



Save the Children



**The Open
University**

**Monitoring, Evaluation,
Accountability and Learning (MEAL)**

I Introduction to the course and Monitoring and Evaluation in Save the Children

Keywords: Values, Theory of Change,
Programme Quality, Breakthroughs



Learning outcomes for this session

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1. Understand the purpose and scope of this MEAL training module
2. Describe the link between monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning and Save the Children's values, goals, theory of change and quality framework.

Course objectives and structure

Welcome to the Save the Children on-line training for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL). Thank you for putting aside the time to follow this training module, we hope that you'll find it interesting and useful.

Save the Children has collaborated with the Open University (OU) in the United Kingdom to produce this course. This partnership has brought together the experience and reputation of the OU in the field of distance learning with Save the Children's experience and global reach in relief and development.

The content of these sessions has been developed by Save the Children staff across the Global Initiatives, members, and Save the Children International, representing the cross organisational Monitoring and Evaluation Learning and Advisory Group (MELAG).

This training resource has two purposes:

1. To provide Save the Children staff and partners with an orientation to the tools and principles that the organisation uses to ensure quality and consistency in its approaches to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.
2. To build skills and capacity in these ways of working.

In order for us to build the evidence which allows us to document and communicate the quality and impact of our work, it's essential that colleagues across the organisation have a clear and common understanding of the tools and approaches that we use, as well as the skills to effectively put these into practice.

Strong capacity and systems in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) is important for Save the Children to achieve quality in its programmes, and its ambition to bring about substantial and long lasting change for children. The MEAL approach emphasises the use of data for decision making and continual improvement and a spirit of critical inquiry. We want to build this culture of quality across the organisation, and this training resource is one way of helping to achieve that.

The course is structured into 18 sessions amounting to 30 hours of study, and most of them will take between one and two hours to complete, as follows:

| | | |
|--|-------------|--------|
| 1. Introduction to the course and M&E in SC | Core | 1 hr |
| 2. SCI MEAL system overview | Core | 2 hr |
| 3. Programme Frameworks, Objectives and indicators | Overview | 2 hr |
| 4. MEAL planning and budgeting | Overview | 1 hr |
| 5. Baseline and Evaluation design and management | Overview | 3 hr |
| 6. Methods of data collection and analysis – | Overview | 3 hr |
| 7. Accountability | Overview | 1 hr |
| 8. Children’s participation in MEAL | Overview | 1.5 hr |
| 9. Use of MEAL data | Overview | 1 hr |
| 10. Tracking of advocacy | Specialised | 1 hr |
| 11. Total Reach | Specialised | 1.5 hr |
| 12. Child Participation Indicator | Specialised | 1 hr |
| 13. Measuring results in the EveryOne Global Campaign | Specialised | 1.5 hr |
| 14. Measuring results in Health and Nutrition | Specialised | 2 hr |
| 15. Measuring results in Education | Specialised | 2 hr |
| 16. Measuring results in Child Protection | Specialised | 2 hr |
| 17. Measuring results in Child Rights Governance | Specialised | 1.5 hr |
| 18. Measuring results in Humanitarian work | Specialised | 2 hr |

How to follow the course

Distance learning is often described as being ‘self directed’. It means that people following the course do so through organising their own time to study independently and reflect on the content of the modules. It takes a certain amount of commitment and time management to do this, and different people will progress through the 30 hours of study time at different rates.

This course is targeted at a wide range of colleagues in Save the Children and its partners. There is content in here which is relevant to almost everybody, in particular the overview of our MEAL system. But we expect that the principle users will be M&E staff, project managers, technical advisors, and anybody engaged in the processes of monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.

The content is very specific to Save the Children’s MEAL system, but we hope that many sessions will be of wider interest to other practitioners in the field. Some of the references relate to resources held on Save the Children’s Xtranet, and therefore may not be available to learners outside of Save the Children.

The content is a mix of narrative information and guidance, reflection, and exercises to test and embed understanding and build skills. Before you start we would encourage you to think about how you are going to approach your study. The sessions vary in length and take between 1 and 3 hours.

We recommend completion of sessions 1 to 12, and learners may then prioritise the most relevant sessions from 13 – 18. Some learners may study on their own, while others may do it in groups. It is up to you to decide what works best for you. However, pacing your studies with a colleague may facilitate exchange of ideas, especially for the activities within the study materials.

For Save the Children staff, completion of this course should be seen as an important part of your Learning and Development Plan, and the time to engage with it must be built into working hours rather than considered as something you do in your spare time. You can decide with your manager how to spread the time required across your work plan.

Once you have completed the modules you should confirm this with your manager, and you will be eligible for a certificate. You can contact your Regional M&E Manager to obtain the certificate.

Save the Children’s strategy and values

In 2009 Save the Children adopted a bold and ambitious five-year strategy (2010-2015) to achieve more for children through an agreed Theory of Change and build a more joined up organisation.

Save the Children must clearly demonstrate how we are positively influencing and changing children's lives. Our MEAL approach, therefore, must help us achieve this objective by including the mechanisms, processes and data that help us to:

- Measure and demonstrate our strategic impact. We will articulate specific results we will seek to achieve for children and measure our progress toward achieving those results through global outcome indicators, sharing our successes, challenges and learning in doing so. This picture notably includes the methods and results regarding Civil Society strengthening, as well as building the capacity of all our partners, including children, local civil society actors, government and the private sector.
- Be accountable to ourselves, children, donors and partners. We acknowledge the importance of sharing information on our progress, results and learning with our key stakeholders, and to seek their feedback; we will pay special attention to accountability to children and their caregivers.
- Ensure and increase the quality of our work. We will prioritise the timely and widespread use of knowledge generated by the MEAL system be used for learning and improving the quality of the ongoing as well as the future interventions. Quality does not only refer to the realisation of objectives, but also to the relevance and sustainability of the results, as well as the applied methods.

In the sections below we will explore these aims in a bit more detail by looking at our values, the goals in our strategy, our theory of change and our common approach to programme quality.

Realising Save the Children's values

Everybody in Save the Children should be familiar with the values of the organisation. Our efforts to build systems and capacity in monitoring and evaluation must be underpinned by these values. In the box below you can see how our commitments to accountability, programme quality and the responsible use of data are reflected in the values.

ACCOUNTABILITY: We take personal responsibility for using our resources efficiently, achieving measurable results, and being accountable to supporters, partners and, most of all, children.

AMBITION: We are demanding of ourselves and our colleagues, set high goals and are committed to improving the quality of everything we do for children.

COLLABORATION: We respect and value each other, thrive on our diversity, and work with partners to leverage our global strength in making a difference for children.

CREATIVITY: We are open to new ideas, embrace change, and take disciplined risks to develop sustainable solutions for and with children.

INTEGRITY: We aspire to live to the highest standards of personal honesty and behaviour; we never compromise our reputation and always act in the best interests of children.

Achieving Save the Children's goals

Three ambitious goals have been set for the current strategic planning period: these goals revolve around reach, impact and revenue.

Our Reach

Estimating the number of children we reach using common methodology across all our programmes

Our Impact

Measuring outcomes for children to be able to demonstrate the value of our work and effective use of resources for internal and external accountability

Our Revenues

Increasing the funds we have in order to achieve more for children.
The proposed global revenue target for 2015 is USD 2 billion

Save the Children must clearly demonstrate how we are positively influencing and changing children's lives. Our monitoring and evaluation system, therefore, must help us achieve this objective by including the mechanisms, processes and data that help us to measure progress towards these strategic goals. More specifically, in our global M&E system we have a methodology called Total Reach to measure the number of children we reach: another pillar of our system is the emphasis on measuring outcomes by applying a set of global indicators.

The Global Breakthroughs

Save the Children has established the Global Initiatives in order to provide a framework for the movement to align its priority thematic areas to achieve greater impact for children. The achievement of our ambitious goals relies on the collaboration and commitment of members and country and regional offices together. Global Initiatives enable all members, regional and country offices to draw on each other's expertise, experience and portfolio when submitting proposals, developing and implementing programmes and advocating for change. As a result, we are better placed to maximise our financial and technical resources.

The Global Initiatives are responsible for:

- Providing a strategic framework for thematic work across all members
- Establishing professional networks
- Supporting the development of an effective knowledge management system
- Promoting a rigorous and consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation, so that (in particular) we can demonstrate progress against our Breakthroughs.

Save the Children has identified four 'Breakthroughs', which are significant changes for children to which we want to make a decisive contribution. Breakthroughs are defined as 'a remarkable shift from the current trend, and a sustainable change in the way the world treats children'.

Our four Breakthroughs are:

- **Education:** All children can read by the time they leave primary school, and children caught up in humanitarian crises have access to quality primary education.
- **Child Protection:** All children can thrive in a safe family environment, and no child is placed in harmful institutions.
- **Child Rights Governance:** All children, especially the poorest, benefit from greater public investment and better use of society's resources in realising their rights.
- **Health and Nutrition:** No child dies from preventable causes – public attitudes will not tolerate high levels of child deaths.

Save the Children has developed a set of global indicators to help us build evidence for our contribution to these breakthroughs, and is also identifying a number of 'signature programmes' which demonstrate how we work towards the breakthroughs within the Theory of Change.

Save the Children staff can access OneNet to find out more about the global breakthroughs here

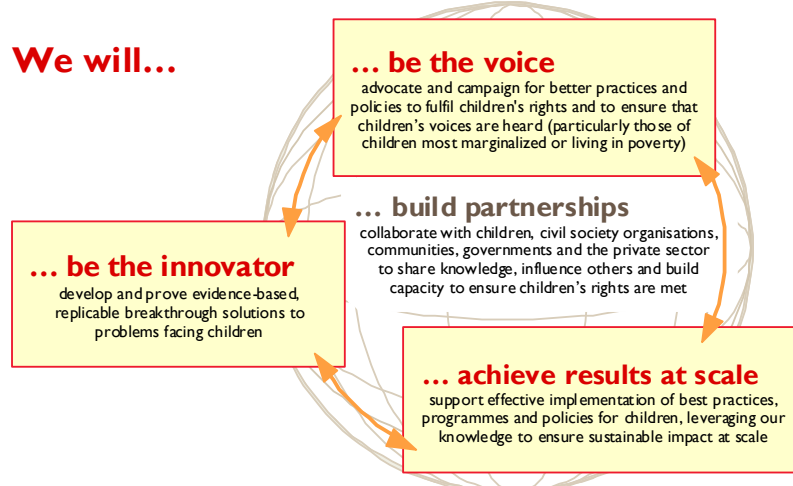
<https://onenet.savethechildren.net/strategy/Pages/Breakthroughs.aspx>

The Theory of Change

Save the Children has developed a Theory of Change which describes how we bring about change for children and help achieve their rights.

THEORY OF CHANGE: how we work to create impact for children

We will...



As with the values and goals, we can see how this fundamental statement of how Save the Children organises its work is linked to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.

Be the voice:

Save the Children leverages our international experience and child-focused expertise to advocate for policy changes at all levels to impact positively on children.

- We speak out for children's rights and highlight children's needs.
- We amplify children's voices and create space for children to take a part in decisions that affect them.
- We advocate to governments and other duty-bearers to deliver children's rights and meet their immediate needs.

- We aim to hold donor governments to account for the impact of their policies on children, and we encourage the public, private sector and governments to invest in children.
- We work with children, civil society, media, the public, and others to generate wide engagement with and commitment to children's rights and needs.

Save the Children leverages our international experience and child-focused expertise to advocate for policy changes at all levels to impact positively on children.

- We speak out for children's rights and highlight children's needs.
- We amplify children's voices and create space for children to take a part in decisions that affect them.
- We advocate to governments and other duty-bearers to deliver children's rights and meet their immediate needs.
- We aim to hold donor governments to account for the impact of their policies on children, and we encourage the public, private sector and governments to invest in children.
- We work with children, civil society, media, the public, and others to generate wide engagement with and commitment to children's rights and needs.

Achieve results at scale:

Save the Children works towards a world where children's rights are realised and their needs met on a large scale using sustainable processes and structures that do not require our permanent assistance and support.

- We build on our evidence-base and advocacy with governments and communities to strengthen systems at the national and local level.
- We strive for results at scale through direct work and that of other change agents, encouraging an environment conducive to positive development.
- We put forward policy proposals for safeguarding the rights and interests of children around the world, drawing on our experience and that of our partners, as well as research and policy work.
- We work with civil society organisations to strengthen their capacity to deliver for children, shift attitudes, and hold their governments to account.

Build partnerships:

Save the Children's ambitions for children will not be secured by us alone. We are an agent for change and part of a global movement for children.

- We work with diverse partners at the community, national and global level, sharing our collective ideas, experience and resources and building capacity to maximise our combined impact for children and support scale-up.
- Our partners include governments, multilateral agencies, civil society organisations (including NGOs, community and children's groups), corporations, academia, the professions, media, and influential individuals.
- To fulfil our aspirations of innovation and achieving results at scale, we must continuously identify partners and build appropriate relationships and networks for programming, policy, advocacy and campaigns.

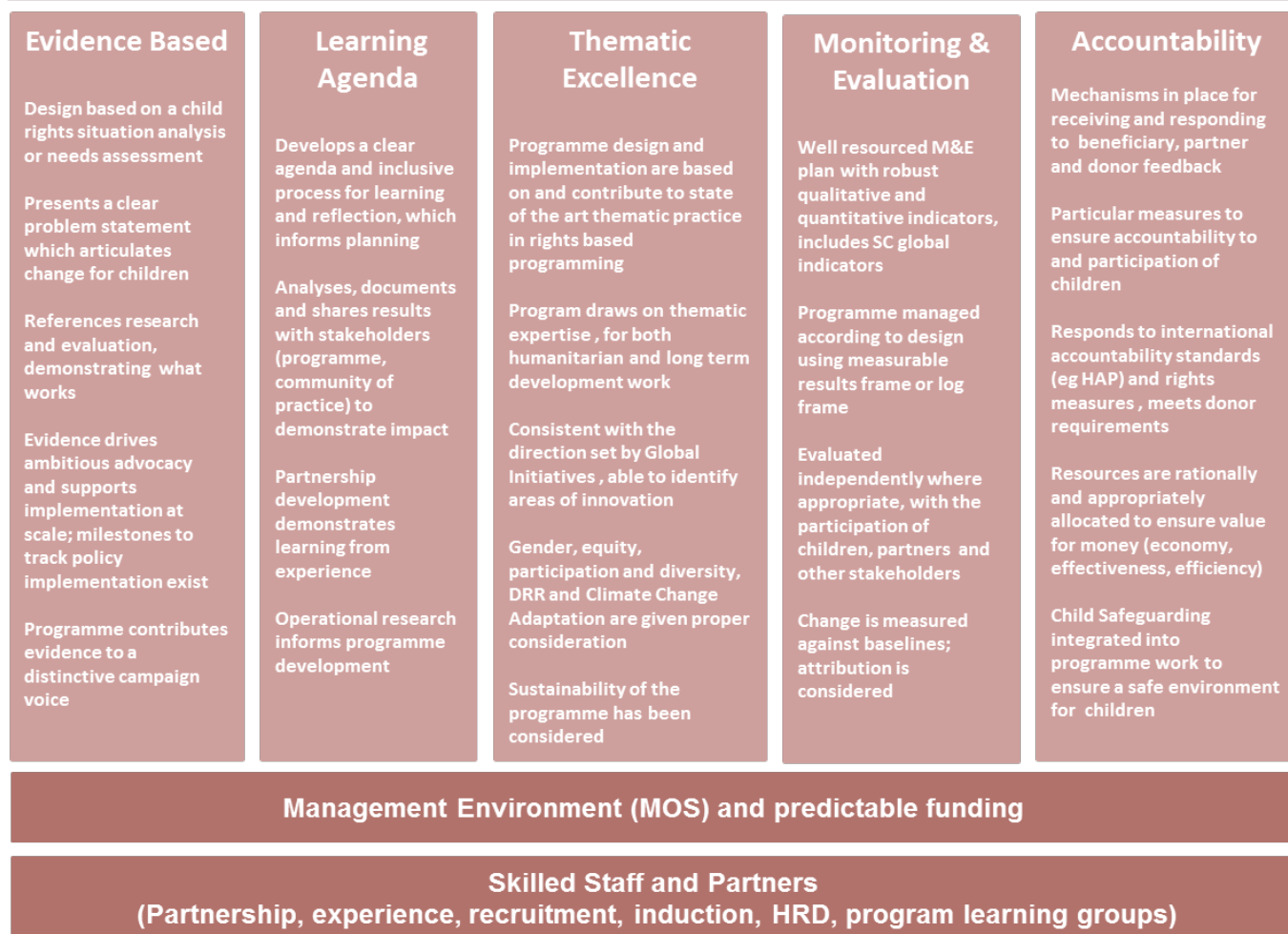
The Programme Quality Framework

We'll take a look at the overall Quality Framework in the next session, but take note here of the Programme Quality component of the framework. This promotes a shared culture of what programme quality means for Save the Children.

It is a programme development tool for planning, proposals and advocacy. And it can also be used as a diagnostic for self or peer review of the extent to which country programmes have been able to build the architecture of quality programmes. It can also be used as a management and assurance tool to provide a basis for accountability on programme quality within SCI.

If you take a look at the headings and the content of the framework you can see that monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning are very much at the heart of how we describe and achieve quality in our work. It's important that Save the Children staff who are engaged in programme development and implementation have a good understanding of the content and purpose of the programme quality framework.

Impact for Children Vision, Mission, Values, Theory of Change



Having reviewed these fundamental organisational principles and approaches, and having seen how they relate to Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning, we are now ready to head into the course sessions. Let's get into it.

Acknowledgements:

The following colleagues have contributed to the development of this training module:

For Save the Children

Marta Arranz, Muluemebet Chekol, Nicola Chevis, Dan Collison, Hana Crowe, Larry Dershem, Rachel Eager, Greg Glead, Lisbeth Dina Jensen, Liisa Kytola, Sarah Lilley, Sophie Martin-Simpson, Hannah Mehta, Carmen Rodrigues, Brynjar Sagatun-Nilsen, Alice Shirley, Morten Skovdal, Nitika Tolani-Brown, Salome Tsereteli-Stephens, Luc Vanhoorickx,

For the Open University

Frances Chetwynd, Mark Childs, Anna Peachey

This module was developed with the generous support of Save the Children Italy and the Save the Children Education Global Initiative.

Cover image: © Save the Children