



Report on the Workshop for Civil Society Organizations: Fundamentals of Monitoring and Evaluation as a Tool for Measuring Progress

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United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
IHEC	The Independent High Electoral Commission in Iraq
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
RBM	Results-Based Management
PCOS	Precinct Count Optical Scanner
OEA	Office of Electoral Assistances
VRCs	Voter Registration Centers

SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance, with the operational support of UNOPS, organized a workshop on 28-29 May in Baghdad, bringing together the representatives of the 27 civic society organizations (CSOs) from 15 governorates of Iraq (excluding the CSOs from the Kurdistan region) to discuss the opportunities, challenges and best practices in using the M&E tool. This report covers the workshop's highlights and key insights and summarizes the discussions from the workshop.



Figure 1. Zarina Isakova, Consultant on M&E and CSO Engagement opening the first day of the workshop and introducing the agenda.

The Office of the Electoral Assistance seeks to enhance and empower the participation of the CSOs in the electoral processes and provide tools to ensure the sustainability and accountability of the CSOs. With this workshop, OEA provided a platform for the CSOs to understand, reflect and focus on the critical role the M&E tool plays in its management.

Objectives set for the workshop were:

- Understanding the main components of the results-based management and M&E tool.
- Analyzing the factors impacting the sustainability of the M&E system.
- Exchanging practical knowledge for improving the M&E system in the context of electoral support.

The workshop opened with the introduction of the Office of the Electoral Assistance (OEA) team and other organizing partners of the event as well as the primary objectives of the workshop. The facilitator, Zarina Isakova, Consultant on M&E and CSO Engagement, elaborated on the workshop's purpose for the civil society organizations in Iraq.

Three participants - Abbas Okab Ahmed from Baghdad Women Association, Ahmed Oday Suhail Alsalamien from Capacity Organization for Sustainable Development, Mohammed Hussein Ahmed from Al-Noor Foundation shared that they directly cover the M&E portfolio for their organizations.

Mr. Hoger Jato Sheikah from Shams Network for Elections Monitoring commented that due to the lack of a clear policy for establishing CSOs, the monitoring and evaluation process is carried out in different ways in different programs and organizations. Some of the organizations have a team of staff working on the M&E of the projects. In contrast, others have one staff, or the process of M&E is organized as higher staff monitoring and evaluating the lower ones. One of the essential duties of a manager is the M&E, as well as every member of the organization has a specific role in the M&E system according to his/her position in the structure

Mrs. Teebah Talal Hussein Al-Qaisi from Al-Teebah Organization for Relief and Development added common perception about the monitoring is that it helps to conduct an observation on the activities in accordance with the specific indicators and to follow up on the compliance of the performance with the indicators. While the meaning of the evaluation is to measure the performance and the deviation from outcomes to adjust.”



Figure 2. Hoger Jato Sheikah from Shams Network from Election Monitoring.

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The facilitator agreeing with both comments added that the essential mission of M&E is to serve the organization to achieve all proposed goals, whether implemented by one person or a team of M&E staff. The facilitator added that M&E ensures that we have the complete picture of our programmatic activities and are moving toward achieving our designed objectives. Facilitator mentioned the history of evolving the M&E tool and the main components of the M&E system for analyzing the factors that influence the system.

It was also clarified that the workshop is designed to look at the M&E tool from the perspective of those who oversee the M&E system as the senior managers, heads of the department, and support staff.

SECTION 2:

INTRODUCTION TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM AND KEY CONCEPTS

The facilitator opened this session with a presentation on the differences and complementary roles of monitoring and evaluation. While monitoring focuses on collecting the data, evaluation is focused on giving meaning to the data that leads to well-analyzed conclusions.

Facilitator also referred to the results-based management cycle, where the M&E tool sits as part of the system. The facilitator described the process of M&E more practically and referred to the logical framework and its components: outcomes, outputs, indicators, risk and assumptions, targets, baselines, etc.

Building up to the next session, the facilitator addressed the audience with a question about the essential purpose we pursue in implementing any project.



Figure 3: Suha Khalis Ibrahim from Women's Leadership Institute.

Suha Khalis Ibrahim, Women's Leadership Institute shared that the essential objective of any project is to create a specific change, either to find solutions to problems, tackle different challenges, or improve and build the capacities of individuals.

The facilitator supported the comment by saying that we are pursuing a specific change therefore, we first must specify the change we seek. At the same time, we must make sure as a team, we comprehend and accept this change in the same way, and it must be documented too. It is crucial in building our M&E system. This can be done through our theory of change. Further facilitator highlighted the role of the theory of change in result-based management, serving as the basis for the logical framework document.

Next, the facilitator discussed the difference between M&E and other programmatic audit processes. Participants provided the following comments.

Saad Jabbar Nima Al Batat from the Ain Network to observe Elections added that the evaluation must be conducted at different levels of project activities, including the organization policies and standards and ensuring their implementation at the administrative and operational level.

Mohammed Hussein Ahmed from Al-Noor Foundation, referring to the presentation, commented that auditing at any level and in any aspect can be considered as a crucial part of the program to achieve the objectives successfully.

Hoger Jato Sheika disputed saying that it is not necessarily that way. Some programs can succeed from financial and operational aspects, but they might need strategic evaluation to monitor the indicators required for objectives achievements. As a result, an audit is considered part of the process and not the whole, so it does not mean that the objectives of the projects are achieved if the result of the financial audit was successful. Therefore, we need an M&E system so our project reaches the correct destination.

Facilitator added that while all points are valid, the essential function of the audit is compliance, whereas monitoring and evaluation allow to change and adjust the activities.

Suha Khalis Ibrahim from the Women's Leadership Institute commented that the term M&E is considered new to most CSOs, and the M&E process is not considered properly in the planning. The M&E process is considered as a simple part of project management when designing the work plan. The manager usually discusses the work progress and performance of the staff in delivering the required services to the beneficiaries and achieving the objectives the donors require. However, having an M&E officer or M&E team can enhance the achievement of objectives accurately and ensure the practical application of the theory of change. Through the M&E system, some work plans might be altered, some activities might be amended, and the deviated performance track can be corrected.



Figure 4. Feryal Al-Kaabi from Awan Organization

Feryal Abbood Al-Kaabi from Awan Organization added that referring back to the theory of change and its relevance to the M&E process, it will depend on many social, cultural, and economic factors when analyzing a particular context. There should also be tools for gender-based analysis and how to correspond with M&E tools. Is there a way to link M&E tools with the tools based on gender analysis?

Facilitator appreciated this comment as a good point providing a segway to the following session about designing of the M&E system in the organization and what steps can be taken, and what factors should be considered by the management. Also, the facilitator highlighted that many donor organizations nowadays pay attention to gender-disaggregated data, which also gives data to measure the change in social behaviors.

Hussein Mohammed Hassoun from Human Rights Trainers Association asked: "Is it possible to implement the M&E process at each stage of the program, to highlight the problems and provide instant solutions and corrections to any deviation through that stage? Then the results of each interim M&E shall be consolidated to represent the final M&E result. This way might be difficult and require efforts, but it will increase the program's transparency to the donors."

Facilitator responded that this is the main point when M&E specialists are campaigning for this tool at the same there are several factors to take into account.

SECTION 3:

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING OF THE M&E SYSTEM. GROUP WORK.

Proceeding with the next session, the facilitator introduced 10 steps[1] that can be taken for designing and implementing the monitoring and evaluation system in the organizational structure.

The main steps described were conducting a needs assessment, agreeing on the outcomes, developing the key indicators to monitor outcomes, gathering baseline data on the indicators, planning for improvements, setting realistic targets, monitoring the results, evaluative information to support decision-making, analyzing and reporting the findings, using the findings, sustaining the M&E system within the institution.

Using these steps, the facilitator unfolded the processes entailed in designing the M&E system in the organizational structures and the logic behind each of these steps. Participants contributed to the discussion, referring to the examples from their experience.

Hoger Jato Sheika from Shams Network for Elections Monitoring: “In my opinion, when we start the M&E process, we’ve got to ask a bunch of essential questions, what are the program’s objectives? The responsibilities of the staff, methods for data collection, and the accuracy of the results have to be agreed in the beginning.”

While discussing the process of designing the indicator and the importance of the participatory designing processes, Suha Khalis Ibrahim from the Women's Leadership Institute shared that indicators should be realistic because they are necessary to evaluate our progress, whether organization is on the right track towards its goals or not.

Hanaa Hammoud Abbas from Iraqi Women Network added that indicator is a measurement tool, which can be qualitative or quantitative and is established to facilitate the delivery of better change status.

Teebah Talal Hussein Al-Qaisi from Al-Teebah Organization for Relief and Development commented that the indicator is the essential point that identifies the progress or measures the deviation of our progress from the goals of the program.”



Figure 5. Hanaa Hammoud Abbas from Iraqi Women Network.

[1] Source: 10 Steps to a Result-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System, Kusek and Rist, 2004



Figure 6. Teebah Talal Hussein Al-Qaisi from Al-Teebah Organization for Relief and Development.

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Further to the discussion, the facilitator raised the importance of the baseline measurements and how it is connected to designing the indicators. Hanaa Hammoud Abbas from Iraqi Women Network commented that the baseline can be defined as the frontline or the foundation to make change happens. It can be obtained from the initial assessment of what we have, and based on it, change can be achieved.



Figure 7. Participants during the group work.

Ahmed Oday Suhail Alsalamdeen from Capacity Organization for Sustainable Development commented that after identifying the indicator, we have to check its initial state (its baseline), so that when the change occurs, we can be aware of the achieved difference or evaluate the result.

After the presentation on designing and implementing the M&E system, participants engaged in the practical exercise. In this session, participants formed teams and practiced designing the M&E plan on the provided outcomes related to electoral support activities. Participants practiced designing the outputs, activities, and indicators to measure the results. This exercise allowed participants to practice the thinking process in designing the outputs, activities, and indicators as a team. Teams worked in collaboration and presented their results to the audience.

Each team presentation was collectively discussed, questioning and highlighting the logical connection between these components in M&E planning.



Figure 8. Participants during the group work.

Group 1 Voter Registration

Outcome: Increase the number of registered voters and maintain a comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date voter register.

Outputs:

- To raise young people's awareness of their rights to participate in elections and to ensure that they know the location of data update centers close to their homes.
- To increase young people's awareness and educate them on the importance of updating their BVCs and voting.
- To increase the number of registered voters who are at age 18.

Activities:

- Surveying young people to know their opinion on electoral participation, whether they are refusing or willing to vote. The survey will be conducted on the outskirts of Baghdad, on Rusafa and Al-Karkh sides, and to collect at least 250 samples.
- Organizing awareness campaigns on the rights of electoral participation.
- Organizing awareness campaigns to educate voters on the registration mechanism and the update of BVCs. Also, to promote the registration process and collection of BVCs focusing on young people (at age 18).
- Indicators:
- Number of registered voters who are at age 18.
- Percentage of turnout of young people.

Group 2 Infrastructure

Outcome:

Improving the infrastructure of the Independent High Electoral Commission throughout the country in line with its constitutional status and the essential functions of the democratic system that it performs for the country.

Outputs:

- Organizational structure. Decision-making policies.
- Communication with CSOs.
- Develop mechanisms to work with the media.

Activities:

- Work on creating a department for communication with the NGOs.
- Improving mechanisms and tools for selecting Sub-offices managers.
- Develop a sustainable action plan to communicate with CSOs.
- Joint training between CSOs and local Communities.
- Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of IHEC by communicating with the media channels.
- Developing a media policy for IHEC on how to deal with society and organizations.

Indicators:

- Directing the sub-departments to create a special department for organizational affairs.
- The sub-departments are working on modifying the structure of the sub-offices by adding a department or creating a division.
- Initiating the implementation of joint programs between SCOs and IHEC
- Percentage of participation in the workshops.
- Percentage of communication between local communities and NGOs.
- Percentage of media contribution in the stages of the electoral process.
- Initiate a policy and enforce it in the national and provincial offices.
- High participation of media channels with IHEC.

Group 3 Institutional Development

Outcome: Strengthening the position of the Independent High Electoral Commission to implement electoral processes efficiently and effectively.

Outputs:

- Issuing instructions to improve IHEC performance.
- Choosing professional and independent members to form the BOC.
- Collecting signatures to support the democratic process in Iraq.

Activities:

- A pleading campaign to pressure the concerned authorities to select members of the BOC according to professional standards.
- A pleading campaign to develop the structure of IHEC to conform to international standards.
- Campaign to collect a million signatures to gain more supporters to uphold the democratic process in Iraq.

Indicators:

- Number of independent commissioners within IHEC.
- Measuring the percentage of change in the structure of IHEC and the measures taken.
- The percentage of participation in the collection campaign.

Group 4: Voters and the rest of the electoral process partners

Outcome:

To enhance stakeholder confidence and participation in the electoral process.

Outputs:

- Increase the percentage of the turnout in the election.
- Spreading electoral awareness in society.
- Increase the number of organizations participating in workshops.
- Increasing the number of organizations participating in monitoring.
- Increasing the number of workshops organizations will carry out to expand knowledge.
- Building a communication mechanism and actions and increasing the number of participating entities.
- Training agency observers of the political entities for meaningful and constructive communication during the electoral process.
- Building the capacity in the field of awareness and supporting the electoral process.
- Develop the capacities of media institutions in the field of monitoring.
- Developing the capacities of media institutions to encourage the community to participate in elections.

Activities:

- Spreading awareness of the electoral process and awareness of election law and the importance of change through elections.
- working to expand the organization's work base.
- Organizing training workshops for raising awareness, effective communication, and monitoring.
- Organizing dialogue sessions and conducting meetings and visits.

Indicators:

- Number of voters.
- Number of participants in awareness sessions.
- Awareness rate and several questionnaires.
- The number of observers and organizations, reports, the number of workshops carried out by organizations.
- Number of joint activities between IHEC and political entities.

Group 5: Electoral processes

Outcome:

Conducting efficient, effective, credible, and fair elections.

Outputs:

- Encouraging NGOs to have 50k monitors to monitor elections for integrity and transparency.

Activities:

- Prepare and train 50 000 monitors.
- Submit 50 000 reports about polling stations.
- Organizing 15 pleading campaigns to support the transparency and integrity of the electoral process.
- Each campaign should target at least 150 000 people.

Indicators:

- The actual presence of 50 000 monitors at 50 000 polling stations.
- Organizing 2500 training workshop
- Reaching out for 2,250,000 voters.

SECTION 4:

REPORTING BASED ON THE M&E SYSTEM AND GROUP WORK.

This session continued the workshop into the second day, and it started with a recap of the sessions from the previous day and a logical continuation to the next phase of implementing the M&E system.



Figure 9. Participating during the group discussion.

The facilitator opened with a presentation about the role of the evaluation and evaluative information supporting the decision-making processes and highlighted how evaluation impacts decision-making processes, i.e., resource allocation, adjusting to the program activities, identifying emerging problems, etc. Following the presentation, participants engaged in the group discussion where they identified opportunities, benefits, and challenges for the civil society in Iraq in applying results-based management and monitoring and evaluation tool. The results of the discussion highlighted the following:

Opportunities	Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening governance and accountability within institutional work. • Enhancing the power of the organization with donors. • Developing public relations. • Enhancing the internal policies of the organization. • Developing a standard tool for evaluating employee performance and team development. • Developing an explicit and approved mechanism for analyzing and dealing with data. • Assist in planning to evaluate the influence of the program. • Developing a unique tool to collect data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the specific need and resources in the organization or the covered area. • Identify the weaknesses and strengths within the organization. • Increase the transparency between the organization and the stakeholders and between the organization and the beneficiaries. • Building a solid trust with the donors by always keeping them updated. • Enhance the trust between the staff and the management. • Encouraging the staff to be more productive and efficient. • Assist in putting up plans and developing strategic planning for future projects in the organization. • Contribute to correcting the track of the projects during the project implementation and facilitate goal achievement. • Smarter investment of resources. • Sharing the lesson learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different capabilities of the workers, weakness in field and administrative specialization. • Structures of organizations lack the presence of sustainable departments. • Lack of continuous support for the project. • Administrative rejection of monitoring findings. • Weak documentation. • The weak correlation of indicators with outputs. • Attempts to cover up the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation. • Non-compliance of the monitoring and evaluation staff with the job description. • The lack of a monitoring and evaluation policy in most organizations. • Solutions to problems are not radical, but temporary.

SECTION 5:

COMMUNICATING THE M&E RESULTS FOR DECISION-MAKING AND LEARNING

In this session, the facilitator described the last step in designing and implementing the M&E system, that is, using the findings and sustaining the M&E system. Facilitator highlighted two essential ways of utilizing the findings that benefit the organization. They support the decision-making process and provide learning opportunities. Other than that, the facilitator highlighted a few other ways the organization could utilize the findings.



Figure 10. Uday Shekhada Khader from Identity Center for the Development of Human Rights.

As the last step, the facilitator highlighted ensuring the sustainability of the M&E system and continuous support to the progress of the organizations or the project.

Following the presentation, participants shared their perspectives on their organizations' practices.

Uday Shekhada Khader from the Identity Center for the Development of Human Rights commented that M&E findings can be used to identify errors and benefit from lessons learned by knowing the potential incidents and avoiding them in the future.

Bahaa Qaisy from Al Tadamun Iraqi League for Youth said the M&E process usually goes through different stages. Each stage has challenges and barriers that can be sensitive or related to financial issues. We need to discuss how we can deal with these challenges and what specific policy would be needed at each stage to navigate through the challenges.

Facilitator agreed with the comments and added that while in a politically constraining environment in Iraq, a mobilized approach from civil society organizations to external barriers is essential and needs to continue. But when it comes to obstacles within the organization, the excellent thing about M&E is it helps to understand the parts that can be adjusted and continue moving towards the objectives without changing them.

Bahaa Qaisy from Al Tadamun Iraqi League for Youth shared that after hearing the sessions, his takeaway as the manager is that the M&E plan should be designed, and the M&E officer should coordinate this process from the start of the project to ensure that the work direction is heading successfully towards achieving the objectives.

Feryal Al-Kaabi from Awan Organization commented that the important thing is that each organization should have a policy and a mechanism for implementing the M&E process, which has to be a participatory process, that information sharing among staff should have a very constructive manner. It must be reinforced, and hard to implement without solid policy.

Hussein Mohammed from Human Rights Trainers Association agreed with the comment, adding that the M&E process is participatory work and can be self-fulfilling by which each unit in the organization contributes.

Dhuha Mustafa from Iraqi Women Network commented that while acknowledging that every organization is responsible for sustaining the M&E system, there is much detail in this system to be organized, and processes should be set up correctly.



Figure 11. Dhuha Mustafa from Iraqi Women Network.

SECTION 6:

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, participants shared verbal feedback confirming the importance of the activities supporting and improving the capacity of the CSOs. With the diverse landscape of Iraqi civil society, participants highlighted that it is still a relatively young society, still growing in understanding its role in governance and its contribution to improving governance.

Participants requested more detailed, insightful information on monitoring and evaluation tools and how other advanced CSOs practice them.

Discussions in the workshop allowed us to conclude that CSOs are strongly willing to adopt the M&E tool and learn about how to benefit from it and strengthen the programmatic work of their organization.



Figure 12. CSOs participating in the workshop.