“Result Based Project Management: Monitoring and Evaluation”

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Summer Online Course Report

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Course Description

In this course, i learn the basics of results-based project management. after an introduction to the results framework and its associated performance indicators, learnt how monitoring systems and evaluations provide a crucial source of evidence for management decision-making. This project management course is designed to address the growing demand for managers around the world, who can use results-based approaches to design, implement and manage an ever-growing range of programs and projects. Monitoring and evaluation(key results based management tools) are increasingly called upon within public service, non-governmental sectors and multi-latera development agencies to help ensure that resources are put to optimum use and that citizens and beneficiaries are assured of receiving the benefits that are committed to them.

Objective of the course-

There are many new concepts, ideas and associated terms, that are passing into common usage within management, in government, the private and NGO sector these days. Amongst those that we may have heard of are managing by results or more specifically results based management. Monitoring and evaluation are also terms that are referred to when describing techniques to assess the performance of programs. But what exactly do we mean by monitoring and evaluation, what distinguishes them and how are they related within the program management cycle? we are going to talk about in this course which is entitled "an introduction to results based monitoring and evaluation". Well a lot of our discussions will center around technical concepts and how we can apply them to policies, programs, and projects. Looking at some of the challenges to managing large programs and projects, and the impact that an increasingly discerning citizenry is having on accounting and reporting system. We will look at the role of monitoring and evaluation look at some of the challenges we may face in terms of introducing results-based systems in our workplaces. While during the course will focus on the use of results-based monitoring and evaluation within the development sector.

Course Content-

1) **Why are results and why are they important**

In results-based approaches we consider the short-term changes that arise because of our program actions, these are important, but we also consider the longer-term outcomes of our work and the impact these have on our target group. The tracking of these results, using monitoring and evaluation tools, and the decision-making based on our progress or lack of it is essentially what we mean by results-based management. “In your view what are the benefits for government and citizens of using results-based monitoring and evaluation for policy and program decision-making?"

The fundamental benefit for governments and citizens, first and foremost, is the engagement of citizens in the definition of results. Once citizens are engaged in the definition of their vision of a better world that they aspire, then they set the parameters and demand the appropriate services from government. The benefit for government is to aspire to meet citizen’s demands, both for better services but especially for accountability. In the context of citizens interface with government, once there is a collective understanding of what the results are, then they can be a mutual agenda to work towards those results. Sometimes governments may design projects and programs without consulting all citizens. And when those programs and projects go wrong, citizens are left with the dilemma of what went wrong and therefore clamor for accountability. Government does not feel achieving the results they want to achieve, need to understand why. So, we need to look at all the different programs and policies and look at what they aim to do, and see whether they're achieving what they expected to achieve and if not why, and how they can be strengthened. I think that policymaking is a very very complex and difficult process. and that's where monitoring and evaluation comes in because basically, the universal dictum is, it is what gets measured that gets done. So, if you want to deliver results, you need to monitor and evaluate results.

2) Distinguishing between evidence and opinion

The reality of course, is that while evidence may be the best source of information for decision-making about our policies and programs, opinion continues to influence those processes, especially in circumstances where evidence is not available. almost all governments, even when they recognize the importance of using evidence, are on a journey between opinion and evidence based.

3) Introduction to the Results Chain

How we organize the results that we want to achieve within a program into a results framework? Results frameworks as the name suggests are tools that we can use to systematize our work, assign resources, and track its progress. The elements of a results chain can coexist at a given time within a program we typically represent them in a results chain to show that there's a logical flow, sometimes called the causal logic between them. Sequence of Results chain are-

Input-inputs of the financial human material and information resources used to produce outputs through engaging in activities, examples of these may be funds, people, equipment, supplies, reports and many others. Essentially all the things that we need to put in place before we can start our program activities.

Activities-these are the actions taken or work performed, that includes are mobilized to produce outputs. Examples of activities are might think of could include, delivering training to, construct wells, schools, negotiating partnerships with, providing care services to, allocating funds to or even distributing food aid.

Output-these are the direct products, services infrastructure stemming from the activities of an organization policy or program. They're usually immediately visible concrete and tangible i.e. we can see them, achieved during and by the end of the project. Completed activities are not always appropriate outputs (completed activities are not always appropriate outputs). Examples of outputs may be pamphlets distributed, research published, water treatment plants commissioned, participants trained, food aid delivered, funding made available, mosquito nets distributed.

Outcomes- A change that is expected to logically occur once one or more outputs have been realized. They are Medium term and start to emerge what is a program a project has become established. Often defined in terms of change in levels of understanding and behavior amongst beneficiaries. Ex. Increased level of clean water usage by communities.

Impact/Goal- This is a high-level long-term development change that is a logical consequence of a combination of outcomes. Often expressed in terms of a region, country, or province, usually seen after the project ends, agency has limited control over it, subject to multiple influences. Ex. SDGs, National priorities

So, we have defined the elements of our results chain and place them in such a way that there is a clear and causal logic between them. If resources are made available, then we will be able to mobilize our activities. If our activities are completed, then we might expect to see direct and tangible outputs. Over time, our outputs should contribute to us achieving longer-term outcomes that eventually should impact positively on people's lives. how we may be able to use result chain to guide our work. It can help us in several ways, -

first, it sets out clearly the inputs that is the resources and the materials that we need to prepare our program. Now that we have established these, we can begin to make plans to set aside funding and to think about how we procure materials.

Secondly the results chain sets out the logical sequence through which we expect change to come about in our program, but as well as the sequence there is an important time element that is captured within our chain. After getting our inputs, funding, resources, and materials, we can commence our activities almost immediately. **Third-**Once we start to make progress with the work, we should start to see outputs follow promptly. **Fourth-**At outcome level this result may take longer, perhaps three or five years to mature. This change is a little bit more complex and involves a shift in knowledge attitude and behavior. **Fifth** Impact in results chain, we might only expect to see in that change after a period of ten years or so.

3) Result Statements-

Result statements are derived from identified problems or issues. Reformulate the problems identified by stakeholders into positive, desirable outcomes-Ex.

From(issues)	**To (Flip the statement into +ve)**	**To**
Children are dropping out of school	Dropout rate of children from school has decreased	Effective incentives exist for families to keep kids in school

Importantly results statements should capture one objective only. They also need to be disaggregated. Disaggregation we mean been able to takeout from a result statement different types of information that may be of interest to ourselves or other parties. When we disaggregate result statements, we want to answer the following: for whom is this result, where is it happening, by how much is change taking place and by when might we expect to see this result. When we craft result statements, we normally express them in terms such as increased, decreased, improved, enhanced, strengthened, or even established. This is what gives our result statement direction. When we word it, we use change language to describe a future improved state. Well there is an important reason why we need to pay attention to the precise wording within our results chain and that's because it's the foundation of our performance management system.

4) Performance Indicators, Baselines and Targets-Assigning Indicators

In fact, it forms the basis of our monitoring and evaluation framework. If we have results statements that are precise and unambiguous then it becomes much easier to monitor our performance in working towards achieving them. If we have results statements that are realistic and time-bound, then we can more easily determine if our efforts are on track and likely to deliver benefits within our allowed time frame. the results statement describes the change we want to see happen, the indicator is what we go to, to see if change is taking place. Defining performance Indicators- USAID, USA based development agency defines- an indicator as a variable whose purpose is to measure change in a phenomenon or process. A similar definition this time from the OECD, describes an indicator as a quantitative or qualitative factor that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect changes connected to an intervention or to help assess the performance of a development sector. The important thing to note is that we need performance indicators at all levels of our results chain if we want to measure change effectively. We need them to monitor progress with respect to inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Well indicators help us answer two important questions. First, it lets us know how we will recognize success or achievement when we see it, but importantly it tells us whether we are moving towards achieving our desired outcomes or away from them. In a very real sense what gets measured gets done and if we do not measure results, how are we going to tell success from failure?

5) Characteristics of strong Indicators

SMART-

Specific- Measures as closely as possible what it is intended to measure

Programme – "Tackling Malarial illness amongst children"

Result

Increased number of parents that ensure children access Treatment for Malaria

Indicators

- Numbers of people using clinics
- *Numbers of patients prescribed anti-malarial* drugs

Measurable-Clear and unambiguous about what is measured

Programme- Improving rural Primary Health care

Result

Improved access to WHO adult Essential Medicines at rural primary health care facilities by 2016

Indicators

- % of health centers with availability of drugs
- *% of health centers without stock out of drugs x, y& z for more than week at a time*

Attributable- measures changes associated with the project's or Program's efforts

Programme- Improving Rural Primary Health care

Result

Increased number of mothers undertaking recommended Immunisation schedule for their children

Indicators

- % of health centers with availability of drugs
- *% of health centers without stock out of drugs x, y& z for more than week at a time*

Reliable- Data obtained will be the same over time (i.e. when Gathered by different people in different places)

Programme- Tackling HIV Aids

Result

Increased practice of safe sexual behavior amongst urban youth by 2018

Indicators

- Propotion of young men and women who report having sex while intoxicated during the preceding 12 months (using questionnaire)
- *Proportion of young people who report having sex while intoxicate (using focus group)*

Targeted- Indicator is specific to the targeted population/area

Programme- Tackling urban unemployment

Result-

20% reduction in unemployment levels among graduates by 2020

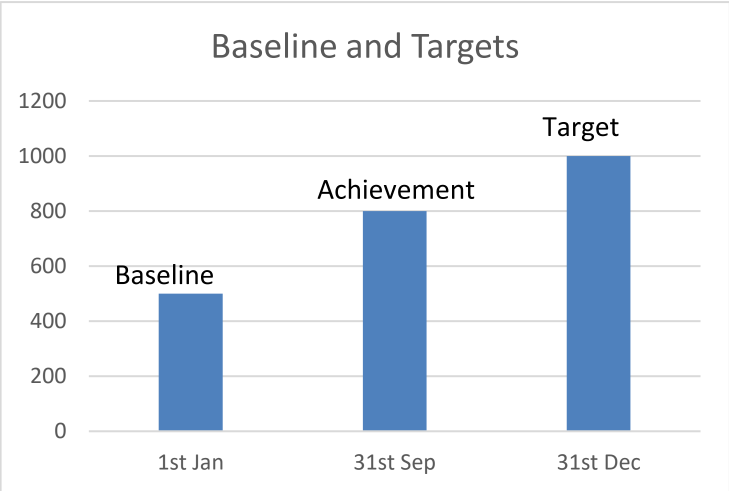
Indicators

- National unemployment rate amongst graduates
- *% of graduates from selected technical training centers securing employment within six months of completin of training*

All the above indicators in respect to Results in *Italic* font are more reliant to corresponding Indicators.

6) baselines and targets-

Baselines and targets are closely associated with indicators and they're very important in that all indicators must be accompanied by baselines and targets. In fact, without these, measurement of change over time is not possible.The value of the indicator at the beginning of the program, uses a point of comparison when measuring progress toward a specific result. If we were to mark our baseline, on a theoretical scale running from a minimum possible value of zero percent to a maximum possible value of one hundred percent, our baseline may come somewhere here. Interesting to note that baselines are not necessarily the minimum value of the indicator. In fact here, the baseline is at around 40 percent of its potential maximum value. The baseline, of course, is higher than the minimum possible value because it's likely that we've already achieved some outputs in earlier phases of our program. The target on the other hand is defined as the intended or expected value of the indicator at the end of a specified point in time, against which actual results will be measured. If we were to plot our target on the same scale, we may find that it comes at a position which is significantly higher than the baseline, but similar to the baseline, is less than the maximum possible value of one hundred percent.



- Target –Baseline= Commitment
- Achievement- Baseline = Performances
- Target- Achievement = shortfall

setting our baseline and our targets is important not only to allow us to determine whether change is happening, but also to measure performance that is related to that change. So as we can see the establishing of baselines and targets for our indicators is an essential part of managing performance. Without baselines and targets, we may still be able to determine that change is happening but we are unable to make any meaningful judgment as to whether this aspect of our project is performing well or poorly.

7) Identifying Assumptions and Risks

The logic of our results chain takes from input, through activity, output, outcome, and impact, but there is an important element that we are missing, and that is to do with our assumptions. Assumptions as links within the Results Frame assumption within our results chain form an important component, that allows us to move up from one level to the next. It gives us a leg up from one step on the results chain ladder into the next. Assumptions are important in making sure that the construction of our results chain is credible. Assumptions describe the necessary conditions that must exist if the cause-and-effect relationships between levels of results are to unfold as expected.

Assumptions are preconditions are reasonable then the sequence of results in our program will unfold as we expect. But if they are unreasonable, then they may unfold in quite a different way. In fact they may not unfold at all. The important thing to recognize is that assumptions can very, very usefully used to identify associated risks. Risks are external factors that could significantly affect the achievement of the program results targets.

8) **Relationship between assumptions and risk-Risks-** Internal or external factors that could significantly affect the achievement of the program results targets.

“ any factor that could adversely affect the activity output, outcome or impact an of and intervention.”

Any factor that could adversely affect the activity, output, outcome or impact, of an intervention. We may even go further to consider three types of risk;

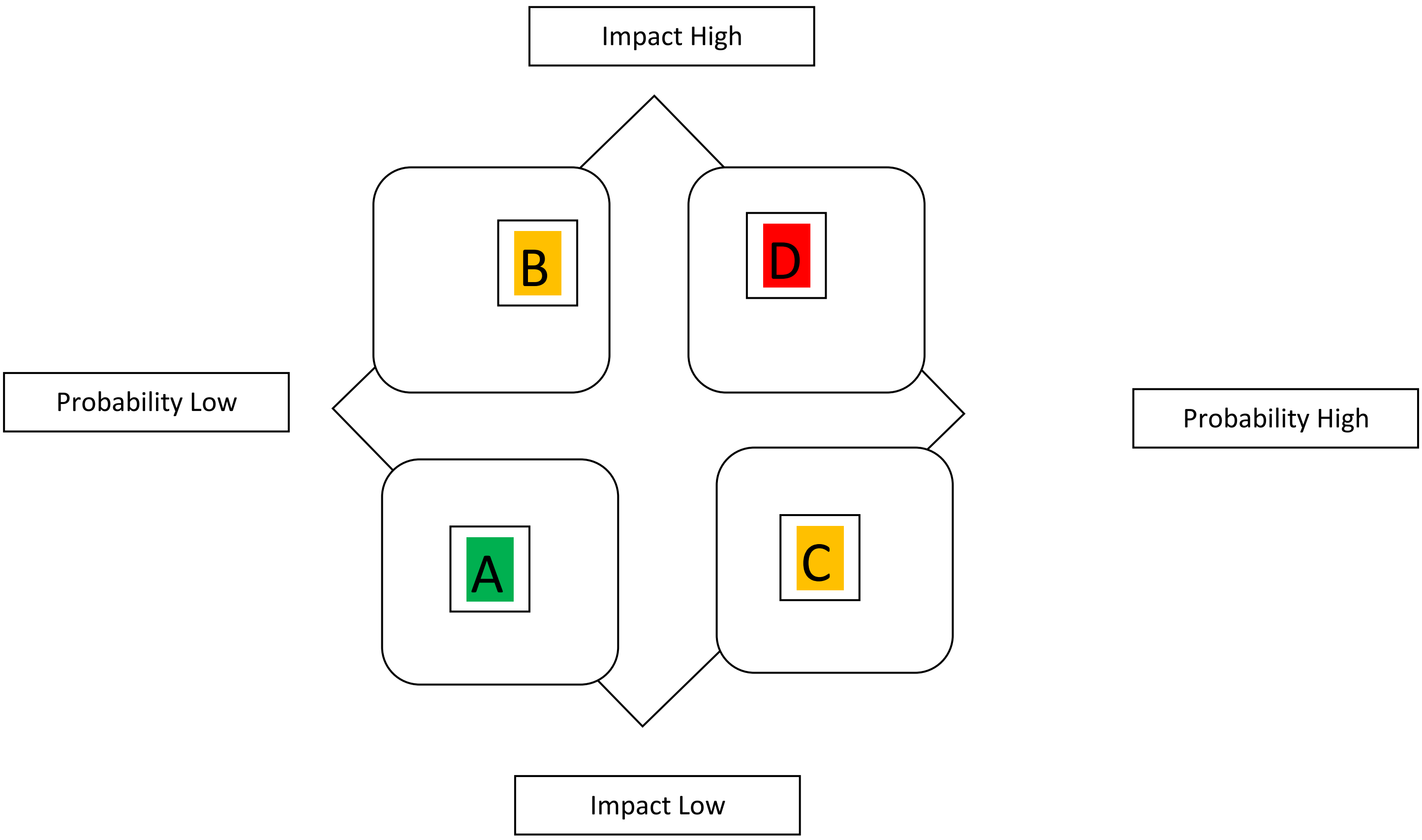
1) Factors that can be considered as being under our control,

2) Wider policy and socio-environmental factors that may not be under our control, but which we may be able to foresee and

3) Foreseeable risks, these on foreseeable risks may include; political upheavals, changes in world commodity prices or even natural disasters.

So what is the purpose you may ask of generating an associated risk from our assumptions, how does that help us with our program planning? Identifying associated risks is that once we have identified them, we have the opportunity of taking action to avoid or mitigate them.

Risk Matrices-To help us consider how we might manage risk, we are going to look at a risk matrix



Risks that fall into this category will have a low impact on our project and the probability of the materializing is also low. Risks that fall into this area are probably not of much concern to us. They're not likely to happen and even if they do, the impact they will have on our project is relatively small.

Risks of a low probability of occurring but will have a High impact on our project.

Risks of a high probability of occurring but will have a low impact on our project. These risks do not pose a particularly dangerous threat to our program, as long as we're aware of them and are able to manage them

Contains what we refer to as killer risks. Risk that fall into this category have both a high probability of occurring and a high potential impact on our project. risk that falls into this category occurs then it might literally kill our project.

9) There are four elements that are important to making any monitoring system effective.

Ownership- is important to assure that time and resources are invested in our system, in fact it's where the demand for the data from our system is generated. It should come from those at every level who use the system.

Management- It's important to know who, how and where our system will be managed, both to avoid overlap and duplication of data, and to ensure that data is collected in a timely manner and fed in to important decision-making processes.

Maintenance- monitoring system needs maintenance if it's to continue to work over a number of years and avoid decay and collapse. We need to ensure that information flows not only vertically, from field-staff to managers and back again, but horizontally as well.

Credibility- If a system is to produce information that's credible then it should report all data both good and bad. Data that's been tainted through political or other interests is unlikely to be trusted or used. To be credible the data produced by our system must additionally be valid, reliable, and precise. Data that's considered to be valid, reliable and precise is likely to be of high quality and will give us confidence to use it to make important decisions regarding the progress of our project.

Benefits of Results Frameworks-

- Forms the basis of our monitoring system
- A convenient framework for project management
- A effective communication tool
- A basis for measuring results
- Enhance accountability
- Encourages lesson learning

Limitation-

- Are limited by the way they model reality.
- By nature, are more focused on results than on learning.
- Can be regarded as inflexible
- Have problems with attribution at impact level
- May lead to blind spots around unintended.

10) Difference between Evaluation and Monitoring-

Evaluation- Evaluations, the E in M&E are complementary to the concept of monitoring. Technically, evaluations can be defined as: an assessment of a planned ongoing or completed intervention to determine its relevance, efficiency effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Definition from the World Bank that describes evaluation as: an assessment of planned, ongoing or completed intervention to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The intent is to incorporate lessons learned into decision-making processes.

Monitoring, which is essentially looking at the efficiency of our project, tends to focus on the first three stages of the results chain. That is inputs, activities and outputs. Monitoring helps us to determine whether or not our project is progressing in a timely manner in accordance with our work plan and budget.

Evaluation on the other hand focuses on the effectiveness of our program, that is, how well it is meeting our expectations to bring about meaningful change. Evaluations tend to measure the effectiveness of our strategy. It might be helpful at this stage to formally define what we mean by evaluation.

Key Findings-

I looked at the rationale behind using results to define what we want to achieve within a project or program. We've also looked at the importance of results statements in terms of defining the change that we want to see. We've explored the nature and logic behind the results chain, where inputs are mobilized to support activities, which in turn produce tangible outputs. Outputs remember lead in turn to longer-term outcomes which in time combine to help us achieve a long-term impact or goal. The defining and regular measurement of performance indicators is the means by which we measure progress at each level of our results chain. And the setting of baselines and targets allows us to both assess and manage performance. This is the heart of our monitoring system. All the elements of our results chain in place, essential foundation of monitoring system. Results chain moves from inputs through to activities. Activities deliver outputs. Outputs in turn deliver outcomes, which after a period of time, will mature into impact.