**Name: Lubna Al Attiah**

**Course: Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Course Code: 001**

**Institution: Strategia Nertherlands**

**Assignment# 2**

1. What are the qualities of a good indicator? Give an example
2. As part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Universal education is a right for all children. Different governments have implemented free primary education in order to achieve this goal. With example from your country please explain the following:
   * 1. Critically evaluate the implementation programme of free primary education for the first 2 years
     2. Analyze the unintended outcomes of free primary education on job creation within the same period

a) what would the monitoring exercise in free primary education wish to achieve for the following stakeholders?

* + - Donors
    - Primary School managers
    - Government

1. You have been contracted by UNICEF to undertake the role of a consultant in a project (joint partnership between them and the Ministry of Gender and Children) a program that gives direct funds to families staying with orphaned children, to plan a monitoring system for the same.
   1. What are the advantages of participatory evaluation methods?
   2. Formulate the steps in planning a monitoring system.

Q1- What are the qualities of a good indicator?

Organizations that adopt results-based M&E systems, set out to achieve specific and pre-determined results and assign indicators that help the organisation recognize these outcomes. These indicators be they, quantitative or qualitative, provide a reliable measure and assessment of the performance of the project over its course.

Indicators set across every level of a project (input, activities, outputs and outcomes) help benchmark progress and allow for adjustments, reassessments and improvements.

A good indicator is able to reflect the interest of not only managers, but other stakeholder groups. In a study entitled *Social Impact Measurement and Why Stakeholders Do Matter?*, the author emphasizes the importance of indicators that imply accountability, especially to funders and taxpayers, who are entitled to a seat at the table and have become active in the larger debate around public development funding.

It is easy to get carried away plotting numerous indicators across each phase of a project. However, one must bear in mind that the purpose is to achieve the goal of the project and clarity is an essential characteristic of an indicator. Complex indicators make it difficult for implementers to implement and recognize the benchmarks that need to be achieved. There is no use applying indicators that are irrelevant. “The validation of the indicator depends on its reliability, sensibility and accuracy and on the consistency of its relations to other development indications. (the role and adequacy od development indicators; 1972, Frank Cass.)

The indicators should not create an economic burden on the project. It is important to remember that the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to ensure the project is able to achieve its results. “Indicators must provide sufficient basis to assess performance and must provide enough clarity to allow for independent assessment. Done badly, it can be very costly and not merely ineffective but harmful and indeed destructive” (Bird, 2003)

It is important to ensure that enough data has been analyzed to support the setting of the target. Bird says: “Technically, this (setting targets ) requires making a reasoned, prior assessment of how much improvement it is plausible to achieve within the PM timescale by taking account of research evidence, local initiatives, organizational culture, and the available or budgeted-for new resources.” In 2012, Educate A Child, a Doha based programme designed to fund the enrollment of out of school children, took on the ambitious goal of enrolling 10 million OOSC in three years. Specified in is vision that the OOSC would be in areas that suffered from conflict and natural disasters. However, the timescale did not take into consideration the pace of mobilizing resources and the required protocol to operate in areas of conflict. The risks were not properly assessed.

Change must be measurable. In its menu of indicators for preventing and reducing exploitation of children working in mines in two districts in country X, *Save the Children* uses the number of families participating in livelihood programs as the adequate basis from where to measure. By quantifying the number of parents and children who take part in the awareness raising exercises and breaking down that number in terms of gender, the project can provide essential aggregated data on gender and age based data. This data is not only measurable, but helps set realistic targets by which to set the indicators.

The menu also lists the number of active community-based child protection mechanisms, providing essential data that informs Save the Children of perspective to scale up. Similarly, the number of labour inspectors trained on child rights, child labour and child friendly inspection informs further interventions and provides perspective on impact to various stakeholders.

In establishing outcome indicators, the project implementers are provided a clear demonstration of what success of the project looks like; The percentage and number of children and families whose behavior has changed as a result of the intervention; the number of children removed from hazardous child labour and enrolled in education; evidence of labour inspector visits and monitoring for child labour. Good impact indicators allow for independent evaluation to take place at a later stage; examining impact and validating information such as percentage of children who remain out of hazardous work and are enrolled in school; Number of children who are remain in hazardous work, disaggregated by gender and age.

Finally, while simplistically, indicators need to be clear, measurable, relevant, cost-effective and monitorable, it is essential for a good monitoring plan to factor in variability as it is a characteristic of the real world. Variability in itself, offers contextual and important information that helps identify and understand the risks that may undermine realizing the goals. (Bird, 2003)

Q2. In its first report on progress in adopting the MDGs, Lebanon firstly identified where it stood as far as “Achieving Universal Primary Education; as its 3rd target , whereby children boy and girls alike were able to complete a full course of primary education. It baseline (91.5-98.3 per cent of net enrollment) is high and no gender disparity exists in enrollment rates. However, the system did suffer from disproportionate allocation of human resources between the private and public sector.

The data on failure and drop-outs amongst school children, identifies at which stages in the primary education, things go wrong. The report acknowledges that various interventions are required to tackle accessibility and suggests improved teacher training to decrease drop- out and failure rates, and improve resource allocation. The report insists on maintaining two structures (private and public) and identifies the challenge to the MDG2 is addressing quality rather than quantity. The country report identifies three goals:

1. Finalize organization and implementation of the *pre-school* level in all public schools and change the enrollment age from 4 to 3 years old
2. Improve the quality and productivity in the primary school level and apply the law of compulsory education

3- Reduce youth and adult illiteracy rates

Lebanon’s report proposes a list of measures it will take to fulfill the above goals, quantifying the results it aims to achieve, however in its listing of legislative modifications required to adjust the two-year pre-school level, to a three year level, it defined the outcome but does not commit to an indicator.

In listing the rise in enrollment rates, the report does not provide a list of activities on how this will be achieved. Also absent from the entire report on MDG2, is the consideration and accountability towards various stakeholders such as the schools themselves, students and parents.

Indicators are also missing in developing the criteria for qualifying a school building for rehabilitation if needed. What determines this need?

While the report extensively provides the cost of adding sections, it does not provide data on how they arrived at these costs nor does it benchmark at against previous interventions and hence do not provide donors with justification for the proposed budget.

The report also proposes training teachers in public schools, but does not provide information on the locations of the schools, how many teachers are in the programme currently. Moreover, the means by which the effectiveness of the training programme will be measured are not shared, nor does it list implementation tools.

In its proposed intervention to improve the quality and productivity, the report lists actions the Government and Ministry of Education will take to achieve the goal, however it does not share any examples of proposed activities that will ensure better quality of education at the preschool level. Moreover, there is no indicator measuring the qualitative value of the training that will be provided to the teachers nor the mechanism employed. The report acknowledges that 50% of total drop-outs originate from public schools, however it only attributes the quality of education to this problem.

In assuming the responsibility of extending compulsory education to three stages, instead of two, the report does not mention the collaboration required from the legislative arm and other key stakeholders to do so. It also limits access to education to the functions of the Ministry of Education only and entities that fall within its authority, such as the government funded universities.

The report over simplifies the barriers to education and dropping out and school productivity are seen as a result of a poor education system, when in fact these do occur due to social and economic reasons as well as political, as in the case of Palestinian school children. Enrollment in school doesn’t always ensure children will not work. Many children do in fact work and go to school.

The report attributes improved health, social awareness as natural outputs of access to education; an educated population is more likely to be more social aware of issues relating to health and the environment according to the report. Moreover, the government is more likely to benefit from more skilled labour. The plan aims to improve education and help decrease the number of drop-outs in the primary phase. This in turn will channel more children into secondary and/ tertiary and vocational education, which will lead to a more skilled labour force with improved chances in the labour market. A monitoring plan would assign indicators to these outputs that would help the government understand the timescale within which these outputs could be achieved and identify them (outputs) as a result of this government intervention.

The MDG report stated that the Lebanese government would implement a plan drafted by UNESCO in 2002 adhering to the provision of basic education and supported by the passing of a law. The law required governmental institutions and civil societies to work together to establish local funds to raise money to provide free education. This would ensure that no extra cost was incurred by the government and the requirement.

The recommendation for implementation of the plan tackling drop-outs suggested a recuperation program, whereby a certain number of teachers were trained to help failing children catch up and remain in school. As the schools were running at full capacity and even running double shifts. The implementation plan proposed that the training take place in public school blocks. However, a monitoring plan would help school managers understand their input and the required outcome. A list of activities such as how the teachers would be identified, where the training would take place and what mechanism would be put in place to assess the benefit of the training program, would help school managers manage their time and resources more efficiently to ensure that the simultaneous learning for the school children is not interrupted. Lebanon has suffered from numerous union strikes that have interrupted the school year over the past few years. A conclusive plan would include these risks and this understanding of the nature of the environment and its complicated politics.

In is report; Lebanon includes a budget that factors in the building of additional schools at a unit cost of 1.1 million. Lebanon ranks unfavorably on international indices in transparency and fighting corruption and international donors have shied away from supporting construction projects due such indicators. A monitoring plan should look into developing indicators that would provide donors with proof of quick wins in enrolling children and improving the quality of education.

To include children with special needs who make up around 3 per cent of the total primary school children, the government demonstrates the importance of including the Ministry of Social Affairs; the official body that oversees matters relating to this category of learners. A monitoring plan would ensure liaison between the various groups does take place to achieve the desired results. It will also act as an activating tool for facilitators overlooking the implementation and achievement of MDG2.

Formulate the steps in planning a monitoring system.

Q3- The participatory evaluation works because in its evaluation of the process, it is able to zero in on the specific needs and benefit from input from the beneficiaries on how to best implement.

In this particular case the participatory approach will provide room to ask questions to the Ministry of Gender to learn from their previous experiences, further understand their goal and how they would like to see the families utilize the funds in support of the children. Involvement with the families will provide information on their needs and how the funds are practically used. Input from various families may provide useful information on how to divide the payments (monthly, bi-weekly) to provide the families with better assistance. Most importantly, providing the families with an opportunity to share their opinions, ideas and grievances will create tremendous trust between the organisation and the beneficiaries; furthering the impact of the project.

Steps to be followed in creating a monitoring system for a project that funds families staying with orphaned children.

1. Naming and defining the issue. in meeting with the beneficiaries, the families and government employees who oversee and implement the program. This information will help identify the issues and where an intervention is necessary
2. Developing a theory of practice that proposes best approaches and develop guidelines that help the program managers better implement their project and use more efficient implementation tools, inspired by input, ideas and creativity from the beneficiaries. This could include the identifying the training needed to do so and multi-stakeholder groups that help collect qualitative and quantitative data over the course of the implementation of the project.
3. Deciding what question need to be asked and to whom. This phase fine-tunes information needed to ensure the project design takes into consideration the specificities of the context, while maintaining the big picture of the project.
4. Collecting the information; through research, surveys, focus groups and interviews. This is the most time consuming phase of the setting up of the monitoring system.
5. Analyzing the information; this is the number crunching takes place and a story is developed that is ready to be conclusively evaluated. Did the project go according to plan? What new measures does the ministry need to take? Are any adjustments needed in training? Do the beneficiaries feel better served?
6. The participatory method requires acknowledgment and enforces accountability. As a conclusive community building exercise, it is important to acknowledge the hard work of the various stakeholders and especially the beneficiaries; families and the orphans for taking part in trying something new and working collaboratively to see a change. It is important to take a moment to acknowledge that a relationship was invested in; both from the side of the ministry, and the beneficiaries. It is also important to examine the process in its entirety and demonstrate accountability of the right and the wrong that took place, in order to allow for growth in the future.

**References:**

[Ericka Costa](https://www.emeraldinsight.com/author/Costa%2C+Ericka), [Caterina Pesci](https://www.emeraldinsight.com/author/Pesci%2C+Caterina), (2016) "Social impact measurement: why do stakeholders matter?", Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal, Vol. 7 Issue: 1, pp.99-124, <https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-12-2014-0092>

Professor S.M Bird, (2003), The report of a Working Part on Performance monitoring in the Public Services, Performance Indicators; Good, Bad, and Ugly. (pp 1-27)

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/cmm/migrated/documents/performance-indicators-report-jrssa.pdf>

Frank Cass and Company Limited,(1972), Measuring Development, The Role and Adequacy of Development Indicators,(pp1-5)

<https://bit.ly/2EvO6K5>

Save the Children,UK (Sept, 2008), Menu of Outcome Indicators

<http://www.crin.org/en/docs/Menu_of_Outcome_Indicators__sept08_%5B1%5D.pdf>

United Nations Development Program, May 2005, Millennium Development Goals MGD Costing-Lebanon, Consultation & Research Institute (pp 45-54)