

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

# 3 Programme Frameworks, Objectives and Indicators

**Keywords:** Programme frameworks, Results Framework,  
Logical Framework, Objectives, Indicators,  
Output, Outcome, qualitative indicators,  
quantitative indicators



## Introduction

This session will take you through programme frameworks, objectives and indicators. Designing your project/programme starts with articulating your project/programme using programme framework. Within the programme framework, inclusion of clear objectives and carefully selected indicators helps to refine:

- WHAT you plan to achieve
- WHERE you plan to achieve it
- For WHOM you plan to achieve it
- And by WHEN you plan to achieve it

This is a foundational step to help you plan appropriate MEAL activities to monitor progress, evaluate results, learn from your experience and improve your work.

## Learning Outcomes for Session

### **Knowledge and Understanding**

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

1. Understand the importance of programme frameworks for programme design, monitoring and evaluation
2. Be aware of different terminology used in the hierarchy of objectives and identify key terms used by Save the Children
3. Understand the difference between input, output, outcome and impact and the links between them
4. Recognise the importance of clear objectives and SMART indicators for quality programming

#### **Practical and Professional Skills**

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

1. Develop programme frameworks together with your stakeholders
2. Correctly use Save the Children terminology in the hierarchy of objectives
3. Develop SMART objectives
4. Develop good quantitative and qualitative indicators

## Programme Frameworks

Before we go into more details on Objectives and Indicators, let's introduce you to Programme frameworks. Programme frameworks are management tools used to design, monitor and evaluate interventions (project, programme, thematic level, etc).

Indeed, these frameworks are used to define the objective(s) of the project or programme and establish the assumed causal relationship between the results planned at impact, outcome and output level. They are or form the basis for various management tools that are used to design, monitor and evaluate interventions (programs, projects, etc).

#### **Activity I (Exploratory)**

In the section 'Essential Standard on Objectives and Indicators' below, reference is made to programme frameworks. Which ones specifically do you see mentioned? And which ones do you have experience using? Do you know of any others?

MEAL Objectives and Indicators Essential Standard: 'Projects and programs have clearly defined objectives created using an appropriate logframe, results or other framework. All relevant Global Indicators are included in the programme design'.

Indeed, the standard mentions the two most commonly used programme frameworks: Results Framework and Logical Framework (a.k.a. logframe).

Others you may have used or heard of include Conceptual Framework and Performance Matrix/Performance Measurement Framework. To introduce this module, we will focus on Results Framework and Logical Framework.

Let's compare a typical version of each of these in the table below:

Results Framework	Logical Framework																								
<p><b>Generic Results Framework</b></p> <pre> graph TD     G[Goal: Improved Status] --&gt; SO[Strategic Objective: Increased Use of Key Practices and Services]     SO --&gt; IR1[Intermediate Result 1: Increased Access to, &amp; Availability of, Key Services and Supplies]     SO --&gt; IR2[Intermediate Result 2: Increased Quality Of Key Services]     SO --&gt; IR3[Intermediate Result 3: Increased Knowledge and Acceptance of Key Practices and Services]     SO --&gt; IR4[Intermediate Result 4: Enabling Social &amp; Policy Environment]                     </pre>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Narrative summary</th> <th>Objectively verifiable indicators</th> <th>Means of verification</th> <th>Assumptions</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>Goal – the overall aim to which the project is expected to contribute</i></td> <td>Measures (direct or indirect) to show the project's contribution to the goal</td> <td>Sources of information and methods used to show fulfillment of goal</td> <td>Important events, conditions or decisions beyond the project's control necessary for maintaining the progress towards the goal</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Outcomes (or objectives) – the new situation which the projects is aiming to bring about</i></td> <td>Measures (direct or indirect) to show what progress is being made towards reaching the objectives</td> <td>Sources of information and methods used to show progress against objectives</td> <td>Important events, conditions or decisions beyond the project's control, which are necessary if achieving the objectives is going to contribute towards the overall goal</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Outputs – the results which should be within the control of the project management</i></td> <td>Measures (direct or indirect) to show if project outputs are being delivered</td> <td>Sources of information and methods used to show delivery of outputs</td> <td>Important events, conditions or decisions beyond the project's control, which are necessary if producing the outputs is going to help achieve the objectives</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Activities – the things which have to be done by the project to produce the outputs</i></td> <td>Measures (direct or indirect) to show if project outputs are being delivered</td> <td>Sources of information and methods used to show that activities have been completed</td> <td>Important events, conditions or decisions beyond the project's control, which are necessary if completing activities will produce the required outputs</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Inputs</i></td> <td colspan="3">Resources – type and level of resources needed for the project Finance – overall budget Time – Planned start and end date</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Narrative summary	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions	<i>Goal – the overall aim to which the project is expected to contribute</i>	Measures (direct or indirect) to show the project's contribution to the goal	Sources of information and methods used to show fulfillment of goal	Important events, conditions or decisions beyond the project's control necessary for maintaining the progress towards the goal	<i>Outcomes (or objectives) – the new situation which the projects is aiming to bring about</i>	Measures (direct or indirect) to show what progress is being made towards reaching the objectives	Sources of information and methods used to show progress against objectives	Important events, conditions or decisions beyond the project's control, which are necessary if achieving the objectives is going to contribute towards the overall goal	<i>Outputs – the results which should be within the control of the project management</i>	Measures (direct or indirect) to show if project outputs are being delivered	Sources of information and methods used to show delivery of outputs	Important events, conditions or decisions beyond the project's control, which are necessary if producing the outputs is going to help achieve the objectives	<i>Activities – the things which have to be done by the project to produce the outputs</i>	Measures (direct or indirect) to show if project outputs are being delivered	Sources of information and methods used to show that activities have been completed	Important events, conditions or decisions beyond the project's control, which are necessary if completing activities will produce the required outputs	<i>Inputs</i>	Resources – type and level of resources needed for the project Finance – overall budget Time – Planned start and end date		
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As you may know and can see from the above examples, both of these frameworks have similar information. While the terminology used for the different levels varies between frameworks, as well as between development and emergency contexts, the logic and levels referred to are more or less the same.

In fact, they are compatible and which one to use depends on your needs. For example, if a donor requires a specific programme or project framework this must be used and the corresponding donor terminology adhered to. On the other hand, partners or other stakeholders who are to be consulted during the programme design or implementation may be more comfortable using one format or the other. Applying the appropriate format and participatory methods is crucial for creating ownership of the program/project and ensuring the relevance of planned objectives and indicators.

In all Save the Children emergency responses the framework and design structure outlined in the Emergency Response Strategy Technical Toolkit should be used. More specifically, these are the logframe, master budget and quality checklist and you can find more information on these in Session 17.

## 2 Objectives

### 2.1 SC terminology and definition of terms

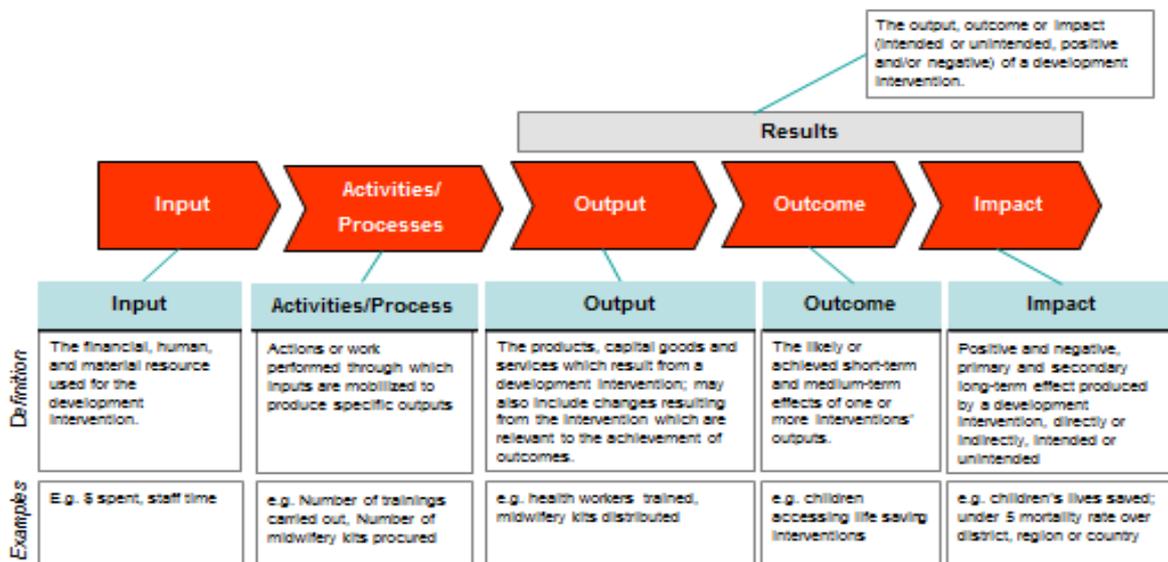
#### Definitions of objectives and results

Save the Children has adopted the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definitions for terms like objectives and indicators as follows.

**Objective** – a specific statement detailing the desired accomplishments of a project at different levels (anticipated or desired output, outcome or impact).

**Another terminology we use interchangeably with ‘Objective’ is ‘Result’:** the definition of ‘Result’ is closely aligned with objectives. For results we use the **OECD definition as follows:** the achieved output, outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of a development intervention

Hence, an objective details different levels of results we would like to achieve with our programming – this can be an output, outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of a development intervention. The following chart provides the definition of results and examples for each level.



Another important way to look at this diagram is to describe the causal linkages between the different levels of results:

- inputs are what you contribute to the activity
- activities/processes are actions taken or work performed using inputs
- outputs are the direct results of your contribution
- outcomes are the effect of your work in short or medium term, while
- impact is a longer term effect of intervention and is most likely a result of the combination of outcomes and other factors.

**Global Outcome Statement** is a Save the Children terminology that is used to specify an anticipated outcome that will be achieved under each of Save the Children's Global Initiatives and that can be used to plan or report at the project, programme, country, thematic and global level.

*Example: A strong civil society, including children, holds states and the international community to account for their promises to children (SC Child Rights and Governance Global Initiative)*

#### Activity 2 (SAQ)

Match the following levels of achievement with the respective results and put them in the correct causal order. Please try to answer the questions before you refer to the answer keys at the end of this session.

<b>Impact</b>	Certified trainer, training materials, venue, transport accommodation
<b>Outcome</b>	5 one week training courses on positive discipline for primary school teachers
<b>Output</b>	Trained teachers begin to apply new methods for disciplining – and influencing colleagues
<b>Input</b>	Less children are subjected to harmful treatment in schools
<b>Activity</b>	50 teachers trained from 10 schools

## 2.2 Well-designed objectives

You will note that objectives may be formulated as both what we plan to do and what we plan to achieve. For example, ‘train 30 teachers in active learning’ or ‘Children are able to read 50 words per minute’. Indeed, by monitoring output level results, we can see whether we did what we planned to do in our workplans. By monitoring and evaluating outcome and impact level results, we can see whether what we are doing is achieving the medium to long term result(s) in relation to our objectives.

Well-designed objectives increase accountability, communicate your plans clearly and are essential to good monitoring and evaluation. When designing objectives, you should factor the context in which you are working in and consider what is relevant and achievable. A common filter to use during objective design process is the SMART filter. It is useful both for objective and indicator design process.

**SMART** means that your objective would be

- **Specific:** Objective should be clear and unambiguous; answers the question of what do you want to achieve or expected results and where.
- **Measurable:** A measurable objective will usually answer questions such as how much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?
- **Achievable:** Stresses the importance of goals that are realistic and attainable
- **Relevant:** Supports or is in alignment with project goals
- **Time bound:** Stresses the importance of grounding goals within a time frame, giving them a target date.

**Activity 3 (SAQ)**

The following table provides an illustration of objectives. Please review the contents and try to determine whether the given objective is SMART or not. The answer key for this activity is provided at the end of the session.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>SMART</b>	<b>Not-SMART</b>
By 2015, increase the childhood nutrition awareness of 200 teachers in Aceh Province		
Provide teacher training		
By 2014, increase number of children with disabilities attending mainstream schools by 12% across the country		
Improved organisational capacity of local NGOs		
Families of vulnerable children are economically strengthened and viable to create/maintain child friendly environment		
Reduced HIV and STI transmission along transport corridor routes in Ethiopia by the end of the project		

You probably have experience with or can imagine that unrealistic and/or ambiguous objectives can carry multiple consequences related to programme outcomes, reporting and accountability. For instance, they might make programme outcomes difficult to establish or make them too vague or general to make reporting effective. They also might lower expectations or make it too difficult to establish accountability.

Moreover, the quality of design of objectives has an effect on the measurement of the results by an intervention: this therefore impacts the indicators for the project. In the next section, you will learn about indicators and see how objectives and indicators are closely related: they should always be considered together when you think about how you are able to demonstrate progress towards your desired results.

### 2.3 Indicators

Indicators are the keys to knowing that you are making measurable progress towards desired results. Different objectives require different types of indicators. In this section we will discuss the types of indicators and how they measure results on different levels.

### 2.4 Definition

Again, from OECD, we use the following definition of an indicator: quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development factor.

### 2.5 Connecting objectives and indicators

As discussed in the previous section, objectives capture both what we plan to do and what we plan to achieve. Respectively, indicators can be used to measure achievement on both of these levels.

Save the Children's Global Indicators are linked to Save the Children's objectives: these are **called global outcomes**. For example, for education the global statement is **that** *'In support of MDG2, by 2015, Save the Children will have significantly contributed to getting 2 million of the hardest to reach children into school, raising the quality of learning environments, and improving the learning outcomes of more children'*. Save the children identified the following indicators to measure progress towards this Global Outcome.

Indicators:

1. Quality learning environment: % of Save the Children Basic Education/Early Childhood Care and Development schools/learning sites supported by SC that achieve 4 guiding principles to quality learning.
2. Learning Outcomes: % of Basic Education students in a representative sample schools/sites

## 2.6 Levels and Types of Indicators

Just as with objectives, indicators are at different levels:

- **Process indicator:** measure inputs and activities planned and implemented to produce the output.
  - Number of radio programs
  - Number of trainings
  - Funds covering planned communication activities
- **Output indicator:** measure the quantity of products and services needed to meet an objective
  - Number of participants by men and women
  - Exposure to needed information/messages
  - Expanded public and private dialogue
- **Outcome:** describe knowledge, behaviour, attitude and skill changes resulting from our work
  - % of children who utilise improved services (e.g. health services, improved learning environment)
- **Impact indicator:** Long-term results measure the impact or the achievement of the project or programme goal. It indicates the quality and quantity of long-term results generated by the programme
  - % of children with improved nutritional status
  - % of children with improved learning outcomes

Moreover, there are different types of indicators: quantitative and qualitative

**Quantitative indicators** are measures of quantities or amounts and are **expressed as numbers:**

- **Units**, such as the number of staff that have been trained
- **Prices**, such as the additional revenue of farmers following a seed distribution programme
- **Proportions**, such as the proportion of the community that has access to a service
- **Rates of change**, such as the percentage change in average household income over a reporting period
- **Ratios**, such as the ratio of midwives or traditional birth attendants to families in a region.

- **Scoring and ranking**, such as the score given out of ten by participants to rate quality of service received
- **Binary Indicators** (yes or no): defining whether something has happened or not

**Qualitative indicators are** measures of changes in attitudes, knowledge and behaviour/ skills and are **expressed as words:**

- **Satisfaction.** For example, how children describe their levels of satisfaction with the project's activities
- **Standards.** For example, the extent to which training is recognised by the appropriate authorities
- **Practices and behaviour.** For instance, the way practice has changed since the completion of hygiene education
- **Institutional change:** This covers the effect of new measures introduced to improve the NGO's accountability to project users

#### Key Differences: quantitative and qualitative indicators

	Quantitative	Qualitative
<b>Expression</b>	Numbers	Words
<b>Coverage</b>	Provide information on width and scope of work	Provide in-depth information on changes at strategic points
<b>Analysis</b>	Analysed through statistical data methods	Analysed through summarizing, themes, coding, interpretation, etc.
<b>Limitations</b>	Often need to be interpreted through qualitative enquiry	Often apply to a small number of people/situations, and may not be representative of larger group

**Activity 4 (SAQ)**

In the table below, identify which indicators are quantitative and which are qualitative. Take about 5 minutes to observe the differences based on what you have learned above, then compare with the answer key at the end of this session.

Indicator	Quantitative	Qualitative
Percentage of individuals who were tested for HIV in the last 12 months and received their test results		
The extent to which gender issues are addressed in policy		
Community perception of empowerment		
% of children underweight		
% of HHs with increased income		
Evidence of NGOs adhering to code of conduct		
% of women who have accesses ANC services		

**2.7 A well-designed indicator**

As mentioned in the previous section, well-defined objectives and indicators play a critical role in programme success. Therefore, besides being SMART, here are some criteria you should consider to have a strong indicator:

- Focus on measuring what you need to know – not what would be good to know
- It should be possible to understand what the indicator is measuring even if there is a change in staff
- The indicator should rely on data that is available at the time when needed and/or can be collected at a cost that is affordable and budgeted

- You are selecting this indicator because you know before you collect the data: who will use it, when and for what specific purpose
- The indicator should be directly related to the objective that you are measuring.
- If it is not possible to directly measure results, use a proxy. Proxy Indicators measure outputs or outcomes that it is assumed will lead to change at higher levels of achievement. Defining a proxy indicator require a plausible argument. For example, measuring income of households is often difficult. We therefore use household consumption as a proxy for income.
- It is advisable to limit the number of indicators monitored and when possible Use internationally accepted indicators.

Multiple organizations have tested and adopted indicators for specific objectives. Some donors (such as PEPFAR, Global Fund) have their own indicators that are required to be reported on.

Save the Children has developed Global Outcome Indicators which are required for countries with relevant programming. You can learn more about the Global Outcome Indicators by theme in relevant thematic sessions.

In addition to the required Global Outcome Indicators, Save the Children's Child Protection Initiative has developed a menu of indicators for three thematic areas: Children Without Appropriate Care (CWAC), Children on the Move (CoM) and Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE). You can learn more about these menus in session 16 – Measuring Results in Child Protection.

Good indicators are context specific. Try to collaborate closely with the thematic experts and technical specialists when you're developing indicators. Articulate your theory(ies) of change as well as the types of change specified in the objectives.

Begin by determining what indicators have already been developed, tested, and refined in your program and other programs with which you are in contact. Brainstorm all related things or dimensions that can be counted, measured, or sized and look for creative ways to combine some of those.

Break issues into smaller components. For example, to measure capacity, focus on skills, technical knowledge, process, motivation, and opportunity. You can use an approach known as factor analysis where all factors that influence the change are identified and, where possible, weighed according to the degree of influence each factor has. Focus on the question: ‘What do I need to know and what information will tell me what I need to know?’ If your objective is not providing clarity, then consider rewriting your objective. Once you have a couple of possible indicators, you can start asking these key questions (refer to Box X) which will help you in selecting indicators:

#### Key Questions to Consider in Selecting Indicators

(Source: Excerpted from the infoDev publication, [Monitoring and Evaluation of ICT in Education Projects: A Handbook for Developing Countries](#))

- Have any indicators been defined in policy and strategy documents and implementation plans – at the national or local levels? How were they chosen?
- What are these indicators? Are they too few? Too many? Should they be prioritised?
- What specific inputs/outputs/outcomes/impacts will these indicators measure?
- Are these indicators realistic, measurable and useful? Are they accepted by key stakeholders and decision makers who will use the results of MEAL activities?
- Are there enough human and financial resources to monitor all the indicators? If not, how can we prioritise certain indicators?
- What will be done with the data gathered on the selected indicators?
- How do indicators support decision-making – in the project/program, or within various levels of government?

Once you have selected your indicators, remember to test them. Testing indicators is different than testing data collection tools. One way of testing the indicators is to look at data generated from different hypothetical situations and consider how each would influence decision making. If vastly different data does not influence your decisions, the indicator is probably not going to be useful and will need to be revised.

## Summary of this Session

By now, you should have a good understanding of how to design objectives, construct results or logical frameworks and design and test indicators. Once you have the objectives set, indicators selected, defined and tested, you're ready to move on with MEAL planning.

## Answers to Self-Assessment Question (SAQ) Activities for Session 3

Activity 2 (SAQ):

*Matching levels of achievement with respective results and showing the correct causal order*



Activity 3 (SAQ)			
Objective	SMART	Not- SMART	Comment
By 2015, increase the childhood nutrition awareness of 200 teachers in Aceh Province	X		The objective answers the what, when and where
Provide teacher training		X	Is not specific about how many teachers will be trained, when and where
By 2014, increase number of children with disabilities attending mainstream schools by 12% across the country	X		
Improved organisational capacity of local NGOs		X	Too general: need to be specific about what types of organisation capacity
Families of vulnerable children are economically strengthened and viable to create/maintain child friendly environment		X	Not Time bound
Reduced HIV and STI transmission along transport corridor routes in Ethiopia by the end of the project	X		

## Activity 4 (SAQ)

*Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators*

Indicator	Quantitative	Qualitative
Percentage of individuals who were tested for HIV in the last 12 months and received their test results	X	
The extent to which gender issues are addressed in policy		X
Community perception of empowerment		X
% of children underweight	X	
% of HHs with increased income	X	
Evidence of NGOs adhering to code of conduct		X
% of women who have accesses ANC services	X	

Annex XXXX

Table adapted from CARE

<i>Key donors</i>	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact	Results	Project / Programme framework
<b>World Bank</b>	Input	Output	Short term objective	Long term objective	x	x
<b>FAO + UNDP</b>	Input	Output	Immediate objective	Development objective	x	x
<b>UNHCR</b>	Input	Output	Goal + project objective	Sector objective	x	x
<b>UNICEF</b>	Input	Output	Outcome / key results	Impact	Results (output, outcome, impact)	Results framework
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact	Results (output, outcome, impact)	x
<b>EC+ECHO</b>	Activity / Budget	Result	Purpose	Overall objective	Results = output level only	Logframe
<b>USAID</b>	Input	Output	Strategic objective + intermediate result	Goal and sub-goal	x	Results framework
<b>USAID (2)</b>	Input	Output	Goal+ purpose	x	x	Logframe
<b>DfID</b>	Activity / Budget	Output	Purpose	Goal	x	Logframe
<b>Norad</b>	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact	Results (output, outcome, impact)	LFA (log-frame approach)
<b>SIDA</b>	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact	Results (output, outcome, impact)	LFA (log-frame approach)

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