1.What are the qualities of a good indicator? Give an example

**1. Introduction**

How will we know when we have achieved our desired outcomes? After examining the importance of setting achievable and well-defined outcomes, and the issues and process involved in agreeing upon those outcomes, we turn next to the selection of key indicators .Outcome indicators are not the same as outcomes. Indicators are the *quantitative or qualitative variables that provide a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of an organization against the stated outcome (*diploma in M and E module 2 notes). An indicator is a specific, observable and measurable characteristic that can be used to show changes or progress a programme is making toward achieving a specific outcome.

There should be at least one indicator for each outcome. The indicator should be focused, clear and specific. The change measured by the indicator should represent progress that the programme hopes to make. (Gage and Dunn, 2009).

An indicator should be defined in precise, unambiguous terms that describe clearly and exactly what is being measured. Where practical, the indicator should give a relatively good idea of the data required and the population among whom the indicator is measured.

Indicators do not specify a particular level of achievement -- the words “improved”, “increased”, or “decreased” do not belong in an indicator.

Indicators should be developed for all levels of the results-based M&E system, meaning that indicators are needed to monitor progress with respect to inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and goals. Progress needs to be monitored at all levels of the system to provide feedback on areas of success and areas in which improvement may be required (Diploma in M and E Module 2 notes)

Once the conceptual framework is finalized, the next step in completing the monitoring and evaluation framework is selecting indicators.  Indicators are signs of progress – they are used to determine whether the programme/intervention is on its way to achieving its [objectives and goal](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf). (Diploma in M and E Module 2 notes)

 1.1**Challenges and considerations when selecting indicators**

* In an ideal world, indicators judged to be the highest quality and most useful would be the ones selected and used to monitor and evaluate programme activities.
* However, in the real world many other factors may intervene. Links to programme activities, as outlined in monitoring and evaluation frameworks are important, as are the needs of the programme for decision-making.
* Many indicators in common use are not well-defined in clear terms, or at least include terminology that could be improved to add greater precision. For instance, “knowledge of dating violence”, “attitude towards violence against women”, “support-seeking behaviour” of victims of violence, or “quality of services” can all mean and imply different things in different circumstances.
* The more defined an indicator, the less room there will be for later confusion or complications. For example, “percentage of women accessing health services at X facility from TIME A to TIME B who state that they received appropriate care and assistance” or “percentage of men who state that it is not acceptable to hit, slap, punch their wives with hands or other objects under any circumstances.”
* Ideal indicators may not be practical; the feasibility of using certain indicators can be constrained by the availability of data and financial and human resources. The requirements and needs of donors, the government, organization headquarters and others may need to be given priority.

Some examples of these considerations are:

* **Availability of data**: Some data may be considered ‘privileged’ information by agencies, projects, or government officials.
* Data may be available only on aggregated levels or already calculated into indicators that may not be the ideal indicators for your programme or activities.
* **Resources**: Ideal indicators might require collecting data to calculate an unknown denominator, or national data to compare with project area data, or tracking lifetime statistics for an affected and/or control population, etc.
* The cost of collecting appropriate data for ideal indicators is prohibitive.
* Human resources and technical skills may be a constraint as well.
* **Programmatic and external requirements**: Indicators may be imposed from above by those not trained in monitoring and evaluation techniques.
* Reporting schedules may not be synchronized (e.g. fiscal vs. reporting year).
* Different stakeholders’ priorities may diverge.
* **Standardized indicators** should be used if available.
* In general, programmes should stay away from indicators that activities cannot affect, that are too vague, that do not currently exist and cannot realistically be collected, or that do not accurately represent the desired outcome. (Gage and Dunn, 2009)

When quantitative indicators of success cannot be identified, qualitative methods offer a valuable alternative.When it is difficult or not possible to measure “benefits” or “risks” in simple, quantitative terms, it is almost always possible to gather qualitative data, such as information on the perspectives of health care providers and women who come for services. In many cases, qualitative indicators provide more relevant information with respect to the success and effectiveness of the intervention. (Bott, Guedes and Claramunt, 2004)***.***

**1.2 How many indicators are enough?**

* Some guidelines to follow when selecting indicators:
* At least one or two indicators per result (ideally, from different sources)
* At least one indicator for every core activity (e.g. training, airing of TV spot)
* No more than 8-10 indicators per area of significant programme focus
* Use a mix of data collection strategies and sources

**Process versus result/impact indicators:** It is important to remember the difference between process and results indicators.

**Process Indicators** are used to monitor the number and types of activities carried out.  Examples include:

* The number and types of services provided
* The number of people trained
* The number and type of materials produced and disseminated
* The number and percentage of female clients screened

**Results Indicators** are used to evaluate whether or not the activity achieved the intended objectives or results. Examples include:

* Selected indicators of knowledge, attitudes and practices as measured by a survey
* The perceptions of survivors about the quality and benefits of services provided by an organization or institution as measured by individual interviews (Bott, Guedes and Claramunt, 2004). Results indicators can be developed at the output, outcome and impact levels. (Bott, Guedes and Claramunt, 2004)

**Output indicators** illustrate the change related directly to the activities undertaken within the programme (e.g. percentage of traditional leaders in community x who completed the training on international human rights standards related to violence against women and girls whose knowledge improved.)

**Outcome indicators** relate to change that is demonstrated as a result of the programme interventions in the medium-to-longer term (e.g. the number of decisions in the informal justice system of community x related to violence against women that reflect a human rights-based approach.)

**Impact indicators** measure the long-term effect of programme interventions (e.g. the prevalence of violence against women and girls in community x.)

An important issue that needs to be resolved in order to monitor project progress is how to define success.  Commonly, organizations are able to track how many events they have held, and how many people have participated (outputs), but not how people have changed their attitudes or behaviours as a result (outcomes), especially over time.

The main indicator of **impact** should be a **reduction in the prevalence** and **incidence** of violence, but that takes years to achieve and to measure. So more indicators are needed to gauge whether programmes are moving in the right direction. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks and plans should incorporate both process and results indicators.

**2. Conclusion.**

**A good indicator should therefore be:-**

**Valid -** accurate measure of a behaviour, practice, taskthat is the expectedoutput or outcome of the intervention

**Reliable -** consistently measurable over time, in the same way by different observers

**Precise: -** operationally defined in clear terms

**Measurable** - quantifiable using available tools and methods

**Timely -** provides a measurement at time intervals relevant and appropriate in terms of programme goals and activities

**Programmatically important** - linked to the programme or to achieving the programme objectives (Gage and Dunn, 2009)

**Meaningful** - Represent important information about the program for stakeholders.

**Relevant** - Reflect the intervention’s intended activities, outputs, and outcomes.

**Direct** - Closely measure the intended change.

**Objective** - Have a clear operational definition of what is being measured and what data need to be collected.

**Reliable** - Consistently measured across time and different data collectors.

**Useful** - Can be used for program improvement and to demonstrate program outcomes.

**Adequate** - Can measure change over time and progress toward performance or outcomes.

**Understandable** - Easy to comprehend and interpret.

**Practical/feasible** - The data for the indicator should not be too burdensome to collect. The indicator should be reasonable in terms of the data collection cost, frequency, and timeliness for inclusion in the decision-making process.

**Clear -** Precise and unambiguous

**Relevant -** Appropriate to the set goal

**Economic** - Available or computable with reasonable cost

**Adequate** - Provides sufficient basis to access performance

**Measurable** – Quantifiable

(Dr. Rajiv Sharma, World Bank technical paper 334).

**3. References.**

1. Diploma in monitoring and evaluation module 2 notes

2. Module 5 notes on monitoring and evaluation

3. Performance monitoring indicators handbook, World Bank technical paper number 334.

4. Dr. Rajiv Sharma [www.cgg.gov.in](http://www.cgg.gov.in) (challenges in monitoring and evaluation).

5. Ending Violence against Women and Girls Programming Essentials 102 June 2013

6. Six steps to effective evaluation Version Final version April 2007

7. Bott, Guedes and Claramunt, 2004)

8. Gage and Dunn, 2009