
LANGOCA M&E Framework

Implementation Guide

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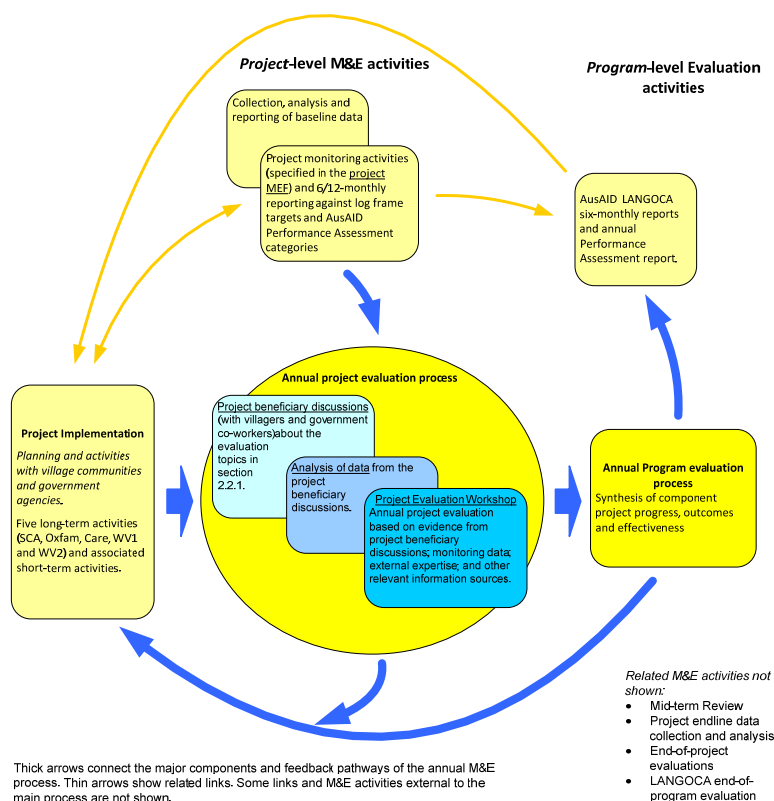
Section 1- An overview

What is the MEF?

The LANGOCA Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is a guide to help NGO projects improve the quality of their work by exploring what is working in their projects and by looking at how the projects are making real and long-term changes or impact on the lives of the people that they are aiming to help.

The MEF also provides a mechanism for project information to be summarised at Program level so that all stakeholders can see how the LANGOCA Program is achieving its goal. This is especially important when the different 4 NGOs within the LANGOCA Program all have different log frames which make it very difficult to aggregate information at the Program level.

The MEF adds a new layer to the existing log-frame based monitoring system. This additional component is an annual evaluation process based on consultations with beneficiaries. The annual process helps projects to focus on longer term change and impact, rather than just looking at the activities that are being done.



The MEF guides NGO projects through the annual evaluation process (shown in the central yellow circle). At project level, there are 3 main parts:

- Project beneficiary consultations
- Analysis of data
- Project Evaluation Workshops (PEW)

This MEF guide also explains how NGOs should prepare for the program level Annual Evaluation Workshop (AEW)

Why do we need to do beneficiary consultations?

Globally, both donors and NGOs are starting to look at impact more than before. It is agreed by many development professionals that there should be a stronger focus on delivering change in people's lives, not just delivering activities. All development agencies need to be more accountable to the communities that they are working with. This means that communities should be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the project. The MEF is designed to make sure that beneficiaries are involved in the evaluation of the project outcomes. Only the beneficiaries can really tell us what have been the positive and the negative effects of the project.

The beneficiaries are the people who will be affected by the project activities. Beneficiaries include:

- Villagers – (men, women, children, elderly, disable people, PLWHA)
- Local government officials – (Kum Ban Pattana, district partners)
- Provincial / National government officials

The local communities and government partners are the best people to tell you what and how things have changed. Local government authorities can provide important information on changes that have happened in the communities and changes in their own capacity to help communities develop. Local government officials are very important to talk to because:

1. They can see a broad picture of changes in the whole district (both project target villages and non-target villages)
2. They work with communities on a regular basis and so they can provide an interesting perspective, even though they may not be directly affected by the changes themselves.
3. They are part of the process of capacity building and so they can talk about:
 - a. Institutional changes in structure, policies, skills and knowledge
 - b. Individual changes in skills and knowledge

Most projects do not affect the lives of all the people in a community in the same way. The beneficiary consultations make it possible for projects to get lots of different views about how

the project has helped make changes in different people's lives. Think about how your project might affect these people differently?

1. Farmer with paddy land
2. Young unmarried woman
3. Older married woman with 6 children
4. Head of a village which is regularly at risk of flooding
5. Farmer whose land is contaminated by UXO
6. A woman with a physical disability

Beneficiaries can also help project teams understand the changes that have come from factors outside of the project,

- The road access has improved opening up new markets

Or changes that have happened because of the project that were not intentional,

- Successful livelihood activities has meant that additional income for men in the village has led to increased male drinking and violence against women

Section 2 – Conducting Beneficiary Consultations

Methodology

The beneficiary consultations are done through informal discussions/interviews with selected villagers. The project teams will conduct interviews and may work individually or in pairs. Some projects may prefer to conduct small group discussions instead of individual interviews but project teams need to be very aware of the challenges in conducting good quality focus group discussions.

Before starting the consultations, you need to be very clear about the type of information you are trying to collect and the methodology you are using:

You are:

- trying to get in-depth information on attitudes, ideas about how people's lives have changed
- trying to get a range of perspectives from different people
- asking open questions so that the respondents can talk freely and in-depth

You are NOT:

- trying to take a random sample of the population that has equal chance of being selected
- trying to make respondents information fit into pre-prepared tick boxes
- trying to count the responses to get statistics from the data (e.g. 60% of people think that water is the biggest change)

Individual Interviews or Focus Group Discussions (FGD)?

There are advantages and disadvantages to each method.

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Interviews	<p>You can talk with some of the most vulnerable village members who may not say anything in a larger group</p> <p>You get to hear their voice instead of someone else representing them</p> <p>You can make notes more easily when 1 person is speaking at a time</p> <p>You can really probe in depth and follow up on what they are say</p>	<p>Some people may feel shy and nervous to be ‘interviewed’ alone even if you make it very informal</p> <p>Some people may get stuck on the questions and not be able to think of what to say</p>
FGD	<p>Lots of ideas are generated as people follow up on each other’s ideas</p>	<p>It is very difficult to facilitate group discussions, to keep the discussion on track, and avoid it being dominated by more confident people (who also likely to be more powerful or better educated)</p> <p>It is very difficult to take notes when many people are speaking. You also have to note who is saying what because this is needed for the gender and power analysis.</p>

It is up to each NGO which method they use but it would be helpful to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages after you have done some initial data collection so you can make an informed decision about how to do it the next time.

Selection and sampling

The beneficiary consultations are an annual process. Each year you need to conduct interviews/discussions with different people from different target villages. This means you will need to decide how many villages and how many respondents in each village to talk to. You should consider these questions:

- How many villages and respondents do you think will be necessary for you to get a good understanding of change in your target area?
- How much data do you have time to analyse?

- Will selecting lots of villages necessarily give you more in-depth information or just more of the same?

Some qualitative evaluators decide to stop collecting data when there is no more new information or themes coming from respondents. This amount is often about 20 sets of interview data. In the first year of beneficiary consultations, each NGO did 4 or 5 interviews with people from 4 villages, making between 16 – 20 interviews of about 45-60 minutes each.

You should discuss with your project team if you think this was enough?

Think about your target villages and try to get a balance between:

- Villages near to the town
- Villages in remote areas
- Villages from different ethnic groups
- Villages where you have worked for many years and have a good relationship
- Villages that you have only been working in for one year or so

It is up to each NGO to decide on the best sampling for your consultations.

Planning and set up

The beneficiary consultations are best done while you are at a village doing another activity. This is because it can be done more informally and save you time. The consultations should not make too much additional work for your team and it should not cost you very much to do them.

- Permission

Although this is an informal discussion with community members, the information that villagers give you will be used by the NGO and shared with others. So, you must ask the respondents if it is OK to interview them. You must not start up an informal conversation without telling people first that you plan to use the information they give you for evaluation purposes. This would be unethical!

If you want to use a tape recorder, you must tell the respondents that you are planning to use it. You cannot have it hidden in your pocket or bag! You will also need to ask respondents if it is OK to take notes. Most people don't have any problems as long as you are clear and open about the reasons that you are doing it which is to try and improve the project.

- Explanation

Respondents would like to know what the purpose of the community consultations are. Be prepared to explain this briefly to them. This explanation will help to make people feel more comfortable and relaxed about answering questions.

- Atmosphere

It is very important to create a warm and friendly atmosphere. You might want to sit informally, on floor mats or on a veranda. Warm up questions about people's lives, their family and their work can also make people feel more relaxed.

- Location

It is really important that you are not interrupted by lots of onlookers. Try to find a quiet place where the respondents can give you their full attention.

- Gender

Make sure that female project staff conduct interviews with women. If this is not possible, your team will need to consider a range of issues – see section on Gender for more details.

- Thanking People

Make sure you thank all respondents. This discussion takes up a lot of their busy time.

Conducting the discussion or interview

The topics for discussion are detailed below. These questions are only a guide to the discussion and you don't have to follow them strictly. If the respondent has already covered a question before you ask it directly, you have to decide if it has been fully discussed or only partially. You might want to jump to the next question or go back and probe a bit more to see if there is some other aspect of the question that the respondent might want to talk about.

Here are some ways of getting more detail when you are interviewing:

- You just mentioned, can you tell me a bit more about that?
- Why do you think is the most important changes?
- Could you explain why you think that?
- Apart from ..., do you think there are any other ...
- What are some other examples of?
- Can you expand on that point?
- Can you give me some specific examples of what you mean and why you think that?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION WITH VILLAGE MEMEBERS

It is important that these topics are discussed with some of the poorest community members and separately with women and men where possible.

Question	Explanation	Things to Consider
1. Have there been recent changes affecting your household that have made your life better? ... or, made your life worse?	<p>This question is very open so that the project teams can hear different ideas about changes from different people. This question also is trying to capture information on both positive and negative changes.</p> <p>This question is also asking about recent changes (this should be within the last 1-2 years). It is also asking about changes within people's life.</p>	If the respondent describes a change such as 'a new road has come to our village', you need to ask a follow up question – 'So how has that affected your life?'
2. Which of these changes (from question 1 – you may need to list them) have been the most important in improving your life?	<p>This question asks the respondents to select which of the changes that they mentioned in question 1 has been the most important for improving people's lives. This question focuses on positive change.</p>	Also ask how these changes have improved things if it is not already obvious?
3. What has been the cause or the reason for the changes?	<p>This question asks beneficiaries to consider how and why such changes have come about. This question is very broad</p>	You may need to adopt a series of more direct questions to work towards an answer. For example: 'Has this change

	and the project teams are interested in hearing people's views about what the changes they are experiencing in their lives are mainly due to	come from other people? Has this change come from government this change come from nature / environment? Has any of this change come from the project? or policy?
<p>4. a. What kinds of "disasters" affect your village or your household?</p> <p>b. What do you do when {one of the local kinds of disaster} happens?</p> <p>c. Has this changed as a result of the project (i.e. what you do when {...disaster} happens)?</p> <p>d. How has it changed? (go through each kind of disaster mentioned in the same way)</p>	This question is asking the respondents to describe the situation in the village now in terms disaster and ways of coping with it, and comparing this with how the village used to cope with disaster at both community and individual levels,	Discuss this topic if it is appropriate for the LANGOCA project in this location and not answered already:
<p>5. a What do you do when there is a problem here with a UXO?</p> <p>b. Has the project done any activities about UXOs with you or other people in the community?</p> <p>c. Compared with earlier times, has the project made a difference to what you do about UXOs?</p> <p>d. What is the difference?</p>	This question is similar to question 4 because it asks respondents to consider changes at both community and individual levels. Project teams would like to hear about changes in the amount of UXO found, what people do when they find a UXO, how do respondents and other feel about the problem of UXO in their communities.	Discuss the topic of UXOs if it is appropriate for the LANGOCA project in this location and not answered already:

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION WITH DISTRICT GOVERNMENT STAFF AFFECTED BY LANGOCA ACTIVITIES

Question	Explanation	Things to consider
1. How has your work been affected by the project?	This question is very neutral and respondents can answer in either positive or negative ways	
2. Have there been changes in your own life because of the project eg. in your household or in your village? <i>Also ask ... If (and how) these changes have improved things if it is not already obvious?</i>	Not all district officials will live in project target villages but if they do, they can provide an interesting perspective on the project and its activities. If they don't live in a project target village, it is also interesting to see if the project is having any effect outside of the target area. This question can help you to see if the increased capacity of the district staff is having effects in non-target villages as well.	
3. How effective is the project in helping village people to strengthen how they can respond to disasters or other difficulties in the future? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the most effective kinds of activities that the project does? • What are the least effective things that the project does? 		
4. The project tries to use a strategy that combines work on Disaster Management and/or UXO with other community development and livelihood development activities. What do you think of this		You could prompt "What would you do differently?"

<p>approach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the strengths of this combined strategy? • What are its weaknesses? 		
<p>5. Since you have been working with the project, do you think that the ability of the district government to assist village communities has changed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the ways it has changed? • What do you think of the changes 	<p>This question gives the respondent the opportunity to talk about some of the following for themselves and within their department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New and improved skills • New methods of working / organisational structures • New policies • Changes in technical capacity • Improvements in coordination mechanisms • New or improved approaches to working with communities • Better understanding of how poverty and livelihoods or disaster and poverty are linked together <p>You do not need to ask about every one of these areas, but they may be useful as prompts if the respondent gets a bit stuck.</p>	

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION WITH PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT STAFF

(Where appropriate, i.e. where they have been directly engaged with the project)

It may be appropriate for discussions with national government staff to be conducted by Project Managers or Program Directors

Question	Explanation	Things to consider
<p>1. How effective is the project in helping village people to strengthen how they can withstand disasters or other difficulties in the future?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the most effective kinds of activities that the project does? • What are the least effective things that the project does? 		
<p>2. What do you think about the main project strategy that combines work on Disaster Management and/or UXO with other community development and livelihood development activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the strengths of this combined strategy? • What are its weaknesses? 		
<p>3. Do you think that the project is having an effect on the <u>capacity of government</u> (at all levels) to assist village communities to respond to disasters and</p>		

<p>UXO problems?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What have been its main effects so far?• Are there areas of capacity development for government staff that you think need more attention from the project?		
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Data collection and Storage

There are lots of different ways of recording data and each method has its advantages and disadvantages. Consider these different methods.

1	Interviewer records information on cassette tape
2	Interviewer asks questions and takes notes at the same time
3	Interviewer asks and listens, as soon as the interview is over they write up the notes
4	Two staff work as a team, one person interviews and the other takes notes

- Which would be best for your project situation?
- Which would be best for different types of respondents (older men and women, youth, single or divorced women, disabled people, young mothers)

Always spend 5 minutes immediately after the discussion/interview completing your notes whilst they are fresh in your mind, or if you worked in a pair, talk with your partner to fill in any gaps.

Data storage

- The information is important and must NOT be lost!
- Notes / transcript must be written up electronically and be saved in a separate document
- Each interview transcript should be given an ID number
- A summary page detailing who was interviewed (ID number) , where, when and who interviewed must be attached to the interview report by the person responsible.
- One person in your team will be responsible for keeping all data in a safe location

Are you new to the MEF? Find out who in your project team is responsible for collating and storing all beneficiary consultation data?

Data analysis

NGO Project teams will use a basic thematic analysis which involves looking for themes and patterns in the text of your data. In particular, you are looking for:

- Similar themes or topics between people's perspectives
- Differences between what people say
- Differences between what different groups/ types of people say
- Information that does not fit the patterns that you are generally seeing

One of the biggest difficulties in this type of analysis is trying to identify themes. See Exercise 3 for extra practice.

Conducting the analysis - Follow these 6 steps

1. Read through all the data from each interview in one village (everyone should read everything – not only the interviews they personally did)
2. Work in teams to identify themes and topics. Write each topic or theme on a separate piece of paper with the ID numbers to help you sort them in different ways. Compare your pieces of paper (There should be quite a lot of discussion about this, and it will help you to be clearer about how to group together the information from the data)
3. Do this process for different villages
4. Summarise the key themes by village
5. Reanalyse using a gender and power lens. Divide your data from all villages into two groups, i) the most vulnerable women ii) head of the village and members of village committee, to see what the themes from each group can tell you about the way different groups in society experience change or impact from the project
6. Add these findings in to your summary

Reporting and Writing up Qualitative findings

Try to keep the following ideas in mind:

- You are trying to get rich and deep data to help you see how some people have benefited from the project
- You are not trying to express your findings in numbers or percentages
- You are not trying to prove anything; you are trying to understand how people perceive change in their village

Here is an example of a summary of the consultation findings from one village:

Generally people described positive change to their income levels which were attributed to project activities. However, the consultations showed some discussions about negative changes as a result of changes in income. These were mostly around gender relationships. Many people in the village felt that there was an increase in confidence to try new things and to be prepared. It also seems that some of the community feel that the benefits are not fairly shared and that some people may be excluded or find it hard to take up the opportunities that the project creates. It was interesting to hear that land clearance had an unintended effect of creating a problem between neighbours about fencing and livestock access. Villagers clearly expressed that the risks of UXO for themselves and their children had reduced.

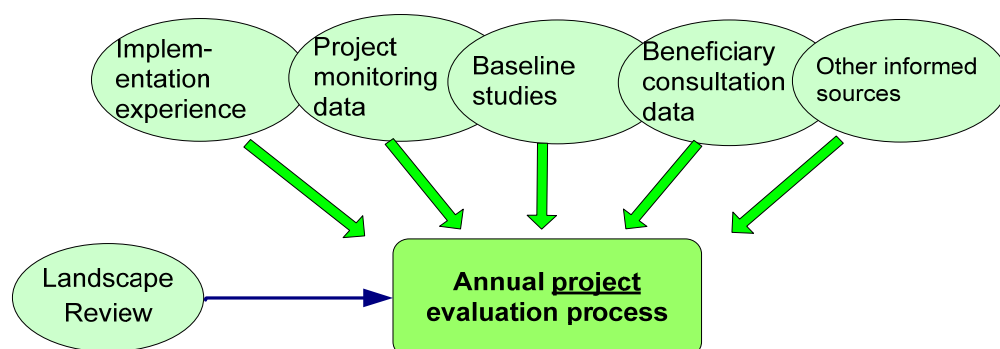
This section highlights how you can report on what people *think, perceive* and *feel*. This short summary above describes *ideas and issues*. It doesn't try to measure the ideas, so you cannot say '3 out of 5 people said they felt the project had negative effects'. You cannot also state that 'people have less risk than before' you can only report that 'people feel/ believe that their risk is lower'.

The findings from all village consultation should give the project teams a strong understanding of the issues and a good basis for synthesising evidence from a range of sources.

Section 3 – The PEW and AEW, Summarising and using the data

The process of summarising the evidence collected by the project takes place during the 2-3 day Project Evaluation Workshop (PEW). This workshop is facilitated by the Project Managers/Coordinators and can be held with selected government partners who are very familiar with the project. The ideal number of participants is between 8 & 12. Too many people will make it difficult to have good discussions and make clear conclusions about the outcomes of the project. The content of the PEW is guided by the 7 evaluation questions described in step 4 below

The aim of the PEW is to use the findings from the beneficiary consultations together with other sources of evidence to make well-supported conclusions about the project. This is shown in the diagram below. The team can use this information to assess the progress, outcomes and learning of the project.



Facilitating the PEW

Step 1: Start with beneficiary consultation data

Start with a key finding from the beneficiary consultation and then consider the other sources of data relevant to that finding – see diagram above.

- Are the findings of the beneficiary consultations are consistent with other data?
- Do other data sources validate and strengthen the findings of the beneficiary consultations?

The box below works through an example of how you might consider each piece of data in turn.

Key finding of the beneficiary consultations	Poor people have fewer opportunities to try new livelihood activities because they have less time and money to start something new and cannot afford to take risks if there are no guarantees of improved livelihood.
Baseline data shows:	The percentage of people classified as poor and the resources they have
Monitoring data shows:	How many people join project activities
Our own implementation experience shows:	We know that some of the poorest people in the village don't come to meetings and get involved in decision making about what livelihoods activities to trial because they are always in the upland rice fields or fishing

Step 2: Discussion

In your team, you should have some discussion about what this shows and what the implications of the findings are for the project. In the box below is an example of some discussion points that your team might come up with.

Discussion

The findings from the beneficiary consultations are consistent with the project implementation experience but the monitoring data only collects total number of participants but not who they are. The data from the beneficiary consultations shows that many women, single parent families and disabled people are not benefiting from livelihood activities that the project is doing.

Step 3a: Implications and reflective learning

Reflect on the discussion as a group. Ask the team this question

- What implications does this have for your activities and the way you are trying to implement the project?

The box below gives examples of some possible reflections and implications that your team might come up with in this situation.

1. The project may need to target the poorest and vulnerable groups more when setting up and designing activities.
2. The project could review the baseline data to check that the livelihood activities currently being offered are suitable for some of the poorest people and build on the resources they have available
3. The project may want to start to monitor participants more closely by poverty / wealth status
4. The project may need to consider different incentives and support to ensure that the poorest people don't have to bear the risk of trialling new activities
5. The project may need to consider how women are being targeted for livelihood activities

Step 3b: Revising activities and making a longer term follow up plan

After the PEW the team should revise and adjust activities and monitor if these adjustments are producing better outcomes. If after beneficiary consultations the following year, the same problems are seen in reaching the poorest and most vulnerable, the project must consider a review of the whole project approach or conceptual framework to check/ confirm that the underlying assumptions of the project are correct. Doing an annual evaluation process as described in the MEF helps the project to evaluate and reflect on an ongoing basis and not wait until the end of project evaluation to find out this essential information.

Step 4: Use the information and learning in steps 1-3 to work through the PEW Guiding Questions below:

1. What outcomes is the project achieving in the three domains of change described below. What have been the most significant changes so far? Why?

What have been the effects of the changes on beneficiaries?
2. Many projects do not result in sustainable outcomes. What has been done for each of these positive outcomes to strengthen the likelihood of them being sustainable?
3. Have there been unintended or unexpected outcomes so far? What have been their effects on beneficiaries?
4. What has the project learnt about facilitating effective community development that is integrated with disaster management and UXO management?

What have been the main success factors?

What have been the main obstacles and difficulties?
5. How has the project addressed:
 - a. Poor and marginalized people? What have been the outcomes?
 - b. Gender? What have been the outcomes?
 - c. People with disabilities? What have been the outcomes?
 - d. Environmental considerations? What have been the outcomes?
6. What other lessons have been learnt so far?

(Here, you might give consideration to: the effectiveness of the project's logic; the implementation process; the kind of outcomes so far and their quality; key stakeholder relationships; What aspects of the local context affected your results or the effectiveness of your project design? Has your project's approach been able to build on the existing strengths of your partner organizations and individuals with whom you work? How?)
7. From the results of your analysis, what Ideas, suggestions or recommendations can you put forward for strengthening the project design; its implementation and its outcomes?

Domains of change

1. **Change in individual or household living conditions:** Has there been improvement in livelihoods (e.g. reduced food shortages; more money). Do the changes vary between different kinds of households (e.g. poor households)? Is it different for women, men, boys and girls? Is there evidence that disaster management and/or UXO management are improving?
2. **Change in the capacity of individuals, households or communities:** What are the changes in capacity that have contributed to these improvements in livelihoods, disaster management and UXO management? Is it different for women, men, boys and girls? To what extent can the changes be attributed to the project?

(Changes in capacity to act can be in individual knowledge, skills, or behaviour, as well as in more effective ways of organising e.g. improved village committees, regular village meetings, etc)
3. **Change in Government policies, capacity and practices:** In government agencies with whom the project works, what changes are evident in the policies, capacity and practices that may be affecting the access of community members to good health & sustainable livelihoods? To what extent can the changes be attributed to the project?

Step 5: Compile your working summary

During the PEW as you go through steps 1-4, each NGO should document your discussions, reflections and discussion of the 7 questions above. This will be your Working Summary. You can take this information from using flip charts and boards. This working summary is meant to provide supporting detailed to your Presentation at the AEW. It will provide additional detail that can be used during the first 2 days of the AEW and it can be used as a reference for the LANGOCA Program-level evaluation report (written by AusAID Consultant)

Step 6: Prepare your summary presentation for the AEW

The PEW summary will be the basis for a presentation about the project for the AEW and will also provide input for the LANGOCA Program-level evaluation report following the AEW.

AEW

The Annual Evaluation Workshop is a 2-3 days event which brings together project teams, NGO staff, partner organisations and other stakeholders to share their knowledge and experiences about the LANGOCA Program.

The main aim of the AEW is to review knowledge, experience and results gained from the LANGOCA component projects and each project's annual evaluation process and make a robust assessment of the overall effectiveness of LANGOCA.

Section 5 - Gender

Why is gender important when doing beneficiary consultations?

The beneficiary consultations aim to see what changes the project has made to the lives of the people. Any project will bring different benefits (and possible negative impacts) to different groups of people within a community. Men and women will not benefit in the same way from a project for many reasons:

- Men and women do different activities and so some activities may be promoted and supported by the project more than others
- Men and women have different ability and responsibility in different areas of life to make decisions
- Men and women have different education levels
- Men and women are not equally represented in local government and village authorities

Because of these differences, women are often disadvantaged in society. These are some of the reasons why women may not benefit so much from a project.

- Women's voice cannot easily be heard and so women are less involved in the planning/design of the project
- Women have less formal education than men because generally societies do not value educating women
- Women are less likely to be able to speak or read or write Lao
- Women are generally less confident and less experienced at speaking out in village meetings
- Women's role when greeting outsiders (like project team and local government officials) is to prepare food and ceremonies, rather than listen and make contributions in discussions
- Women's role is to stay close to the village, men generally travel to the market, to the town. This limits women's experience outside the village
- Women cannot make decisions about livelihood activities or money without consulting their husbands, their voice is often represented by their husbands
- Women who do not have a husband (single, divorced, widowed) are often not consulted because they have no man to represent them
- Women are not leaders in their community and are usually only consulted on women's matters
- Women's time is fully occupied with domestic work and contribution to livelihood activities

Women's subordinate role in society means that they are some of the poorest people in the village. They are also some of the most vulnerable e.g. women with many children, widows, separated or divorced women, young women and disabled women.

To assess the impact of the project, it is very important to talk directly with many different women in the village. Talking with women about changes in their lives can provide some very important information to help project teams plan and implement activities that are targeted to reach these poorest and most vulnerable. At a Program level, this information can help LANGOCA partners to know how well the program is contributing to the goal of reducing the vulnerability of the poor by integrating poverty reduction and cross cutting issues with disaster management and UXO approaches in Laos.

What aspects of gender do we have to consider when doing beneficiary consultations?

We have seen the ways many women are disadvantaged in society and how difficult it is to hear women's voices. When you are planning these beneficiary consultations, you will need to think through these issues and find the best solution for your situation:

- Selection: How do you make sure women of all kinds are selected for interviews?
- Language: How do you make sure you can understand what women are saying?
- Location: How can you make sure that women are free to talk in private and not distracted by children and other people?
- Comfort: How do you make women feel comfortable and confident to talk?
- Understanding: How do you ensure that women with lower levels of education can understand the questions as well as men?

Additional issues

If you are in the situation where a male project staff member is interviewing a woman, there are several protection issues you need to think about:

Women might feel uncomfortable or even threatened by having a discussion/interview with an unknown male. It is important to make sure that this situation is not a problem for her.

- Respect her wishes if she doesn't want to talk
- Ensure that doors are open and not locked
- Inform her of your purpose and amount of time you will take
- Suggest a friend stays nearby or joins in the discussion if she looks uncomfortable.

Your own NGO should decide the policy for interviewing female villagers. Where possible ensure a female project team member interviews a woman.

Section 6 – Ethnicity

The LANGOCA Program works with over 10 different ethnic groups. These groups are different in many ways that might affect the project implementation and the impact the project can have on the lives of people in ethnic communities.

- a) Language: (spoken or written, familiarity with Lao language)
- b) Beliefs and practice: (sacrifice, birthing practice, divorce, land ownership traditional medicine etc.)

- c) Access to natural resources: (fishing, upland rice fields, paddy, forest and other productive land)
- d) Access to services: (distance from hospitals, schools and markets, acceptability of services to local people, openness of services to local people)
- e) History: previous relationships in times of war and social turmoil,
- f) Location: Remoteness from other people and from services, closeness to market to sell goods and services
- g) Relationships with other ethnic groups: trust and communication with other groups, people they can turn to in times of trouble such as famine, drought etc.

Work with a partner and discuss how these headings a-g above might affect the beneficiary consultations.

When you are planning and implementing your project it is very important to know as much as possible about the ethnic groups you work with. During the beneficiary consultations, a good understanding of the target ethnic group will help the team to:

- Know how to approach the villagers and access the people you want to talk to
- Refine the questions so that they will be well understood
- Know what issues to ask follow up questions
- Interpret and analyse the findings accurately

Gender and ethnicity working together

Look back at the lists of issues around both gender and ethnicity. Imagine you are ethnic women in one of your project target villages. Think of some way in which your project might or might not benefit you!

Might benefit	Might not benefit
e.g. Project put in new water systems which improves our children's health and they provided some posters with clear pictures so we could understand	e.g. Livelihood activities focus on livestock and women in our ethnic group are not given responsibility for large animals like cows
e.g. project has supported village health volunteers and traditional birth attendants to promote safer delivery and raise dangers of giving birth alone in the forest	e.g. Decisions about which land to clear from UXO were made by head of the village after consultation with villagers, but only men speak Lao so we could not participate.

Language is the biggest issue for the project team to deal with when working with ethnic groups. How does your project make sure that you can communicate with ethnic women at all times, during planning, implementation and evaluation?

Section 7 - Conclusion

This MEF Implementation Guide takes you step by step through the annual process of conducting beneficiary consultations, analysing and synthesizing the data and using it to make a robust assessment of effectiveness of LANGOCA. This guide gives field staff practical tips for how to collect data and what to consider when conducting the consultations. This guide will be periodically updated as the MEF is implemented and suggestions and lessons learned are added. If possible, this MEF Implementation Guide should be read in conjunction with the LANGOCA MEF Document. Section 8 provides four additional exercises to help field staff practice their skills in implementing the MEF.

Section 8 – Exercises

Exercise 1 – When Unexpected Things Happen

Unexpected problems always arise in research. Discuss with a LANGOCA colleague what you might do in the following situations:

1. The head of the village selects 4 people for you to interview (old/ young/men/ women) but they are all members of the village committee
2. You are talking to a woman and her husband or male relative comes to sit down and starts answering the questions or telling the woman what to think and say
3. In your team there are not enough female interviewers and so a male project staff member has to interview a young woman who looks very shy and nervous.
4. The respondent doesn't understand Lao language and you can't speak or understand their ethnic language
5. You are talking with a young mother. She has brought her baby with her and during the discussion she puts her child down in a dirty and potentially dangerous place. The child starts to cry because it is hungry and is not getting attention. You are only ½ way through the questions

When discussing these questions with a colleague consider these two questions?

- What could you do in advance to prevent this problem from happening?
- What can you do about it when it happens?

Exercise 2 - Leading Questions

Suppose that you want to find out from villagers what they think about the food distribution activities after the Ketsana emergency. Look at the two questions below. They are all trying to get the same answer, but one is a very leading question.

1. What do you think about the food distribution during the Ketsana emergency?
2. Do you think food distribution during the Ketsana emergency was honest and fair?

Leading questions:

- Are often closed yes/no questions
- Often contain words in the question that lead the respondent to think or answer in a certain way
- Make it difficult/ unlikely for the respondent to disagree

If you ask question 1 and you get the answer, “the food distribution was very fair and people received the amount they needed, then your answer has good validity because the question is open and neutral which allows the respondent to say what they feel.

If you ask question 2 and you get the same answer, it is likely to be because your question has led the respondent to think about only *honesty* and *fairness*. The most common answer to this kind of question would be “yes, the food distribution was fair”.

An even more leading question is this:

3. The food distribution was fair and equitable wasn't it?

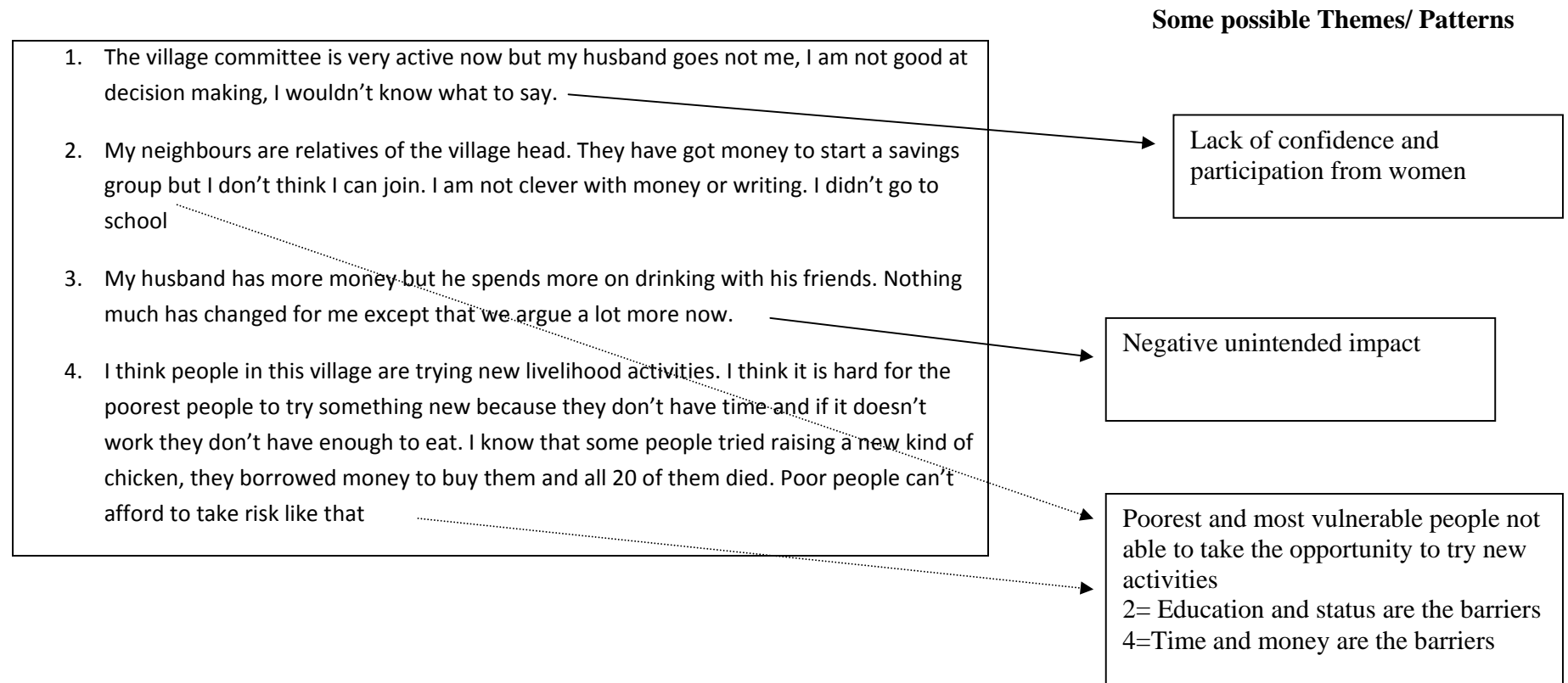
A leading question makes it easy for the respondent to agree even if it is not what the respondent really thinks. You should try to avoid leading questions.

Have a look at the example questions below and discuss why they are leading questions. Then try to improve them.

1. Was this training useful?
2. Do you think the new road is better than the old one?
3. Do you think the project has been successful?
4. Do you think that women in the village have more confidence than before?
5. Do you know more about disaster now than before the project started

Exercise 3 - Thematic Analysis

Look at this data from the beneficiary consultations and the themes/patterns that come out of the data



Look at this set of data. Try and find some themes/patterns.

1. The livelihood activities have helped some people in the village but my situation hasn't changed much
2. The biggest change is in the income I have. Now I can buy some better food for the children, we can eat meat 3 times per week now.
3. At the moment the biggest change is that prices are increasing and I don't have as much money as last year to feed the family.
4. Lots of the changes have come because the project has done activities that help us to discuss issues that affect the whole village.
5. The district staff listens to us more and we feel more confident to explain what problems or possible effect of a disaster might be in the village
6. I feel like the project has helped my family a lot to prepare for a flood. My house is on the river bank and now I know what to do

Exercise 4 – Summarising and using the data

Look at the following examples of data from all sources.

Example 1

Findings from beneficiary consultations	Both parents and children perceived the risk of UXO to children to be less than before because of their increased understanding of UXO and what to do if they find any
Data from baseline shows:	Children are at the highest risk of accidents because they don't know what they are or what to do when they find them
Monitoring data shows:	Gives numbers of Mine Risk Education sessions and activities held per village and number of children who attended IEC materials have been developed and field tested with children and the results of the field tests show that the materials were well understood
Your own project implementation experience	You have seen how active children have been in MRE activities and children have been asking you for more IEC material as they want to share this with their peers You have seen the posters displayed in school and the village notice board and over the past 6 months the posters have been well displayed and taken care of
Data from other sources:	Evaluation of UXO project with other NGO demonstrated good outcomes in risk reduction

1. Do you think that the findings from the beneficiary consultations are consistent with other sources?
2. What do you think are some of the implications for your project if you had data like this?

Example 2

Findings from beneficiary consultations	Prices of rice are increasing so that any benefits from other livelihoods activities has to be set against the price of rice
Data from baseline shows:	Didn't collect baseline data on this
Monitoring data shows:	Not part of routine monitoring data
Your own project implementation experience	You know this is true from you own experiences working and implementing a project in this area
Data from other sources:	From other Many outside sources confirm that this price rise is affecting the poorest villagers sources

1. Do you think that the findings from the beneficiary consultations are consistent with other sources?
2. What do you think are some of the implications for your project if you had data like this?