

The introduction of effect orientation into Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems - A Compilation

This paper is not an official Misereor document! It was elaborated by some members of staff as a basis for an exchange with partner organisations on questions of effect orientation in project management.

Key Questions, helping to formulate (a/n)...	
...Goal/Impact (or: Development goal)	Which comprehensive changes is the project designed to help bring about? ² (What is the desired situation for the region/ its population in 5-10 years, if the development initiated continues positively? To which bigger change/development in the project environment shall the project contribute to?)
...Project Objective(s)/Outcome	What changes is the project intended to bring about among the target group by the end of the project funding period? (What is the desired situation (described as a specific change) you want to see on the target group/beneficiary level at the end of the project period? What will the target group be doing (differently) at the end of the project period? How shall framework conditions have been changed at the end of the project period?)
....Intermediate Objective(s)*/Use of Outputs	How does the target group adapt or implement the knowledge gained from the project activities/trainings...)? What will the target group be doing when using your services and products (i.e. putting workshop knowledge into practice, downloading documents from your website, etc.)?
Planned outputs	Which services/products (i.e. workshops, reports, documentations) need to be provided for the target group so that intermediate objectives and project objectives are achievable?
Planned measures / activities	What do you have to do in order to provide services and products to the target group (i.e. design a workshop manual, invite relevant stakeholder to a dialogue meeting, training of trainers, etc.)?

2. PM&E Methods

Misereor does not require or “prescribe” specific methods in the field of PME. It is important for Misereor that the partner organizations develop an adequate system to plan for and assess the effects of their own work in order to **learn from structured and systematic observation and documentation of effects** as well as other influencing factors in the project’s environment. Some partners may prefer to work with a Logframe-based approach; others are used to alternative methods of assessing effects (examples: see box below). A good alternative may even be to combine alternative methods and Logframe-based approaches that make it easy to communicate with partners / donors. What is key to any approach from Misereor’s point of view is the participation of the target group and (if helpful) the (ultimate) beneficiaries.



Example: In a project which intends to improve the access to psychosocial counseling, the *target group* might be social workers who receive training in trauma counseling. Yet, the *beneficiaries* will be all people in a given area who are in need of trauma counseling and will ultimately benefit from the project’s intervention.

Another example shows that target group and beneficiaries can be the same group of people: In a rural development project which intends to improve food security, the target group might be some groups of farmers, who receive training on seed storage. In the end those same groups are the beneficiaries as their access to seeds/food will be assured.

In sum, each partner organisation of Misereor should develop a system that fits its own approaches and needs. This also means that it is helpful to build upon already existing

² Guideline for the Submission of Funding Requests

systems and set up a system which (ideally) complies with all donor-requirements (in the case of co-financed projects).

Misereor's understanding of and requirements related to effects-oriented PME in practice

According to each stage of **Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation** of a project, the following questions will be treated below:

1. What are crucial aspects for each of the different stages (PM&E)?
2. What methodological questions have to be taken into account?
3. What does Misereor precisely need/require from its partners relating to effect-orientation?

Planning

1. Crucial aspects:

A project needs a detailed **planning process with the target group/beneficiaries**³.

This planning process enables a project to base their work on the genuine **needs of the target group**. Furthermore on the level of the partner organisations planning processes help to have **commonly shared goals, project objectives and strategies** for the funding phase. This helps to carry out activities and to deliver outputs consistently by all staff members.

Usually, a **project period** financed by Misereor encompasses up to **three years**, but one funding period can be **part of a longer change process** that a partner organisation has planned to initiate. In this case, the partner organisation should make clear what the project objectives of the upcoming/proposed project phase are and in how far these serve as a necessary intermediate step in order to reach the long-term objectives.



Example: In a project area violence connected to traditional cattle raids has been a major and increasing problem over the past years. This has become especially problematic because of the latest use of automatic weapons during these raids. Now a project intends the restoration of traditional/alternative ways of conflict resolution between the raiders and those who have been robbed, instead of using automatic weapons. This could be the endpoint/objective of a long-term change process, which however needs the rival groups to be willing to meet and dialogue first. Thus, the latter is a good example for a project objective of a first funding phase, being an intermediate step in the long-term change process.

For the upcoming project phase, it is important to check that the planned **project objectives are attainable in the scheduled time frame (3years)**!

2. Methodology:

As for the general PME-system/approach, Misereor does not require a specific methodology for project planning. The **participation of the target group and/or beneficiaries** is nevertheless indispensable: Project objective(s) as well as the respective indicators should be formulated by the target group/beneficiaries themselves or at least in close agreement with them. These objectives have to be translated into more **operational project management tools** by the partner organisation for its own work (*See Appendix A: PME matrix as an example for an operative project planning tool*).

³ It might be helpful to even include further stakeholders, meaning those people whose views and interests might be interesting to hear and to take into account.

Possible methods/approaches to plan a project⁴:

Logframe

Outcome Mapping

Participative Impact Monitoring (PIM) – Booklet 1-4

NGO Ideas “Impact Toolbox” (PWR, SAGE, PAG, PRIAR)

NGO Ideas “PME Manual”

Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP)



3. Misereor requirements:

Misereor needs a **project funding request** from the partner organisation **according to the Misereor guidelines** (See *Guideline for the Submission of Funding Requests*⁵) that summarises the results of the planning process with the target group/beneficiaries on the one hand and the operative planning of the project that has been done by the partner organisation (resources, activities) on the other hand. The formulation of **project objectives with indicators** is essential for Misereor and will be legally binding parts of the project contract. The project objective should describe the intended changes in/on in the life/behaviour of the target group (See table above). The indicators have to measure this project objective. It is also very helpful to be able to follow the logic of your planning; i.e. understanding why these project objectives have been chosen by referring to the needs assessed with your target group and understanding the logical linkages you see between the activities and the project activities (→ Why is it that you think activity A - together with activity B,C or D - helps to achieve Project Objective Z?)



Indicators are not equivalent to activities or outputs of the project! (See appendix 2 about indicators).

Monitoring

1. Crucial aspects:

Monitoring has to be part of the regular project management and should be done jointly by the **partner organisation and the target group/beneficiaries**.

For the **partner organisation itself** it has to **focus on all levels of the planning/implementation logic** (see chart above). Apart from monitoring the implementation of activities and the delivery of outputs it is supposed to help matching up observed changes (=intended outcomes) with causal factors (i.e. project activities). The conclusions drawn from this observation and analysis are supposed to help **steering the project's own work and adjust project activities**. This needs a **reflection and learning process** including the relevant actors of the organisation and the target group/beneficiaries. The results of the monitoring and subsequent reflection process have to be **documented**. This documentation can also be used for Misereor reports in order to describe the progress towards the project objective.

2. Methodology:

Assessing whether a project is going in the planned direction has to be made sure by formulating **and checking indicators**. **On the level of the project objective, indicators are obligatory for the project contract!** When partner organisations formulate indicators including quantitative targets (i.e. often percentages) it is indispensable to assign the

⁴ Information on these methods can easily be found on the internet or requested at evaluation@misereor.de

⁵ This guideline can be downloaded from our international website:

www.misereor.org/Cooperation&Service/Documents

baseline values for the set targets as point of reference in the annual reports. (See information document “Does Misereor require a baseline study”)⁶.



Indicator-based monitoring helps to assess whether an intended effect really occurred. However, it does not give any information on unplanned and unintended effects / changes of a project.

There are other –more flexible, creative and sometimes more participatory– possibilities to measure progress towards intended but also unintended effects:

Methods and Tools to measure progress towards change⁷
Most Significant Change (a systematic type of storytelling)
PRA⁸-Tools, like “Resource Cards”, “Social Mapping”
NGO Ideas “Tiny Tools”, like “Influence Matrix”
Outcome Mapping



A good alternative might even be to combine open, participative methods used with the target groups with the “classical” indicator-based monitoring.

3. Misereor requirements:

Misereor needs a **financial report** based on the project activities **every 6 months** and a **narrative report based on the project outcomes and respective indicators put down in the project contract once a year** according to the structure of its **reporting guidelines** (See *Guidelines for Narrative and Financial Reporting*)⁹. In case that the partner organisation’s monitoring is not based on classical indicators it should nevertheless be possible to give information on the indicators formulated in the project contract.¹⁰

Changes on the **level of impact** do not need to be monitored within the scope of the regular project monitoring. This level is usually not in the sphere of influence of the project but rather depends on multiple causal factors. The assessment of this level is often subject to evaluations.

Evaluation

1. Crucial aspects:

An evaluation can be more encompassing than the regular monitoring, which is usually carried out semi-annually or at content-wise appropriate points in time. In addition to the question “are we doing things right?” it can help to look at the question “are we doing the right thing?” or “are we making a difference”. This means, it can assess **broader questions of outcomes and impacts** (for example also unplanned or even unplanned negative impacts a project may develop). It does not only concentrate on the planned part of the project, but tries to find out more about the context and complexity.

2. Methodology:

There is no standard methodology for an evaluation. An external evaluation should be prepared by an **external consultant** based on **Terms of Reference** that the partner organisation elaborates (in the case of external evaluations organised together with Misereor, the Terms are jointly written by the partner and Misereor). The approach should be

⁶ This document can be downloaded from our international website:

www.misereor.org/Cooperation&Service/Documents

⁷ Information on these methods and tools can easily be found on the internet or requested at evaluation@misereor.de

⁸ PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal

⁹ Please find out about specific reporting in consultation with your country desk officer.

¹⁰ In this case the issue should be discussed in detail with your country desk officer.

more open and comprehensive than that of the project monitoring and be able to reveal **information about unplanned, unintended and even negative effects**, beside the information about the project outcome / impact (*See Guide for partner organisations for commissioning external evaluations¹¹*).

3. Misereor requirements:

Misereor requires an external evaluation for **all KZE projects** (Government funded = Z or ZG in project-no.) as well as **financially extensive Misereor projects** (> EUR 100,000) which have received approval after 1 January 2010 if one of the following **criteria** is applicable:

- The **funding period is five years** or more.
- Funding of the (essentially unchanged) project is being continued under the **third successive grant approval**.
- The grant approval provides for **funding in excess of EUR 500,000**.
- The project has been designated as of **special interest or particular significance**.

¹¹ See above

Appendix

A. Monitoring Matrix

Logframe Element	Indicators (including targets)	Means of Verification				Use of Information	
		Data Source ¹²	Frequency & Cost of Collection	Responsibility for Collection	Collection Method	Reporting to	Presentation
Impact							
Outcome							
Outputs							
Activities							
Inputs							

N.B. Indicators are only obligatory for the project contract on the level of the “Project Objective/Outcome”, whereas on the level of “Inputs”, “Activities” and “Outputs” indicators are still helpful for your internal project management and in some cases for the 6-monthly financial reports. On the level of “Impact” indicators might as well be helpful (especially in the view of carrying out evaluations), but are not manageable in the process of the regular monitoring.

¹² As data source we understand documents, interviews, reports and other sources providing information that makes it possible to check the indicators.

1. Definition

'An indicator is a pointer. It can be a measurement, a **number, an observable fact, an opinion or a perception** that points at a specific condition or situation, and measures changes in that condition or situation over time. ¹³

When formulating an indicator, asking the following question might help: How do we (the project team) know that the intended effects were brought about? How can we prove/measure/observe the realization of the intended effects?



It is not all about countable objects! Capturing individual, subjective perceptions, attitudes, judgments are as important! (→*How to make increased self-esteem countable? How to measure happiness?*)

There are two types of indicators – **Quantitative and qualitative indicators**. The difference shall be depicted by presenting the following example:

Project Objective

Women in the region XY participate more actively in the decision-making processes of the ten development councils.

Quantitative indicators

- try to capture more tangible, mostly countable things.
Ex: 50 % of the seats in each development council in village „XY“ are taken by women by the end of the funding period.

Qualitative indicators

- try to capture opinions, attitudes, personal judgements.
Ex: Those women in the development councils state that at least one development activity implemented per year can be traced back to proposals made or initiatives launched by women.

The presented qualitative indicator can be (further) “quantified”, i.e. made countable by changing the indicator as follows:

- In at least 80 % of the development councils women state that at least one development activity implemented per year can be traced back to proposals made or initiatives launched by women.

Further examples for quantitative and qualitative indicators:

Quantitative indicator:

60% of the 10.000 participants in a training project found work

Qualitative indicator:

40% of 8.000 participants in a training project say they found better work due to the training

¹³ CIDA (1997): A Guide to Gender-Sensitive Indicators. Hull: CIDA.

2. How to formulate indicators

- Indicators describe the project objective(s) in operationally measurable terms.
- An indicator only makes sense in relation to a project objective.
- Indicators are not the project objective(s) (effects) themselves, but provide reliable information on their achievements. (*Example: Marks / grades to measure the performance of pupils*)
- Usually we need a set of indicators for one project objective in order to fully describe it.
- Indicators should not repeat the activities or outputs, but the observable and measureable consequences resulting from the activities.

Steps to formulate an indicator:

1. Define the indicator = “what”

Increase of the production of traditional rice varieties (quality) of peasant farmers by 50% (quantity)

2. Define “who”

10.000 peasant farmers (quantity); (those having land property < 1 hectare; at least 30% women (quality))

3. Define the time = “when”

Between January 2013 and December 2016

4. Define the region (“where”)

Province xy / village abc

Complete Indicator

By the end of 2016 10.000 peasant farmers (owing land < 1 hectare; at least 30% women) in the region XY have increased the production of traditional rice varieties by 50 % (Baseline value: 100kg per harvest in January 2013)



Every indicator has to give information about “who” (quality and quantity), “what” (quality and quantity), “when”, “where”.



Quantifications of “what” (=targets, i.e. How much increase in crop yield?) in indicators often need **baseline values** – as reference points helping to assess whether the achieved change is high compared to the initial situation at the start of the project. (*See information document “Does Misereor require a baseline study”¹⁴.*)

¹⁴ This document can be downloaded from our international website:
www.misereor.org\Cooperation&Service\Documents



Assess the usefulness of an indicator! Before reading the two remarks at the bottom of the box, try to find out whether you think this indicator is useful or not!

Project Objective: Education in elementary schools in district “ABC” has improved.

Indicator: By the end of 2013 at least 50 % of the elementary school pupils in district „ABC“ have passed their final exam.

Remarks!

- An exam might give information on some aspects of education: “Did the students learn something?” But the quality of education might be influenced by other factors (teacher behaviour, methods and material used, etc.) which should be assessed as well.
- It is important to know how many primary school pupils are enrolled and how many of them passed the final exam in the last exam term! Otherwise „50 %“ has no meaning!

3. Indicators and Project Management

Indicators are usually defined during the planning phase, thus before handing in funding requests. They are important reference points for monitoring activities as well as for reporting. However, since indicators are tools to manage a project they might have to be revised and specified during implementation.



- Indicators are a management tool, not an end in itself!
- Indicators are also subject to learning and could thus be revised!
- However, Misereor has to be informed if any amendments with regard to project objectives or indicators of the project contract occur.