeavours to optimize reach and impact by leveraging contributions from donors, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and local communities.

7.4.   Establishing a knowledge base

The EAC is deeply committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning and knowledge sharing, with a specific emphasis on identifying and replicating successful programs that deliver high-quality outcomes for children and their communities. In pursuit of this objective, the EAC places great importance on promoting innovative approaches, encouraging collaboration, and facilitating the scaling-up of effective initiatives. This Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System serves as the bedrock of this endeavour.

As depicted by the theory of change, achieving substantial progress in increasing the enrolment of out-of-school children in educational programs necessitates a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy. This strategy entails elevating the issue of OOSC on the global agenda and sustaining its prominence through the identification and dissemination of successful models, practices, and knowledge development. The EAC continues to diligently analyse carefully selected programs through focused case studies and rigorous

monitoring and evaluation activities. This in-depth examination aims to gain insights into how these projects bring about tangible improvements by reducing the number of OOSC and ensuring the continued participation of formerly out-of-school children in their educational journey. Furthermore, the EAC is determined to mobilize additional resources to support promising programs that demonstrate significant potential in reducing the OOSC population and delivering high-quality primary education to these children.

7.5.   Implementing the Zero OOSC strategy

EAC continues to hold to its commitment to out-of-school children. Toward this end, EAC has rolled out an additional strategy aimed at finding creative ways to enable every child to realize their right to a quality primary education. Subsequent to achieving in 2018, its initial commitment to enrol 10 million plus OOSC globally, EAC continues to implement its approach with an annual target of approximately 1 million OOSC. The continued incidence of OOSC, particularly in countries that linger on the cusp of Universal Primary Education (UPE), serves as a clarion call for the world to change the way it works if we are to achieve a sustainable planet. EAC wants to make a contribution to this change.

EAC's Zero OOSC strategy represents the credible means by which the most disadvantaged children in countries within an arm's reach of UPE will, at long last, embark upon a pathway to a better life. The Zero OOSC strategy refers to a comprehensive plan of action aimed at ensuring that every child has equitable access to quality primary education and is not deprived of their right to education. The strategy is designed to address the root causes of OOSC and to provide a framework for identifying, enrolling, and tracking, every child who does not have access to primary education.

Zero OOSC is a term used to describe a situation where every child has access to primary education. It implies that no child is excluded from primary education due to any of the various reasons, such as poverty, conflict, gender discrimination, or disability, among others. The concept of zero OOSC reflects the commitment to ensure that every child has the opportunity to realize their full potential through education. It is underpinned by the principle that every child has a right to education and that no child should be excluded from primary education for any reason.

8. EAC Strategic Objectives

In accordance with the overarching strategic framework of the EAA Foundation for the period 2024-2028, EAC endeavours to translate its programmatic theory of change into a dynamic and adaptive strategic framework. This translation is manifest in a series of agile and forward-looking strategic objectives[5], delineated herewith:

Strategic Goal

Enhance lifelong opportunities for millions of Out-of-School Children (OOSC) worldwide, contributing to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4: to ensure inclusive and quality education for all.

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[5] These draft Strategic Objectives for the period of 2024-28 are currently under review and pending final approval.

EAC Strategic Objectives (2024 – 2028)

1. **Improve access and retention of OOSC in a full cycle of quality primary education, by:**
   a. Sustaining and expanding existing contractual agreements to ensure continuous support for OOSC programs and initiatives.
   b. Identifying and establishing partnerships with new stakeholders to reach 1.3 million OOSC annually, thus extending EAC's outreach and impact.
   c. Identifying and collaborating with additional partners to support at-risk children and prevent school dropouts.
   d. Engaging with countries to actively participate in EAC's Zero Out-of-School Children (Zero OOSC) initiative, thereby fostering a collective effort to eliminate barriers to education.

2. **Facilitate the strengthening of education systems at the local level to effectively address the issue of out-of-school children (OOSC), fostering a more cohesive and inclusive education environment, by:**

   a. Supporting policy dialogue and development to promote the inclusion of OOSC in education policies, ensuring that their unique needs and challenges are addressed within national education frameworks.
   b. Identifying and facilitating capacity development activities that equip stakeholders with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement effective interventions to better address the diverse needs of OOSC.
   c. Exploring innovative financing mechanisms to increase resources allocated for OOSC interventions, thereby enhancing the sustainability and impact of EAC efforts.
   d. Supporting and advocating for robust data systems at both national and sub-national levels to ensure accurate and comprehensive information for informed decision-making and effective program implementation.

3. **Establish EAC as a primary global resource for monitoring, evaluation, and learning in relation to OOSC by:**
   a. Employing a comprehensive program approach that emphasizes the enhancement of access, quality, equity, equality, efficiency, and sustainability in addressing the challenges faced by OOSC.
   b. Strengthening EAC's capacity for generating knowledge and evidence related to OOSC, commissioning studies and evaluations leveraging data-driven insights to inform effective strategies and interventions.
   c. Promote the conduct of thorough evaluations and rigorous impact measurements, drawing invaluable insights from past experiences to strategically inform future approaches and enhance program effectiveness.
   d. Formalizing a global OOSC community of practice to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration.
   e. Adopting collaborative approaches, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and integrating adaptive management practices to enhance program efficiency and responsiveness in an ever-evolving landscape.

4. **Assume a prominent global leadership role in addressing OOSC by:**
   a. Organizing relevant global events that promote awareness and solutions for OOSC to drive meaningful actions and change.

b. Effectively communicating EAC's initiatives and accomplishments at the national level and beyond, thus raising the visibility of Out-of-School Children issues and mobilizing support for their inclusion in educational systems.
c. Actively participating in key partnerships and groups dedicated to addressing OOSC challenges, aimed at fostering collaboration and collective efforts on a global scale.

5. **Strengthen EAC's leadership and reputation by implementing robust quality assurance processes, including:**
   a. Contributing to strong partnership selection through rigorous due diligence, ensuring that EAC collaborators align with its mission and values.
   b. Conducting audits to ensure partner accountability and transparency.
   c. Maintaining a high standard of performance and ethical conduct in all aspects of EAC program.
   d. Regular monitoring of partner performance through inception visits, structured measurement and verification exercises, and data quality assessments (DQAs).
   e. Proactively identifying opportunities for improvement and maintaining the highest level of program effectiveness.

9. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

EAA Glossary (Part – I) Monitoring and Evaluation Terms and Concepts.
EAA Glossary (Part – II) Programme Management Terms and Concepts.