

Monitoring & Evaluation Guidelines



United Nations World Food Programme
Office of Evaluation

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Going to the Field to collect Monitoring and Evaluation Data

Overview

Introduction. The purpose of this module is to explain how M&E data collection should be organised, who should conduct it and what key issues must be considered in order to collect data that is comparable and useful.

Why is this Module important?

In a results-oriented M&E strategy, the data collection roles and responsibilities of WFP and its partners should be established and clearly stated in the M&E plan matrix. This module is important because it provides guidance on how to complete the M&E Plan Matrix and how to ensure that the data collected is comparable and useful. It describes who should undertake data collection, outlining the critical qualities and skills required for field monitors, and it suggests ways of organising data collecting teams for cases in which this is required. The module also describes how to select the people to interview in the field and provides useful advice on data collection, including the rationale for using interview and discussion guides, checklists and questionnaires and the importance of distinguishing between raw data and data analysis.

What does this Module aim to achieve?

This module has the following objectives:

- Explain how to complete an M&E Plan Matrix.
- Describe who undertakes data collection at the field level.
- Describe how to select the people to interview during an M&E field trip.
- Explain the rationale for using interview and discussion guides, checklists and questionnaires, and describe key issues to consider when using them.
- Explain how to take field notes and collect raw data.

What should be reviewed before starting?

- What is RBM Oriented M&E
- Choosing Methods and Tools for Data Collection
- Identifying M&E Indicators
- What is Beneficiary Contact Monitoring and how is It conducted
- How to design a Results-Oriented M&E Strategy for EMOPs and PRROs
- How to design a Results-Oriented M&E Strategy for Development Programmes
- How to Plan an Evaluation
- How to plan and undertake a Self-evaluation

Section Titles and Content Headings

- **How to complete an M&E Plan Matrix**
 - Introduction
 - The M&E Plan Matrix
 - An M&E Plan for a Community Forestry Project
 - Stages for completing the M&E Plan Matrix
-

Who undertakes Data Collection

- Introduction
- Who should collect M&E Data at the Field Level
- Hiring a Data Collection Team
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- **On an M&E Field Trip how do you select the People to interview**
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- **Data Collection and Field Notes**
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 - Example of Data Collection versus Analysis during an Interview

How to complete an M&E Plan Matrix

Introduction. This section describes how to prepare an M&E Plan Matrix, 1 of the main documents explaining the M&E Strategy for an operation. This matrix is a summary of M&E related information, setting out detailed responsibilities for data collection.

The M&E Plan Matrix

The table or matrix below is useful for clearly identifying what data is needed, the source of the data, how often it will be collected, by whom it will be collected, what methods will be used in collection, and finally in which reports and forums the data will be presented. The matrix is critical for establishing clear roles and responsibilities of WFP and partners. It builds upon the information already contained in the logical framework and develops assumptions by identifying relevant indicators and ensuring that the related data is collected, analysed and used.

Logframe Element	Indicators (including targets)	Means of Verification				Use of Information	
		Data Source	Frequency & Cost of Collection	Responsibility for Collection	Collection Method	Reporting	Presentation
Impact							
Assumptions							
Outcome							
Assumptions							
Outputs							
Assumptions							
Activities							
Assumptions							
Inputs							

An M&E Plan for a Community Forestry Project

Achievement of Activity Impact							
Information Requirements	Indicators	Means of Verification				Use of Information	
		Data Source	Frequency & Cost of Collection	Responsibility for Collection	Collection Method	Reporting	Presentation
Impact - Enable households which depend on degraded natural resources for their food security to make a shift to more sustainable livelihoods	Incidence & degree of food insecurity among households in districts with degraded natural resources	VAM reports	Before and after completion	VAM Officer, WFP Country Office	VAM Mapping tools	VAM Reports	At CP evaluation workshop

Achievement of Activity Outcome							
Information Requirements	Indicators	Means of Verification				Use of Information	
		Data Source	Frequency & Cost of Collection	Responsibility for Collection	Collection Method	Reporting	Presentation
Outcome - Increase incomes and food security of target population at risk	Changes in income by households or household members	Baseline study & follow-up study in participating & control villages	Before, and at completion	WFP Country Office	Sample survey	Baseline report Terminal Country Office Report (COR)	At inception workshop & terminal COR workshop
	Amount of forest products harvested per household						
	Leading Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number households receiving income or food from protected land ● Beneficiaries (men & women) perceptions of costs & benefits of scheme 	Regular field visits Mini survey at mid-term Site survey of area protected	Six-monthly At mid-term	WFP Country Office, in collaboration with implementing partner	Field visit and sample survey	Mid-term management review report	At mid-term management review workshop

Achievement of Activity Outcome							
Assumptions – Encroachment by non-participating households can be controlled	Number of encroachments, and extent of damage		Annual	Implementing partner. Community Forestry Officer (CFO)	Visual observation during field visits	Annual Report	At annual review meeting
Delivery of Activity Outputs							
Information Requirements	Indicators	Means of Verification				Use of information	
		Data Source	Frequency of Collection	Responsibility for Collection	Collection Method	Reporting	Presentation
Output 1 – Increase in incomes and food security of target population at risk	Area of land developed or protected	Site survey of area protected & survival survey of seedlings planted	Annual	Implementing partner, Community Forestry Officer (CFO)	Visual observation during field visits	Annual Report Terminal COR	At annual review meeting & Terminal COR workshop
Assumptions - Market prices for fruit tree crops remain stable	Local market prices for fruit tree crops	Market Survey	Seasonal	Village food distribution committees	Recording of prices observed in sample of markets	Annual Report	
Output 2 – Target population fed	No. of people who have received WFP supplied food by gender and age group	Food distribution sheets	Monthly	Village food distribution committees, implementing partner, CDO	Compilation from food distribution sheets	Monthly report, Quarterly Progress Report (QPR), Progress Implementation Report (PIR)	At quarterly progress review meeting
Assumptions – etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	
Output 3 – Community groups formed and active in managing forested lands	No. of community groups formed and active	Village committee records	Quarterly	Implementing partner Community Development Workers (CDWs)	Compilation from village committee records	QPR, PIR	At quarterly progress review meeting
	Representation and involvement in Committees by gender	Village committee records	Quarterly	Implementing partner CDWs	Compilation from village committee records	QPR, PIR	
		Village committee survey	Six-monthly	Implementing partner CDO	Focus group discussions	PIR	
	No. of plans prepared and adopted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plans submitted ● Site verification 	Quarterly	Implementing partner CFO	Count of plans submitted & field visits to verify	QPR	
Assumptions – etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	Etc.	

Stages for completing the M&E Plan Matrix

The following stages illustrate the process to be undertaken in completing the matrix. In some cases it is simply a matter of copying information that is available in the logical framework. In other cases, some research, discussion and agreement with key stakeholders will need to be undertaken prior to inserting the information.

Stage	Information to be Included in each Column of the Matrix
1. Logframe Element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enter in Column 1 the main statements contained in the logical framework for Impact, Outcome, Output, Activities, Inputs and Assumptions.
2. Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enter in Column 2 the main indicators – For Impact, Outcome and Outputs, the indicators contained in the operation logical framework should be inserted. The indicators must be specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and timely (SMART). Indicators may need to be developed, and added at this stage, in the case of the main assumptions. For inputs, the physical quantities and project financial costs should be inserted for the main cost categories – for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for food items the projected quantities and cost of each commodity. for non-food items, the physical quantity and cost of each main item (eg equipment). for human resources, the projected staff time and cost.
3. Data source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enter in Column 3 the data source – the primary or secondary data source that will provide information about each indicator – eg. existing statistics or records; project accounts; nutrition survey; etc.
4. Frequency of Collection and Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enter in Column 4 the frequency of collection and costs related to each indicator listed in Column 3. Specify how often primary data will be collected, or secondary data analysed (eg. quarterly, annually, at end of phase, etc.), and the budget required for each stage.
5. Responsibility for Collection and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enter in Column 5 the organisation or unit or individual responsible for collecting and/or analysing the data.
6. Collection Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enter in Column 6 how the data is being collected (for example surveys or focus group meetings)
7. Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enter in Column 7 in which report(s) the information will be included (for example Quarterly Progress Report; Project Implementation Report, final evaluation etc.)
8. Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enter in Column 8 at which forums or meetings the information or report will be presented and discussed (eg. Quarterly management meetings; annual progress review workshop.)
9. Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review draft matrix with key stakeholders and revise it. Ensure that indicators can be measured at reasonable cost by existing means or by procedures to be developed by the operation. Ensure that responsibilities are clearly assigned. Check that Input, Activity and Output indicators are derived from management record-keeping and internal analysis.

Who undertakes Data Collection

Introduction. This section provides guidelines on who should collect M&E data at the field level.

Who should collect M&E Data at the Field Level

It is essential that the duplication of monitoring be avoided, information gaps identified and resources for monitoring used efficiently. The M&E Plan helps to clarify who will collect what, and why. It also provides a framework for agreeing responsibilities.

When a government department directly implements a WFP-assisted operation, that department has the direct responsibility for monitoring and reporting on progress, and its staff will collect and analyse field-level data. Specific responsibilities for this must be set out in the standard Letters of Agreement. WFP has an important role in ensuring that the necessary support for monitoring is made available through training and technical assistance and through ongoing supervision and oversight.

When WFP works with an implementing partner (IP), the responsibilities for data collection, analysis and reporting are set out in the contractual arrangements. IPs must provide basic data on food distribution, numbers of beneficiaries, agreed key indicators articulated in the operations logical framework and any additional activities that have been undertaken (e.g. training).

When WFP has direct responsibility for monitoring, the relevant tasks are usually delegated to field monitors, who are recruited specifically for the job. WFP field monitors usually have the tasks of collecting and analysing monitoring data and preparing field reports. The recruitment and deployment of field monitors must consider the following:

- Constitute mixed teams – of both internationals and nationals – to take advantage of different people's different perspectives and capacities.
- Develop a team approach, with frequent team meetings at which to promote integration and shared perceptions.
- Aim for gender equity, not only to be consistent with WFP's Commitments to Women, but also because female field monitors can help facilitate access to women in the target communities, access to in-depth monitoring information from the female perspective and the participation of women in monitoring exercises.

Having mixed monitoring teams takes advantage of each group's experiences and capacities.

National Staff

- Have advantages in terms of language, cultural understanding and, usually, freedom to travel, which are particularly important for monitoring distribution and end-use.
- May be subject to a variety of pressures and, in general, should not be assigned to work in their own localities or immediate ethnic groups.

International Staff, including United Nations Volunteer Specialists

- Can bring in national colleagues and share wider relevant overseas experience – particularly in relation to logistics and general management – with them.
- May be able to address issues that, for cultural reasons, are difficult for national staff to pursue.
- May lack local language and cultural understanding, which can lead to undue reliance on reports and a failure to appreciate what is really happening within the communities concerned.
- In some conflict or civil strife situations, their freedom to travel may be restricted; they may

require permits and/or escorts to travel to certain areas.

Hiring a Data Collection Team

It may be necessary to hire and train a data collection team owing to the limited number of staff available for a data collection exercise of significant magnitude, such as a sample survey or baseline data collection. Minimum selection criteria for data collectors (also called enumerators) must be developed, and will include local language skills, numeric and literacy skills and skills that are unique to the method of data collection being employed. In addition, a training session, lasting from 4 to 10 days, must be held at which to train the team in the uniform application of the questionnaire, sampling strategy and respondent selections well as on a variety of other topics related to fieldwork (e.g. managing conflict, responding to questions about the benefit of participating in the survey).

A management structure must be put in place with supervisory roles (and training in those roles) for WFP or IP staff. This is essential to maintain data quality and consistency. As a general guideline, the ideal supervisor-to-enumerator ratio is between 3:1 and 5:1, depending on the depth and nature of the data collection exercise. Supervisors will oversee data collection and respondent selection (e.g. sampling) in the field, meet with community leaders, resolve conflicts as they arise and review data collection notes and completed questionnaires to ensure the quality of data.

An Example of the Critical Qualities and Skills Required of Field Monitors

Field monitors must:

- understand WFP's mandate and goals in humanitarian relief operations;
- clearly appreciate gender issues and be supportive of gender equity;
- have good analytical and reporting skills;
- have skills in qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques;
- have knowledge on input and output monitoring, inventory control and food distribution methods, preferably gained from prior experience in similar operations;
- have a basic knowledge of nutrition;
- be honest, observant, perceptive, inquisitive, persistent and diplomatic;
- be sensitive listeners who have the ability to influence and convince people through discussion;
- be energetic and willing to travel and spend the majority of their time in the field;
- be capable of reviewing problems with officials on the spot;
- be team players; and
- be able to determine and focus on what is important.

An Example of Monitoring Data Collection Team Composition

Some 16 focus group discussions are to be held in 8 different villages. Two focus group discussions will be held in each village, 1 with men and 1 with women. It is estimated that 2 villages will be covered in 1 day, 1 in the morning and 1 in the afternoon. A team of 6 data collectors will be used.

Three women data collectors will lead focus group discussions with 8 to 12 women in each village. One female national staff member will facilitate the discussion in the local language (Dholuo) and another 1 will take notes. One female international staff member will sit in on the discussion, raise points (where relevant) and be responsible for raising sensitive topics related to women's control of food resources. The same arrangement will be made for 3 men data collectors.

On an M&E Field Trip how do you select the People to interview

Introduction. This section describes how to select the people to interview when you go to the field to collect M&E data. It introduces useful terms related to data collection such as respondents, purposive selection and random selection. Examples of potential respondents are listed.

How to select People to Interview

M&E reports are 1 of the critical decision-making tools that management relies upon to make decisions about operations.

1. The women, men, boys and girls who you will interview or hold discussions with in the field are called 'respondents'. Selecting the right people to interview is largely determined by the data you have come to collect. Remember this data is defined in the indicators listed in the logical framework and correspond with various data sources. Your visit to the field is 1 of these data sources.
2. Your ideal respondent criteria should be selected ahead of time based on who is in the best position to answer the questions you will ask or topics you will raise. For example, if you intend to ask about childcare, it is often best to ask mothers rather than village leaders or others in the field site.
3. The number of total interviews or group discussions is determined beforehand when sampling decisions are being made and should not be left to interpretation in the field. Deciding on the number is usually a balance between enough for a fair 'representation' and a reasonable workload given the time and financial resources available.
4. The number of participants in group sessions is determined by the method. Different qualitative methods have a suggested number of participants based on an understanding of how the number of people positively and negatively affects the discussion.
5. Once you have identified the ideal respondents, you must devise a method for selecting them in the field. The 2 most common methods are random selection and purposive selection and both have their merits.

Purposive Selection, intentionally selecting individuals because you think they are in the best position to provide you with accurate data, is used in qualitative and rapid data collection methods. This is especially true for key informant interviews where specific individuals (e.g. women head of households, adolescent girls, community leaders, traditional healers, etc.) may be in a better position to discuss topics or answer questions than the average respondent.

Random Selection can be done in many different ways and has less selection bias than purposive selection if done properly. Random selection of individual respondents or participants in group discussions is often a good technique to use when everyone wants to participate and your method or time constraints demand limited participation. If the random selection method is explained to all potential respondents in a group, most individuals readily accept the fact that they have or have not been chosen for participation.

Examples of Potential ‘Respondents’

- Children, boys and girls
- Women head of households
- Men and women beneficiaries individually and in groups
- Community representatives, local leaders, traditional leaders, both men and women
- Local government officials, district government officials
- Technical staff, site superintendents
- Donor, NGO representatives active in the operation area
- Private sector representatives (e.g. market vendors, truckers)
- WFP front-line staff

Why use Interview and Discussion Guides, Checklists and Questionnaires

Introduction. This section explains the rationale for using interview and discussion guides, checklists and questionnaires and outlines key issues to consider when using them.

Interview and Discussion Guides, Checklists or Questionnaires

Regardless of the data collection method being used, a written interview or discussion guide, checklist or questionnaire is critical for ensuring the following:

- All key issues are covered during the field visit.
- Questions or points for discussion are uniformly applied, regardless of when the field visit is conducted or who conducts it.
- The methods and questions used in monitoring are consistent across time and place (M&E strategies that rely on individuals are avoided, and a system is established and put in place).
- Data analysts clearly understand the questions or topics discussed and are able to make sense of the answers received (especially outlying or uncommon answers).

Remember that it will often not be possible to revisit the same topics with the same individual or group of people after you have left the field and returned to the office.

Using Interview and Discussion Guides, Checklists or Questionnaires

The data collection methods that can be used range from a formal questionnaire in which answers are ticked or filled in by enumerators (i.e. data collectors) to an informal list of 3 to 5 points that should be brought up during a community discussion. Selection of the appropriate option is largely driven by the type of collection method being used.

Familiarising the Data Collection Team with the Content

Regardless of whether a formal questionnaire or a checklist of points for key informants is being used for interviews, the people applying the tool in the field must become familiar with that tool prior to using it with real respondents. This is critical for ensuring that the tool does not become a burden or disruption to the rapport established with respondents. An informal exchange of thoughts and ideas can be ruined by a data collector who is obviously reading straight from a sheet of paper. An experienced and well-prepared data collector reviews the points prior to meeting with respondents and then glances over them once more at the end of the session in order to ensure that no key points have been missed.

Using Topics other than those listed

Do not limit yourself to the topics listed, especially when using qualitative methods. For almost all participatory and rapid methods, data collectors should develop follow-up questions related to respondents' answers. The list of topics or discussion points on a checklist should serve only to remind the data collector of key issues to bring up, and should not limit or prevent discussion of other topics.

Pre-testing and Adjustment

Prior to undertaking a large-scale data collection exercise, it is important that formal question-

naires are pre-tested to ensure that they will work in the field. It is also critical to spend an adequate number of days training data collection teams for formal or large-scale surveys. Teams are often composed of hired “outsiders”, and it is essential that all data collectors understand the intention behind each question in the same way so as to ensure consistency in the questions’ application and explanation to respondents. This also applies to discussion guides or checklists for which the key points and the intent behind raising specific topics should be reviewed prior to fieldwork. Discussion guides and checklists should be adjusted if, during the first few applications of the tools or during the first few attempts to analyse the data, additional points are found to be necessary.

Translation

All questionnaires, checklists or discussion guides must be translated into the language in which the interviews, discussions or meetings will be held. Data collectors in the field should not be expected to translate during the course of interviews or discussions because this will lead to inconsistent translation among collectors, or even by the same collector when meeting with subsequent groups or individuals.

An Example of a Simple Checklist for use in a Focus Group Discussion

A checklist may be a simple list of points on a sheet of paper. It serves the purpose of reminding the data collector of key issues to bring up, but it should not limit the discussion to those issues. The following are some of the points that can be listed on the checklist:

- Food distributions in relation to seasonal food gaps in households.
- Perceptions about the quality of food received.
- Typical household use of food: is food consumed, sold, fed to animals, given as loans/ gifts?
- Who controls the food aid commodities that are distributed to women?
- Has food had a notable impact on children’s nutrition and overall health status?
- How has food aid affected the lives of respondents (for the better, for the worse)?

Data Collection and Field Notes

Introduction. This section explains how to take field notes and collect raw data.

Data Collection versus Data Analysis

Taking notes during an interview or discussion, regardless of the methodology being used, is critical for ensuring that what the respondents say is accurately captured. A common error is for data collectors to interpret or analyse what respondents have said prior to writing it down. It is crucial to separate data collection from data analysis and to avoid assuming that you know what the respondent meant. Data collectors should be encouraged to note any analytic insight that they might gain from their field experience, but this should not be confused with documenting what the respondents have actually said.

Key Steps to follow in Data Collection

1. Be sure to separate description and raw data collection from your own analysis, judgement, interpretation or insight.
2. Do not attempt to recall what was said in an interview or discussion at a later time (e.g. in the car or back at the office). Inevitably, such recalled data will be biased by your own insights and analysis.
3. Be disciplined and conscientious in taking detailed field notes at all stages of the fieldwork, including notes on how the fieldwork that was carried out differed from the fieldwork that was planned. Notes about how the respondents were selected (in relation to the planned sampling strategy) are important for assessing comparability among data collected from different sites and at different points in time.
4. Be descriptive when taking notes. While it is critical to document what respondents said, note also focus group participants' reactions to points that were made in the discussions as well as any other relevant visual observations that you make. The intent is to have data that describe accurately, not only what was said, but also the setting in which it was said.
5. Make notes that refer to the interview or discussion guide, checklist or questionnaire that you are using. It is often helpful to create the checklist with space for adding field notes, ensuring that each note is correctly situated under the relevant checklist point. Another option is to number the discussion guide or checklist points and refer to these numbers in your notes. For questionnaires, the usual practice is to leave space for ticking or filling in answers on the questionnaire itself.
6. Quote directly from interviews or discussions. This allows people to be represented in their own words and terms. It also provides powerful anecdotal evidence for reports, proposals, etc.
7. Use the notes that you have taken to confirm important points that are made in order to ensure that you have understood their intended meaning fully. Notes also facilitate cross-checking with other sources.
8. Even if you think that a point is not important, document it. This serves 2 purposes: the point may prove to be important either later in the interview/discussion or during analysis; and your noting of every point assures respondents that you are being unbiased in what you document and giving each person's ideas equal value.
9. Do not let note taking disrupt the flow of the conversation, interview or discussion. In one-on-one interviews, this is not usually a problem. In group settings, however, where your role as facilitator is paramount, the use of a facilitator and a separate note taker is the best approach.

Example of Data Collection versus Analysis during an Interview

Respondent's Statement:

"The quality of food given is poor. It is the wrong type of food because we do not usually eat maize and are not familiar with cooking it."

It would be incorrect to note only that beneficiaries need training on maize preparation. This is analysis, deducing the critical problem and suggesting a possible solution.

It may, in fact, come to light in subsequent interviews that this respondent was subtly pointing out that he or she does not like the taste of maize, but prefers pasta. When all the elements of a respondent's statement are recorded (e.g. we collect the data before we analyse it), we get several points, instead of the single analysis point. In this case, the elements of the respondent's statement are:

- Poor food quality;
- Wrong type of food;
- Do not usually eat maize; and
- Unfamiliar with cooking maize.

Since it is impossible to know beforehand what subsequent interviews (or other data collection method) may uncover, it is critical to collect all the data in a written form.

Module Summary

What has been covered in this module?

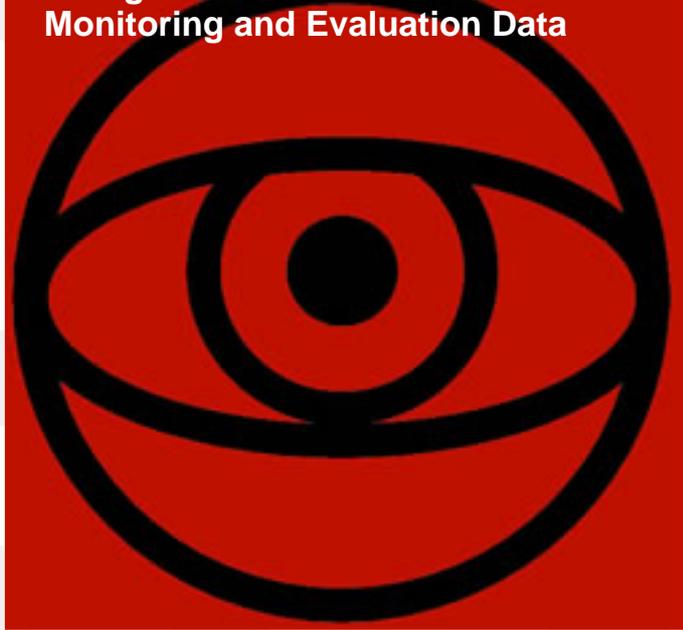
This module is important because it provided guidance on how to complete the M&E Plan Matrix and how to ensure that the data collected are comparable and useful. It described who should undertake data collection, outlining the critical qualities and skills required for field monitors, and it suggested ways of organising data collecting teams for cases in which this is required. The module also described how to select people to interview in the field and provided useful advice on data collection, including the rationale for using interview and discussion guides, checklists and questionnaires and the importance of distinguishing between raw data and data analysis.

What additional resources are available?

For further information the following modules and resources might be useful:

- How to consolidate, process and analyse Qualitative and Quantitative Data
- Reporting on M&E Data and Information for EMOPs and PRROs
- Reporting on M&E Data and Information for Development Programmes

**Going to the Field to collect
Monitoring and Evaluation Data**



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