**Revised Guidance on Field Monitoring Visits**

**July 2015**

**I. Introduction**

Well planned field visits constitute an essential part of programme monitoring. They offer an opportunity to assess progress towards the achievement of planned results, learn from implementation and take timely corrective action. Field visits enable the provision of direct technical support, whilst also offering a chance to work together with Implementing Partners (IPs) on resolving implementation bottlenecks. Field trips are essential to good programme management and enable assurance on the use and adequacy of UNICEF inputs (cash, supply, technical assistance), and how these are leading to the achievement of programme outputs.

A Field Monitoring Checklist exists to guide UNICEF staff to prepare, undertake, report on and manage field visits. It is intended to be used to monitor programmes where there are field activities undertaken by partners to implement activities financially supported by UNICEF. The checklist establishes a systematic approach to field monitoring that integrates elements of MoRES, notably through a focus on Level 2 monitoring of inputs and implementation processes, and with the view to preparing to undertake level 3 monitoring of progress in addressing bottlenecks to results achievement. Field visits are integral to fostering communication between different levels of stakeholders to ensure engagement, and action to support implementation and future design of interventions.

Through the use of technological innovations (SMS-based tools, and mobile applications, etc.), field level information can be obtained, analysed and reported on in real-time, to support quicker management decisions on programme implementation. In this regard, the checklist will be a feature of the [eTools](https://icon.unicef.org/iconhome/Pages/FullStory.aspx?Title=LinkTitle&List=1699371f-2b32-4333-bdd7-6cc9397808b1&Fulltext=Full_x0020_Text_x0020_of_x0020_S&ItemID=782)[[1]](#footnote-1) initiative (*currently under development*) to strengthen field monitoring practice. The field visit module in e-Tools will provide a user-friendly electronic platform that is interfaced with VISION to allow a more integrated and systematic approach to undertaking and reporting on monitoring visits.

This Guidance Note updates existing guidance and related tools in the PPPM on Field Monitoring Visits and Programme Assurance. The guidance complements other programme monitoring and technical guidance related to [Monitoring Results for Equity System](https://teams.unicef.org/sites/NYHQ01/OED/MoRES/SitePages/MoRESCollab.aspx) (MoRES), [Real Time Monitoring](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/Communities/PF4C/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fteams%2FCommunities%2FPF4C%2FDocuments%2FReal%20Time%20Monitoring&FolderCTID=0x01200070540EB89F736B4FB89B1D849FDB8AED&View=%7BC77F98A2-D74B-4AE4-ADC9-DE0C1204AA95%7D) (RTM), [Humanitarian Performance Monitoring](https://intranet.unicef.org/emops/emopssite.nsf/root/PageCCCPM1) (HPM), [Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT)](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/OED/PPPManual/SiteAssets/Harmonized%20Approach%20To%20CASH%20Transfers%20(HACT).aspx) and [Supply Monitoring](https://intranet.unicef.org/denmark/danhomepage.nsf/0/C5CE80131A60CA69C1256E6D0049A3B2?open&expandlevel=MainLevel9&expandlevel2=SecondLevel57). The full checklist is outlined in Annex I. Annex II provides a sample template that could be used for such visits and Annex III is a schematic presentation of field visits within UNICEF’s programme monitoring architecture.

The Guidance Note was developed in consultation with headquarter divisions, regional and country offices. The note and related tools will be revised periodically upon feedback and lessons learned from country offices.

**II. Use of the Field Monitoring Checklist**

The Field Monitoring Checklist is intended for programme staff in country offices to undertake field monitoring of UNICEF-supported Programmes of Cooperation. Field trips should be undertaken jointly with national, local and, where appropriate, other international partners. Implementing partners, development actors and donors undertaking joint field visits with UNICEF should also be encouraged and supported in using the checklist.

The field monitoring checklist should be adapted to context. While the checklist is readily applicable to heavy service delivery (downstream) operations, certain aspects of it can be adapted to programmes with a stronger upstream leaning. The checklist may be used alongside other monitoring tools, such as the [Field Monitoring Checklist](https://intranet.unicef.org/pd/pdc.nsf/e59d3405e8ee2cb9852567460068fae4/94412c3ce52d4a8085257862007acf56?OpenDocument) in the Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Tool Kit, as appropriate.

Country offices should establish standards for the frequency of field visits (taking into account the minimum requirements specified in the HACT Procedure). They should establish a standard format for reporting and mechanisms to review findings and follow-up of recommendations from field visits to support timely action by programme managers.

**III. Scope of the Field Monitoring Checklist**

Conducting field monitoring visits requires sound preparation, data collection, reporting on findings and follow-up on priority actions. The rationale and key elements of each step are briefly described below.

**A. Preparation**

Sound preparation for field monitoring gives focus to the visit by identifying areas that may warrant special attention and in developing a strategy for how information will be obtained and used. Adequate preparation will direct the nature of technical assistance to provide once on site. Preparation entails the following:

1. review of relevant documentation (AWP, Programme Document, FACE) to inform the scope of the visit and guide data collection efforts;
2. review of information on concerned implementing partner(s), including reports on activities undertaken and status of achievement of outputs and of findings from previous assurance activities;
3. review of the status of cash and supplies transferred in view of ascertaining coherence between inputs with actual programme implementation;

**B. Data collection**

Data collection is central to field visits, as it enables staff to assess progress towards outputs as identified in work plans and/or programme performance monitoring plans. Methods and approaches most appropriate to the information needs and the particular situation should be considered ahead of the visit (such as *observation, interviews, and focus group discussions*). Field visits provide an opportunity to check and verify data quality. Where needed, detailed data collection templates and protocols could be further developed for the purpose of a particular field visit. The following constitutes essential information to be collected:

1. direct assessment of progress regarding programme implementation;
2. accuracy of reports presented by Implementing Partners and other stakeholders on programme implementation;
3. whether target populations, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are able to access facilities and services being supported;
4. whether UNICEF-supported activities and services adhere to quality standards;
5. whether the provision of supplies and services to target populations is taking place as planned and if these are being utilized as intended, and achieving the desired results;
6. whether barriers and bottlenecks to programme implementation have been assessed and how they could be addressed;
7. whether records and locally generated statistics exist and are properly kept to enable assessment of progress towards targets and to analyse uptake, continuity, and trends in the utilisation of services.

**C. Reporting**

Reporting constitutes a critical element of conducting field monitoring visits and activating feedback loops, as it enables analysis and dissemination of collected information to relevant stakeholders for follow-up action, as necessary. The eTools will strengthen results-focused reporting, facilitating output-focused reporting and follow-up of findings contained in trip reports for action. Key elements of the reporting phase include:

1. preparation of a trip report that outlines the findings of the field visit, recommendations and responsibilities for follow up actions;
2. data storage and management that will facilitate easy access to data from field monitoring visits by other staff and partners, and to permit analysis of trends over time;
3. discussion of monitoring findings with Implementing Partners and sharing of the report with relevant stakeholders;
4. use of information to analyze progress against plans, completing sections of the Results Assessment Module (RAM) in VISION, completing SitReps, and to determine future actions both internally and with partners.

**Annex I: Field Monitoring Checklist**

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| **SECTION A: PREPARATION** |
| **Planning**  State the purpose and objective(s) of the monitoring visit  Consider SSFA, Programme Documents, and others as applicable  Review monitoring plan and indicators  Review programme management indicators in VISION  Consider data collection needs and available tools  Review prior documentation on progress, including recommendations from previous field/monitoring visits and status of implementation  Consult other programmes and partners, in case joint monitoring is needed  Formulate questions to guide the field monitoring visit  Develop schedule of visits/appointments  In emergency settings, refer to “Field Monitoring Checklist ” in the HPM Tool Kit and “*Field Monitoring in High Threat Environment – Minimum Standards*”  Consider contracting independent third party monitors, where access to sites may be problematic  **Information on concerned implementing partner** *(Government, Civil Society, UN Agency)*  Identify Implementing Partner(s) to be visited  Note implementation period of intervention (start date : end date)  Review period of last programmatic/field monitoring visit  ☐ Identify any high priority observations from prior assurance activities (programmatic visits / spot  checks / audits) that require follow-up during the visit  Review disbursements to date for the intervention (cash, supplies), if there is outstanding  DCT of over 6 months, identify the reasons and how to address them  Review Implementing Partner contribution (in kind and cash) as per commitment  Review the findings from spot checks and audits to determine any issues identified that may impact programme implementation  **Status of cash and supplies**  Review the FACE forms submitted to determine the total amount of cash transfers and actual programme expenditures reported. This information will be used to determine if the progress reported on FACE forms is in line with the actual programme implementation progress.  Check for overdue progress and financial reports from partners  Review documentation on supplies, as applicable  **Data collection tools**  Review applicable monitoring protocols and use them as appropriate  Prepare appropriate data collection tools as applicable  Consider potential for technology based data collection applications (*Rapid Pro, U-report, EduTrac etc…)*  For emergency situations, use “Checklist for Field Monitoring in Humanitarian Situations” and “Questionnaire for Field Monitoring in Humanitarian Situations”, as appropriate |
| **SECTION B: DATA COLLECTION** |
| **Programme implementation status**  Verify and document that the programme is being implemented as planned and as reported in  progress reports and on FACE forms.  **Access to services**  Inquire on average distance from households to services/facilities and whether this constitutes a  bottleneck  Review whether information about services is readily available and accessible to target populations  Assess whether vulnerable and disadvantaged groups have access to facilities and interventions  Check whether essential commodities exist to deliver services  Review timeliness, quality and quantity of materials and equipment distributed  Check status of facilities, stores and warehouses, where relevant (*ventilation, cleanliness etc.)*  Collect information on numbers and presence of trained staff/human resources  Identify and indicate if there are any other barriers and bottlenecks in accessing services  **Quality of services**  See how UNICEF-supported activities are being conducted (where possible, e.g. training)  Check application of new skills and knowledge by trained staff  Check if service providers adhere to and apply required standards[[2]](#footnote-2) for services  Check if mechanisms for quality assurance and supervision are in place  Check on relationship between service providers and users of services.  Check if data trends show continued use of services for intended populations including minority/vulnerable groups(from registers or service providers)  **Utilisation of services**  Examine level of utilisation of services by target population(s)  Check if supply items are fully and appropriately utilized  Observe community involvement in the given interventions  Explore any barriers to utilisation of services  Obtain views from on quality of services and enabling environment to providing services from:   * + women and men, girls and boys   + community leaders and authorities (e.g. chiefs, religious leaders, etc.).   + minority or other vulnerable groups   **Enabling environment for intervention**  Check for communal attitudes and/or behaviours that may inhibit access and use of services  Check for partner resources allocated and disbursed for services (*human, financial, equipment*)  Check for functioning management and coordination arrangements for interventions  Check for functioning coordination arrangements between concerned institutions  Check for functioning supervisory mechanisms  Obtain views of authorities charged with oversight (e.g. District health Officer)  Obtain views of service providers, or implementers of the programme (e.g. teachers)  **Statistics and records**  Review locally generated statistical records and routine information systems (e.g. school attendance, nutrition coverage);  Obtain updated data, where available  Update status of indicators (cumulative progress towards targets) |
| **SECTION C: REPORTING** |
| **Trip report**  Prepare and submit a trip report covering conclusions from the monitoring visit. The data gathering elements can help structure the report (*access/timeliness, quality, utilisation, enabling environment* )  At a minimum, the trip report outlines progress towards outputs, constraints, opportunities and recommendations. Document any verification of performance reported by the partner.  Ensure priority recommendations/actions have a target date for completion and assigned focal  point for follow up.  Ensure major findings and bottlenecks are discussed in the Programme Management or Country Management Team meetings.  **Data storage and management**  Store data from monitoring visit in appropriate platform (*DevInfo, Excel sheets, Access-based databases, or other monitoring system in place*).  Maintain a cumulative progress of relevant targets based on data from monitoring visits  **Use of information**  Discuss relevant findings in-house and with partners to determine future action  Use information to analyse progress against plans  Use information to inform programme review meetings (*quarterly, mid-year and annual*)  Use both quantitative and qualitative data and information to prepare progress reports in the inSight Results Assessment Module (RAM), Sit-Reps and other reporting requirements (*donor reports etc.)*  Use information to develop responses to the Specific Monitoring Questions (SMQs) and Country Office Annual Report (COAR).  Adapt or redesign interventions, as necessary in work plans, including monitoring plans |

**Annex II: Field Monitoring Template**

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| **SECTION A. PREPARATION - Programme Information** | | | | | | | | |
| **I: Purpose:** | | | | | | | | |
| **II: Programme Reference** | | | | | | | | |
| Name of related CPAP/Work Plan Output (s) | | | Output(s):  Intervention/activity[[3]](#footnote-3): | | | | | |
| If using a Programme Document, indicate name/Reference # and related outputs) | | | Programme Document name/Reference #: | | | | | |
| Programme Document Output(s): | | | | | |
| Indicators from Work Plan or Programme Document | | Baseline | | | | Target | MoV | |
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| *Add as appropriate* | |  | | | |  |  | |
| **III: Information relating to implementing partner (Government, Civil Society, UN Agency)** | | | | | | | | |
| Implementing Partner to be visited and their geographical location(s) | | | | Name of partner:  Location:  Geo Coordinates: Latitude: Longitude: | | | | |
| IP Risk Rating | | | |  | | | | |
| Contact Information | | | | Tel: Email: | | | | |
| Period of intervention/activity | | | | Start Date: End Date: | | | | |
| Persons to meet | | | |  | | | | |
| Date of last field visit | | | |  | | | | |
| Total value for the intervention | | | | Cash (US$)……….. | | | | |
| Proportion disbursed to date for the intervention | | | | Amount (US$)………..) ………….…..% | | | | |
| Supplies (US$)………… ……………...% | | | | |
| Implementing Partner contribution to date | | | | Cash (US$)……….. | | | | |
| **IV: Status of previous recommendations and follow-up actions (***List all recommendations from the previous Field Trip Report and indicate status of follow-up/action taken)* | | | | | | | | |
| Date of field visit | Section/staff that  undertook the visit | | Recommendation | | | | | Status of  implementation |
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| *Add as appropriate* | | | | | | | | |
| **SECTION B. DATA COLLECTION** | | | | | | | | |
| **Methods/approaches that may be used for data collection include:**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | *Observation* | *Focus Group Discussions* | | *Key Informant Interviews* | *SMS based Technology (e.g. U Report, Rapid Pro)* | | *Register Inspection* | *Management Information Systems(e.g. HMIS, EMIS)* | | *Document Reviews* | *Physical verification (for supplies)* | | | | | | | | | |
| **Access to services** | | | | | **Comments/Situation** | | | |
| Inquire on average distance from households  to services/facilities and whether this  constitutes a bottleneck | | | | |  | | | |
| Review whether information about  services is readily available and accessible  to target populations | | | | |  | | | |
| Assess whether vulnerable and  disadvantaged groups have access to  facilities and interventions | | | | |  | | | |
| Check whether essential commodities exist  Within service delivery points (e.g. school,  health facility) | | | | |  | | | |
| Review timeliness, quality and quantity of  materials and equipment distributed | | | | |  | | | |
| Check status of facilities, stores and  warehouses, where relevant (*ventilation,*  *cleanliness etc.)* | | | | |  | | | |
| Collect information on numbers and  presence of trained staff/human resources | | | | |  | | | |
| Identify and indicate if there are any other  barriers and bottlenecks in accessing  services | | | | |  | | | |
| **Quality of services** | | | | | **Comments/Situation** | | | |
| See how UNICEF-supported activities are  being conducted (where possible, training) | | | | |  | | | |
| Check application of new skills and  knowledge by trained staff | | | | |  | | | |
| Check if service providers adhere to and  apply required standards[[4]](#footnote-4) for services | | | | |  | | | |
| Check if mechanisms for quality assurance  and supervision are in place | | | | |  | | | |
| Check on relationship between service  providers and users of services. | | | | |  | | | |
| Check if data trends show continued use of  services for intended populations including minority/vulnerable groups(from registers  or service providers) | | | | |  | | | |
| **Utilisation of services** | | | | | **Comments/Situation** | | | |
| Examine level of utilisation of services by  target population(s) | | | | |  | | | |
| Check if supply items are fully and  appropriately utilized | | | | |  | | | |
| Observe community involvement in the  given interventions | | | | |  | | | |
| Explore any barriers to utilisation of  services | | | | |  | | | |
| Obtain views on quality of service and  enabling environment to provide services  from: (i) women, men, boys and girls (ii)  community leaders and authorities (e.g.  chiefs, religious leaders, etc.); (iii) minority  or other vulnerable groups | | | | |  | | | |
| **Enabling environment for intervention** | | | | | **Comments/Situation** | | | |
| Check for **communal attitudes** and/or  behaviours that may inhibit access and use  of services | | | | |  | | | |
| Check for partner resources allocated and  disbursed for services (*human, financial,*  *equipment*) | | | | |  | | | |
| Check for functioning management and  coordination arrangements for  interventions | | | | |  | | | |
| Check for functioning coordination  arrangements between concerned  institutions | | | | |  | | | |
| Check for functioning supervisory  mechanisms | | | | |  | | | |
| Obtain views of authorities charged with  oversight (e.g. District health Officer) | | | | |  | | | |
| Obtain views of service providers, or  implementers of the programme (e.g.  teachers) | | | | |  | | | |
| **Statistics and records** | | | | | **Comments/Situation** | | | |
| Review locally generated statistical  records and routine information systems  (e.g. school attendance, nutrition coverage); | | | | |  | | | |
| Obtain updated data, where available | | | | |  | | | |
| Update status of indicators (cumulative  progress towards targets | | | | |  | | | |

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| **SECTION C: REPORTING**  *Reporting may be completed while in the field or at the office. Reporting at the office may facilitate any required further data analysis***.** | | | | |
| **A. Progress Reporting**  *(Description of activities and outputs)***:** | | | | |
| Progress on results as outlined above (in section II –Programme Reference) that details elements related to the following, as appropriate:   * + Access to inputs, services\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   + Quality to inputs/services\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   + Utilisation of inputs/services \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   + Enabling environment\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   Overall assessment of the extent to which the project/programme is progressing in relation to the expected results for the year | | | | |
| **B. Status of Indicators** | | | | |
| **Indicators (Baselines and Targets)** *(as defined in this Work Plan/Programme Document* | | **Progress on Indicators/Targets** | | |
|  | |  | | |
| **C. Constraints/Challenges/Opportunities- (Related to this Project/intervention implementation and achievement of results):** | | | | |
| **Constraints/Challenges (***Implementation constraints that affect achievement of Project/intervention results)*  **Lessons Learned** (*Lessons learned from addressing these in the course of the reporting period (if any).*  **Opportunities:**   * Key partnerships and collaboration * Other highlights and issues pertinent to the results being reported on. | | | | |
| **D. Recommendations/Follow-up/Planned Actions** | | | | |
| **Recommendations:**   * Key recommendations to address the constraints/challenges outlined above   **Follow Up/Planned Actions:**   * Priority actions planned to overcome constraints * Build on achievements and partnerships, and use lessons learned during the previous year. Indication of any major adjustments in the strategies, targets and expected results planned in the Project/intervention. | | | | |
| **Findings** | **Recommended action & priority *(High, Medium, Low)*** | | **By whom** | **By when** |
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**Annex III: Programme Monitoring Architecture**

Programme Monitoring Architecture

**Work Plans**

Results Groups

Monitoring Plans

Programme documents/SSFAs

* **UNDAF / ISF/SRP**
* **CPD/CPAP/HAC**
* **Programme Plans**
* **IMEP**

**Programme performance**

* Stakeholder engagement
* Analysis of opportunities
* Analysis of bottlenecks and barriers
* Implementation processes *(activities/interventions)*
* HACT assurance
* Data collection around indicators

**Other information**

**IP Risk Rating**

**Assess progress towards milestones/targets**

**Compile, analyze**

**and record data**

**Assess progress towards**

**outputs and outcomes**

**RAM, HPM,**

**Donor reports, COAR**

**Reporting**

**Programme Reviews**

*(Quarterly, mid-year, annual, UNDAF)*

**Situation Analysis/**

**Needs Assessments**

**IP performance**

**Programme Implementation/**

**Monitoring**

*(WPs, include monitoring activities, where specific monitoring plan not used)*

**Field**

**Monitoring**

**Checklist *(including HPM checklist)***

*Adapted from a China CO Framework (2014)*

1. The eTools will augment VISION (SAP and inSight) by providing tools for collection and storage of additional information needed for day-to-day programme and operational management.  The eTools will also interface with UNICEF’s data warehouse – the electronic store of enterprise data, and thus allow for the data collected to be associated with other pieces of information that already exist in VISION and other corporate systems. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Consult relevant standards [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Intervention and activity are used interchangeably in this template [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Consult relevant standards [↑](#footnote-ref-4)