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GUIDELINES

Monitoring and Evaluation System

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OBJECTIVE OF THE EAC GUIDELINES FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

EAC supports all its partner projects to plan and implement quality monitoring and evaluation activities. The partner projects are expected to conceptualize their M&E system right from the project design stage and to incorporate various aspects of M&E system in the project proposal. Through a well-run M&E system, a project team (and associated stakeholders) will know what is happening across the project, when it happens, who is taking part, and how much it costs. In addition, the M&E system can provide information that tells the project team how change (both intentional and unintentional) has occurred and why. All of this information, is to varying degrees, of interest to the project team, funders, stakeholders, and an array of other audiences. Developing an M&E system that can do all of this, requires careful and thorough planning. This Guide is based on a set of principles to develop each component of an M&E system for a project. In line with this, EAC's technical quality standards for M&E are described¹.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ESTABLISHING ROBUST M&E SYSTEMS

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

Principle 2 *Local capacity and ownership:* M&E systems should be designed, planned, and implemented in close collaboration with key stakeholders in the host country to improve local capacity and enhance local 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 project needs:* As an integral part of the M&E system, on-going performance monitoring responds to the needs of projects in addition to the reporting requirements of funders.

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

Principle 6 *Cost-effective:* Determine the budget allocation for M&E activities relative to total project cost to ensure adequate resources devoted to M&E.

¹ see Annexes 1 & 2

COMPONENTS OF AN M&E SYSTEM

An *M&E System* is a planning tool that contains a detailed description of all the project monitoring and evaluation activities; and *ideally* includes:

- (i) program theory or development hypothesis;
- (ii) performance monitoring plan (PMP);
- (iii) an evaluation plan;
- (iv) data collection and management plan.

3.1 Program Theory and Result Framework

Program theory (also known as Development Hypothesis), using logic models, helps describe and present the project's design. The **program theory is a narrative description** of causal links between inputs, activities, outputs, short-term and medium-term outcomes, and longer term outcomes and impacts. As part of the project design process, EAC emphasizes that partners need a well-thought-out program theory that draws on established evidence, data, professional knowledge, and/or field experience to show how the intervention provides solutions to identified problems. In addition to guiding project design, planning, and management, program theory also contributes to the task of monitoring and evaluation. A program theory provides a framework to think about what should be measured, when, and for what purpose.

In evidence-based project planning, a well-articulated program theory enables evaluators to identify and describe all the essential components of a project that must be implemented for particular results to occur. Moreover, it provides the detail evaluators need to identify and describe the project components that can and should be flexible and adaptive to local contexts, content, coverage, and needs.

In this regard, EAC expects that partners' proposals should narrate a well-articulated program theory (development hypothesis) to show how the project design provides solutions towards achieving EAC's and the program objectives of enrolling and retaining OOSC in education.

At the minimum, EAC requires partner projects to have a **Result Framework (RF)** – a planning, communication, and strategic management tool that conveys the program theory (development hypothesis) implicit in the overall goal. It includes any critical assumptions that must hold for the development hypothesis to lead to the relevant outcome.

3.2 Performance Monitoring Plan – (PMP matrix)

PMP is a plan that identifies and defines performance indicators, sources of data, methods, and a schedule of data collection, and targets or milestones against which progress will be tracked.

EAC partner projects are required to demonstrate how they will systematically track carefully selected performance indicators through a performance monitoring system that provides essential timely data and information needed to manage, change, and improve program performance and spending (process monitoring), monitor progress toward intended outcomes (results monitoring), and track indicators. Partners will provide in their proposals, for each performance measure, an indicator, or set of indicators that can validly and reliably measure performance against these criteria.

3.3 Evaluation Plan

Evaluation is a systematic process of collecting and analyzing data to determine the merit, worth, and significance of a project using defensible criteria against a set of performance indicators. Evaluation for EAC focuses in part at the system level, using a meta-evaluation approach. Case studies and performance monitoring data can also help determine the overall impact of the program at selected intervals.

EAC recognizes that evaluation is the best means to obtain systematic, meaningful feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of partner projects. To understand how the partner projects are able to enroll and retain OOSC in primary education programs, EAC considers the appropriateness of project evaluation just prior to the end of the project in order to draw lessons about interventions that work; why and how those interventions work; and if the interventions are context specific – or if it – or components of it – can be scaled to reach more OOSC.

3.4 Data Collection, Management, Analysis and Reporting

3.4.1 EAC Data Requirements

EAC collects data through implementing partners' semi-annual reporting. Every implementing partner is required to report to EAC against set indicators twice a year. Data is reported to EAC through an online reporting tool. Narrative/technical and financial reports are also submitted at the same time.

EAC's principle indicator is the number of previously out of school children (OOSC) enrolled in primary education programs. EAC requires that all partners report on the total number of OOSC who are enrolled in primary level education programs. This enrolment data is to be disaggregated by gender, grade, and geographic location for all OOSC enrolled through the project with both EAC and partner funding. EAC's secondary indicators surrounding OOSC have to do with tracking OOSC once they return to a structured learning environment the following enrolment cycle. EAC partners are expected to report on:

- Number of previously OOSC enrolled through the project who **remain** in the primary education program from one cycle to the next;
- Number of previously OOSC enrolled through the project who **dropout** or leave education from one year to the next;
- The number of previously OOSC enrolled through the program who have **completed** a full cycle of the education programme.

Additional indicators requested in the online reporting system are below; they are reported depending if relevant to project activities,:

- The number of individuals trained through project and the number of hours of training provided.
- The number of schools, classrooms and latrines constructed.
- The number of schools and classrooms that are refurbished.

Additional indicators, including qualitative, are also reported based on the particular interventions projects employ. EAC also expects data on enrolment and retention of OOSC from co-funding activities as total project OOSC reported, with verifiable data.

3.4.2 Data quality dimensions

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 will therefore require its partners to ensure reported data meets these standard dimensions of quality:

- **Accurate:** Should be valid and a true reflection of actual numbers on the ground e.g. of OOSC enrolled into primary education learning programs through project interventions;
- **Precise and verifiable:** Collected through a reliable and systematic process capable of producing the same findings or data if repeatedly applied e.g. finding the same count of OOSC even after repeat verification process.
- **Complete:** Should be able to give the full picture/ be usable to generate usable information e.g. no missing data and having all levels of aggregation and disaggregation.
- **Consistent:** Routinely collected, processed and reported for all reporting requirements and commitments/cycles
- **Timely:** So as to be useful in informing timely learning for corrective action/adaptive management and decision making, the established M&E system should ensure availability and accessibility of usable reporting data within stipulated timelines.
- **Attributable:** Should take cognizance of confounding factors (from other parallel processes and initiatives e.g. other education projects implemented within the same context) and have measures in place so that only data that the project can confidently claim, is reported – individual level information and OOSC enrollments reported to EAC are directly attributable to interventions conducted by EAC supported projects.

3.4.3 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 OOSC enrollment and retention 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 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 grant agreement so that the terms may be worked into the agreement and avoid any potential issues later. Once the grant 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.

3.4.4 Estimated data

EAC expects partner projects to go to reasonable efforts to collect individual-student 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 estimates for OOSC enrollment along with a schedule for verifying 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 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.

The *estimated data* is 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

3.4.5 Retention data

The overall goal of EAC is to enroll and retain out of school children (OOSC) to complete a full cycle of quality primary education. EAC requires partner projects to report on retention which is presented as a percentage of newly enrolled OOSC who remain in the primary education program from one year to the next. For tracking the cohorts of enrolled OOSC overtime, partner projects must collect individual or student data. Retention data is a compilation of the OOSC enrolled who are either promoted or who repeat an education cycle (Retained = Promoted + Repeated). In traditional education, an education cycle is considered the school year while for alternative or accelerated education programs it may be differently defined. The average retention rate in primary education in low income countries, as per the World Bank categories, is **50.01%**² (Source: *UIS Statistics*)³. EAC sets a standard of at least 75% average retention rate

² UIS uses survival rate to the last grade of primary. The survival rate to the last grade of primary is the percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first grade of a given level or cycle of education in a given school year who are expected to reach a given grade, *regardless of repetition*, and therefore is the closest international indicator to the EAC retention rate per cohort. EAC retention is tracked for each cohort of OOSC enrolled. EAC retention rate includes formally enrolled OOSC who are both promoters and repeaters.

³ [http://data.uis.unesco.org/OECDStat_Metadata/ShowMetadata.ashx?Dataset=EDULIT_DS&Lang=en&Coords=\[EDULIT_IND\],\[SR_1_GLAST_CP\]](http://data.uis.unesco.org/OECDStat_Metadata/ShowMetadata.ashx?Dataset=EDULIT_DS&Lang=en&Coords=[EDULIT_IND],[SR_1_GLAST_CP])

for all projects. However, EAC partners' focused retention strategies frequently encourage significantly higher project-specific rates.

3.4.6 Data collection and online reporting

Besides designing and rolling out the data reporting system, EAC M&E team provides partners with guidelines and processes for collecting and reporting the data. The guidelines include directions on the following items:

- Tracking individual students.
- Instructions for completing the online data reporting forms, which include technical support contacts to troubleshoot any problems when completing the forms.
- Instructions for submitting the online data reporting forms.
- Provision of clear definitions for all indicators (variables) being requested, including instructions on how to calculate any indicators that are unique to EAC.
- Clear criteria for categorizing sub-groups of OOSC.

All the partner projects are expected to follow online M&E data reporting semi-annually in January and July each year. Subsequent to M&E report submission, EAC conducts a data quality assessment for each report. The technical and financial reports are submitted concurrently. All three reports must be approved by EAC before recommending payment disbursement. Data are summarized against annual and life of project targets.

3.5 Structure and resourcing of the M&E function

Success and quality of any project are often linked to the organization's ability to establish strong and effective M&E systems to measure its performance. Similarly, a robust M&E is dependent on the availability of both human, financial and institutional resources. Depending on the complexity and the implementation environment, the cost of having an effective M&E system varies from project to project. It is therefore important that these costs are anticipated and analyzed while designing the project. As a commitment to ensuring functional M&E systems are established and resourced to cater for the data and information needs, EAC partners are therefore required in the submission of project proposals to consider that:

- The project M&E budget is adequate (at least 10% of the overall program budget) to establish and carry out M&E activities.
- There are dedicated staff for M&E with clearly assigned roles and responsibilities.
- The project M&E staff is sufficient in relation to the program size, breadth, scope, and complexity, where sufficient is defined as (i) Data collection is on time and accurate; (ii) Reporting is on time.
- There is a designated senior/key staff member (at each level of the project's reporting system) responsible for reviewing the quality of data (i.e. accuracy, completeness, precision, and dis/aggregations) prior to submission of data on EAC Reporting System.
- There is a training plan for demand-driven capacity of all staff involved in M&E, data management, and the reporting system.
- Members of the M&E team receive adequate mentoring and technical support from their supervisors.

- A procedure exists for orienting new partner staff on the M&E system in case of staff turnover.

3.6 M&E Work Plan

The M&E work plan provides a summary list of all the key tasks that need to be completed throughout the project, the estimated timing of those tasks, the personnel required, the resources required to complete the tasks, and associated costs. This can be included in the overall detailed project implementation plan.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: M&E GOLD STANDARDS

ANNEX 2: TEMPLATE FOR RESULTS FRAMEWORK/LOGIC MODEL (TABLE)

ANNEX 3: TEMPLATE FOR PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN (PMP MATRIX)

ANNEX 1: M&E GOLD STANDARDS

Following several years of implementing EAC partnership data collection and analysis, the M&E team has developed a set of “Gold Standards” for an M&E System to meet EAC reporting requirements. These are based on the components of M&E System described in this guide.

EAC expects partner projects to follow these Gold Standards to develop and implement a comprehensive M&E system, starting early on in the project design or proposal.

- There is a well-articulated **program theory** (development hypothesis) that uses logic models to help describe and present the project’s design.
- There is a brief **Result Framework and narrative** that describes the causal links.
- A **PMP matrix** exists that lists indicators, annualized and cumulative life of project (LOP) targets, data sources, baselines, methods, reporting frequency, and responsible entities.
- There is well articulated plan/strategy/methodology, personnel, roles, responsibilities for **data collection and management** to ensure sufficient precision, accuracy, timeliness and disaggregation of data with an ability to measure all the relevant indicators, most specifically regarding OOSC enrolment and retention through the life of the project.
- The **M&E work plan** indicates timeline and persons responsible for each activity, including any M&E-related roles for the program/technical staff and implementing partners.
- There is an **Evaluation Plan** that clearly explains the need for evaluation/s and the planning around it in terms of resources (financial, human and temporal).
- The project **M&E budget** is adequate (at least 10% of the overall program budget) to carry out all M&E functions/activities, including data collection, processing and reporting.

Annex 2: TEMPLATE FOR RESULTS FRAMEWORK/LOGIC MODEL (TABLE)

Project Goal/Objective:									
Outcome 1:		Outcome 2:		Outcome 3:		Outcome 4:			
Intermediary Results		Intermediary Results		Intermediary Results		Intermediary Results			
IR 1.1	IR 1.2	IR 2.1	IR 2.2	IR 3.1	IR 3.2	IR 4.1	IR 4.2		
Output 1.1.1	Output 1.2.1	Output 2.1.1	Output 2.2.1	Output 3.1.1	Output 3.2.1	Output 4.1.1	Output 4.2.1		
Activities:		Activities:		Activities:		Activities:			
1.1.1.1	1.2.1.1	2.1.1.1	2.2.1.1	3.1.1.1	3.2.1.1	4.1.1.1	4.2.1.1		
1.1.1.2	1.2.1.2	2.1.1.2	2.2.1.2	3.1.1.2	3.2.1.2	4.1.1.2	4.2.1.2		
1.1.1.3	1.2.1.3	2.1.1.3	2.2.1.3	3.1.1.3	3.2.1.3	4.1.1.3	4.2.1.3		
Assumptions		Assumptions		Assumptions		Assumptions			

Goal/Objective:

This is the ultimate change that the project aims to achieve.

Outcomes:

Outcomes are the changes the program aims to achieve with each target group or in a particular area of intervention. Outcomes lead to the Goal.

Intermediary results (Short Term Outcomes):

Intermediary results are the short to medium term outcomes of the project. These are the direct result of project outputs. Intermediary results (Short Term Outcomes) lead to Outcomes.

NOTE: Both outcomes and intermediary results are changes in something. They tend to be an increase in X, a decrease in X, an expansion of X, an improvement in X, etc.

Outputs:

Outputs are the direct results of activities. These are products, services provided, participation generated by the project, and for which the project staff can be held directly accountable. These tend to be written as nouns, i.e. XX teachers trained, XX School kits available, XX OOSC enrolled, XX school management committee formed and active, etc. Outputs lead to the Intermediary results (Short Term Outcomes).

Activities:

These are the things done to deliver the project’s products, services, and participation. For example: recruit teachers, conduct community mobilization campaigns, etc. These are and are written as actions. Activities lead directly to Outputs.

ANNEX 3: TEMPLATE FOR PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN (PMP MATRIX)

PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN											
Indicators	Indicator Definition	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Dis-aggregation	Responsible	Collection Schedule	Yearly Targets				
							Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Program Objective/Goal:											
Outcome 1:											
Intermediate Result (IR) 1.1:											
Output 1.1.1:											
Output 1.1.2:											
Intermediate Result (IR) 1.2:											
Output 1.2.1:											
Output 1.2.2:											
Outcome 2:											