

Stop Guessing?

A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation For Community & Faith Based Organizations Working with Children Affected by HIV/AIDS

May 2004

A Product of the STRIVE Project Operations Research Unit



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*Stop Guessing: A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation
For Community and Faith Based Organizations
Working with
Children Affected by HIV/AIDS*

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CHAPTER 1- Introduction

Who Is This Manual For?

This manual has been prepared to assist programs working with children, especially orphans, vulnerable children, and other children affected by HIV/AIDS. It can be used as a resource by organizations ranging from international donors to grassroots neighborhood groups. It gives Monitoring and Evaluation and Operations Research guidelines for Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), implementing Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)/Children Affected by AIDS (CABA) programs. Within these organizations, the manual may be used by directors, program managers, field officers, implementing partners, etc. If you are just beginning to conduct M&E and OR, the manual can be used as a blueprint. If you already have these operations in place, the manual can be used as a tool for making adjustments and fine-tuning.

Why Do We Need This Manual?

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is unprecedented in the enormity of its impact on children, family structures, and communities. AIDS has claimed almost 20 million lives worldwide and an estimated 40 million people are currently living with the illness. In the wake of this humanitarian crisis, children, already one of the most vulnerable segments of society, have been forced to bear much of the brunt of the disease.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) estimates that by 2000, 13.1 million children under the age of fifteen had lost one or both parents to AIDS, just in sub-Saharan Africa. If current trends continue, the number of orphans in sub-Saharan Africa could reach 14.9 million by the year 2010.¹ As staggering as these numbers are, they pale in comparison to the looming global catastrophe that will result if HIV/AIDS continues its unchecked expansion into Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, India, Eastern Europe, and Russia. Many of the states most severely affected by the disease are already struggling to provide for the most basic needs of their citizens. The continued spread of HIV/AIDS and the attendant increase in orphanhood therefore represent a serious destabilizing domestic influence, as well as a severe threat to children's welfare and rights.

Due to the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on children, a special emphasis is being placed on how to mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS infection among children and to assist those children who are already affected by the disease. In light of the rapidly expanding numbers of vulnerable children, it is vital that AIDS service programs learn from their own interventions and similar

¹ Hunter, S and Williamson, J. (2000) *Children on the Brink: Executive Summary, Updated Estimates and Recommendations for Intervention*; USAID.

interventions being implemented by other organizations. This process of continuous learning and improvement is essential because of the constantly evolving nature of the crisis. In order to carry out this process effectively, an organization must be able to collect, analyze, and disseminate information quickly and clearly².

An examination of current HIV/AIDS programs indicates that while experiences are being shared, it is in an unsystematic manner. Information varies in both content and in method of generation, making it extremely difficult to compare programs and different interventions. Consequently, best practices are difficult to identify and evidence of project impact tends to be either weak or non-existent. The main source of this problem is the absence of a strong Monitoring and Evaluation system and the virtual non-existence of Operations Research. This manual was developed as a response to this problem and to assist organizations in establishing their own M&E and OR structures.

Objectives of the Manual

This manual is not a textbook on Operations Research and Monitoring and Evaluation. Instead, its purpose is to share practical ideas and techniques that will help your organization to set up and manage effective M&E and OR methods and systems. The manual draws from both academic and field-based discourse on issues related to children. There is an urgent need to verify that the diverse interventions targeted at orphans and vulnerable children- be they Education Assistance, Economic Strengthening, Psychosocial Support, Child Advocacy, etc.- are efficient, effective, and worth scaling up or replicating. The only way to make these determinations is by carrying out Monitoring and Evaluation and Operations Research. The manual therefore offers systematic instructions for the establishment and enactment of effective M&E and OR systems.

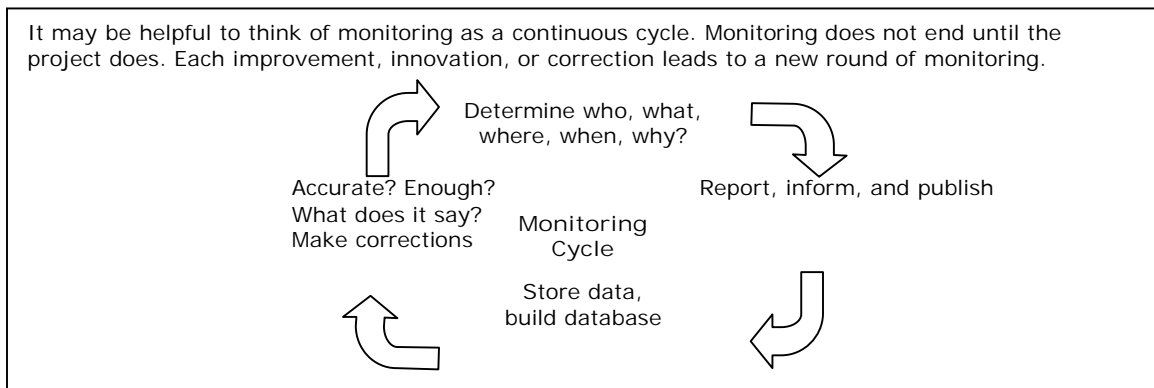
- Chapter 1 begins by offering an explanation of the manual's origins, objectives, intended audience, and defines the terms M&E and OR.
- Chapter 2 goes on to explain the relationship between M&E and OR and the reasons for carrying them out.
- Chapter 3 lays out how to incorporate M&E and OR considerations into the design of goals, objectives, and indicators.
- Chapter 4 explains how to go about establishing a Monitoring Plan.
- Chapter 5 deals with monitoring and measuring performance for specific interventions targeted at children.
- Chapter 6 discusses strategies and approaches as well as specific tools and instruments.
- Chapter 7 addresses those issues of programming that are unique to interventions aimed at children.

² Webb D. and Elliot L. (2000) *Learning to Live: Monitoring and Evaluating HIV/AIDS Programs for Young People*; Save the Children (UK); London

What is Monitoring and Evaluation?

Monitoring is a process that systematically and critically observes events related to your work with children, thereby enabling you to adapt activities to ever changing conditions. By utilizing a monitoring process, your program managers will be able to set performance indicators and targets for child interventions and then gather information regularly to check the project's progress. Based on the information gathered, your managers will be able to make informed decisions and take corrective action if there are problems. The process then begins anew as the manager collects information to gauge the effectiveness of the corrective action. Monitoring includes the following activities:

- Periodic record keeping (Write down which children were served, where, when, how many, in what ways, etc.)
- Reporting (Inform management of results, share findings with colleagues from other organizations, publish results, etc.)
- Storage of data (Create a formal record of the collected information)
- Analysis/Reviews (Is the recorded information accurate? Is there enough of it? What does it indicate? etc.)



Evaluation, on the other hand, is the assessment of a project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact on the target population and beneficiaries. Evaluation draws on data collected during the monitoring process and can be supplemented by additional data from surveys and studies. The following table highlights some of the key differences between monitoring and evaluation.

	Monitoring	Evaluation
Timing	Occurs frequently, is ongoing	Occurs periodically
Analysis	Mainly descriptive, recording inputs, outputs, and activities (How many children receive supplementary feeding, how much does each ration cost, what were monthly attendance levels, etc.?)	More analytical and examines processes (Did implementing school feeding successfully increase attendance levels?)

Specificity	Very specific and compares a particular plan and its results. Collects specific, individual data points	Does the same but also looks at processes. Takes account of the “big picture”
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So how does the difference between monitoring and evaluation manifest itself in the daily process of gathering and analyzing data related to your programs targeting children? Here are a few examples of what you might monitor and what you would then evaluate for different interventions targeted at children.

You monitor...	You evaluate...
1. How many children are graduating to the next grade level.	1. Whether your Education Assistance initiative is increasing retention rates.
2. A child’s height and weight.	2. Whether the child is growing at a normal rate.
3. The number of children in a ward exhibiting signs of malnutrition.	3. The effectiveness of your food security intervention.
4. The number of children attending school.	4. If your supplementary feeding program is increasing school attendance.

What is Operations Research?

In general terms, Operation Research takes scientific, systematic methods and applies them to decision making. It is a problem-solving tool and it focuses on the day-to-day operations of working with children. In practical terms, Operations Research is a continuous process with five basic steps:

1. Research question identification and explanation (What do we want to know? What is happening? Why is it happening? Who is being affected?)
2. Strategy selection (There are many potential approaches to the issue: which is the best?)
3. Strategy testing and evaluation (How well does our response address the issue? Should we continue implementing our response or try a new one?)
4. Information dissemination (How can we best share our successes and failures with others?)
5. Information utilization³ (How can we use the lessons learned to better select and design future initiatives?)

³ Fisher, A. and Forfeit, J. (2002) *Designing HIV/AIDS Intervention Studies- An Operations Research Handbook*; Population Council; New York

An example of a possible OR agenda: CRS Zimbabwe's STRIVE program has chosen to center its Operations Research agenda on four main areas of care and support for orphans and children. You may choose to focus your attention on other areas, but these four strategy objectives offer an example of how to outline a clear and comprehensive agenda for your OR department.

1. Impact of interventions (Are the interventions having the desired effect?)
2. Cost effectiveness of programs (Does the intervention's impact justify the expenditure of resources? Is there another way to achieve the same results with less money?)
3. Reproducibility of programs (Will it be possible to carry out similar interventions in different circumstances?)
4. Quality of care given to orphans and vulnerable children (Are we sacrificing high quality care in an effort to reach more beneficiaries? Are we not reaching enough beneficiaries because our standards are too demanding?)

Operations Research is about more than simply seeking practical solutions to the challenges faced by children. While OR does indeed seek such solutions, it also takes the essential next step of explaining *why* a particular way of doing things is working or not, and *how* to most effectively share these conclusions with other groups dealing with similar problems.

What do we know? What do we need to know?

The unfortunate reality is that *we simply do not know* very much about the impact of activities meant to assist children. While governments and NGOs have developed extensive programs to soften the impact of HIV/AIDS on children, little is known about how many children are being served and in what ways. In fact, one of the few things agreed upon by the twenty-two sub-Saharan countries participating in the November 2002 regional workshop on orphans and vulnerable children for Eastern and Southern African countries, held in Windhoek, Namibia was that there is a glaring lack of knowledge about:

- The numbers of beneficiaries reached
- The geographic coverage of programs
- The indicators needed to appropriately monitor progress and impact
- The outcome/impact of activities meant to assist children.

Therein lies the essential challenge to all programs targeting children affected by AIDS: to continue effectively serving vulnerable children while implementing structures to accurately and comprehensively record the impact of those interventions. As we will examine in the next chapter, without the implementation of effective M&E and OR strategies and structures, it is unlikely that AIDS oriented services will be able to succeed in the long term.

CHAPTER 2- M&E and OR: Why Bother? What is the Difference Between Them?

The upcoming section contains numerous references to “data.” Although data is not a particularly uncommon term, it has a very broad meaning within the context of M&E and OR which is worth clarifying.

What is Data?

Data is any information collected for a specific purpose. Data can be facts, figures, feelings, opinions, and observations that are able to tell whether the project is going according to plan. Let’s say you are designing a program to increase school attendance by distributing free textbooks to all of the children at school X (this is not necessarily a good idea). To design the project and monitor its progress later on, you are going to need to collect a lot of information about school A and its students. This information is data. You might want to collect data about how many student are attending school before and after the program, how many textbooks are distributed, how much each textbook costs, how much School X spends per pupil before and after the intervention, how students, teachers, and parents view your intervention, etc. Each individual unit represents one data point (327 students represent 327 data points) and all of the individual units of information together make up “the data.”

What Are the Sources of Data?

Sources of data, which are also known as means of verification, refer to where you would look for information needed to provide indicators. Examples of sources of data include weekly or monthly reports and household surveys. Data can be collected from the following sources: people, documents, physical objects such as houses, the natural environment, etc. Returning to the example of School X and the textbooks: once you determine what data you need to collect, you have to decide how to go about collecting it. You might choose to review school records, distribute surveys to every child in school, visit the homes of all school children to interview their parents, etc. The method of data collection you select will depend on what data you need to collect, what resources (human and monetary) you have at your disposal, and how detailed your data needs to be⁴.

Why Conduct Monitoring and Evaluation?

Now that it is a little clearer what constitutes M&E, you may be saying to yourself, “That all sounds nice, but it seems like a tremendous amount of work. Is it really worth it?” The answers are “Yes, it is a lot of work,” and “YES, it is worth it.”

Monitoring and Evaluation is essential for the successful implementation of any project, even more so for projects targeting a highly vulnerable group such as children. M&E helps to enhance the effectiveness of projects targeting children by establishing clear links between past, present and future interventions and results. It assists in the extraction of relevant data from past and ongoing project activities. This data can then be used for fine-tuning the project intervention, reorienting objectives and programs, and planning for the future. Without Monitoring and Evaluation, it would be virtually impossible to determine whether your work with children is moving in the right direction, whether vulnerable children have truly been assisted by your efforts, and how you can improve future interventions.

Monitoring and Evaluation helps to ensure the following:

- Your work with children is consistent with your overall development objective;
- Your work with children has a high probability of success;
- You use the most cost-effective strategy to achieve your objectives;

⁴ An extensive discussion of data collection methods can be found in Chapter 6.

- Your project is being implemented efficiently;
- The programming you offer targeted children is genuinely responsive to their needs and concerns;
- Potential problems in your work with children are detected and corrected as quickly as possible.

To illustrate the importance of M&E, you need only ask yourself the following question:

“How can we possibly expect to help orphans and other children affected by AIDS if we don’t know how many are participating in our programs, what their lives are like, where they live, if our programs are having any impact on them, and whether they are better off than other children not participating in our programs?”

Why Conduct Operations Research?

Operations Research builds upon the results of M&E and then goes a step further. Not surprisingly then, it is just as important as M&E for any organization wanting to serve children. OR takes the observations and questions generated by M&E, elaborates on and expands them, proposes answers, and then engages in dialogue with other interested parties. Listed below are just a few of the benefits of OR.

Organizational learning

Operations Research allows you to question what you are doing, how it is being done, and why it is being done in that way. Operations Research is especially important for project interventions targeted at children, because many of these projects are still in their pilot phase. OR helps to determine if projects still in their initial stages are adequately serving targeted children and how the intervention can be replicated or scaled up.

Target resources and most vulnerable children more effectively

As the amount of funds made available by donors continues to decrease at the same time that the number of orphans and vulnerable children continues to expand exponentially, it becomes ever more important for projects targeting vulnerable children to be fiscally accountable. Operations Research ensures that resources are utilized effectively by emphasizing cost effectiveness and quality of care. By conducting Operations Research, you will be able to construct more accurate budgets, write more convincing funding proposals, effectively target those children who are at the greatest risk, and more fully account for how all of your resources are spent.

Disseminate lessons learned and sound practices (sometimes referred to as best practices)

When effective strategies for assisting children are discovered, they must be shared with other stakeholders. It is essential to exchange this information in order to ensure that all partners are using the most effective strategies available and to avoid the unnecessary duplication of effort. Considering the

enormity of the challenges faced by children and the scarcity of resources available to assist them, it is not only unproductive but also irresponsible for every AIDS service organization to try to find all of the answers on its own. OR provides project managers with a systematic means of communicating project successes and failures with other interested parties so that they can more easily achieve similar successes and avoid similar failures.

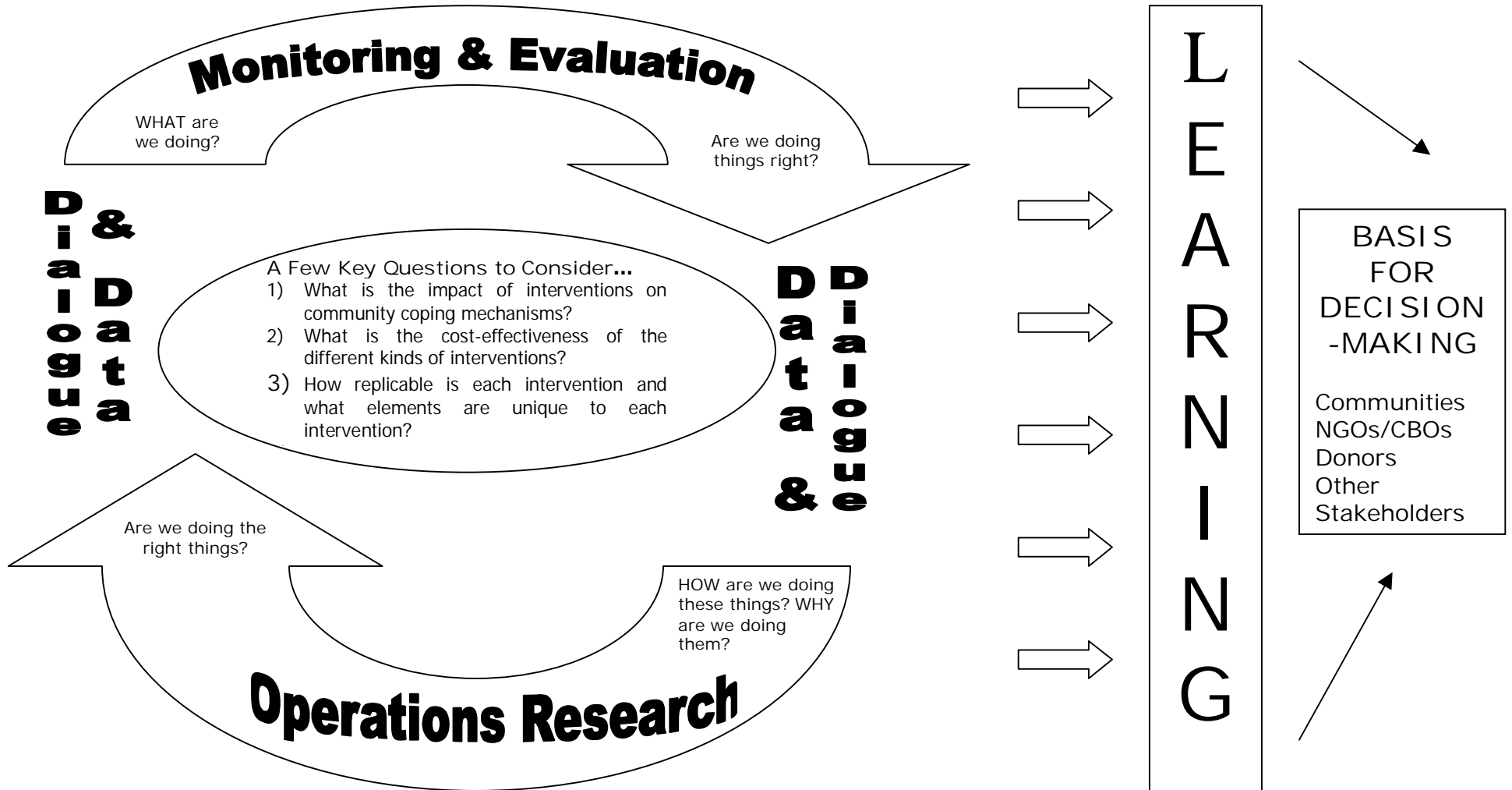
Improve project performance

Because OR is an ongoing analytical process, it allows you to continuously improve the quality of your work with children. OR allows you to ask difficult questions about the how and why of your programming and then to systematically collect the lessons you have learned. By answering these questions and analyzing your experiences, you can make changes based on your past experiences. Additionally, OR allows you to adjust your work with children to a constantly changing environment, so that you are not trying to solve today's problems with yesterday's solutions.

OR and M&E – The Differences And Complementarities

It is a common misperception that OR and M&E mean the same thing. While Monitoring and Evaluation and Operations Research are mutually beneficial processes, there is a distinct difference between the two. Monitoring and Evaluation examines *what* your work with children is doing, while Operations Research examines *how* and *why* your interventions are making an impact. Dialogue and the exchange of data create a cycle of mutual exchange and reinforcement between the two approaches. Both M&E and OR contribute to learning, which can then guide the decision-making of all stakeholders invested in the welfare of children. The flow chart on the following page offers a graphical explanation of the differences and complementarities between M&E and OR.

Source: Jemison, Tinarwo and Lentfer (2003)



CHAPTER 3- Incorporating M&E and OR Considerations into the Planning Phase of Your Project

Before moving on to the actual mechanics of M&E and OR, you will first need to take care to establish program structures that will facilitate them. In order to monitor, evaluate, and conduct operations research, you must have a project. And if that project is going to be successful, it must have carefully constructed goals, objectives, and indicators. This section therefore offers some guidance on how to be mindful of future M&E and OR activities while laying out the structure of your work with children.

Determining Goals, Objectives, and Indicators

- A goal is the over-arching purpose of the project. It is a mission statement of what the program seeks to achieve and what impact it intends to have on the community at large. Potential goals for child centered projects might include enhancing the quality of life of orphans, preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS among children, or raising community awareness of the disease and the means of combating it.
- An objective, on the other hand, is a step to be taken on the path towards reaching a goal- one goal may consist of numerous objectives. For instance, if a project's goal is to enhance the quality of life of orphans, it would also include more specific objectives such as increasing school attendance, food security, mental and physical health, decreasing stigmatization, etc.

When you are designing your objectives, you should be sure that they are SMART objectives, in order to facilitate M&E.

S	The project should set Specific objectives of what it wants to achieve for children. Objectives should be specific in the sense that they need to clearly define the number of children who will receive assistance, what type of assistance they will receive, how much it will cost, etc. An objective such as "provide school uniforms for fifty male and fifty female students at school X through a block grant ⁵ of \$5,000, to be disbursed on August 1, 2004" is much better than "provide uniforms for needy students."
M	The project should have Measurable objectives. It should be possible to collect, organize, and analyze data related to a project. If it is not possible to measure what is being done, it will not be possible to monitor and evaluate the program. Consequently, an objective of "reducing the number of parents who hit their children at home" is not a good one because it would be extremely difficult to collect that data. A preferable objective might be "to reduce the number of cases of child abuse reported at community clinics by 25%."
A	Your objectives should also be Achievable. Unrealistically high objectives will only frustrate the program team. Objectives should strike a balance between what is achievable and what is sufficiently challenging to motivate your team. An organization that sets an objective of "eliminating HIV/AIDS transmission in the entire ward" is certain to fail. A better objective might be "reduce the number of new cases of HIV/AIDS in the ward by 5% over the next two years."
R	Objectives should be Relevant to the overall goal of your project. Just because an objective is worthwhile does not necessarily mean that it is relevant to your project. Setting objectives that fall outside the scope of your work will only decrease your level of expertise and increase inefficiency. For instance, many orphans suffer from serious psychological trauma as a result of loss of family

⁵ A block grant is a grant given to a school by an outside organization in exchange for the retention of a certain number children at the school who are not required to pay fees for a certain period.

	members, stigmatization, food insecurity, etc. Your organization might therefore want to set an objective of “providing PSS to 100 targeted orphans in Urban Area X.” However, if your organization specializes exclusively in economic strengthening, your objective is not relevant to your overall goal and you very probably do not have the expertise to implement it.
T	The objectives of the program should be Time bound. A time frame should be given to clarify when the program milestones will be achieved. All projects must eventually come to an end, but by determining in advance when that end will come, it is easier to measure progress and increase productivity.

- *Indicators* are what we use to keep track of our progress towards goals and objectives. Indicators specify what data must be collected in order to measure progress and then track changes in data over time. Establishing good indicators is one of the most crucial and challenging aspects of M&E. Both monitoring and evaluation use indicators to determine whether project objectives are being met. Good indicators have a lot in common with SMART objectives. Good indicators should be...⁶

Valid – they should actually measure what they are supposed to measure;
 Reliable i.e., *verifiable* or *objective* – conclusions based on them should be the same if measured by different people at different times and under different circumstances;
 Relevant – they should be relevant to objectives of program;
 Sensitive – they should be sensitive to changes in the situation being observed;
 Specific – they should be based on available data;
 Cost effective – the results should be worth the time and money it costs to apply them; and
 Timely – it should be possible to collect the data reasonably quickly.

Direct vs. Indirect Indicators

There are as many different types of indicators as there are items to be measured. It is nonetheless possible to distinguish different categories of indicators based on what they measure and how they measure it. The most basic of these potential divisions is the distinction between direct and indirect indicators.

As their name suggests, direct indicators offer a direct measure of the item in question, i.e. measuring school enrollment levels by counting how many children are physically present at school. Unfortunately, however, it is not always possible to determine a direct measure for all aspects of a project (Can you think of an exact, direct measure of contentment? Economic security? Psychological well-being?) In that case, you must use indirect (or proxy) indicators. Indirect indicators provide an indirect measure of something that is difficult to find out directly. For example, roofing material can be used as a proxy indicator for wealth.

⁶ Monitoring and evaluation: Guiding principles. For the Design and Use in Rural Development Projects and Programmes in Developing Countries. The United Nations ACC Task Force on Rural Development. Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation. IFAD, Italy, 1985.

Examples of Direct Indicators	
What is being Measured	Indicator
School enrollment levels	School enrollment numbers
Number of children receiving care and support	Number of children receiving care and support
Number of care givers trained	Number of care givers trained
Change in school retention rates	Drop out rate

Examples of Proxy Indicators	
What is Being Measured	Indicator
Food access	Number of meals per day
Poverty vs. wealth	Number and type of assets
Food security of children	Number and types of meals consumed by household
Household economic safety nets improved	Change in number and types of assets in a household

Performance Indicators

Performance indicators are measures of inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts for development projects, programs, or strategies. When supported with sound data collection, analysis, and reporting, performance indicators enable managers to track progress, demonstrate results, and take corrective action to improve service delivery. Participation of key stakeholders in defining performance indicators is important because they will then be better able to understand and use indicators for management decision-making.

There are four basic types of performance indicators: Input, Output, Outcome, and Impact⁷. Each indicator corresponds to an “Objective Verifiable Indicator” of the Logical Framework Matrix that is discussed in the next section⁸.

Input – Input indicators track all the financial and physical resources used for an intervention (money, time, facilities, in-kind contributions, etc.).

Output – Output indicators cover all of the goods and services generated by the use of inputs. These indicators measure the supply of goods and services provided to individuals. Outputs are fully under the control of the agency that provides them (meals served, textbooks provided, medicine distributed, after school classes taught, etc.).

Outcome – Outcome indicators measure the level of access to public services, use of these services, and the level of satisfaction of users. Unlike

⁷ All four indicators may be either direct or indirect, depending on what is being measured.

⁸ In the LFM, “Activity Indicators” are a combination of Input and Output Indicators, “Intermediate Result Indicators” are a type of Outcome Indicators, “Strategic Objective Indicators” are a type of Outcome Indicator, and “Goal Indicators” are a type of Impact Indicator.

outputs, outcomes typically depend on factors beyond the control of the implementing agency, such as the behavior of individuals or other demand-side factors (improved nutritional status, increased graduation rates, increased school attendance, greater household economic security, etc.).

Impact – Impact indicators measure the ultimate effect of an intervention on a key dimension of the living standards of individuals. Impact results from outcomes, and consequently may be beyond the direct control of the implementing agency (freedom from hunger, literacy, good health, empowerment, food and economic security, etc.).

For the chosen set of indicators, sources of verification should be established and provisions should be made for data collection. Benchmarks, which describe the situation and trends during a particular time period, should be established using the defined set of indicators.

There are numerous ways of measuring inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts depending on what your particular objectives and activities are. This table lists a number of specific types of indicators, what they are designed to measure, and offers one or two real world examples of that indicator.	
Measurement	Indicator Examples
Accessibility	Children who need a service are able to access it. Ex. <i>Percentage of children with psychosocial problems who have regular contact with trained counselors.</i>
Utilization	Extent to which something that has been made available is used for that purpose. Ex. <i>Percentage of drip-kits being used for irrigation, school drop out rate.</i>
Participation	Extent to which stakeholders are involved in activities. Ex. <i>Children represented on school development committees.</i>
Coverage	Similar to accessibility, but relates more directly to the comprehensiveness of care. Ex. <i>Percentage of children who in rural areas who are receiving supplementary feeding.</i>
Effort	Level of investment, time, or labor, contributed to a project. Ex. <i>How many days it takes for a community garden to be planted.</i>
Institutional Capacity	Extent to which a project/activity has become a permanent part of organizational function. Ex. <i>Staff turnover rates, implementation agency's diversity of funding sources.</i>
Impact (longer term)	Most difficult to measure, uses a combination of any of the above indicators. Ex. <i>What difference have we made in the life of a child?</i>

An Introduction to the Logical Framework Approach (LFA)

As you are designing your initiative, it is essential that you remain aware of how you will incorporate M&E into your daily work routine. As you organize the structure of your program, you should bear in mind how you will carry out the following steps, each of which is vital for the construction of an effective M&E system:
--

1. Decide to start
2. Identify participants
3. Identify expectations
4. Clarify objectives
5. Identify indicators
6. Select methods
7. Make a calendar
8. Prepare methods and tools
9. Collect data
10. Analyze data
11. Document and distribute findings
12. Use information for different stakeholders to alter implementation strategy.

Once you have established your project goal, SMART objectives, and have begun consideration of the indicators that you will use to track your progress towards achieving your goal and objectives, you need a way of organizing this diverse array of information in a logical, clear format. The Logical Framework Approach is a commonly used, extremely powerful tool used for just this purpose. The LFA is an analytical, presentational, and managerial tool that can help your planners and managers to:

- Analyze the current status of vulnerable children during project preparation.
- Establish a logical progression of activities through which your interventions with children can reach their objectives and goals.
- Identify potential risks.
- Establish how best to monitor and evaluate the outputs and outcomes of your work with children.
- Present a summary of your work with children in a standardized format.
- Monitor and review your work with children during implementation.

The results of a logical framework approach are summarized in a Logical Framework Matrix (LFM). The standard format for an LFM is laid out below. A general explanation for each entry is given, along with specific examples for a hypothetical supplementary school-feeding program.

Project Description	Objective Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Goal: The broader development impact to which the project contributes – at a national and sectoral level. (improved education standards, economic recovery, higher literacy rates, more active civil society, etc.)	Measures of the extent to which a contribution to the goal has been made. Used during evaluation. (macroeconomic trends, national literacy rates, quality of life indicators, etc.)	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it. (census data, government and NGO publications, UN reports, etc.)	
Strategic Objective:	Conditions at the end of the	Sources of information	Assumptions

The development outcome expected at the end of the project. All components will contribute to this. (children's academic performance and levels of retention increase)	project indicating that the purpose has been achieved. Used for project completion and evaluation. (change in school enrollment numbers, increased graduation rates, positive feedback from program participants)	and methods used to collect and report it. (survey data, school records, etc.)	concerning the SO/goal linkage (there is a direct link between local academic achievement and national macroeconomic and educational trends)
Intermediate Results: Indicates the behavioral change anticipated as a result of the successful delivery of the outputs (children attend school more regularly, pay better attention in class)	Measures of the extent to which component objectives have been achieved. Used during review and evaluation. (changes in weight for height, school attendance levels, program graduates, etc.)	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it. (survey data, program records, school attendance records, etc.)	Assumptions concerning the IR/SO linkage (attending school more regularly and with adequate nutrition improves learning)
Outputs: The direct measurable results, goods, and services of the project which are largely under project management's control (X number of children receiving a supplementary ration each day)	Measures of the quantity and quality of outputs and the timing of their delivery. Used during monitoring and review. (How much food distributed, how many children served, what is the level of satisfaction among staff and beneficiaries, etc.)	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it (program registry, activities log, satisfaction surveys, focus group discussions, etc.)	Assumptions concerning the output/IR linkage (students will attend school more regularly if a supplementary lunchtime ration is provided)
Activities: The tasks carried out to implement the project and deliver the identified outputs (distribution, preparation, and consumption of food)	Implementation/work program targets. Used during monitoring. (how many children receive a ration, how much CSB is distributed, etc.)	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it. (Attendance logs, surveys of program beneficiaries and staff, monitoring checklists, etc.)	Assumptions concerning the activity/output linkage (there will be no disruptions that prevent serving prepared food to students)
Inputs: Financial and material inputs used to carry out activities (Ex. money, teachers' time, school facilities, food, kitchen implements, etc.)	Measures of inputs used in implementing activities (Compare actual expenses with budget, benchmarks)	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it (accounting records, time sheets, receipts, etc.)	Assumptions concerning the activity/output linkage (the inputs budgeted for are sufficient to implement the activities)

CHAPTER 4- Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan: Why and How?

The actual process of monitoring your work with children is far more involved than simply asking your program beneficiaries what they think of the project every once in a while. In order to be effective, M&E must be carefully and methodically planned.

To ensure that you carry out a thorough, effective M&E process, you must begin with a monitoring plan. You can develop your monitoring plan using your project plan as a guide⁹. The monitoring plan indicates how the project plan will be monitored, and should therefore include what is being monitored, how and when monitoring data will be collected, and who will carry out data collection. This chapter offers a detailed exposition of the central questions to be asked and steps to be taken when you put together your monitoring plan.

Questions to Ask As You Develop Your Monitoring Plan

1. What do we want to know or measure? What kinds of information would help us to know whether we are meeting our objectives?
2. What information do we collect at the moment that is relevant to our needs?
3. Do we need to stop collecting any of the information we currently collect?
4. Do we need to collect any new types of information?
5. Do we collect our monitoring information in a systematic and appropriate way?
6. Do we report the information in a systematic and appropriate way?
7. Do we really use monitoring information to influence project activities?
8. Do we use monitoring information to plan and manage the project?
9. What do we need to do to improve the monitoring of our project?

Principles for Effective Monitoring

The credibility of findings and assessments depends to a large extent on the manner in which Monitoring and Evaluation is conducted. The following are some of the principles, as outlined by UNDP (2002), which should be considered when designing a monitoring plan:

- Good monitoring focuses on results and follow-up. It looks for “what is going well” and “what is not progressing” towards intended results. It then records this information in reports, makes recommendations, and facilitates follow-up with decisions and appropriate actions.
- Good monitoring requires regular visits by Monitoring and Evaluation staff that focus on results and follow-up to verify and validate progress. Achievements and challenges should be continuously documented as they occur.

⁹ Every organization has a different way of planning how to carry out their daily activities. Generally though, a project work plan is a tool used to set targets for the delivery of outputs, typically on a monthly basis. The work plan sets out the activities or tasks to be carried out, the timeframe for those tasks, and who is responsible for each tasks' implementation. Whether or not you actually refer to this plan as “project work plan,” you can still use it to organize your monitoring plan.

- Good monitoring should objectively assess progress and performance based on clear criteria and indicators.

Monitoring and Evaluation is most successful when the project leadership, the project team and partners, the host organization, and donors all believe in its value and are open to learning and change. Stakeholder participation in the Monitoring and Evaluation process results in greater awareness of its benefits and a commitment to it on the part of the project team and partners.

A Monitoring and Evaluation plan template can assist in guiding the planning process for data collection analysis and use. When complete, it provides an at-a-glance record of decisions made during the planning process for baseline data needs, people involved in collection, and tools, methods and additional resources needed for each level of monitoring.

Utilizing a Monitoring and Evaluation plan template is an effective way of identifying and organizing key information needed for your Monitoring and Evaluation plan. An M&E plan template encourages you to think carefully about the details of who will participate in each stage of M&E, how the information will be used to improve the project, and how lessons will be disseminated. The information contained in your M&E plan template can be drawn primarily from your Logical Framework Analysis and your monthly work plan. An example of an M&E plan template is presented on the next page. You should feel free to modify this template to fit the distinct needs of your program.

Monitoring and Evaluation Worksheet¹⁰

DATA COLLECTION							DATA ANALYSIS AND USE			
Key result area	Indicator	Source of Data	Targets and Benchmarks	Who is Responsible	Tools & Methods	Frequency	Frequency	Who is Responsible	How Information is to be Used	Dissemination (to whom)

¹⁰ Jemison K., Tinarwo L. and Lentfer J. (2003) *The STRIVE Project Operations Research Agenda & Strategy*; Catholic Relief Services Zimbabwe; Harare

What to Evaluate?

The core programming issues that you will need to periodically evaluate are: relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Each of these has a direct relation to a specific level(s) of the intervention's logic and the logical framework analysis.

Defining the issues to be addressed is essential in all evaluation work. The following are the central questions that need to be asked for each area of investigation:

Relevance

Does the project make sense within the context of its environment?

Relevance concerns whether the results, purpose, and overall objectives of the project are in line with the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries, as well as the policy environment of the project.

Impact

What has happened (or is likely to happen) as a consequence of the project?

Impact concerns whether there has been a movement towards the achievement of the overall objective(s) as a consequence of the achievement of the project purpose. Both intended and unintended impacts are reviewed.

Effectiveness

To what extent has the project's goal been achieved (or is likely to be achieved), and to what extent is the achievement a result of the project?

Effectiveness describes how well the results achieved have furthered the achievement of the project's goal.

Efficiency

Do the quantity and quality of the results of the project justify the quantity and quality of the means used for achieving them?

Efficiency concerns the relation between the results and the means i.e. whether the process of transforming the means into results has been cost-effective. Efficiency assessments are normally part of the planning and monitoring process. They may also be included in evaluations, especially if the evaluations cover management performance.

Sustainability

What has happened (or is likely to happen) to the positive effects of the project after the external assistance has come to an end?

In terms of a single project, sustainability can be described as the degree to which the benefits produced by the project continue after the external assistance has come to an end. Sustainability is a central theme in all evaluation work and relates to all elements of the logical framework for a specific project.

Types of Evaluations

Outputs Evaluation – This type of evaluation looks at activities. What is it that is being done/provided/produced? It assesses whether the activities are appropriate for the objectives. For example, does the project provide or produce according to the stated objectives? Given the objectives, are the outputs appropriate in terms of quality, quantity, and type?

Process Evaluation – Assesses how and why decisions are made and implemented. For example, could management and administration be improved? Who is involved in decision-making and should others be given a voice?

Performance Evaluation – Focuses on the stated objectives and assesses the quantity and quality of what has actually been achieved. For example, to what extent is the project meeting targets? Is the quality of service good enough? How cost-effective is the project?

Impact Evaluation – Focuses on the end result or goal of the project. For example, is a block grant component more effective in reducing the stigmatization of children affected by AIDS than programs that directly target children for assistance?

Strategy Evaluation – Takes a “helicopter” view of the whole project. It asks such questions as what is the overall goal of your organization? Is it appropriate? Is your goal still relevant or does it need to be revised? Are your activities meeting project goals?

Formative Evaluation – Focuses on ways of improving and enhancing programs in initial development as well as at any point of the program. It relies heavily on site visits, direct observation of project activities, and in-depth interviews.

Summative Evaluation – aimed at determining the essential effectiveness of programs. It is important in making decisions about continuing or terminating an experimental program or demonstration project.

How to Organize an Evaluation Agenda

The following agenda for conducting an evaluation is based on guidelines provided by USAID for an evaluation scope of work (SOW), which can be found in their entirety at http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/usaid_eval/pdf_docs/pnaby215.pdf. The exact format of your evaluation agenda will vary depending on exactly what it is you are evaluating, but the structure provided by USAID poses important questions that should be answered by almost any thorough evaluation.

1. Activity or strategic objective to be evaluated
 - What is being evaluated?

- What is the focus of the investigation (Be very specific)?
- 2. Background
 - Briefly, what is the background and current status of the topic you plan to investigate?
- 3. Existing performance indicator sources
 - Is there any information currently available on the topic you plan to evaluate? If so, what is it, and what merits your additional investigation?
- 4. Purpose of the evaluation
 - Who wants the information?
 - What do they want to know?
 - What will the information be used for?
 - When will it be needed?
 - How accurate must it be?
- 5. Evaluation questions
 - What questions will your evaluation answer?
 - How many questions will your evaluation answer?
- 6. Evaluation Methods
 - What will be your overall evaluation strategy (case studies, sample surveys, comparative evaluation designs, analyses of existing data, etc.¹¹)?
 - How will the strategy you select answer your evaluation questions?
 - From whom (or what), and how will you collect your data?
 - Once you have collected it, how will you analyze your data?
- 7. Team composition and participation
 - How many people will be involved in the evaluation?
 - What are the qualifications of your team members?
- 8. Procedures, schedules, and logistics
 - How long will the evaluation take?
 - What must be done to prepare for the evaluation?
- 9. Reporting and Dissemination Requirements
 - How formal a report is required?
 - When are drafts and final versions of the evaluation due?
 - How many copies of the report are needed?
 - In what languages will the evaluation report be published?
- 10. Budget
 - How much will the entire evaluation cost¹²?

¹¹ Each of these strategies is examined in greater detail in Chapter 7.

¹² USAID suggests that the total expenditure for Monitoring and Evaluation activities should be between three and ten percent of the total cost of the program intervention.

CHAPTER 5- Monitoring And Measuring Performance for Specific Programs or Interventions Targeted at Children

Organizations targeting children tend to offer a variety of interventions, due to the complexity of the challenges faced by vulnerable children and the extent of their needs. Areas of intervention include policies and strategies, resources and resource mobilization, family capacity building, community capacity building, food security and nutrition, health, education, child protection, psychosocial support, and institutional care/shelter¹³. Within each intervention area, there are a number of different strategies and activities meant to achieve the organization's objectives.

In this chapter, we will briefly introduce examples of four of these intervention areas, present one example of a specific programming initiative within that area, and then outline indicators that might be used to monitor the initiatives. This will be followed by a brief discussion of problems encountered when trying to assess the number of children being assisted and other beneficiary counting errors that often occur in programming. The examples given are neither exhaustive nor definitive, but are instead meant to offer suggestions for how your organization might apply similar measurement processes to your work with children.

1. Education Assistance

Education assistance initiatives seek to improve children's access to quality education. Education initiatives are designed not only to increase enrollment, attendance, retention, and completion of schooling, but also aim to increase the overall quality of education.

Examples of interventions in the education assistance arena include:

- Scholarships to individual children.
- Support to existing pre-schools, crèches¹⁴, primary schools, and secondary schools.
- Block grants in exchange for free schooling for children affected by AIDS.

Real World Example- Block Grants

Block grants have been referred to several times over the course of the manual. They are a highly cost effective intervention, and are relatively simpler to monitor and evaluate than direct interventions. Block grants have the additional benefits of empowering implementation partners, encouraging widespread community involvement, and perhaps most significantly, reducing the stigmatization of beneficiary children.

¹³ *Guide to monitoring and evaluation of the national response for children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS*, UNICEF

¹⁴ In the context of children affected by AIDS, crèches are centers at which child heads of households can leave siblings while they attend school.

In a block grant initiative, a school receives a lump sum payment at the beginning of a school term, which it is then able to spend on books, uniforms, school refurbishments, etc. In exchange, the school agrees to admit a pre-determined number of children who are exempted from paying school fees. In this way, the entire school population benefits, targeted children are given access to education they would otherwise have been unable to afford without being enrolled in some special program that would add to their stigmatization.

In order to effectively implement a block grant, there is a significant amount of information that must be collected before, during, and after the grant is disbursed.

Required Information	Indicator
Before you even begin to implement your block grant, you need to establish that children who are affected by AIDS are at an actual disadvantage versus children who are not, in regards to school attendance.	1. Ratio of children affected by AIDS' to children not affected by AIDS' school attendance ¹⁵
Once you have established that children affected by AIDS are at a disadvantage and begin implementation, you need to know how many children your intervention is assisting. You should disaggregate your beneficiaries by age and gender.	1. Direct beneficiaries (children affected by AIDS admitted to school) 2. Indirect beneficiaries (children not affected by AIDS benefiting from materials purchased with block grant) 3. Total number of beneficiaries
Next, you need to know how much the intervention costs.	1. Total cost of disbursing block grant vs. what was budgeted
Then, you need to know if the block grant actually has any impact on the targeted population.	1. Retention rate of direct beneficiaries 2. Retention rate of indirect beneficiaries 3. Percentage of direct beneficiaries graduating to the next grade level 4. Percentage of indirect beneficiaries graduating to the next grade level
You will also want to measure the comprehensiveness of your coverage of children affected by AIDS in the area.	1. Percentage of children affected by AIDS in the village/ward/district who benefit from block grants
Finally, you will want to monitor how the school spends the money from the block grant to insure that it is not wasted or stolen.	1. School's monthly expenditures on budgeted items vs. what was budgeted

A situation analysis/baseline evaluation would need to be carried out before implementation in order to determine which orphans and/or vulnerable children the program should target, characteristics of the schools involved, and as the basis for future comparison¹⁶. Thereafter, monitoring should occur on a quarterly basis, to track the progress of the initiative and make corrections if necessary. At the end of each school year, a comprehensive evaluation should be taken, in order to determine how to improve and expand the program in the upcoming school year.

¹⁵ This proportion should be calculated by finding a proportion for each single year age group and then taking the average of all age groups.

¹⁶ An extensive discussion of baseline surveys and data is contained in the next chapter.

2. Economic Strengthening

Economic strengthening activities are designed to counter the precarious economic situation of children and families affected by AIDS by improving the viability and sustainability of household and community safety nets.

Examples of economic strengthening initiatives include:

- Promotion of self-managed savings and credit groups.
- Facilitation of market linkages between micro-enterprise owners and profitable markets.
- Building capacity in innovative community resource mobilization (fundraising, identifying community assets, creating an inventory of skills and talents within the community).
- Vocational skills transfer between professionals and adolescent orphans and vulnerable children.

Real World Example- Internal Savings and Lending Groups

One way of promoting economic strengthening is through the formation of internal savings and lending groups. These groups pool members' savings in a common savings account. The savings can then be lent to group members at reasonable interest rates. In this way, group members are encouraged to begin formal savings (often for the first time), have a means of earning interest, and gain access to capital for investment.

As in the example of block grants, it is necessary to collect information before, during, and after implementing the intervention.

Required Information	Indicator
If you plan to screen beneficiaries for entry into the program, you will need to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine which potential beneficiaries qualify. In this example, we only want to admit households that contain children, are affected by AIDS, and are economically disadvantaged. Furthermore, you will need to collect baseline information on the status of household safety nets, so as to chart your progress. In this example, we will use food security and access to education as our household safety net measures.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of people in household (include age, gender, HIV/AIDS status, and relationship to family for each individual) 2. Value of household's physical assets (TV, refrigerator, farming equipment, housing structure, etc.) 3. Total household income from all wage earners 4. Source of each wage earners income. 5. Average # of meals consumed by children in the household per day. 6. Average # of days per week that children in the household attend school.
Once you have screened and admitted program beneficiaries, you will want to track their participation in the program in order to see how actively they are involved.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monthly savings of each household involved in the program. 2. Total monthly savings of each IS&L group. 3. Amount lent each month by IS&L group. 4. How individuals invest the money lent to them.
In order to determine whether or not your economic intervention is having an impact, you will want to continuously monitor participant households to gauge whether their economic, food security, and access to	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Value of household's physical assets (TV, refrigerator, farming equipment, housing structure, etc.) 2. Total household income from all wage earners.

education are improving.	3. Source of each wage earners income. 4. Average # of meals consumed by children in the household per day. 5. Average # of days per week that children in the household attend school.
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3. Food Security

Food security initiatives seek to stabilize children and their families by enhancing their access to adequate, reliable sources of nutrition. In so doing, these initiatives not only slow the rate of mortality for HIV/AIDS infected individuals, thereby decreasing the rate of orphaning and number of orphans, but also allow communities to reallocate resources that were once used in the desperate scramble for food towards HIV/AIDS prevention and care for orphans and vulnerable children.

Examples of food security interventions include:

- Introducing drought tolerant crops.
- Promoting community fields/gardens.
- Facilitating agricultural market linkages to increase income.
- Promoting the use of crops that are naturally high in vitamins and nutrients.
- Using drip irrigation techniques to intensify production in home gardens.

Real World Example- Community Fields and Gardens

Community fields and gardens are a way of promoting food security that not only increases food security, but also facilitates community cohesion and allows for the introduction of new and innovative farming techniques. Once a community field/garden is established, HIV/AIDS affected members of the community acquire the right to harvest and then sell or consume produce based on the number of hours that they contribute to planting, monitoring, harvesting, etc¹⁷. The fields can also serve as demonstration plots where both innovative techniques such as drip irrigation and new types of high nutrient crops can be introduced.

Once again, in order to determine if your program is having the desired impact, it is necessary to monitor the targeted population before, during, and after implementation.

Required Information	Indicators
Before beginning project implementation, you will need to collect information on the community in which the garden will be cultivated. It is important to know the food security level of HIV/AIDS affected households and to what degree food insecurity is affecting children.	1. # of HIV/AIDS affected households in the community, number of children living in these households. 2. Average number of meals consumed per day by children in AIDS affected households. 3. Source of meals consumed by children in AIDS affected households (field, shops, donations, handouts, etc.)

¹⁷ It is also possible to include a food for work provision that pays non-HIV/AIDS affected community members to work the community garden on behalf of an HIV/AIDS affected household.

	4. Prevalence of malnutrition amongst children in AIDS affected households.
Once you begin implementation, you will need to monitor the level of participation by HIV/AIDS affected households in order to ensure that they are actively engaged in the project.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # of caregivers from HIV/AIDS affected households working in the gardens, disaggregated by gender and adult or youth status. 2. # of hours devoted by caregivers to work in the garden. 3. Value of inputs contributed by caregivers
It is also vital to know exactly what is being produced in the gardens, how much there is, and what is being done with it. This data would generally be available around harvest time.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Types of crops planted in each community garden. 2. Average area planted in each community garden. 3. Average production expected for each community garden. 4. Average production achieved by each community garden. 5. Percentage of production that is kept for consumption. 6. Percentage and monetary value of production that is sold.
Once crops have been harvested, you will want to determine if the intervention has had any impact. This can be done by once again returning to the food security indicators that were collected at the beginning of the intervention.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Average # of meals consumed per day by children in AIDS affected households compared with baseline data¹⁸. 2. Source of meals consumed by children in AIDS affected households compared with baseline data. 3. Prevalence of malnutrition amongst children in AIDS affected households compared with baseline data.

4. Psychosocial Support

Children affected by AIDS face an immense threat of psychological trauma. The loss of parents and other family members, heightened food insecurity, withdrawal from school, and stigmatization all create tremendous obstacles to the healthy mental development of children. Psychosocial support initiatives are designed to respond to this threat by providing emotional support to orphans, vulnerable children, and their caregivers.

Examples of psychosocial support include:

- Provision of basic child-counseling skills.
- Therapeutic recreational activities such as music and drama for children.
- Organizing Kids Clubs to provide children with support networks, recreational opportunities, life skills training, and a safe environment for discussion and counseling.
- Life skills transfer for orphaned adolescent and child headed households.
- Vocational skills transfer to youth.

Real World Example- Kids Clubs

¹⁸ See page 32 for a discussion of baseline surveys and statistics.

The term Kids Club covers a broad spectrum of children’s organizations. Kids Clubs may be highly structured and organized, or they may be more informal. They may be directed by an adult, or they may be run by the children themselves with minimal direct adult supervision. Kids Clubs may be dedicated to one type of activity, such as agricultural training, or may include a wide variety of activities including drama, poetry, life skills training, athletics, debate, study groups, etc. The unifying characteristic of Kids Clubs is that they provide a safe environment for children to meet and interact with each other, which is an essential aspect of psychosocial support.

Hopefully, it has become obvious by now that monitoring of your intervention should occur before, during, and after implementation.

Required Information	Indicators
You should begin by determining the characteristics of children participating in the Kids Club. You will also want to collect data that will help you to analyze the psychosocial health of club members.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of Kids Club members, disaggregated by age and gender. 2. Family status of Kids Club members (orphan, HIV/AIDS affected household, child-headed household). 3. For a test that can be used to measure psychosocial health, see Appendix II.
Having established who is in the Kids Club, you will need to clarify exactly what it is they are doing and how actively members participate in club activities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # and type of activities offered by Kids Club. 2. Frequency of Kids Club activities. 3. # of Kids Club members participating in each activity.
It is also important to measure the Kids Club’s retention rates to ensure that children are being adequately served.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # of original member still participating in the club after 2 months, 6 months, 1 year, etc. 2. # of new members participating in the club after 2 months, 6 months, 1 year, etc. 3. Total club membership measured over time.
Measuring the impact of PSS interventions is an extremely difficult task, given the intangible nature of psychosocial health. There are, however, a variety of proxy indicators that can be used to estimate the impact of your PSS initiative.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Re-administer the test laid out in Appendix II, and then compare the latest responses with the baseline data.¹⁹

¹⁹ See page 33 for a thorough explanation of baseline surveys and data.

5. Keeping Count: Double Counting and Double Dipping Elimination
A common problem in monitoring and evaluating project progress occurs from inaccurately reporting the number of beneficiaries assisted by the project. It is often likely that some children will benefit from several activities at once or over the course of the project (children receive educational assistance and participate in Psycho-social activities; while their families participate in food security and economic strengthening interventions). The simple means of counting the number of children assisted is to simply add the total number of children having their school fees paid plus the number of children participating in PSS activities and then adding the total number of family members or children benefiting from food assistance over a given period of time. A result of such beneficiary accounting principles results in the actual number of children assisted by the project being overwhelmingly distorted.

Double counting?

In many child-centered projects, children often benefit from more than one activity for concurrent periods of time, as part of holistic services to children and families. As a result, children are often double-counted in projects.

For example:

School fees are paid for 500 children.
200 children are part of kids clubs.
And 150 children's families receive food from community gardens.

Many project managers would simply add up these numbers, for a total of 850 children served. However, this number would be inaccurate if, for example:

Of the 500 children receiving school fees, 175 are part of kids clubs.
Of the 200 children in kids clubs, 175 are receiving school fees.
Of the 150 children benefiting from community gardens, 150 are also benefiting from school fees.

If project managers were to accurately tally the total number of beneficiaries, they would need to include:

School Fees	500
Kids Clubs	25
Community Gardens	0

The correct number of children reached, when double-counting is eliminated is 525, much less than the 850 counted above. In an environment where there is a push for results to reach as many children as possible, it can easily be assumed that 850 is the better number for a project to report. However, since a holistic approach to serving children requires that programs be responsive to a range of children's needs, a project's ability to provide relevant service to children should be just as highly valued. 525 may be a lower number, but it more accurately describes the depth of service to children.

What is double dipping?

Additional concerns often arise concerning beneficiary double dipping. "Double dipping" occurs when an organization or institution reports reaching the same beneficiaries to two or more donors or supporters. Therefore, it is crucial that organizations keep accurate and separate records for different project funding in order to prevent and be able to refute double dipping.

Example 1: An organization is carrying out two projects for OVC, funded by separate donors. Both donors are funding education assistance. An audit is done of the organization and it is found that the same list of children whose school fees were paid was used to calculate the total number of beneficiaries reached. This number was then reported to both donors. Therefore, one of the donor's funding had obviously been used for other purposes than education assistance, in breach of the grant agreement. This is a serious violation that could hurt future funding prospects for an organization.

Example 2: Let's say a school receives funding from the government and two NGOs to assist underprivileged children. One NGO goes in to the school and discovers that the school has been reporting the same children as benefiting from the government program, as well as their program. After further inquiry, it is found that the school head had been double-dipping in order to line his own pockets with the finances provided to the school by the government.

Spot Checks

"Spot checks" can be used as an effective means of data verification. Especially when projects are serving large amounts of children, it is often impossible for officers and field staff to visit every site on a regular basis. An organization carries out a "spot check" by randomly selecting a few sites and conducting "unplanned" visits. Although spot checks are not a means to collect complete data, they can often uncover certain trends about how completely records are

being kept, the effectiveness of the beneficiary selection process, and the actual number of children being served in a certain site.

CHAPTER 6- Data Collection Methods

This chapter focuses on different methodologies for conducting research. Preliminary activities that should be carried out before an investigation, such as a literature review and baseline study, are introduced. The bulk of the chapter is then devoted to the two broad categories of data collection methods: qualitative and quantitative. Specific methods of carrying out each type of data collection are introduced and explained, as well as strategies and suggestions for data collectors.

Preliminary Activities

Literature Review

Before you undertake your own research, it is important that you establish what has already been done in the area you plan to investigate. It may well be that someone else has already covered your topic, rendering your work redundant. Alternatively, you may be able to avoid some of the complications and frustrations faced by earlier researchers by reading their work. Rather than simply starting from scratch, you can benefit from the work of others and thereby enhance the quality of your own research.

The process by which you investigate previous research is called a literature review. The central question to ask yourself when conducting a literature review is “What has already been done in the field I intend to investigate and how will my research either elaborate on that work or fill in the gaps?” The following concrete steps should help you to find the answer to that question:

1. Read as many different sources as possible on the topic you plan to research as well as related topics in order to have varied perspectives on the topic. This material could include books, documents, websites, and academic journals.
2. Write a summary of different articles that you find as you read them. This will assist you in remembering the main ideas of the documents you are reading and will also help you to develop the material for your report.
3. Organize the work that you have done so as to establish the gaps that need to be filled in before you move on to write up your results.
4. The report of the literature review should give an overview of the topic that you have studied. The report should bring out the main points of the review in your own words. You should not copy directly from a source unless you properly reference it.
5. The report should be logical, flow smoothly, and be easily understood by the target audience.

Having conducted a thorough literature review, you should be well versed in the topic you intend to investigate and have a clear idea of how your own research can compliment the work already done by others.

Baseline Survey

A baseline survey is a snapshot of the current situation of the program's constituency. It is carried out in the initial stages of project implementation to establish where the community in general, and beneficiary households and individuals in particular, stand in terms of challenges, responses, demographic characteristics, and potential areas of assistance. You can think of a baseline survey as the meter stick against which you will measure the progress of your work with children. Without a baseline survey, it would be impossible to quantify the impact of your intervention because there will be data for the status of beneficiaries before the intervention began.

The internal savings and lending example that was used to illustrate economic strengthening interventions in the previous chapter is an excellent example of why baseline surveys are essential. In order to carry out your baseline survey, you can utilize the various data collection methodologies described in the remainder of this chapter. Let's say that shortly after launching your economic strengthening intervention, you need to decide whether or not to conduct a baseline survey of all the households participating in the program. Consider the following...

Your baseline survey asks questions about household composition (How many children live in the house? How many caregivers? What are the ages of household members? What is the relationship between different household members? What are their genders? How many are infected with HIV/AIDS? Etc.), household financial situation (What are the household's net assets? Who in the household is employed? What is the household's total monthly income? Etc.), and anything else that you will need to help you to carry out your work.

Using the information collected, you decide to categorize households as being either "destitute" (12 households), "very poor" (47 households), "poor" (28 households), or "lower middle income" (13 households). You then continue the ongoing process of implementing the program and monitoring its progress.

One year later, you decide to conduct a review of the project's progress. You re-survey all of the original intervention participants, asking them the same questions as on the initial baseline survey. You again categorize in the same manner, but now there are 9 destitute, 41 very poor, 31 poor, and 19 lower middle-income households. Based on this information and additional analysis, you determine that your program is having a positive impact on participants. Had you not conducted the baseline survey, you would have known the current status of participants, but, having no information on their status at the beginning of the intervention, you would have had no way of knowing if your project had actually had any positive impact over the past year.

Before conducting a baseline survey, it is essential that you have completed the evaluation agenda outlined in the previous chapter. In order to carry out an effective baseline survey, you must have a clear idea of exactly what it is you will be monitoring over the course of your intervention. The indicators that you establish for use in your baseline survey will provide the information that you need to monitor your initiative's progress. If you do not choose good indicators for your baseline survey or carry out a sufficiently thorough investigation, you will have an extremely difficult time in tracking the progress of your initiative.

What is a Situation Analysis?²⁰

It is extremely likely that in the course of conducting research or interacting with other organizations, you will come across the term "situation analysis." A situation analysis is the process by which you gather information to guide the planning and implementation of your work with children. Like a baseline survey, it provides a snapshot of a particular situation at a given point in time. Unlike a baseline survey, however, it need not be carried out only at the beginning of the project cycle, but can be conducted at any time over the life of a project. Some of the potential uses of a situation analysis include:

1. Policy and strategy development
2. Advocacy
3. Social mobilization
4. Information exchange
5. Stakeholder coordination and collaboration
6. Program design

A situation analysis offers a means of prioritizing problems within the context of a complex environment. It goes beyond the surface level to consider the underlying dynamics of the situation, with a view towards potential points of intervention. It focuses on capacities and identifies not only current policies and relevant services, but current and potential stakeholders as well.

In the context of children affected by AIDS, a situation analysis gathers information about the HIV/AIDS epidemic, its consequences, household and community responses, and relevant policies and programs. It analyzes the information gathered, identifies geographic and programmatic priorities, and makes specific recommendations for action.

If this all sounds somewhat familiar, it is because this is essentially what we have been discussing for the duration of this manual. A situation analysis is indelibly linked to Operations Research. While Operations Research is an overarching strategy, a situation analysis is the practical incarnation of that strategy. So as you seek answers to the various questions outlined in earlier chapters and carry out the suggested procedures, you are actually conducting a type of situation analysis.

Quantitative Data Collection Methods

Quantitative methods are used to collect data, which can then be analyzed in a numerical form. Quantitative methods pose the questions:

Who, what, when, where, how much, how many, how often?

Items are either measured or counted, or questions are asked according to a defined questionnaire so that answers can be coded²¹ and analyzed numerically.

Quantitative techniques are useful when you need to:

- Provide accurate and precise data;
- Have a broad view of the whole population;

²⁰ This section is drawn from Williamson, J., Cox, A., and Johnston, B. (2004) *Conducting a Situation Analysis of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Affected by HIV/AIDS*. USAID.

²¹ Coding is a technique that facilitates the organization and analysis of data. When data is coded, it is organized into similar packets of information. Each packet is then given a numerical code, with each sub packet receiving an additional numerical code.

- Test whether there is a statistical relationship between a problem and an apparent cause;
- Produce evidence that a certain problem exists;
- Establish baseline information, which can then be used for evaluating project impact later on.

Surveys

The most commonly used quantitative research tool is the survey. Though surveys can be used to collect both quantitative and qualitative information, they are generally used for the collection of quantitative data.

The following are basic steps in carrying out a survey:

- Formulate the question(s) that you want the survey to investigate.
- Select variables that enable you to answer that question.
- Design methods of data collection for each variable. This could be done by physical measurement or by asking people questions using a questionnaire. In a questionnaire, everyone is asked the same question in the same way, so that results can be compared numerically. Questions must be carefully designed, since the number or wording of questions could have a significant effect on the way they are answered.
- If necessary, translate questionnaires and guidelines into the local language(s). This should be done if the survey will be conducted in an area where English is not commonly spoken. Presenting the survey in the interviewee's native language helps to ensure that participants fully understand the questions they are being asked and helps them to give appropriate responses. In order to guarantee that the questions on the survey mean the same thing in both languages, it is advisable for one individual to translate the survey from English to the second language and for a second individual to translate the survey back into English. If the two English versions match, the translation is ready for use. If the two English versions do not match, the translation must be revised. Additionally, if you intend to administer the survey orally, a qualified translator must be found.
- It is usually not possible to collect data from an entire population, so a sample of the population should be selected. This sample should be representative of the whole population and has to be selected randomly in order to avoid selection bias. The precise method of selecting a sample varies according to the type and purpose of the survey. Sampling is covered in more detail later in this chapter.
- Plan the data collection according to the population sample selected. It is necessary to organize transport and accommodation, and to devise a timetable to take into account travel time, holidays, and when is the best time to meet people in the sample.
- After data is collected, collated, and checked, it can then be analyzed.

After you have finished writing your survey questions but before you begin to administer them, there are two additional steps that you can take to help ensure that your survey will obtain the desired information from interviewed children.

The first step is to formulate possible responses to survey questions. Formulating possible responses will enable you to more rapidly record children's answers, make it easier to organize those responses, and will also help you to determine if the anticipated responses to your questions actually provide the data you need to collect. For example, if you are analyzing children's psychosocial health and plan to ask the question "Who do you talk to when you are unhappy?" before you begin administering the survey, it would be helpful to list possible responses in a separate index (mother, father, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, teacher, friend, neighbor, social worker, no one).

After you have mapped out what you believe to be all of the possible responses to your questions, you may find it helpful to conduct a trial survey with small test groups. This exercise is not designed to collect data, but to evaluate how your survey holds up when it encounters actual interviewees. To conduct the trial, you should administer your survey to a small group of randomly selected individuals (ten to twenty should be adequate). The actual data collected is not as important as respondents' understanding and impression of the survey. Your test group will help you to determine which questions are unclear, which questions elicit responses different from those you expected, if the length of the survey is appropriate, and if there is any data you require that is still missing after conducting the survey.

There are certain preconditions that must be met in order to make surveys more representative:

- You must clearly and accurately define exactly what population you plan to interview. In other words, make the definitions of orphans and vulnerable children operational, as these can be open to different interpretations²².
- You must also clearly and accurately define the geographic area that is to be covered by the survey. One aspect of geographic coverage that is of particular relevance when dealing with orphans and vulnerable children is where exactly surveys will be administered. Most of the surveys currently in use rely on households, but this is not the only place where orphans and vulnerable children are found. Orphans are especially likely to be found outside the home in urban areas, where the number of street children is steadily increasing. Relying on households only in a situation with street children will lead to under estimation of the prevalence of orphans.

Designing Questionnaires

The first thing to do before you begin designing your questionnaire is to write down all of the information that you need to collect. Then, group this information by themes or by questions that seek more or less the same answers. When you are sure that you have all of the information that you want from your respondents, you may then go about drafting your questions.

²² Guidance for making definitions operational can be found in Appendix I.

Here is a list of things to avoid when coming up with research questions. This list is not exhaustive but includes the most commonly made mistakes

- Avoid loaded or leading words or questions that strongly suggest a response. Examples include: "HIV/AIDS is caused by sexual promiscuity, do you agree?" or, "Are you often hungry?" Also, strong words that represent control or action introduce bias. Phrases to avoid include "you must," "you have to," "you should have," etc.
- Double-barreled questions that are essentially two questions asked in the same sentence. For example, "What are the types of food that your family eats and where do they come from?"
- Confusing or unfamiliar words. For example, "How many CABA are in this household?" CABA is not a common word and might therefore confuse the interviewee.
- Non-directed questions, which give respondents excessive latitude. For example, "What do you think about the HIV/AIDS pandemic?"
- Non-specific questions. For example, if your program has 5 different interventions and you ask, "What are your thoughts on this program?" You have not specified exactly which initiative you are asking about or what it is you want to know about that initiative.
- Mutually non-exclusive response categories where no clear choices can be made. For example, "How often do you attend the skills-transfer workshops? Once a week, more than once a week, three times a week, less than five times a week." A respondent who attends the workshops twice a week would have to choose between two equally correct options.
- Non-exhaustive listings that do not include all of the possible answers. For example, "How do you earn a living? Teacher, farmer, gifts from neighbors." It is possible that the respondent earns their living through a form of work not listed in the potential responses.
- Long questions. Long questions are more likely to confuse the respondent and affect the quality of the answer. For example, "The school feeding initiative began in 2002 in response to a demonstrated need from the community. The initiative is designed to give a supplementary food ration to all children attending school X so as to prevent malnutrition within school aged children, thereby increasing school attendance and the academic performance of children attending school. To date, the initiative has served over 20,000 children. Is your child enrolled in the school feeding program, and if so, what are your opinions of the initiative's goals, methods, and impact?"
- Do not overload your interview schedule. Ask only relevant questions and avoid asking questions that are of no value to your study.

After you have written your well-crafted questions, avoiding the above pitfalls, it is time to organize the questionnaire's structure. The questionnaire should use the "funnel" approach, wherein you ask the general questions first in each theme/category and then go on to ask about the specifics. Sensitive issues should not be asked first, but should instead be placed near the end of the questionnaire. The same is true of questions related to certain sensitive

demographic information. Beginning an interview with invasive questions about the interviewee's wealth, family, etc. is not a good way to establish rapport.

Working with Communities: Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Research with Children

Organizations must take steps to ensure that informed consent with children goes beyond what is traditionally considered necessary for review boards. Because of the nature of our children's programming, communities must be the entry point for conducting research with children. Using appropriate and culturally relevant channels also allows for greater ownership of the research process and results.

In a recent nationwide study on the coping strategies of children in Zimbabwe, CRS/STRIVE assisted its partners in developing research protocols for informed consent. These are specific registers of people and institutions from whom partner staff and field officers must receive expressed permission before they enter a community to collect data from children. The individuals and organizations included in the registers range from district to the family level. These "gatekeepers" e.g. chiefs, ministry representatives, school authorities, etc., were helped to understand the objectives of the research and all that it entailed, which was especially important in Zimbabwe's current political and economic climate. Because organizations often have a standing relationship with these influential community members, these research protocols are as important for public relations as they are for gaining access to children. While STRIVE partners had informally used these channels before, using research protocols in a formal manner actually benefited them by providing opportunities to create additional linkages in their programming.

Most importantly, using these protocols assists organizations to follow-up with children as part of fulfilling our moral obligation to support children at risk. Because the relevant stakeholders and service providers to children are co-opted from the beginning, organizations are able to better provide follow-up assistance and referrals through these channels when enumerators uncover any cases of abuse or severe vulnerability.

Finally, taking the time to identify and inform these important "gatekeepers" also creates vital dissemination channels for the results and findings of the study. Because research to understand the situation of children is crucial to protecting children's rights, sharing the study's findings with identified community members also acknowledges their duty-bearer role and informs their decisions on how best to develop and advocate for services to fulfill children's basic rights.

Training and Support for Data Collectors

Data collectors play an important role in getting information from respondents, so it is important that they are well trained and know their role in the field. They are OR's ambassadors. During training, the following points should be emphasized:

- Introduce yourself in a clear and courteous way and explain the reason that you want to interview the person.
- Ask the question as it is worded on the questionnaire. This minimizes the room for misinterpreting the question.
- Write down the respondent's exact answer to open-ended questions. This helps in analysis, as the respondent's exact train of thought is captured instead of the interviewer's interpretation. There have been instances in which post-interview analysis reveals that data collectors have indicated exactly the same response for multiple respondents. Such a situation introduces significant doubt as to whether the answers are those of the respondent or the interviewer's interpretation.
- Isolate the respondent during the interview. If other people are available politely ask to be excused so that you can administer the questionnaire. Conducting interviews while other people are around affects how the respondent answers, especially with sensitive issues related to sexuality and economic status.

Basic do's and don'ts – Instructions that should be given to data collectors during the briefing session.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do follow the instructions in the body of the questionnaire.• Do approach the respondent in a relaxed and confident manner.• Do tell the respondent truthfully how long the interview is likely to take.• Do make the respondent understand that his/her opinions are valuable.• Do stick to quota control and sampling instructions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't let the respondent read the questionnaire unless it is designed for self-completion.• Don't interview a respondent who is not co-operative.• Don't omit the required visual checks.• Don't put words into the respondent's mouth.• Don't give your own point of view on any subject.• Don't leave any questions unanswered.

Gaining Access to Communities

Because of the nature of community-based programming, it is absolutely necessary that communities be the entry point when conducting research with children. Using appropriate and culturally relevant channels also allows for greater ownership of the research process and results.

Many organizations working with children find it helpful to develop research protocols for informed consent. These protocols are registers of specific people and institutions from whom staff and field officers must be given express permission before they enter a community to collect data from children. The registers include individuals and institutions from the district to the family level. These “gatekeepers” e.g. chiefs, ministry representatives, school authorities, etc., are then helped to understand the objectives of the research and all that it entails.

Because many implementation partners have standing relationships with these influential community members, using research protocols can be as beneficial for public relations as it is for gaining access to children. While implementation partners may have informally used these channels before, formalizing research protocols offers the opportunity to create additional linkages in programming.

Most importantly, using formal research protocols will assist implementation partners in following up with children who are at risk. Because the relevant stakeholders and service providers for children are involved from the beginning of the research process, it becomes much easier to provide follow-up assistance and referrals through these channels when enumerators uncover any cases of abuse or severe vulnerability.

Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Qualitative research methods are designed to help build an in-depth picture of how sample populations function, what the key relationships are, and how different aspects of their lives are linked together. They also reveal how the children understand their own situation and problems, and what their priorities are.

Once you determine that you want to collect qualitative data, you have a variety of options available to you. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and you will need to carefully consider exactly what type of data you need to collect, how much time you have to do it, what resources (both financial and human) are available to you, and how accurate your data must be before you select your qualitative data collection method. Potential options include direct observation, semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews, community group interviews, and focus group discussions. Each method is described in the following section, beginning with the least comprehensive method and moving to the most comprehensive data collection technique.

Direct observation

This method uses a detailed observation form to record what is seen and heard at a program site. The information may be about ongoing activities, processes, discussions, social interactions, and observable results. Direct observation is a quick, relatively cheap, and easy means of collecting data. It is, however, highly prone to observer bias and error, and provides a much less complete picture than other qualitative methods.

Semi-Structured Interviews

A checklist related to a subject of interest is used. This is a flexible tool that must be used systematically in order to produce valid results. The following are guidelines that should be used when conducting a semi-structured interview:

- The interviewing team should consist of two to four people of different disciplines.
- Begin with the traditional greeting and state that the interview team is here to learn.
- Conduct the interview informally and mix the questions with discussion.
- Be open minded and objective.
- Let each team member finish his or her line of questioning (Do not interrupt).
- Carefully lead up to sensitive questions.
- Assign one note-taker.
- Be aware of non-verbal signals.
- Avoid leading questions and value judgments.
- Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no.
- Individual interviews should last no longer than 45 minutes.
- Group interviews should last no longer than two hours.

Key informant interview

This method utilizes a series of open-ended questions posed to individuals selected for their knowledge and experience in a topic of interest. Interviews are qualitative, in-depth, and semi-structured. They rely on interview guides that list topics or questions.

Community group interview

Through this method, a series of questions and facilitated discussions are conducted in a meeting open to all community members. The interviewer follows a carefully prepared questionnaire.

Focus group discussion

An FGD is an exploratory research tool. Focus groups should be kept to a manageable size, include people with similar demographic characteristics, and need to be thoroughly planned and coordinated. They are an extremely effective and comprehensive means of gathering qualitative data.

- FGDs provide descriptive information, not numbers and figures.
- The "Focus" in Focus Group Discussion describes the importance of focusing on a few key related issues.

- FGDs provide in-depth insights and understanding of motivations and perceptions. They explore knowledge, beliefs, concerns, and attitudes.

Step 1 - Clarify your objectives

- What is your overall purpose in conducting the focus group discussion?
- What do you want to learn from the focus group? Think in terms of missing information and problematic issues. Then define your objective/s, where possible, to address those issues.

Step 2 - Select participants

- The best size for a focus group is somewhere between 6 and 8 individuals. Any number above 10 becomes hard to manage in a focus group situation. Invite the maximum number to allow for people dropping out.
- Select participants who fit the desired categories (such as age, gender) that correspond to answering the research objectives you have identified.
- Participants should be of a similar background and social class as they are more likely to talk freely if they feel comfortable with other members of the group. For example, this is especially true for discussions about sex and sexuality where groups might only feel comfortable talking in same sex groups.

Step 3 - Make practical arrangements

- Inform the participants of the date, place, and time of the meeting and arrange transport or child-care if necessary and if possible. Explain what the meeting is about.
- Choose someone to facilitate the group. The facilitator is the key person in ensuring the group's success. The person you choose must have good verbal communications skills, have knowledge of what is being discussed, and must be able to lead and guide the conversation in a subtle manner.

Step 4 - Prepare for the discussion

- Prepare an agenda as a reminder of the main issues to be discussed. Agendas should always include introductions, an explanation of the purpose of the meeting, and a set of five or six questions based on the objectives that you have already clarified. Order the questions you want answered to allow for the discussion to flow smoothly.
- Prepare methods/tools to be used in conducting the FGD, such as:
 - o A Discussion Guide e.g. a written discussion guide prepared in advance that meets the research objectives. (Note that during the discussion, other questions may arise that go beyond the discussion guide.)
 - o An interactive dynamic such as mobility mapping, force field analysis, etc. These activities help to relax participants and extract more candid information.
- Be selective about the types of questions you ask. Prompting or close-ended questions will give short answers, whereas probing or open-ended questions will give longer, more thoughtful responses.
- Decide in advance how you will record the discussion. Will it be taped or videotaped? Will there be a minute taker?

- Prepare refreshments for participants.

Step 5 - Manage the discussion.

- Introduce yourself, and explain the purpose of the focus group discussion. Assure participants that their contribution is valued and important. Remind people that you want to hear their opinions - you are not looking for 'right' answers to questions. The focus group is not a test.
- Explain how the discussion will be recorded e.g. notes, tape, video. Check that everybody feels comfortable with this.
- Agree on ground rules that help ensure that all participants can make useful contributions. One of the most important ground rules is that participants demonstrate mutual respect by allowing others to speak without judgment.
- Ask participants to introduce themselves in order to create some familiarity.
- Ask general questions to start with and then work towards more specific issues.
- Consider asking participants to write down their "gut" answers to questions before discussion starts. (Before doing this, discreetly inquire whether everybody in the group is able to read/write.)
- Try to ensure that everyone participates and that no one is unduly influenced by anyone else in the group. In some groups, dominant people emerge - if you notice this happening, try to involve other people by addressing questions to them directly e.g. "Let's just go round the room and hear what everybody else has to say about this." Use the agenda to help focus the discussion.
- Don't be afraid of silence. A pause can often encourage people to speak or expand on an idea.
- Summarize the discussion at the end but try not to pass judgment or give an opinion.
- Two hours is the maximum time for a discussion.

Step 6 - Use the information.

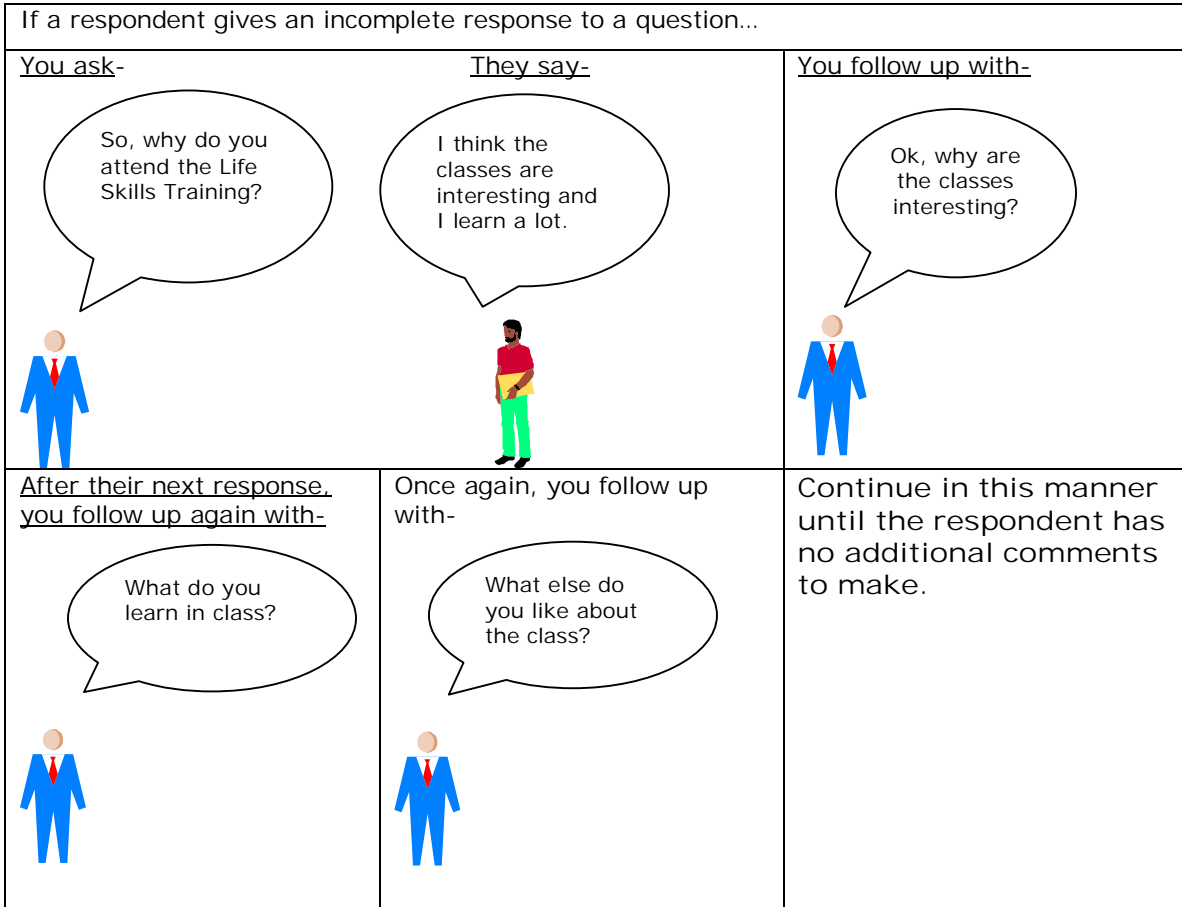
- Analyze the record of the discussion and try to summarize information under the objectives that you defined at the start of the process. In some cases, it may be necessary to separate out what people said in the meeting from your impressions of their beliefs and thoughts, based on non-verbal communication etc.
- Share your findings with all stakeholders. Feed back information into the wider assessment process by the means agreed in Step 1.

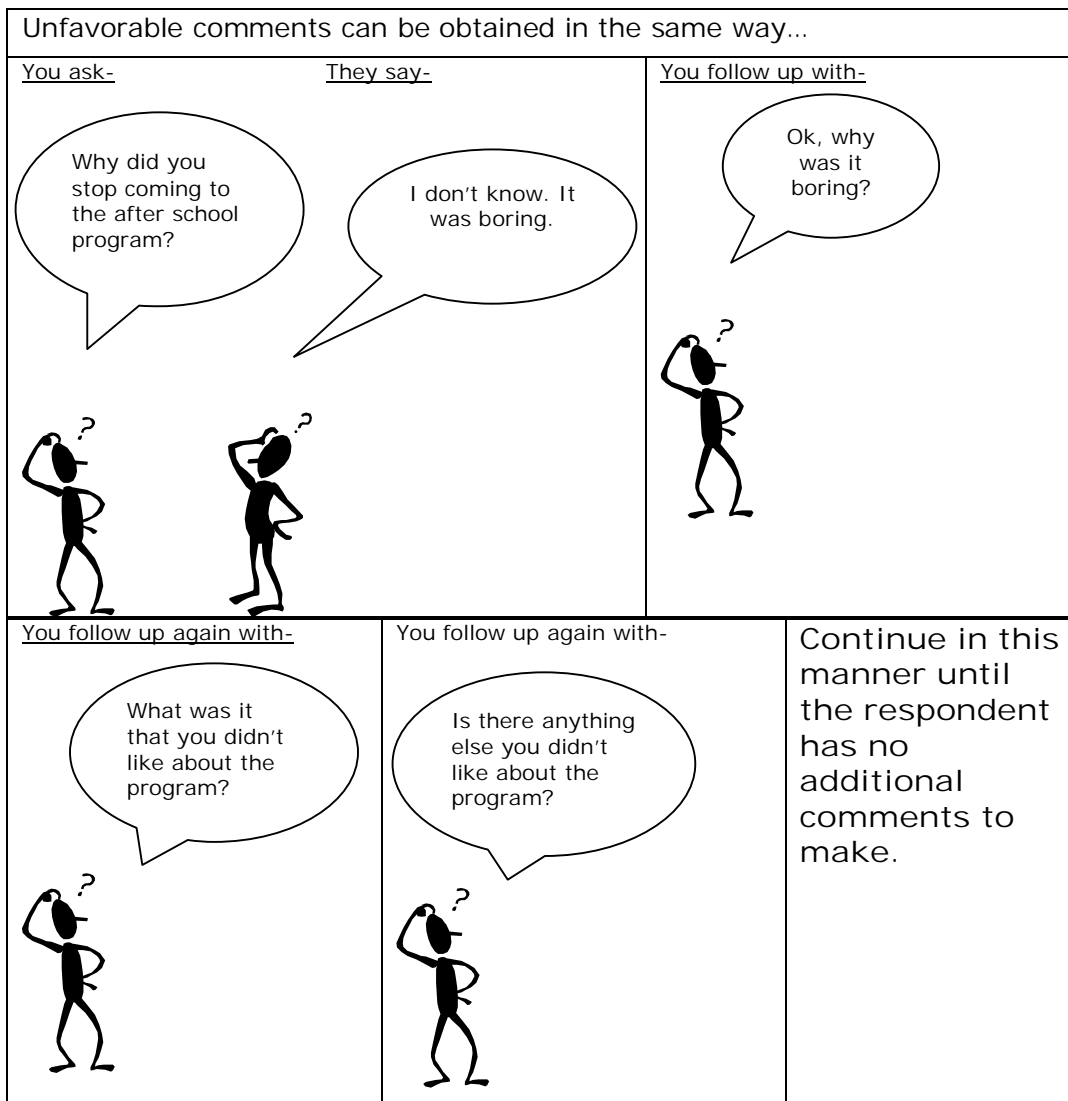
Remember that focus groups are a forum for a small group of people drawn from your target audience to speak to you directly. They can provide useful qualitative information, which can then be used to confirm quantitative research numbers or suggest where there might be deficiencies in quantitative data. For these reasons, you may want to consider your findings from focus group discussions in conjunction with other assessment and evaluation activities.

Techniques that are helpful in obtaining qualitative data

- *Following up*

When obtaining the respondent's attitude or opinion about a program process, make this attitude or opinion complete by giving the respondent a chance to tell you everything he/she thinks about the program process. Using "follow up questions" does this.

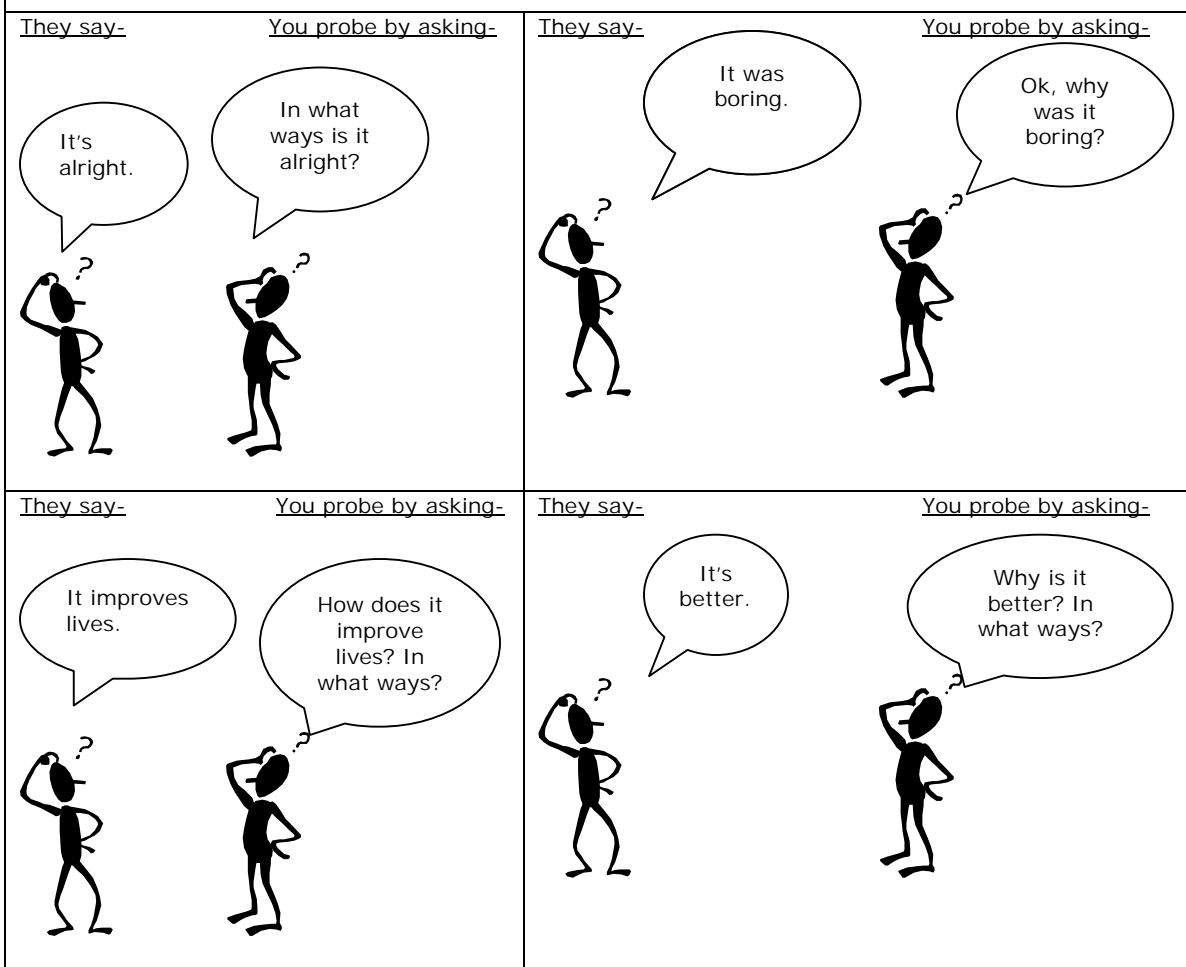




- Probing vs. Prompting*
 While it is important to never accept vague statements in answer to follow up questions, it is equally important to avoid prompting children to give the "correct" answer. The interviewer must therefore walk a fine line between probing and prompting.


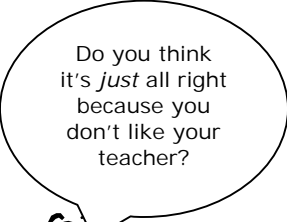

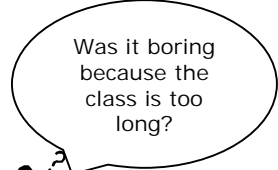

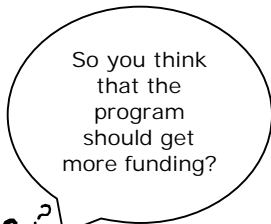

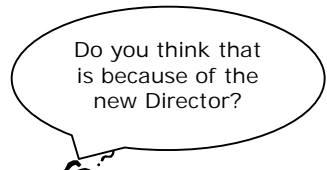
Probing is important because phrases such as "it's alright," "it's improving our lives," "it's better," etc. are not particularly useful to a program manager who wants to know the program's specific positives and negatives. Program personnel want to know about intended and unintended program outcomes and how they can address them. Through probing, the interviewer can expose underlying causes and motivations that will be of greater use to program managers.

Examples of follow up questions that utilize probing include:



The phrase you use to probe can vary; the important thing is to repeat the actual incomplete word that the respondent used, stressing it so that the respondent understands just what you want him or her to explain.

Prompting, on the other hand, significantly degrades the quality of data. When prompting, the interviewer responds to unclear answers by following up with questions that are phrased in such a way as to suggest a "correct" answer. Prompting corrupts data because the information collected is biased by the opinions of the interviewer.

Examples of follow up questions that incorporate prompting include:			
<u>They say-</u>	<u>You prompt by asking-</u>	<u>They say-</u>	<u>You prompt by asking-</u>
 It's all right.	 Do you think it's <i>just</i> all right because you don't like your teacher?	 It was boring.	 Was it boring because the class is too long?
 It improves lives.	 So you think that the program should get more funding?	 It's better.	 Do you think that is because of the new Director?

Sampling

But what if you want to collect information about a segment of the population and that group is either too large, elusive, or geographically dispersed for you to locate and interview every member? In this situation, which is not at all unusual when working with children, you can utilize a technique called sampling to overcome logistical difficulties. Sampling consists of selecting a certain number of representative members of the population and taking their responses as being typical for those members you were unable to interview.

Sampling of orphans and other vulnerable children presents a significant challenge, especially if subjected to scientifically rigorous standards. If children are not attending school or are living on the streets, it becomes significantly more difficult to locate and interview them. The constantly expanding numbers of orphans and vulnerable children mean that even if you are able to locate and interview all of the orphans and vulnerable children in your targeted area, the data will rapidly become outdated. Furthermore,

there are basically three categories of orphans requiring independent sample surveys. There are: 1) orphans in households; 2) orphans residing in institutions and other group quarters; and 3) homeless orphans, especially street children.

One way to get around some of sampling's more significant difficulties is to engage the community being served as much as possible. The community will aid in identifying children and advising of any change in their status. Another possible approach is to use a variety of sampling techniques, so as to ensure that no group of children is overlooked. There are quite a few different sampling techniques, all of which can be divided into two principal categories: Non-scientific and scientific sampling.

Non-Scientific Sampling

As the name suggests, non-scientific sampling does not provide scientifically accurate information. Though the information collected by non-scientific sampling can tell you very significant things about specific segments of a population, it is not reliable enough to be generalized to the population as a whole. In technical terms, an investigation's internal validity is not compromised by non-scientific sampling, but its external validity is severely compromised. The effectiveness of non-scientific sampling is hampered by the introduction of researcher and systematic biases. The primary advantages of non-scientific samples are that they are generally much easier to carry out than scientific samples and they can provide detailed information about targeted populations. The most common non-probability sampling methods are convenience, judgmental, and snowball sampling.

- Convenience Sampling – this is a sample in which cases are selected from those that happen to be available at a given time and place. If you want to conduct a survey of secondary school boys and you work at an after school program for secondary school students, you might draw a convenience sample from boys attending the program. As the name suggests, it is useful because it is convenient and requires less time than other types of sampling.
- Snowball Sampling – this is a special type of convenience sampling. It occurs when people (cases) who have agreed to be interviewed recommend acquaintances to be interviewed as well. The recommended acquaintances share the same characteristics as the original respondents. For example, if you determine that the sample size obtained from interviewing boys at the after school program is insufficient, you might ask each boy interviewed at the center to recommend two friends who do not attend the center. These additional two boys, might, in turn, recommend more potential interviewees.
- Judgmental Sampling – the sample taken is deliberately chosen in order to provide specific information about a specified population. Judgmental samples are useful when conducting market research studies. For

example, if you were attempting to design a t-shirt for a program that is targeted at adolescent girls, you might conduct an FGD with a group of girls between the ages of twelve and 18. If the target group was single, adolescent mothers, you might further restrict selection criteria to include only girls with at least one child. The information collected from the group will not be indicative of the opinions of society as a whole. Instead, it will be heavily biased in favor of the opinions of single, adolescent mothers. This bias is desirable because that is the population targeted by the initiative.

Scientific Sampling

While non-scientific sampling can provide valuable information about specific sub-sections of a population, it is sometimes desirable to gather information about an entire population. In these instances, scientific sampling offers a way of collecting data that can be generalized, while maximizing external validity. Scientific sampling randomly selects a broad sample of members of an entire population, thereby ensuring that all members have an equal probability of being selected. Scientific sampling eliminates the selection bias of non-scientific sampling.

Sample Size

The size of the sample is determined by whether the survey is combined (examines the overall situation of all children, both vulnerable and non-vulnerable children) or stand-alone (examines the situation of a specific subset of children: orphans, vulnerable children, non-orphans, adolescents, girls, etc). A combined survey will require a larger sample size than a stand-alone survey. This is partly due to the fact that orphans still comprise a tiny portion of most countries' children, notwithstanding the rapid expansion occurring as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Sample size is also smaller for the estimation of the orphan population than it is for a survey on orphan characteristics, because the former is only meant to estimate the number of orphans in a population, while the latter requires a detailed analysis of different sub-categories such as gender, age, and nature of orphan-hood.

Working with Research Advisory Boards

In order to gain an outside perspective on the quality of your data, you may find it helpful to enlist the assistance of a Research Advisory Board. A Research Advisory Board is made up of a group of experts in varying fields relevant to children. These people are able to provide feedback on your program's research agenda, processes, and results.

CHAPTER 7- Working With Children

There are issues unique to child programming which need to be addressed for successful implementation of projects targeting children. There is a disturbingly common assumption that only adults know what is right for children. More often than not, children have been allowed to speak but were not heard because people were not paying attention. If your program wants to deliver effective, sustainable responses to the challenges faced by children, it is vital that this assumption be discarded, and children be allowed to play a part in determining their own destinies.

Active participation

The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have a right to express their views and to be listened to. Operations Research wants to know lessons learned in programs, and there is no better way to learn than from the intended beneficiaries. At the same time, researchers must make specific adjustments when using conventional research methodology/tools, such as questionnaires and interviews, with children, taking into account considerations of language, interview length, and sensitivity of topics discussed. In order to facilitate active participation while maintaining sensitivity to children's special needs, you may wish to incorporate some of the following techniques into your M&E and OR activities when working directly with children:

- The facilitator should communicate a genuine desire to listen to what children and young people have to say. Consider training a young person to be the facilitator so that children will feel more comfortable.
- Explain fully what participation in the activity involves and make sure that children are comfortable with their participation, other participants, and the environment or social situation. Children and young people may find it difficult to refuse when they are asked by adults to participate, or they may not understand that they can say no.
- Differences between children in terms of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion and family background *must* be taken into account when selecting participants for group activities. For example, including a six-year old in a focus group of 10-year olds will more than likely negate the participation of the six-year, old as s/he will not feel comfortable.
- Children and young people may feel more comfortable when participation occurs within the normal, everyday contexts of their lives, such as within school or with close peer groups.
- Recognize that developing trust and understanding between children and adults is essential and may take time. Children need to feel safe before trusting other people enough to talk openly.
- Consideration of language is especially important. Children express themselves in different ways than adults and it is therefore essential to

- understand the words that children use when they talk about the research topic.
- Children should be given enough time to think about exactly what it is they want to say.
 - Carefully observe how the children and young people act and behave in the monitoring activity. These non-verbal clues are very important to understand how children feel. Also, if they appear bored or restless, try an energizer or a fun activity to get them back on track.
 - The time given for any activity must be appropriate for the children's age. For example, a two-hour child forum is much too long for a group of ten-year olds²³.
 - No matter what M&E or OR activity you are conducting, you must find a way to make it interesting and fun.

Operations Research can be a key factor in protecting the fundamental participatory right of children to express their views in all matters related to their lives, in accordance with age and maturity. Participation, as one of the four general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, supports the idea that children should be listened to *and* taken seriously, as full persons deserving respect and dignity. Children's right to participation is especially key in involving them in the analysis and dissemination of your research findings, as you will want to make sure that your results make sense to the children you are serving.

Protecting Children

In order to protect and fulfill the rights of children, we, as researchers, must apply the concept of "do no harm" to our research with children. We have a responsibility to have higher standards than those of traditional academic review boards. Those with a deeper contextual understanding of issues surrounding children also must hold themselves to higher ethical standards when conducting research.

Following are some "rules" of research with children, which are intended to outline the basic responsibilities of researchers towards children.

- Respect children as individuals.
- Overcome power attitudes – create trust.
- Use communities as the entry point.
- Do nothing without permission.
- Listen.
- Do no harm.
- Be prepared to change.

Beyond Informed Consent

Steps in ensuring informed consent with children must go beyond what is traditionally necessary for review boards. Communities should be the entry

²³ Child forums take many different shapes and dimensions but the underlying principle is to give children a safe space in which they are given an opportunity to air their views.

point in conducting research with children. Involving appropriate and culturally relevant channels and adults in children's lives allows for greater ownership of the research process and results.

To this end, research protocols for informed consent should be developed. These are specific lists of people or structures in a given area from whom researchers must be given express permission before they enter a community to collect data from children, from the district to the family level. Most importantly, using these channels provides opportunities for follow-up with children, as well as fulfilling the moral obligation to help children at risk. This allows researchers to provide assistance/referrals if enumerators uncover any cases of abuse, acute vulnerability, etc.

Choosing Appropriate Enumerators

The selection and training of enumerators is vital in data collection with children. Enumerators must first have a shared sense of values with researchers and organizations, because who they are as people impacts the quality of data they will collect. You will want to ensure that children can trust your enumerators. An essential element of this trust consists in preparing researchers to minimize status/power dynamics and to deal with the emotional consequences that can occur when asking sensitive questions about painful subjects.

Addressing Expectations

Researchers must be prepared to deal with any raised expectations on the part of communities and children as a result of research activities. The children you work with and the communities in which they live may reasonably expect that if you have taken sufficient interest in them to conduct research, you will follow up that research with material assistance. Individuals who participate in the research process may expect compensation for their time. It is therefore important to clearly lay out the objectives and potential outcomes of your research to participants and the larger community before beginning to carry out your work. It would be particularly cruel to give false hope to vulnerable children and then to simply walk away once you have achieved your objectives.

Research with Children - A Balancing Act

No research team will have all of the answers when it comes to conducting research with children. In fact, there are certain issues that you will have to grapple with throughout the research process. Here are some additional issues to consider:

- How will you understand, internalize, and operationalize the "best interest" of the child and "do no harm"?
- How can you operationalize children's rights, especially the right of participation, in the research process?
- How can you balance the time and effort required for engaging all relevant stakeholders versus ensuring enough time for participation of children themselves?

- How will you determine who is present when conducting research with children? How will you balance privacy/confidentiality/openness with making sure that children are comfortable and do not feel vulnerable? When is it appropriate to utilize locations where adults cannot overhear?
- How do you balance allocating adequate time to working with each individual child versus fulfilling a scientific sample size?
- How can you avoid sensationalizing children's issues with your findings while at the same time raising awareness?

In summary, what is the single most important thing to remember when conducting research with children?.....

CHILDREN DO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS!

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APPENDIX I- DEFINITIONS

These are working definitions for terms that are common in programs dealing with vulnerable children. However, it should be noted that different communities might define these terms differently. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that the researcher and the targeted community have the same understanding of these terms. The terms should also be used with care, so as to avoid stigmatizing vulnerable children. While acronyms such as "OVC" and "CABA" may facilitate internal discussions, there is a danger that if these terms are used when interacting with the public, people will begin identifying individual children as being an OVC or a CABA, further dehumanizing an already marginalized population.

Child

A person below the age of 18 years

Youth

A person aged between 10 and 24 years

Orphan

A child who has lost one or both parents through death and is under the age of 18 years

Children Affected By AIDS (CABA)

These children fit into any one of the following criteria:

1. Double orphans who have lost both parents
2. Single orphans who have lost one parent
3. Children with parents who are chronically ill and the parents are unable to perform regular duties for at least three months.
4. Children living in families that are fostering orphans
5. Child-headed households
6. Chronically ill children

Non-CABA

Children not affected by AIDS.

Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)

These Children fit into any one of the following categories:

1. Double orphans who have lost both parents
2. Single orphans who have lost one parent
3. Children from extremely poor families
4. Abandoned children
5. Street children
6. Children with physical and mental disabilities
7. Children whose parent(s) is (are) mentally ill/addict(s)
8. Children from disintegrated families
9. Children whose circumstances make them more susceptible to abuse e.g. child laborers, girl headed households.

APPENDIX II- PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH MEASUREMENT TOOL²⁴

The following test offers a way of measuring the psychosocial health of children involved in PSS interventions. Your organization may use it as it appears here or adapt it to fit the particular needs of your intervention. The children interviewed should indicate their level of agreement to the following series of statements related to different components of psychological health:

1. *Stress and worry:*
"I feel stressed and worried."
2. *Feeling sad:*
"I am sad."
3. *Hopefulness for the future:*
"My future looks hopeless to me" or "I feel that life isn't worth living anymore".
4. *Self-esteem/self-worth:*
"I feel I am a worthless person."
5. *Self-perception of physical health:*
"I feel tired out and sick."
6. *Functioning/capability:*
"I have trouble doing the things I have to do in my life (school, work, etc.)."
7. *Internalizing behavior:*
"I want to be alone these days" or "I don't want to associate with people".
8. *Externalizing behavior:* "I get into fights" or "I do things that can get me into trouble."

Responses should then be rated on a four-point scale: 1=not at all, 2=no more than usual, 3=somewhat more than usual, 4=much worse than usual. (The scale should be presented in a pictorial format, like a type of thermometer gauge that is culturally relevant). If a child's total score is equal to or greater than 20, that child has an acceptable level of psychosocial health. If a child's score is below 20, that child's psychosocial health is inadequate.

It is recommended that local psychologists, other professionals who work with children, and children/adolescents themselves review the questionnaire to be sure of its linguistic and cultural relevance, and whether or not the items adequately capture children's concerns and priorities.

²⁴ This tool is taken from the *UNICEF Guide to monitoring and evaluation of the national response for children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS*