



Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Manual*

For further information, please contact:
Raffat Zerín, GODAN
raffat.zerin@godan.info

*This manual is prepared for the eDIAL programme. It should be read in conjunction with the eDIAL initiative programme documents.

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1. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning concepts and considerations

Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) MEL manual sets out the details and provides guidance on the monitoring system to establish the progress in achieving results.

A fully functioning MEL system provides a continuous flow of information that is useful, both internally and externally, to measure the progress being made towards the achievement of expected results or desired outcomes and knowledge management for future programming and information sharing.

Internally, within the GODAN Secretariat, M&E information is a crucial management tool towards achieving results and meeting specific targets. Information on progress, problems and performance are all central to programmatic success. Information is also important for organizational learning and future programming, and to build stronger external relations, as well as to identifying other worthwhile activities to allocate resources.

M&E provides critical information and empowers policymakers to make better, more informed decisions. However, instituting M&E systems that highlight outcomes—both successes and failures—and that provide greater transparency and accountability may be challenging.

The process committed to by GODAN in implementing the eDIAL initiative is described below:

1.1 Objectives of MEL system

- To enable the Secretariat to demonstrate organizational effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, transparency, and learning
- To identify key indicators, form of collection and analysis stages
- To track the progress of activities, enhance performance and impact, and identify areas where corrective action is required with respect to activities and deliverables.
- To improve delivery and ensure that the activities directly lead to the achievement of deliverables/outputs associated with the outcomes of an expected result.
- To facilitate dialogue and discussions at meetings with partner organizations and donors, as well as other stakeholders.

1.2 Terminologies

The terminologies adhered to in this manual are based on how GODAN describes its results in terms of; inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts, when designing its eDIAL initiative. It refers to specific wording used in the logframe, proposal and other programme documents, which is agreed by DFID.

Acceptability

Issues from the policy agenda are framed in a more positive light (e.g. due to compelling research). Key actors increasingly believe their peers support the agenda.

Accountability

The obligation to demonstrate to stakeholders to what extent results have been achieved according to established plans.

Activity

An action, or a group of actions, implemented by GODAN to generate products or services. The implementation of one or more activity leads to the production of a deliverable/output. Activities are based on the contributions of the partners (both GODAN network partners and partners outside the network but implementing a specific activity for GODAN), associations with common understanding, governments in target areas and the GODAN Secretariat.

Assumptions

This describes risks that need to be avoided, if possible, by restating them as positive conditions that need to hold.

Attitudes

Target audiences' attitudes improve towards the policy agenda. Network partners increasingly believe their action will lead to change (increased self-efficacy).

Awareness

Awareness refers to improve concern, spread knowledge and inform the targeted audience to create understanding and a positive image on open data.

Appropriateness

The extent to which an intervention is tailored to local needs and context, and complements other interventions from other actors. It includes how well the intervention GODAN is involved in takes into account the economic, social, political and environmental context, therefore contributing to ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness.

Baseline

A point of reference prior to an intervention against which progress can later be measured and compared.

Capacity Development

GODAN helps partners build an ability to understand and use data which aims to make better, more productive and sustainable decisions. GODAN works with partners who generate, collect and analyse data in order to bring change in agriculture and nutrition for smallholder farmers

Champions

High profile actors speak in favour of key issues (e.g. acceptability, usability, accessibility, interoperability) in open data for the first time, or more frequently than before. Champions are advocates of open data and have a significant influence in their sector and will consider open data to be an integral part of agriculture practice and management. They are neither GODAN consultants or employees, but rather volunteers based in their own institutions or companies.

Efficiency

Efficiency refers to how well GODAN (or our partners) are converting inputs into outputs

Economy

Economy is about utilisation of resources of the appropriate quality at the right price.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness is about how well are the outputs produced by an intervention having the intended effect

Engagement

Key actors are willing to meet GODAN partners for the first time, or more frequently than before. Agreements are reached for further consultation, which helps achieve programmatic results.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic process that identifies, reflects upon and judges the worth of the effects of an ongoing or completed intervention. The aim is to determine its relevance and fulfilment of objectives, efficiency and effectiveness, impact and sustainability

Expected Results

An expected result is a top-level statement that predicts a high-level outcome (change in external or societal conditions) to be achieved in the long term by the partners, associations with common understanding, governments in target areas and GODAN Secretariat.

Feasibility

Policy makers and public servants increasingly believe the policy ask is technically feasible.

Impact

The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Indicator

Indicators are performance measurements, which tell us what will be measured not what is to be achieved.

A good indicator is:

- **Specific**, in terms of quantity, quality and time (QQT).
- **Measurable** objectively, verifiable at acceptable cost.
- **Available** from existing sources or with reasonable extra effort.
- **Relevant** to project objectives and sensitive to change.
- **Timely**, to ensure usefulness to managers.

Inputs

Inputs are the financial, human, and material resources from the partners, associations with common understanding, governments in target areas and GODAN Secretariat needed to carry out activities.

Knowledge

This relates to increased awareness, understanding, or information that has been obtained through programme activities, with emphasis on the knowledge products and expert support the programme delivers. GODAN applies a further definition – how scientific or legal knowledge improves the quality of life for smallholder farmers.

Level of Influence

Policy makers, stakeholders or GODAN champions influence on policy and capacity development issues associated to open data for agriculture and nutrition.

Logical framework (logframe)

A table (matrix) summarising a programme's operational design, including: the logical sequence of objectives to achieve the programme's intended results (outputs, outcomes and impact), the indicators and means of verification to measure these objectives, and any key assumptions.

Means of Verification

The sources of data (including external and internal) required for indicators to measure changes.

Milestone

Description of a deliverable marking a significant change or achievement at a time period, which is considered key to the success of the eDIAL initiative, and its achievement of intended outcomes.

Outcome

Outcomes refer to the results that lead to the achievement of the impact or goal, most commonly in terms of the knowledge through advocacy or linkages of different stakeholders, and that has greater external influence.

Output

A lower level expected result, that is arrived through an accumulation of activities, i.e., is a tangible outcome. Deliverables contribute to the achievement of a key outcome or programme area.

Partnerships

Partnerships and collaboration are strategic alliances with individuals or different kinds of organisations that are intended to achieve greater impact on open data for agriculture and nutrition.

Policy Influence and Advocacy

Policy influence and advocacy can encompass a wide range of activities. This is defined as an intervention intended to catalyse, stimulate or otherwise seed some form of change through different forms of persuasion.

Policy influence interventions can vary but share similar strands. The stages of policy influence can be described as follows:

- Mapping and landscaping
- Agreement to collaborate
- Public statement by governments or businesses
- Create or amend laws
- Implementation of policies through laws or regulations
- Creation of portal for data release
- Innovation or services that support the end users

The approaches to advocacy, in most cases, can be described as follows:

- Changing policy and/or changing behaviour: some advocacy is aimed at changing policy and other advocacy is focused on changing the behaviour of the general public (e.g. understanding and accepting the value of open data for agriculture).
- Direct and/or indirect: advocacy aimed at changing decision makers' beliefs, opinions, behaviours and policies, either directly or indirectly via other actors who might have influence on decision makers
- Inside track and/or outside track: advocacy from within by working with decision-makers or from outside by confronting, exposing or challenging decision-makers.
- Formal and/or informal: advocacy through formal/official channels such as policy reforms, but sometimes advocacy finds alternative ways through informal routes such as relationship-building

Resources

New public or private entities contribute funds or other resources to the agenda.

Risks

Potential negative threat which leads to uncertainty of outcome and needs to be mitigated.

Saliency

Target audiences increasingly believe the agenda is important (i.e. a priority). New language is being adopted by the media and/or policy makers on the issue.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals or organisations which have an interest in GODAN's mission and the programme. It includes different governments as donors and target countries, like-minded non-profit and profit-making organisations, individuals, academia, research organisations, end users of the programme and development partners.

Sustainability Indicators

Sustainability indicators represent the persistence of benefits over time, particularly after any funding ends.

Visibility

Increased visibility of campaign messages on open data in public debates or in the media (including research citations). Quantity or quality of media coverage on open data increases and/or improves (e.g. volume of media citations or website hits), relating to the mission of the eDIAL initiative.

Will

Willingness of elected representatives or senior officials to support a policy proposal increases. Willingness of policymakers to support a policy proposal increases.

1.3 Integrating Value for Money (VfM)

The activities of the programme are planned and implemented based on meeting the principles of the DFID Value for Money framework. The process involves continual scrutiny of the assumptions, their result on the impacts and the mitigation of risks required to manage a set of activities that will deliver change.

The VfM guidance recognises that it is difficult to monetise outputs in all aspects of this type of programme, particularly at the business case stage.

2. Purpose and scope of the M&E system

It serves as a reference point for the M&E system, guiding key decisions such as informational needs, methodological approaches, capacity building and allocation of resources. The following outlines key considerations when determining an M&E system's purpose and scope.

2.1 Review the programme's operational design (logframe)

The logframe is not a static document, but should be reassessed and revised according to the realities and changing circumstances during implementation of the programme. However, changes should only be made after careful consideration and consultation with key stakeholders and in compliance with any donor requirements.

An important consideration in the logframe is the use of industry-recognized, standard indicators – to ensure they are measured reliably and consistently, with credibility and legitimacy across the variety of stakeholders linked to the programme activities. These are comparable over time and rely on measurement methods that are developed and accepted. However, there are limitations to how much indicators can be standardized, and they can be inflexible and unrepresentative of the local context. Also, consideration should be given to the programme's capacity (financial or human) to measure certain standard indicators according to international methods and best practices.

2.2 Identify key stakeholder informational needs and expectations

It is essential to have a clear understanding of the priorities and information needs of people interested in or affected by the programme. This includes stakeholder motivations, experience and commitment, as well as the political and other constraints under which various stakeholders operate. It is especially important that local knowledge is sought when planning M&E functions to ensure that they are relevant to and feasible in the local context, and that M&E information is credible, accepted and more likely to be supported.

For GODAN, a stakeholder can be one or multiple individuals or groups or governments. The number of GODAN stakeholders grows as the programme reaches into new channels and audiences interested in learning and advocating for open data initiatives. The levels of engagement with the stakeholders is based on their level of influence, availability and willingness to advocate. Mapping of the stakeholder is done according to the following two levels:

- Level of interest
- Level of influence

By influence, it means those stakeholders that have power in setting and achieving programme goals. On the other hand, interest means those stakeholders that are affected by programme outcomes, but have no power of influence.

Example of Stakeholders

Private Sector:

- Corporations and Businesses
- Businesses Associations
- Private Agriculture extension services
- Individual Business Leaders and entrepreneurs
- Financial Institutions
- Food Corporations
- Agriculture Cooperatives

Public Sector:

- Ministers and advisors
- Elected representatives
- Local Governments/Councils
- International Bodies

Civil Society:

- Public or Private Universities
- Media organizations and journalists
- National NGOs
- International NGOs

2.3 Scope of M&E function

The scope of the M&E system refers to its scale and complexity. It can be highly complex with a variety of activities and requiring considerable expertise and resources, or it can be relatively simple, relying on internal resources and capacities.

For the eDIAL initiative, GODAN's M&E is relatively simple based on the type of output and outcomes it seeks to achieve. The other important considerations for the scope of GODAN's M&E system includes - *geographic scale, time frame, maturity of the organisation, availability of human resources and budget and dependency on stakeholders.*

Examples of key M&E activities are:

- Milestone monitoring
- Context monitoring
- Regular operations update meetings
- Quarterly reviews
- Annual reviews

3. Plan for data collection and analysis

GODAN supports reliable data collection and management for proper analysis and utilisation as information.

3.1 Develop an M&E plan

An M&E plan is an internal document for the team that builds upon a programme's logframe to detail key M&E requirements for each indicator and assumption. It summarizes key indicator (measurement) information, detailed definition of the, data, its sources, the methods and timing of its collection, the people responsible and the intended audience and use of the data.

Ideally, the M&E plan should be completed during the planning stage of a programme (before implementation). This allows the programme team to cross-check the logframe and ensure that the indicators and scope of work they represent in both programme implementation and data collection, analysis and reporting are realistic to field realities and team capacities.

At GODAN, this was developed at a later stage and is a continuous evolving document because of the evolving nature and the knowledge of the programme and context provided by the in the field and partners. Their involvement also contributes to data quality because it reinforces their understanding of what data they are to collect and how it will be collected.

3.2 Assess the availability of primary, secondary and tertiary data

The operational utility of agricultural statistics is strongly related to their reliability and time of collection that is, being collected at the appropriate time in the agricultural calendar. Furthermore, the availability of the results at the appropriate time to inform subsequent decisions is paramount.

For primary data, GODAN depends on its team members, paid subscriptions and partners with who it has signed agreements to conduct such services.

Secondary data refers to data that is not directly collected by and for the programme, but which can nevertheless meet programme informational needs. Secondary data is important to consider because it can save considerable time and expense. It can also be used to help triangulate data sources and verify primary data and analysis collected directly as part of the programme. In case of secondary data, GODAN relies on international institutions that release data that are benchmarked and robustly measured. Although not always collected on an annual basis, many of these publications regularly release national level data on a broad range of indicators - ranging from crop yields, agricultural prices and inputs, and more. Because the data is usually captured at the national level, it will not be able to measure impact as a direct result of a sub-national open data policy for agriculture and nutrition.

Tertiary data refers to sources of information based on a collection of primary and secondary sources. Tertiary data are important because they often extract the essential meaning or most important aspects of large amounts of information into a convenient format. For GODAN this is important because it allows to see national level changes and impact and relate to see the effect of open data in a large sphere.

Depending on the indicators, GODAN Secretariat could utilise a combination of those three data source types. GODAN has established a list of reputable sources to support its logframe indicators. The secondary and tertiary data sources list was established based on geography exposure, availability of historical data, data variables, reputation and collection rigour.

Overview of all programme indicators, as outlined in the logframe (numbers align to the logframe)

Impact indicators

- 1.1 Measurable improvements in productivity (yields) and incomes (revenue) in the agricultural sector
Measurement Methodology: GODAN dependency on Government partners and International secondary sources to collect and verify increases in Yield/Income in 24 target countries using open data
- 1.2 Indicative measure of resilient agricultural practices, food security, and climate adaptation strategies in rural communities
Measurement Methodology: GODAN dependency on Government partners that comply with NAPA where the information could be available

Outcome indicators

- 1.0 Number of regional open data initiatives in Africa and Asia
Measurement Methodology: GODAN dependency on Government partners to assess regional open data initiatives
Data Dependency: GODAN is dependent on others (Secondary data and Country Partners)
- 2.1 Level of Investment mobilized for new business initiatives following support by GODAN
Measurement Methodology: GODAN dependency on Government partners to provide information on technical support to 22 investments that drive new business models/innovations that help smallholders in target countries
Data Dependency: GODAN is dependent on others (Secondary data and Country Partners)
- 2.2 Total number of smallholder farmers reached by business initiatives supported by GODAN
Measurement Methodology: GODAN dependency on Government partner to provide the number of small farmers using open data within business initiatives supported by GODAN
Data Dependency: GODAN is dependent on others (Secondary data and Country Partners)

Output indicators

- 1.1 African & Asian countries with improved open data public sector policies and regulations
Measurement Methodology: GODAN dependency on Government partners to assess improved public sector policies & regulations on open data in agriculture and nutrition
Data Dependency: GODAN is dependent on others (Secondary data and Country Partners)
- 1.2 Public sector, private sector and civil society organizations with improved open data policies
Measurement Methodology: GODAN dependency on Government partners, Civil society institutions and private sector institutions to provide status on number of open data source policy adoptions
Data Dependency: GODAN is dependent on others (Secondary data, Public sector, private sector and civil society)
- 2.1 Number of events where GODAN presents on Open Data initiatives
Measurement Methodology: GODAN will count the total number of events annually where it was asked to present and advocate on open data for agriculture and nutrition

Data Dependency: GODAN dependent on staff and partners to properly collect the data

3.2 Share of GODAN annual operating income sourced through non-traditional donor income

Measurement Methodology: GODAN will sum the total value received on a per project basis and then extract the total annual value and calculate the percentage relative to total funding

Data Dependency: GODAN dependent on core team to collate and calculate the data

4.2 Total Number of People reached with knowledge products

Measurement Methodology: GODAN will sum the total number of interactions (touches) through online analytics, event reports, papers and tools presented on traditional media

Data Dependency: GODAN dependent on staff availability and a well-established process to properly collect and calculate the data as well dependent on access to research institutions to complement GODAN findings.

3.3 Data quality control

It is important to identify procedures for checking and cleaning data, and how to treat missing data. In data management, unreliable data can result from poor typing of data, duplication of data entries, inconsistent data, and accidental deletion and loss of data.

For the collection of primary data GODAN is in an advantageous position because it can draw on a small network of individuals who are well placed to collect and record data on our activities. GODAN can maintain data quality control effectively and efficiently with this trusted group of individuals. (GODAN has only recently started this process and so far, has not encountered data quality issues).

In relation to collection of secondary and tertiary data we use data sets from reputable international organisation which are listed on the programme logframe and approved by DFID.

3.4 Use an indicator/progress tracking table

An indicator/progress tracking table is an extended version of the logframe and is an important data management tool for recording and monitoring indicator performance to inform programme implementation and management. This is updated quarterly and is presented as a part of the quarterly review. This is one of the programme documents.

3.5 Use of risk matrix

GODAN track any risks that threaten programme implementation. Such risks can include those identified and expressed as assumptions in the logframe, as well as any unexpected risks that may arise. This information is used in programme reports that explains the risks related to the activities and the effect on performance. GODAN developed a risk matrix prior to commencing the programme, which is reviewed and updated annually, or as required. This is one of the programme documents.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of converting collected data into usable information. Data analysis is conducted with the objective to assess performance against plans and targets, forming conclusions, anticipating problems and identifying solutions and best practices for reporting, decision-making and organisational learning.

3.7 Responsibility for data analysis

Roles and responsibilities for data analysis will depend on the type and timing of analysis. Analysis of data can be undertaken by those who collect the data, M&E staff, other programme staff and external consultants.

4. Information reporting and learning

4.1 Information reporting

GODAN Secretariat, as part of its reporting for the eDIAL initiative, is committed to presenting the findings through quarterly and annual reports to DFID. Among the programme documents, there is a delivery plan tracker which details the reporting timeline. The audience of these reports are GODAN's immediate team, donors and partner organisations. The primary purpose is typically for accountability, credibility, to solicit funds, celebrate accomplishments and highlight any challenges and how they are being addressed. The content is concise and focused on communication points specific to the targeted audience. The format of these reports is determined by the donor.

4.2 Learning

The overall purpose of the M&E system is to provide useful information on the progress, as well as the success or failure of programme activities, and policies throughout their respective cycles. These systems constitute a continuous management tool that decision-makers can use to improve performance and demonstrate accountability and transparency with respect to results. Therefore, information utilisation is essential. The key considerations for information distribution, decision-making and planning are as follows:

- Programme management – inform decisions to guide and improve future programming.
- Learning and knowledge-sharing – advance organisational learning and knowledge-sharing for future programming, both within and external to the programme's implementing organisation.
- Celebration and advocacy – highlight and promote accomplishments and achievements, building morale and contributing to resource mobilisation.