Transforming Fragilities, Inc.

MODULE 1

MEAL FOR BARMM GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

FOUNDATIONAL MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND LEARNING (MEAL)

A TRAINING MODULE FOR GOVERNMENT STAFF

MODULE DEVELOPER:
Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga

Foundational Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL): Building Your Core Understanding

A Training Module for BARMM personnel

This training course introduces participants to the fundamental concepts and principles of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning, laying the groundwork for effective practice.

Foundational Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL): Building Your Core Understanding

A Training Module for Government Staff

August 2025

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Cotabato City
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FOREWORD

Our collective journey to build a truly resilient and responsive Bangsamoro has been one of great challenge and profound promise. As a partner committed to this mission, I have had the privilege of witnessing your tireless efforts on the frontlines of public service. Yet, in our many collaborations, a shared challenge consistently emerges: how do we move beyond simply fulfilling our mandates and counting our activities to confidently measuring the tangible impact of our work?

We know that a well-executed Work and Financial Plan (WFP) is essential. We know that a diligently completed accomplishment report is a non-negotiable part of our Strategic Performance Management System (SPMS). But the true story of our success is found not just in these compliance-based metrics, but in the lives that are changed.

It was this observation that inspired the founding of Transforming Fragilities, Inc. (TFI). As a local, non-governmental organization deeply rooted in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), TFI's mission is to bridge this gap. We specialize in providing comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) support to a diverse range of partners, including BARMM government agencies, UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and local CSOs. Our purpose is to unleash the power of data, transforming it from mere numbers into a force for social change, organizational excellence, and evidence-based decision-making. This also this gap that this training module is designed to bridge.

This module, **"Foundational Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL): Building Your Core Understanding,"** is a direct response to this need. It is not an abstract course on a theoretical framework; it is a practical guide grounded in the very documents and realities you navigate every day. We will dismantle the idea that MEAL is a bureaucratic burden and reframe it as a powerful, indispensable tool for proving the value of your programs.

Our hope is that this training will empower you to become storytellers of a different kind—ones who can use data not only to satisfy a requirement but to advocate for the communities you serve, to justify budget increases with undeniable evidence of impact, and to make more informed decisions that lead to sustainable change. This is the first step in a new way of working, and we are honored to take it with you.

Judith Joy G. Libarnes
Managing Director
Transforming Fragilities, Inc.

PREFACE

To my fellow public servants in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region,

Our work in the BARMM is more than a job; it is a sacred trust. We are tasked with building new institutions, delivering essential services, and transforming a legacy of fragility into a future of peace. For over two decades, I have been deeply immersed in this journey, both as a field practitioner and as a specialist in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning.

Through this experience, I have come to believe that our greatest asset is not just our commitment, but our ability to prove that our commitment is making a difference. The challenge is that our current systems, while effective for financial compliance and performance reporting, often fall short of capturing the true story of our impact. We can show that a project was completed on time, but can we confidently say how it changed the lives of the people it was meant to serve?

This module, **"Foundational Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL): Building Your Core Understanding,"** is designed to address this very question. It is my personal goal to demystify MEAL and present it not as a top-down mandate, but as an indispensable tool for each of you. This training is practical, grounded in the realities of our government's processes, and aimed at empowering you to use data to tell a more complete and compelling story of your work.

We will bridge the gap between our official mandates and our on-the-ground reality. We will learn how to turn the metrics in our Work and Financial Plans into meaningful evidence of change. We will equip ourselves to move from simply reporting on outputs to proudly demonstrating outcomes.

This is the first, crucial step. It is the foundation upon which we will collectively build a more responsive, effective, and evidence-based bureaucracy. I am confident that together, we can build a public service that not only works for the Bangsamoro people but can also show, with certainty and pride, that it is truly making a lasting impact.

Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga
Module Developer
Transforming Fragilities, Inc.

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Title: Foundational MEAL: Building Your Core Understanding

Course Description: This three-day course is the first stage in a four-part training series designed for BARMM government personnel. It introduces the fundamental concepts, principles, and frameworks of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL). The curriculum is structured to build a strong, holistic understanding of the "why" and "what" of MEAL, laying the conceptual groundwork necessary for more advanced, technical skills training in later courses.

TIME	SESSION	ACTIVITY
Day 1: Setting the Stage		
Morning Session		
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM	1 - Preliminaries	Activity 1: Opening Program
		Activity 2: Getting to Know You - "My MEAL Compass"
		Activity 3: Building a Learning Community - Human Bingo
		Activity 4: Expectation Check
	Chapter 1: Deconstructing MEAL	
	2 - The Government and BARMM MEAL Landscape	Activity 5: Understanding Our M&E Policy Landscape
		Lecturette 1: Understanding government and BARMM MEAL and Challenges
	3 - The Purpose & Principles of MEAL	Activity 6: Word Association & Gallery Walk
		Lecturette 2: The Purpose & Principles of MEAL
	4- Understanding Monitoring	Activity 7: Understanding Monitoring
		Lecturette 3: What is Monitoring?
	5 - Understanding Evaluation	Activity: 8: Understanding Evaluation
		Lecturette 4: What is Evaluation?
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch Break	
Afternoon Session		
1:30 PM - 5:30 PM	6 - The Pillars of Accountability and Learning	Activity 9: What is Accountability and Learning?
		Lecturette 5: What is Accountability and Learning?
	7 - Basic MEAL Terminology	Activity 10: Defining other basic terms in MEAL
		Lecturette 6: Other Basic Terms in MEAL
	8 - Understanding Indicators	Activity 11: SMART Indicator Challenge
		Lecturette 7: What are "indicators"?
End of Day 1 Session		
Day 2: From Theory to Frameworks		
Morning Session		
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM	**Chapter 2: The Foundational Frameworks**	
	9 - Basics of Results-based MEAL	Activity 12: Building a Results Chain
		Lecturette 8: What is "Results-based M&E"?
	10 - Intro. to Theory of Change	Activity 13: Developing a Theory of Change
		Lecturette 9: What is Theory of Change?
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch Break	

Afternoon Session		
1:30 PM - 5:30 PM	11 - Intro. to Results Framework	Activity 14: From Story to Structure
		Lecturette 10: What is a Results Framework?
	12 - The LogFrame: a Planning Tool	Activity 15: Building a Logical Framework
		Lecturette 11: What is a Logical Framework?
End of Day 2 Session		
Day 3: Bridging the Gap from Plan to Practice		
Morning Session		
8:30 AM - 12:00 PM	**Chapter 3: Bridging the Gap from Plan to Practice**	
	13 - The Role of People in MEAL	Activity 16: Stakeholder Mapping & Listening
		Lecturette 12: The Role of People in MEAL
	14 - A Glance of Data Usage	Activity 17: Data Detective: Sort & Discover
		Lecturette 13: Data vs. Information
		Lecturette 14: Data Collection Methods
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch Break	
Afternoon Session		
1:30 PM - 5:30 PM	15 - The MEAL Plan: A High-Level Overview	Activity 18: Building the MEAL Plan
		Activity 19: My MEAL Commitment
		Activity 20: Course Synthesis, Next Steps, Closing Program
End of Day 3 Session and Training		

SETTING THE STAGE AND INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY

SESSION 1: PRÉLIMINAIRES

Activity 1: Opening Program[1]:

This session sets the tone and provides a foundational framework for the entire training. It is crucial for fostering an inclusive atmosphere and ensuring all participants feel acknowledged and prepared.

- **Opening Prayer**:
    - Request a representative from each identified faith group present to lead the opening prayer, one at a time.
    - Note to the facilitator: It is important to be culturally sensitive. Do not ask a female Muslim to lead the prayer if there are Muslim males present, as the former can only lead in the absence of the latter.
    - Thank the representatives for their prayers.

- **Playing the National Anthem and Bangsamoro Hymn**:
    - Ask the participants to remain standing after the prayer for the National Anthem and the Bangsamoro Hymn.
    - You have the option to play video clips of the National Anthem or ask for a volunteer to lead the group in singing.
    - Next, play the Bangsamoro Hymn after the National Anthem.

- **Welcome Message from a Ranking Official**:
    - Allow the participants to sit comfortably.
    - Request a ranking official from your organization or a local elder to give a brief welcome address.
    - Introduce your guest properly to the participants.
    - Thank the guest immediately after their remarks.

- **Course Overview**:
    - Present the general description and objectives of the module to the participants.
    - Post the training schedule and lead the participants in a walkthrough of the planned activities.
    - Use this opportunity to compare the program with the participants' consolidated expectations to see if all expectations can be met by the lineup of activities.
    - For any expectations that fall outside the training design, explain why it is not included or how it might be indirectly related but is a separate topic on its own.
    - Ask the participants if they have questions or suggestions for amendments to the schedule.

[1] Adapted from the Preliminaries Section of the Panagtagbo sa Kalinaw Manual

Activity 2: Getting to Know You - "My MEAL Compass."

Objective: This activity helps you and your fellow participants reflect on your motivations, challenges, and goals for this training. It also helps build a sense of community by encouraging self-awareness and sharing.

Procedure:

1. Provide each participant with a piece of clean paper or a metacard.

2. Each participant clearly writes his/her name in the center.

3. In each of the four sections, they write a single word or symbol that represents their personal response to the prompt.
    - **North:** Their perception of a successful project.
    - **South:** Their biggest challenge in a project.
    - **East:** One thing they hope to learn about MEAL.
    - **West:** One contribution they can offer to the group's learning journey.

4. Facilitate a quick round of introductions where each person briefly explains their "MEAL Compass" to a small group or the full plenary.

My MEAL Compass

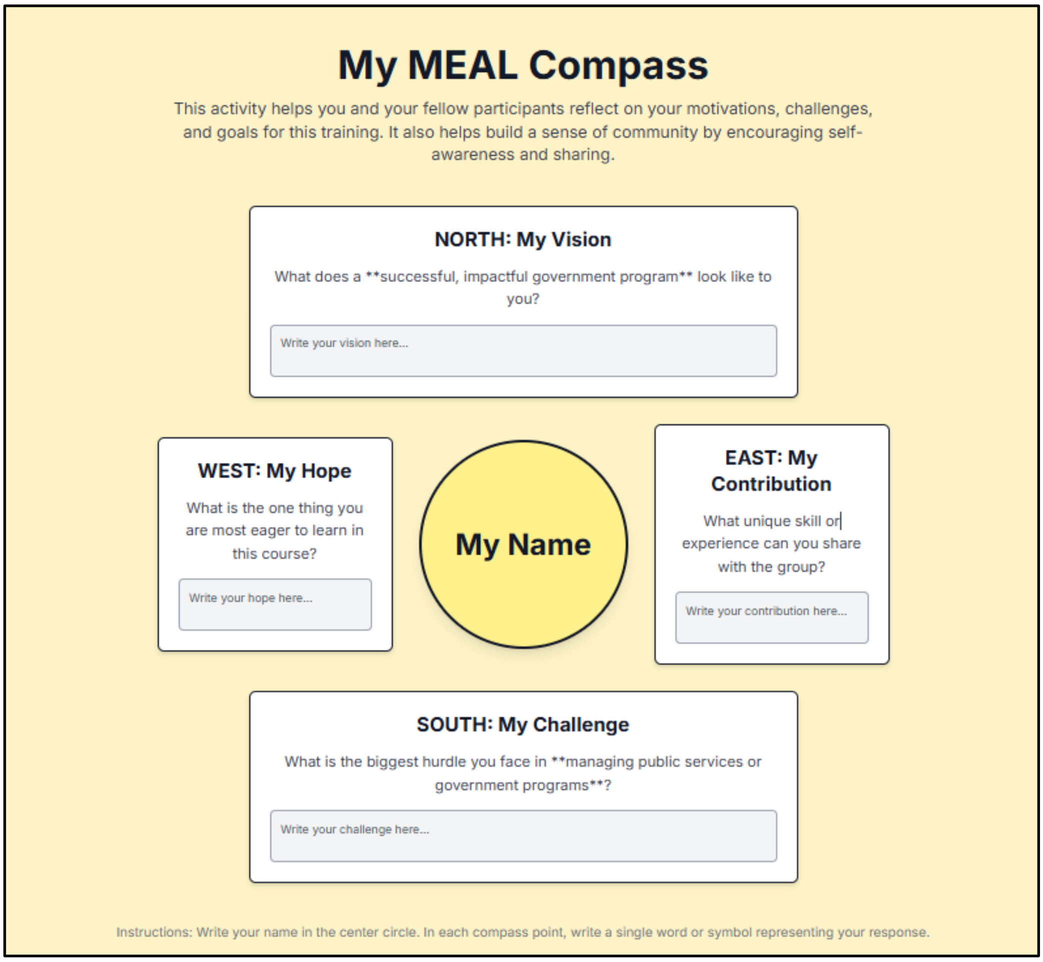

Figure 1. My MEAL Compass Template

Activity 3: Building a Learning Community - Human Bingo

Objective: To help participants get to know each other beyond their initial introductions and build a sense of community.

Procedure:

1. Distribute a bingo sheet with squares containing descriptions of people's experiences or characteristics (e.g., "Someone who has traveled abroad," "Someone who has worked for an NGO before").

2. Participants walk around the room and find a different person for each square that matches the description. They write the person's name or have them sign the square. The rule is that each person's name can only appear once on a single sheet.

3. The first person to complete a line (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally) yells "Bingo!".

4. The winner introduces the people whose names are on their winning line and the corresponding descriptions.

Human Bingo Instructions:

- Stand up and walk around the room.
- Find a different person for each square who fits the description.
- Write their name in the box. A person's name can only be used once!
- The first person to get a full row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally) shouts "BINGO!"

The Human Bingo Template

(This template is designed to be printed on a of paper and distributed to each participant, for a group activity.)

Has worked in more than one BARMM agency.	**Can speak more than two Mindanao languages.**	**Has visited at least four provinces of BARMM.**	**Has participated in a MEAL-related training before.**	**Has a hobby that is not related to their wor.**
Has facilitated a training session before.	**an explain the importance of a WFP.**	**Can explain the difference between an output and an outcome.**	**Has experience in working outside government.**	**Is a morning person (wakes up before 6 AM).**
Has a plant on their desk or in their office.	**Can name the Chief Minister's 12-Point Priority Agenda.**	**FREE SPACE**	**Works in a different division from you.**	**Has traveled abroad for work or vacation.**
Can cook a traditional Bangsamoro dish.	**Is a parent or a guardian.**	**Has received a government award or recognition.**	**Was born in a province outside of BARMM.**	**Has written a project proposal or report in the last year.**
Is the youngest person in their immediate family.	**Can play a musical instrument.**	**Has experience in managing a project budget.**	**Is the first in their family to work in the government.**	**Has a pet at home.**

Figure 2. The Human Bingo Template.

Activity 4: Expectations Check

Objective: To align the training's content and process with the participants' needs and ensure transparency about what the course will and will not cover.

Procedure:

1. Ask participants to form into groups.

2. Provide each group with a set of colored cards. Each color represents a category for your expectations.
   - **First Color:** Content (e.g., specific topics they want to learn).
   - **Second Color:** Process (e.g., a participatory approach, open forums).
   - **Third Color:** Facilitators (e.g., knowledgeable, patient, flexible).
   - **Fourth Color:** Co-participants (e.g., respectful, cooperative, open-minded).

3. Ask groups to discuss amongst themselves and write down their expectations on the corresponding-colored cards.

4. Write **one idea per card** using keywords or a short phrase.

5. Once all groups are finished, ask them to post their cards on the wall under the correct category.

The Expectation Check Template
(This template is designed to be drawn on a large sheet of paper, like a manila paper, for a group activity.)

CONTENT	PROCESS	FACILITATORS	CO-PARTICIPANTS
(What topics, skills, or knowledge do you hope to gain?)	*(What kind of activities or methods do you expect?)*	*(What do you hope for from the facilitators?)*	*(What do you hope for from your peers in this training?)*
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-

Figure 3. Expectation Check Template.

The facilitator clusters similar ideas and then leads a discussion to "level off" the expectations. The facilitator clearly explains which expectations are realistic for this foundational course and which will be addressed in future training stages, ensuring no topics are prematurely covered or permanently dismissed.

CHAPTER 1: DECONSTRUCTING "MEAL"

SESSION 2: THE GOVERNMENT AND BARMM MEAL LANDSCAPE

Activity 5: Understanding Our M&E Policy Landscape

Objective: To establish the critical context for the training. It aims to bridge the gap between national M&E frameworks and local challenges as a direct response to real-world problems.

Materials:

- PowerPoint presentation of the lecturette "Understanding government and BARMM MEAL Landscape and Challenges."

Procedure:

1. Present the lecturette "Understanding government and BARMM MEAL Landscape and Challenges."

Lecturette 1: Understanding government and BARMM MEAL Landscape and Challenges

Key National M&E Frameworks: Guiding Results-Based Management

The Philippines has a robust theoretical framework for M&E, largely driven by a **results-based management (RBM)** approach. This means the focus is on achieving measurable results, not just on activities. This approach emphasizes a clear chain of results, from inputs to activities, outputs, outcomes, and ultimately, impact.

1. **Regional Project Monitoring and Evaluation System (RPMES) -** The **RPMES** was established through Executive Order No. 376 (1989) to provide a systematic way to **monitor and evaluate projects** at various levels – national, regional, provincial, and local. It's designed to facilitate the generation of information on project implementation status and identify problems that might be hindering progress.

   - **Purpose:** To track project implementation, identify bottlenecks, and ensure timely interventions. It aims to expedite project implementation through decentralization and administrative delegation.
   - **Key Feature:** It emphasizes **multi-stakeholder participation**, involving various government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the monitoring process. This collaborative aspect is intended to provide a holistic view of project progress and challenges.
   - **Structure: I**t operates through Project Monitoring Committees (PMCs) at different administrative levels (regional, provincial, city, municipal). The RPMES guidelines also allow for evaluation of priority programs and projects at different stages of their lifecycle.

   While RPMES aims to track outcomes and impacts, its practical application often leans more towards **implementation monitoring** (focusing on whether activities are being done) rather than a deep assessment of developmental impacts (what changes are actually occurring).

2. **Organizational Performance Indicator Framework (OPIF) -** The **OPIF** is a framework from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) that aims to strengthen the **accountability of government departments and agencies** based on the **Major Final Outputs (MFOs)** they deliver to external clients. It's a cornerstone of the government's performance-informed budgeting system.

   - **Purpose:** To guide agencies in developing performance indicators that measure their key outputs and outcomes, thereby linking agency budgets to tangible results.
   - **Key Principle:** OPIF stresses that indicators should measure **what is delivered to clients** (outputs/outcomes), not just internal processes. It explicitly cautions against indicators that "describe processes undertaken in getting the MFO ready for delivery to client" or "relate to internal processes/outputs and not to delivery of MFOs to end-clients."
   - **Challenge:** Despite these clear guidelines, many agencies still tend to use a mix of outcome, output, activity, and **process indicators**, sometimes leading to confusion about the actual focus of accountability. This often results in a preference for process-oriented measurements in government planning systems, making it difficult to truly assess the impact on end-users.

3. **Program Expenditure Classification (PREXC)** - The **PREXC** framework is another DBM initiative that classifies government spending based on **programs, activities, and projects (PAPs)**, linking expenditures directly to specific results. It's an integral part of the government's budget reform agenda.

    - **Purpose:** To improve the transparency and accountability of public spending by showing what government programs are costing and what results they are expected to achieve. It provides a more granular view of how public funds are allocated and utilized towards specific objectives.
    - **Key Feature:** It shifts the focus from traditional line-item budgeting (where funds are allocated to specific inputs like salaries or office supplies) to **performance-informed budgeting**, where budget allocations are justified by the expected outputs and outcomes of programs.
    - **Connection to M&E:** PREXC requires agencies to define clear performance indicators and targets for their PAPs, making it easier to monitor and evaluate whether funds are being spent effectively to achieve desired results. It provides a direct link between financial resources and the performance indicators used in M&E.

The Theory vs. Practice: The "Performance-Change Dichotomy"

Here's where we often see a significant gap between the ideal and the reality of M&E in Philippine governance. Theoretically, our M&E frameworks are designed for **results-based management**, aiming to track not just activities, but also **outcomes and long-term impacts** on beneficiaries. However, in practice, there's a strong tendency towards **performance-based M&E**, which primarily focuses on:

- **Process Efficiency:** How well activities are carried out (e.g., "We conducted X number of trainings").
- **Input Utilization:** How resources are consumed (e.g., "We spent Y pesos on supplies").
- **Output Delivery:** What direct products or services are produced (e.g., "We distributed Z relief goods").

This creates what's often called a **"performance-change dichotomy."** Agencies can effectively demonstrate *what they did* (their performance in terms of activities and outputs), but they often struggle to provide robust evidence of *how these activities improved the lives of beneficiaries* or contributed to broader, transformative change (the actual "change" or impact). For instance, it's easier to report "100 LGUs trained" than to show "how that training led to a measurable improvement in LGU functionality or service delivery."

Why does this dichotomy happen?

- **Compliance Mindset:** Data is often collected primarily to fulfill reporting requirements and demonstrate compliance with regulations, rather than to genuinely inform decision-making, foster learning, or assess deeper impact. The focus becomes checking boxes rather than understanding real-world effects.
- **Indicator Formulation:** As seen with OPIF, there's a practical leaning towards easily measurable process or output indicators. It's often simpler to quantify activities than to measure complex behavioral shifts or long-term socio-economic changes.
- **Capacity Gaps:** There can be a shortage of skilled personnel with the technical capacity for comprehensive, change-based M&E approaches. This includes expertise in designing

impact evaluations, conducting rigorous data analysis, and utilizing qualitative methodologies to capture nuanced changes.
- **Budget Constraints:** Resources allocated for rigorous impact evaluations, baseline studies, and ongoing beneficiary tracking are perceived as constrained by the 1% budget ceiling on Engineering and Administrative Overhead (EAO) expenses, because it is said to include "monitoring and project management."
- **Structural Issues:** There can be a fundamental disconnect between strategic planning documents (which articulate change objectives, such as development plans and action plans) and operational plans (which measure implementation activities, such as the work and financial plan), leading to potential misalignment in accountability.

This focus on process and output indicators can create significant challenges during budget hearings, as agencies may struggle to justify budget increases for community-facing interventions without clear evidence of their actual impact on beneficiaries. Without robust "change data," it becomes difficult to make evidence-based decisions about which programs truly deserve increased funding based on their demonstrated effectiveness.

The Unique Context of BARMM

The BARMM operates under a unique governance structure established by the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). This autonomy brings both opportunities and distinct challenges, particularly in institutionalizing robust M&E systems. The region has its own budget allocation process, led by the Ministry of Finance, Budget and Management (MFBM), which, while similar to the national framework, has its own specificities. Key aspects of the BARMM fiscal framework include:

- The **Annual Block Grant**, the main source of funding for the region.
- Budget allocation priorities that often mirror national priorities, with significant allocations to sectors like education, health, and social services.
- A budget preparation, execution, and accountability cycle that is intended to incorporate M&E mechanisms.

M&E Gaps and Challenges in BARMM

Despite efforts to strengthen M&E systems, BARMM faces significant gaps and challenges. The Second Bangsamoro Development Plan (2023-2028) itself acknowledges the "non-institutionalization of MEAL system" as a key challenge. Let's explore some of these specific hurdles:

1. **Low Priority in Some Local Government Units (LGUs)**. Studies show that many LGUs often give **low priority to M&E**.
    - **Perception of Responsibility:** M&E is often seen as solely the task of the Municipal Planning and Development Office (MPDO) or the Local Chief Executive (LCE), rather than a collective responsibility of the Local Development Council.
    - **Limited Mechanisms:** Many municipalities lack established M&E programs, meaning systematic tracking and assessment are not yet widespread.

    This low prioritization means M&E is often treated as an afterthought rather than an integral part of governance.

2. **Lack of a Standardized M&E System**. A fundamental challenge is the **lack of a standardized M&E system** across BARMM. This leads to:
    - **Varying Comprehension:** The understanding and application of M&E vary significantly from one Ministry, Office, or Agency (MOA) to another. There's often a limited grasp of the crucial distinction between **performance-based** and **change-based M&E**.
    - **Fragmented Data:** Without a unified system, data is often fragmented and inconsistent, making it difficult to get a holistic view of regional progress.

3. **Prevailing Performance-Oriented Approach to M&E** - A significant hurdle is the tendency towards a **compliance-oriented approach**, which manifests as a **performance-oriented approach to M&E**. This means agencies focus on fulfilling reporting requirements rather than genuinely using data to learn and improve.
    - **Focus on Outputs, Not Outcomes:** Data collection often prioritizes easily measurable indicators that show **activity completion** or **output delivery**. This is the essence of the **performance-change dichotomy**: we can prove *what we did* (performance) but struggle to show *what difference it made* (change).
    - **Reinforced by Our Own Tools:** Our own ïnput and output forms, and their variations, while valuable, can reinforce this gap.

4. **Budget Constraints and the 1% EAO Clarification** - A common source of confusion is the **1% Engineering and Administrative Overhead (EAO) expenses limitation**. It's crucial to understand that this policy applies specifically to **infrastructure project implementation** (construction supervision, quality control, etc.). The 1% EAO ceiling **does NOT include** broader program M&E activities like:
    - **Baseline studies** for development programs.
    - **Impact evaluations** assessing long-term outcomes.
    - **Program effectiveness assessments.**

    Agencies must budget for these strategic M&E activities separately within their program proposals and work plans.

5. **Misinterpretation of "Baseline" and its Impact on M&E -** A critical challenge is the frequent **misinterpretation of the term "baseline."**
    - **"Baseline" in Work and Financial Plans (WFPs):** In government budgeting, a "baseline" is often just a starting number for the fiscal year—either **"0" for a new project** or the **previous year's accomplishment for an ongoing one**. This serves an accounting purpose but is **not a true M&E baseline.**
    - **What a "Baseline Study" Truly Is:** A genuine **baseline study** is a comprehensive data collection exercise done *before* a program begins. It establishes the **initial conditions** and measures the **starting values** of all key indicators (outputs, outcomes, and impacts). Without this, it's nearly impossible to attribute observed changes to our interventions.

SESSION 3: THE PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF MEAL

Activity 6: Word Association & Gallery Walk

Objective: To collaboratively develop a shared foundational understanding of key MEAL terminology by drawing on collective knowledge and experiences, without using external references.

Materials:

- Six large sheets of manila paper, each with a pair of words written in large letters.
    - Paper 1: MONITORING / EVALUATION
    - Paper 2: ACCOUNTABILITY / BUDGET
    - Paper 3: GOAL / OBJECTIVE
    - Paper 4: IMPACT / OUTCOME
    - Paper 5: INDICATOR / INPUT
    - Paper 6: QUALITATIVE DATA / QUANTITATIVE DATA
- Markers of different colors (for each group)
- Masking tape (for posting outputs)

Procedure:

1. Divide participants into six small groups. Assign each group a manila paper posted on a wall at equidistant locations around the session hall.

2. Each group will focus on the pair of words on their assigned manila paper. Without using any external references, the group will discuss and write down a meaning or definition for each word based on their collective stock knowledge and experiences. They should write their definitions clearly and concisely on the paper. (5 minutes).

3. Explain the process: "We will now begin a gallery walk. Each group will have two minutes to move to the next manila paper and add their own 'meaning' or insights to the words already on the paper. Signal the groups to begin. After two minutes, signal them to move to the next manila paper. This process continues until all groups have had the opportunity to add their contributions to all six manila papers.

4. Reconvene the main group. The facilitator will go through each manila paper, reading the initial definitions and the "add-on" contributions from each group. A discussion will follow to clarify any conflicting points and arrive at a single, shared, and agreed-upon working definition for each term.

5. Present the lecturette on the purpose and principles of MEAL.

6. Participants discuss the implications of a poorly implemented MEAL system, connecting the absence of MEAL to potential project failures and a loss of stakeholder trust. This reinforces the importance of the principles before moving into planning frameworks.

Lecturette 2: The Purpose and Principles of MEAL

MEAL is crucial for ensuring that organizations are implementing evidence-based, efficient, and sustainable initiatives, and that they are responsible to their stakeholders. MEAL offers a systematic methodology for program administration, enabling organizations to recognize accomplishments, difficulties, and opportunities for enhancement. It empowers them to use data and input to create well-informed choices regarding program design, execution, and resource distribution.[2] MEAL is a comprehensive approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Ensuring that organizations deliver programs that are evidence-based, effective, and sustainable, and that they are accountable to their stakeholders is crucial for success. MEAL offers a systematic approach to program management, enabling organizations to analyze achievements, obstacles, and opportunities for enhancement. By utilizing data and feedback, informed decisions can be made regarding program design, implementation, and resource allocation.

Picture MEAL as a puzzle made up of four pieces (Figure 1). Each piece – monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning – has its unique place and purpose, but the MEAL system is only effective **when the pieces are aligned, connected, and working together**.

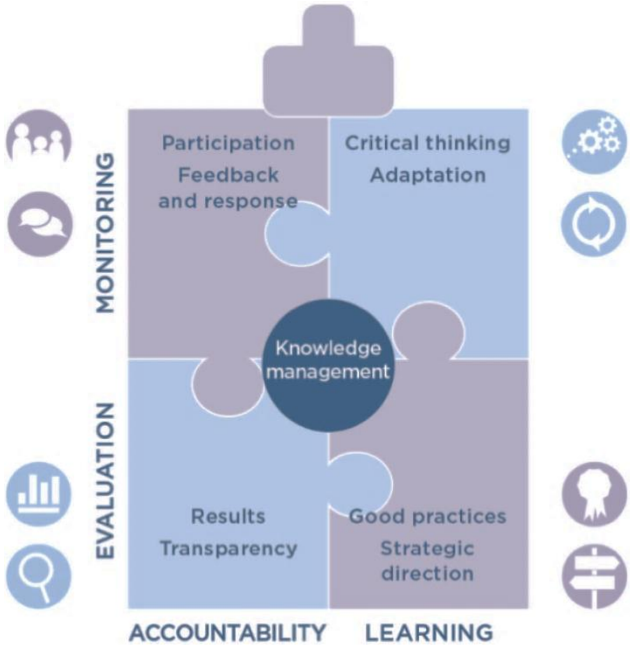

Figure 4. The MEAL Puzzle.

Policymakers and program managers can evaluate how an intervention changes over time through **monitoring**; how well a program was implemented and whether there are discrepancies between the expected and achieved results through **evaluation**; and whether changes in well-being are solely attributable to the program through **impact evaluation**.[3]

Placing MEAL within the Project Management Cycle

MEAL is not a standalone activity that we do at the end of a project. It is an integral thread woven throughout the entire project lifecycle, from beginning to end.

- **The Planning Phase (Before the Project Starts):** This is where MEAL begins. We conduct a **baseline assessment** to get a clear overview of the existing situation before any intervention takes place. This baseline data is essential because it gives us a starting point against which all future changes will be measured. We also develop our **MEAL framework and plan**, defining our goals, objectives, and indicators.

- **The Implementation Phase (During the Project):** This is the domain of **monitoring**. It's the continuous, routine process of checking in to see if our activities are on track. Are we

[2] Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) by EvalCommunity
[3] Basic Principles of Monitoring and Evaluation by International Labour Organization (ILO)

meeting our targets? Are we using our resources efficiently? Monitoring gives us the real-time data we need to make daily and weekly adjustments.

- **The Evaluation Phase (Mid-term and End-of-Project):** At strategic points, we perform **evaluations** to step back and look at the bigger picture. A **midline evaluation** helps us make course corrections if needed. An **endline evaluation** (or end-of-project evaluation) is a "before-and-after" study that compares our final results to the initial baseline. This is where we determine if our work was effective.

- **The Learning and Adaptation Phase (The End and the Beginning):** The final evaluation is not truly an end. It's a key source of **learning**. The insights we gain—what worked, what didn't, and why—are captured and fed back into the next project planning cycle. This is how we ensure that our work is not just a series of isolated projects but a continuous journey of growth and positive change.

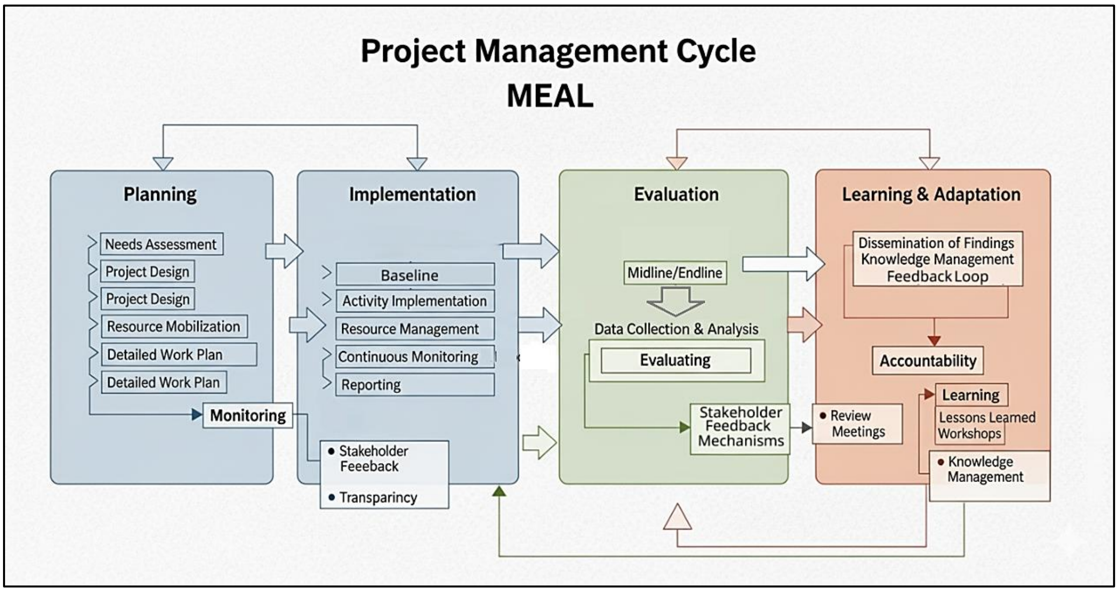

Figure 5. MEAL in the Project Management Cycle

Levels of MEAL

MEAL operates at different scales, providing insights and guidance from the broad strategic direction of an entity down to the granular details of specific initiatives. There are primarily two levels of MEAL: organizational MEAL and project MEAL.

1. <u>Organizational MEAL</u> – At the organizational level, your MEAL will focus on monitoring the performance of your organization as a whole. The areas considered in organizational MEAL include:

    - **Your organization's mission.** This involves evaluating whether the organization's programs, strategies, and resource allocation are consistent with its core mission and values. It assesses if the organization is staying true to its foundational purpose and making progress towards its overarching aims.

    - **Your organization's structure.** This examines the efficiency and effectiveness of the organizational design, including its hierarchy, departments, reporting lines, and internal communication flows. The goal is to ensure that the structure supports efficient operations and effective delivery of services or programs.

- **Your planning, implementation, and MEAL processes.** This looks at the robustness and integration of the organization's internal systems. It assesses how well plans are developed and executed and how MEAL activities themselves are managed and utilized to inform continuous improvement. This includes evaluating the quality of data collection, analysis, reporting, and learning mechanisms at an institutional level.

- **The relevance of your projects to your mission.** This assesses whether individual projects and programs undertaken by the organization contribute meaningfully to its broader mission and strategic objectives. It helps prevent "mission drift" and ensures that resources are invested in initiatives that align with the organization's core purpose.

- **Your organization's capacity.** This evaluates the human, financial, technical, and infrastructural resources available to the organization and how effectively they are utilized. It identifies strengths, weaknesses, and areas for capacity building to enhance overall organizational performance and sustainability.

2. Project MEAL – Project MEAL is focused on the specific, defined initiatives, programs, or action plans undertaken by the organization. This micro-level MEAL provides detailed insights into the performance and impact of individual projects, allowing for immediate adjustments and targeted improvements. For a specific project or action plan, Project MEAL focuses on:

    - **Monitoring targets.** This involves the continuous tracking of predefined quantitative and qualitative targets set for the project. It ensures that activities are on schedule, within budget, and producing the expected immediate outputs. Example: Tracking the number of training sessions conducted or the number of beneficiaries reached.

    - **Results.** This assesses the immediate and intermediate results (outputs and outcomes) achieved by the project. It goes beyond just activities to determine if the project is delivering the tangible products, services, or changes intended. Example: Evaluating if participants gained new skills (output) and if those skills led to improved livelihoods (outcome).

    - **Changes.** This delves into the qualitative and quantitative changes observed among beneficiaries, communities, or systems as a direct or indirect consequence of the project. It seeks to understand the "what" and "how" of transformation, including both intended and unintended changes. Example: Comparing baseline data with endline data to measure shifts in conditions.

    - **Challenges.** This systematically identifies and analyzes obstacles, risks, and unforeseen difficulties encountered during project implementation. It aims to understand why certain targets might be missed or why expected results are not fully achieved, providing crucial information for problem-solving and adaptive management. This includes operational, contextual, and capacity-related challenges.

SESSION 4: UNDERSTANDING MONITORING

Activity 7: Understanding Monitoring

Objective: To understand the concept of monitoring.

Materials:

- PowerPoint presentation of the lecturette: What is Monitoring?
- Laptop
- Projector
- Projector Screen

Procedure:

- Present the Lecturette on Monitoring

Lecturette 3: What is Monitoring?

At its core, monitoring is the **continuous and systematic process of collecting and analyzing information to track progress**. Think of it as a project's ongoing health check. It's about gathering facts and figures to see if our project is unfolding as planned.

This ongoing oversight is crucial for making informed, timely decisions. Without a reliable monitoring system, we're essentially navigating without a map—we might know where we're headed, but we won't know if we're on the right road.

The Key Questions Monitoring Answers— Monitoring helps us answer two fundamental questions that are essential for successful project implementation:

1. **"Are we doing what we planned?"** This question is about compliance and process. Are we holding the workshops we said we would? Have we trained the number of people we targeted? Monitoring data, such as attendance sheets or activity logs, provides the answers.

2. **"Are we on track?"** This question is about progress and timelines. Are we on schedule to complete our objectives by the deadline? Are we staying within our budget? Monitoring gives us the data to spot potential delays or overspending early, allowing us to make quick corrections before they become major problems.

What Do We Monitor? The Types of Data - Monitoring looks at various types of data, but in this foundational course, we'll focus on a key area: outputs.

- **Output-Level Data:** This data tracks the direct products, services, or events that our project activities produce. It's the tangible evidence of our work. Examples include:
    - The number of community members engaged in dialogue sessions.
    - The number of training workshops successfully completed.
    - The number of information pamphlets distributed.

Outputs are distinct from the activities themselves. The activity is "conducting a training," while the output is the "number of people trained." This distinction is vital because outputs are the immediate, measurable results of our efforts.

Monitoring's Role in the Project Cycle - As we've established, MEAL isn't a one-time event. Monitoring, in particular, is a **continuous and routine** function.

- It happens throughout the entire life of the project.
- It's a regular check-in, whether that's daily, weekly, or monthly, to ensure we are progressing as intended.

Monitoring is also a prerequisite for effective evaluation. The data we gather through monitoring becomes the raw material for our evaluations later on. Without solid monitoring data, it's impossible to make a credible judgment about our project's overall effectiveness or impact.

Two Key Types of Monitoring

Monitoring approaches often distinguish between these two key areas:

1. **Financial Monitoring:** This involves the systematic tracking of how we use project funds. It's essential for accountability to donors and provides the data needed for financial evaluations, ensuring we are getting "value for money" and staying within budget.

2. **Results-Based Monitoring:** This is a more comprehensive approach. It tracks not only our outputs (what we delivered) but also the immediate outcomes (the changes that arose from those deliveries). Results-based monitoring helps us understand if we're delivering what we promised and if those deliveries are actually leading to the desired changes in people's lives.

By embracing both types of monitoring, we ensure we have a holistic view of our project's performance—both financially and programmatically—which is the first step toward building an effective and accountable MEAL system.

SESSION 5: UNDERSTANDING EVALUATION

Activity 8: What is Evaluation?

Objective: To understand the concept of evaluation.

Materials:

- PowerPoint presentation of the Lecturette “What is Evaluation?”
- Laptop
- Projector
- Projector Screen

Procedure:

- Present the lecturette on What is Evaluation?

Lecturette 4: What is Evaluation?

If monitoring is our continuous health check, then evaluation is the full diagnostic report.

Evaluation is a **systematic and objective assessment** of a program's design, implementation, and results. Its overarching purpose is to determine a program's overall **worth or significance**. It's where we step back from the day-to-day work to ask the bigger questions and make informed judgments. This information is crucial for decision-makers who need to know if a program is truly making a difference and whether it's worth continuing or expanding.

The Key Questions Evaluation Answers— While monitoring tells us if we're on track, evaluation helps us understand the true value of our journey. It answers:

1. **"Did we achieve our goals?"** This goes beyond just completing activities. It's about whether the project's outputs and outcomes actually led to the desired changes in people's lives.

2. **"Did the project make a difference?"** This is the core of evaluation. It seeks to understand if the lives of the people we served are better now than they would have been without our intervention.

3. **"Why or why not?"** This is perhaps the most important question. A good evaluation doesn't just show a result; it uncovers the reasons behind it. It helps us understand what factors contributed to success, what challenges caused setbacks, and what we can learn from both.

Monitoring vs. Evaluation: A Critical Distinction - This is a point of frequent confusion, so let's clarify it with a simple comparison:

- **Monitoring** is focused on **tracking progress**. It's a continuous, internal process, often done by project staff. The data is usually quantitative and answers questions like "How many workshops were held?" or "How many participants attended?"

- **Evaluation** is focused on **assessing value**. It's a periodic, often external or independent, process. It uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative data to answer questions like "Did the workshops actually increase the participants' skills?" or "Did their new skills lead to a change in their community's dynamics?"

Without a reliable monitoring system, a credible evaluation is nearly impossible. The data from our ongoing monitoring efforts becomes the raw evidence that an evaluation uses to tell a compelling, evidence-based story of our project's journey.

Types of Evaluation: Understanding the "How" and "Why" - Not all evaluations are the same. We generally categorize them in two main ways, depending on what we want to assess:

1. **Performance Evaluations**: This type of evaluation focuses on the **quality of service delivery and immediate results**. It's ideal for making timely, in-course corrections. It answers questions like
   - Are the intended beneficiaries receiving our services?
   - Are participants gaining the knowledge or skills we expected?
   - Are there any bottlenecks in our service delivery?

This type of evaluation primarily relies on data from our routine monitoring system, along with feedback from participants. It helps us ensure operational efficiency and is best suited for programs in their early to mid-stages.

2. **Impact Evaluations**: This is a more rigorous and complex type of evaluation. Its defining feature is its approach to establishing **causality**. It seeks to determine whether a long-term, significant change can be directly attributed to our program and not to other external factors. It answers the crucial question: **"What would have happened otherwise?"**

   For example, an impact evaluation for a women's empowerment program might ask: "Did women's economic independence genuinely increase because of our intervention, or was it due to a new government policy or a change in the market?" This type of evaluation is best suited for strategic decision-making, like whether to scale up a pilot program. It requires a significant investment in time, resources, and technical expertise, often involving a **baseline study** at the beginning of the project to measure the starting conditions, which we will discuss in our next sessions.

We also have different types of evaluation based on timing:

- A **baseline evaluation** is done at the very start to set a benchmark.
- A **midline evaluation** happens during implementation to check progress and allow for adjustments.
- An endline evaluation is conducted at the conclusion of a project to measure overall results and distill lessons learned.

Understanding these different types of evaluation is key to designing a MEAL system that provides the right information at the right time.

SESSION 6: THE PILLARS OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

Activity 9: What is Accountability and Learning?

Objective: To understand the concepts of accountability and learning.

Materials:

- Powerpoint presentation of the Lecturette: "What is Accountability and Learning?"
- Laptop
- Projector
- Projector Screen

Procedure:

- Present the lecturette on What Is Accountability and Learning?

Lecturette 5: What is Accountability and Learning?

Accountability: A Moral and Operational Imperative

Accountability is the obligation of organizations to ensure that programs are executed in an **ethical, transparent, and participatory manner**. It's about being answerable for our actions, and it goes far beyond simply fulfilling a reporting requirement.

For BARMM agencies, this concept manifests in three critical ways:

- **Upward Accountability:** This is our responsibility to report to higher authorities, like our donors, partners, and our own senior management. It involves providing accurate and timely data from our monitoring and evaluation activities to justify resource allocation and demonstrate compliance with our mandates.

- **Downward Accountability:** This is our crucial responsibility to the primary beneficiaries—the communities we serve. It's about providing them with information about our programs, listening to their feedback, addressing their concerns, and ensuring their needs and perspectives genuinely shape our interventions. Tools like feedback mechanisms and community scorecards are vital for this.

- **Horizontal Accountability:** This refers to our responsibility to our colleagues, collaborating agencies, and peer organizations. It involves transparently sharing information, coordinating our efforts, and ensuring that we pursue our collective goals effectively as a sector.

Ultimately, accountability in MEAL means not just tracking progress but also being answerable for the ethical conduct of the program and demonstrating the tangible improvements in the lives of the people we serve.

Learning: Closing the Loop for Continuous Improvement

Learning is the ultimate purpose of MEAL. It's the process through which information from monitoring and evaluation is used to **continuously improve our work**. It is not about collecting data for data's sake, but about actively making sense of that data and translating insights into actionable changes.

Learning is about fostering a culture of organizational reflection where we openly discuss successes, failures, and unexpected outcomes. It's about asking: "What did we learn from our M&E findings, and what can we do better next time?"

This process is critical for several reasons:

- **Adaptive Management:** Learning enables our programs to be flexible and responsive. By understanding what works, what doesn't, and why, we can adapt our strategies and activities in real-time, which is particularly vital in dynamic contexts.

- **Knowledge Management:** Learning involves systematically capturing and sharing knowledge derived from our findings. This ensures that valuable insights are not lost but are institutionalized and accessible for future planning and implementation, preventing us from repeating the same mistakes.

- **Evidence-Based Decision-Making:** Learning transforms our data into actionable evidence. This evidence then becomes the foundation for informed decisions, ensuring that future interventions are based on what has been proven effective.

- **Fostering Innovation:** When we understand the nuances of our work and its impact, we can identify new opportunities for innovation and develop more effective approaches to address complex challenges.

Ultimately, **learning closes the loop in the MEAL cycle**. It ensures that our efforts in monitoring and evaluation are not just for reporting but for driving continuous improvement, fostering organizational growth, and maximizing the positive impact of our initiatives on the lives of the people we serve.

SESSION 7: BASIC MEAL TERMINOLOGY

Activity 10: Defining other basic terms in MEAL

Objective: To understand the concepts of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, impact, results, data sources, and assumptions.

Materials:

- PowerPoint presentation of the Lecturette on Other Basic Terms in MEAL
- Laptop
- Projector
- Projector Screen

Procedure:

- Present the Lecturette on "Other Basic Terms in MEAL"

Lecturette 6: Other Basic Terms in MEAL

What are "inputs"?

Inputs are sometimes mistaken for being equivalent with "activities." Nevertheless, these terms cannot be used interchangeably. While both are crucial components of a project's logical framework, their roles are distinct[4].

Inputs, in basic terms, refer to the elements utilized in a project for its implementation or for an activity of it to happen. Examples of an "input":

1. Supplies and Materials
2. Funds / Money (for payments and/or disbursements/reimbursements)
3. Manpower (trainor, resource speaker, facilitator, documenter, etc.)
4. Venue
5. Food and snacks
6. Accommodation
7. Equipment (laptops, projectors, photocopier, vehicles, etc.)

Inputs are essential for achieving the desired outcomes of a project.

What are "activities"?

Activities are actions related to achieving project objectives[5]. Put simply, they refer to the actions undertaken by individuals to accomplish the objectives of the project. Activities are the processes or tasks that transform inputs into outputs, moving the project forward towards its intended goals. They are the "doing" part of a project, where resources are utilized and work is performed.

A project is composed of several interlinked activities, forming a sequence or a network of tasks that collectively lead to the desired results[6]. These activities are typically time-bound and require specific inputs to be completed successfully.

[4] UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results (2009).
[5] International Labour Organization. Basic Principles of Monitoring and Evaluation.
[6] UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results (2009).

Examples of an “activity” include:

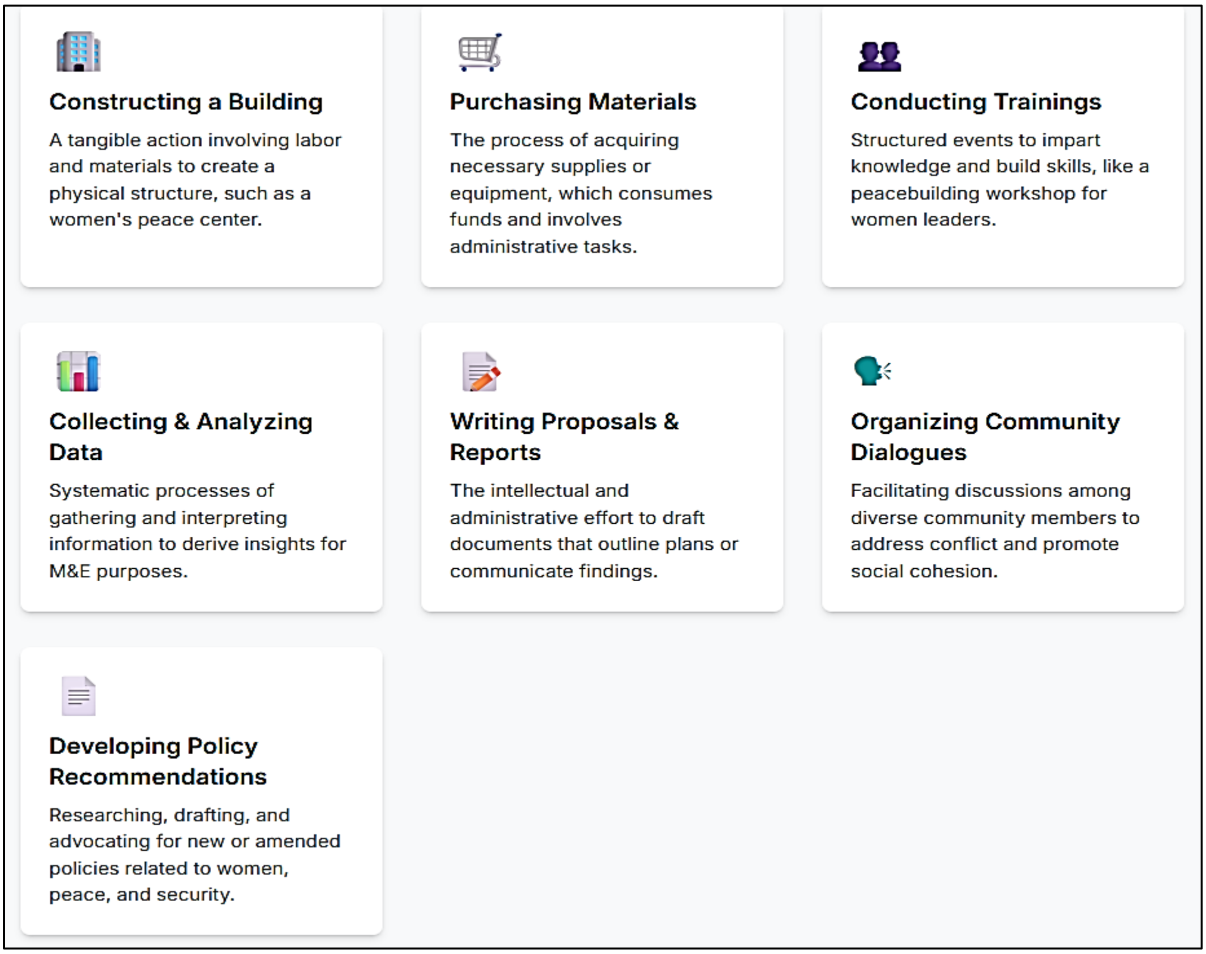

Figure 6. Examples of an Activity.

Activities are the operational core of any project or program. Their effective execution is directly linked to the production of outputs and, subsequently, the achievement of desired outcomes and impacts.

What are “outputs”?

Outputs refer to the first level or immediate results that are directly linked to an activity[7]. They are the direct products, goods, services, or changes that are produced as a consequence of successfully completing project activities[8]. In essence, outputs are what the project has directly produced or delivered.

In other words, they are the “delivered scope.” The tangible and intangible products that result from project activities. Outputs can be both **tangible** and **intangible**[9].

- **Tangible outputs** are physical deliverables that can be directly observed and measured, such as a newly constructed building, manufactured products, or printed reports.

[7] International Labour Organization. Basic Principles of Monitoring and Evaluation.
[8] Sloneek. (n.d.). *What Is the Difference Between Outcomes and Outputs?*
[9] ELD Training. (n.d.). *Outputs & Outcomes in Project Management*.

- **Intangible outputs** are non-physical deliverables that influence project results, such as new services, knowledge gained, skills developed, or changes in awareness. For example, a training program's output could be "employees trained in a particular skill" or "community people gaining greater knowledge about a new concept or a social issue."

Success on this first level of results is often referred to as **"Project Delivery Success"**[10]. It is about defining the criteria by which the process of delivering the project is successful, typically measured by whether the project meets its objectives within the defined scope, time, budget, and quality standards. This directly addresses the classic project management "triple constraint" or "magic triangle" of **scope, time, and budget**[11].

Figure 7. Scope, Time, Budget Triangle. Source: The Triple Constraint by Kate Eby (2024).

Essentially this addresses the classic triangle "scope, time, budget" in project management.

It is limited to the duration of the project, and success can be measured as soon as the project is officially completed (with intermediary measures being taken of course as part of project control processes). It is always a combination of measurements on inputs and outputs.

What are "outcomes"?

This is the second level of results associated with a project and refers to the medium-term effects of interrelated project activities and/or the whole project itself. Outcomes usually relate to the project goal(s).

For example, the new skill of policy advocacy is used by BWC management and staff to facilitate the passing of laws by the Bangsamoro Parliament that will help promote Women, Peace, and Security at the local government level.

These criteria need to be measured once the product/service is implemented and over a defined period of time. This means it cannot be measured immediately at the end of the activity itself.

The achievement of desired outcomes in this second stage of results is commonly known as "Product or Service Success." The task involves establishing the specific standards by which the product or service provided may be considered successful.

What is "impact"?

This is the third level of project results and signifies the long-term effect(s) of a project. Frequently, it is challenging to determine the precise impact of a project due to the presence of several other initiatives, which may differ in character but lead to the same impact.

[10] PM4DEV Blog. (n.d.). *Definition of Project Success*.
[11] The Project Group. (n.d.). *What Is Project Success?*

For example, Enhanced leadership of women and girls in the Bangsamoro, governance and in the peace process; the full realization of their human rights in conflict situations; and post-conflict transformation towards inclusive and sustainable peace and development.

Attaining success at this level of results can be referred to as "Organizational Success". Organizational success hinges on establishing the specific standards by which the product or service provided adds value to the whole organization and how it contributes in terms of financial and/or strategic aspects.

What are “results”?

Project results are the combination of outputs (level 1), outcomes (level 2), and impact (level 3). The combination of these levels will decide the overall success of your project. It is possible to achieve success in one aspect but not in others.

The outcomes of a project might vary and are not always classified as either complete success or complete failure. While it is not feasible to be “partially pregnant”, it is indeed conceivable to achieve a certain degree of success.

Each project encompasses several success criteria pertaining to organizational outcomes, product/service outcomes, and project delivery outcomes such as cost, time, scope, and quality.

Criteria can be classified as either absolute or relative. Absolute criteria must be achieved by the original intended date, whereas relative criteria must be finished by a date that is acceptable to the customer.

The success of a project is defined by the extent to which your success criteria are met and the level of satisfaction achieved.

What are assumptions?

Assumptions are **conditions necessary for the achievement of objectives (conditions for success)**, but they are also **uncontrollable external factors** because they are natural factors or outside the direct control of the project or program[12]. They represent the "if-then" logic in a project's results chain, where the successful progression from one level of results to the next (e.g., from activities to outputs, or outputs to outcomes) depends on these external conditions holding true. For example, for the formation of an early warning-early response group (the output) to result in increased participation of community people in peace mechanisms and decision-making structures (the project purpose), pre-existing community groups engaged in conflict prevention or peacebuilding work in different conflict-affected municipalities will be required, but those are assumptions when they fall outside the scope of the project or action plan. Similarly, members of groups possessing appropriate skills in conflict prevention or peace promotion, if required, are an assumption. The lowest level of the “assumptions” column is used to state “preconditions” which must be met before the project starts, or the action plan is implemented.

Identifying assumptions is a critical part of project planning and risk management. By making assumptions explicit, project teams can:

[12] MEAL DPro Guide. (n.d.). *Module 2: Project Design and the MEAL System*.

- Test the project's logic: Ensure that the causal pathways are realistic and well-founded, considering external influences.
- Identify potential risks: If an assumption does not hold true, it can pose a significant risk to the project's success. Explicitly stating assumptions allows for contingency planning.
- Promote adaptive management: When assumptions are monitored, changes in these external conditions can trigger adjustments to the project strategy.

Assumptions can exist at various levels of the results chain:

- **Activity-Output Assumptions:** Conditions required for activities to successfully produce their intended outputs.
    - **Example for a government agency:** If a government agency's relevant division conducts a series of training workshops for officials on a new policy or program (activity), it is assumed that officials will be available and motivated to attend the training sessions (assumption), leading to a certain number of trained officials who have acquired new knowledge of their roles and responsibilities (output).

- **Output-Outcome Assumptions:** Conditions required for outputs to lead to desired outcomes.
    - **Example for a government agency:** If officials are trained on a new policy or program (output), it is assumed that their respective Local Chief Executives (LCEs) and Sanggunian will support the application of this new knowledge and that the LGU has the necessary fiscal resources (assumption), leading to improved LGU functionality and performance (outcome).

- **Outcome-Impact Assumptions:** Conditions required for outcomes to contribute to long-term impacts.
    - **Example for a government agency:** If there is improved LGU functionality and performance (outcome), it is assumed that the overall security situation in the BARMM remains stable, that government and community leaders value these contributions, and that economic opportunities are expanding (assumption), contributing to a more functional, accountable, and performing constituent LGU (impact).

- **Preconditions:** The lowest level of the "assumptions" column in a logical framework or results chain is often used to state **"preconditions"**[13]. These are specific assumptions that must be met *before* the project starts or the action plan is implemented.
    - **Example of a precondition for a government agency:** A key precondition for implementing a new program on local economic development is that a key Bangsamoro policy or code, which grants LGUs fiscal autonomy and new taxing powers, is fully approved and operationalized by the Bangsamoro Parliament. Without this legal basis, the program's activities would be ineffective.

By systematically identifying and monitoring these assumptions, a ministry or agency can better understand the external factors influencing its programs' success and adapt its strategies to navigate potential challenges more effectively. This ensures our plans are both realistic and responsive to the unique context of the Bangsamoro.

[13] UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results (2009).

SESSION 8: UNDERSTANDING INDICATORS

Activity 11: SMART Indicator Challenge

Objective: To enable participants to practice writing clear, measurable, and relevant indicators by applying the SMART criteria to a real-world scenario.

Materials:

- **Project Scenario Cards:** One per group, describing a fictional project with a broad goal and a few general objectives.
- Blank sheets of manila paper (one per group).
- Markers of different colors (one set per group).
- SMART criteria reminder sheet (one per group).

Procedure:

1. Present the Lecturette on indicators.

2. Divide participants into small groups of 4-5 people.

3. Distribute a "Project Scenario Card" to each group.

4. Group Work:
    - Each group must read their scenario and discuss how to refine the broad objective into a more specific, measurable one.
    - Next, they must brainstorm and write down **at least three (3) indicators** that they can use to monitor progress toward that objective.
    - For each indicator, they should briefly explain how it meets each of the SMART criteria.

5. Each group will have 2-3 minutes to present their revised objective and their SMART indicators to the plenary.

6. Highlight the best examples and reinforce how the SMART framework makes a general idea into a powerful, practical tool for monitoring and evaluation.

Project Scenario Card: 'Seeds of Peace' Initiative (*Exercise Handout*)

Project Title: "Seeds of Peace: Youth Leadership for Community Dialogue"

Project Goal: To foster peaceful coexistence and reduce intergroup conflict in the municipality of San Juan by empowering youth leaders.

Project Objective: To train and mobilize 100 young leaders (ages 18-30) in conflict resolution skills and facilitate 10 community dialogue sessions over a 6-month period.

Timeline: The project is currently at the end of Month 3.

Recent Monitoring Data (End of Month 3):

- **Youth Leaders Trained:**
  - **Target (by end of Month 3):** 50 leaders
  - **Actual (end of Month 3):** 55 leaders
- **Community Dialogue Sessions Facilitated:**
  - **Target (by end of Month 3):** 5 sessions
  - **Actual (end of Month 3):** 3 sessions
- **Budget Expenditure:**
  - **Planned:** 50%
  - **Actual:** 45%

(Note: This scenario card's plot can be changed to fit the thematic focus of the BARMM agency that is using this training module. If participants are staff from MSSD, the scenario can be anything related to social work. If participants are staff from MAFAR, CSEA MTIT, or Project TABANG the scenario can be anything related to livelihood, social enterprise, agriculture, and aquaculture. If participants are staff from MILG, or MPOS, the scenario can be anything related to peacebuilding, public order and safety, local governance and civic participation, etc.)

Lecturette 7: What are "Indicators"?

Indicators are visible cues, signs, or markers that assess a specific area of a program and demonstrate the degree to which a program is progressing towards its intended path and expected results[14]. Indicators are objective and quantifiable benchmarks used to assess the advancement of a project. Prior to project initiation, it is important to establish clear definitions that enable us to effectively monitor and assess the project's adherence to its stated objectives. Indicators serve as the connection between theory and practice in project planning.

An indicator is a useful instrument that assists in determining the effectiveness of your effort. Indicators often refer to noticeable alterations or occurrences that are connected to the project intervention. They offer the proof that an event has taken place, whether it be the delivery of a result, the occurrence of an instant impact, or the observation of a long-term alteration.

Types of Indicators

Indicators are categorized based on what they measure along the results chain (inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts). While quantitative indicators are numerical and qualitative indicators convey information in textual or descriptive form, it's crucial to distinguish between what they are measuring.

1. **Process Indicators:** Process indicators focus on **how activities are happening** and whether planned actions are being implemented as intended[15]. They monitor the efficiency and adherence to procedures, essentially tracking the "doing" of the project. These indicators help to oversee the governance aspects of plan and program execution, including the progress of planned activities, the advancement of social processes (such as community organizing), and the extent of public participation by all stakeholders.

    - **Examples:**
        - Number of meetings held.
        - Percentage of budget disbursed.
        - Number of staff trained on a new procedure.
        - Timeliness of report submissions.
        - Frequency of monitoring visits conducted.

2. **Output Indicators:** Output indicators measure the **immediate, direct, and tangible or intangible products, goods, or services that result from project activities**[16]. They tell us *what was delivered* by the project. While often quantitative, they are distinct from process indicators because they focus on the *result* of the activity, not just the activity itself[17].

    - **Examples:**
        - Number of people trained in peacebuilding skills.
        - Number of gender-responsive policies drafted.
        - Number of community dialogues facilitated.
        - Number of information materials distributed.
        - Number of safe spaces established for women.

[14] International Labour Organization. Basic Principles of Monitoring and Evaluation.
[15] Practical Action. (n.d.). *Results chains*.
[16] Sloneek. (n.d.). *What Is the Difference Between Outcomes and Outputs?*
[17] Practical Action. (n.d.). *Results chains*.

3. **Outcome Indicators / Qualitative Indicators:** Outcome indicators are usually indicators of **change**, reflecting the short- to medium-term effects of a program's outputs on target beneficiaries or systems. They provide information on whether the work is leading to the desired changes in people's lives, power, rights, or conditions. Outcomes are influenced by outputs but are not entirely within the direct control of the project team, as they often depend on external factors and how beneficiaries utilize the outputs[18].

    - **Examples:**
        - Increased confidence of youth in participating in decision-making.
        - Improved perceptions of safety among women in conflict-affected areas.
        - Increased access to conflict settlement mechanisms by parties in conflict.
        - Enhanced collaboration between civil society organizations and local government units on peace and conflict issues.

4. **Impact Indicators:** Impact indicators refer to the **long-term, fundamental change in the status or well-being of the target population** that can be attributed, at least in part, to the program. These indicators measure the ultimate, often transformative, effects of an intervention. They do not show progress over relatively short periods of time, requiring a longer timeframe for observation and often more rigorous evaluation methodologies to establish causality.

    - **Examples:**
        - Reduction in the overall incidence of *rido* (clan feud) in BARMM.
        - Significant increase in youth representation in elected and appointed positions within BARMM governance structures.
        - Sustained peace and stability in previously conflict-affected communities due to a government agency's peacebuilding efforts.

The logical flow of indicators, from process to output, outcome, and impact, enables a more regular and frequent monitoring of changes, allowing for adaptive management and comprehensive evaluation of a program's contribution to broader development goals.

[18] ELD Training. (n.d.). *Outputs & Outcomes in Project Management*.

CHAPTER 2: THE FOUNDATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

SESSION 9: BASICS OF RESULTS-BASED MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Activity 12: Building a Results Chain

Objective: To enable participants to apply the core principles of Results-based Management by collaboratively building a simple results chain from a generic project idea.

Materials:

- **Project Idea Cards:** One per group, with a simple, broad project idea (e.g., "Reduce malnutrition in a remote community").
- **Results Chain Template:** A big brown (manila) paper with a flowchart or boxes for:
  - **Inputs**
  - **Activities**
  - **Outputs**
  - **Outcomes**
  - **Impact**
- Markers of different colors (one set per group).

Procedure:

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4-5 people.

2. Distribute a "Project Idea Card" and a "Results Chain Template" to each group. Instruct them to read their project idea. Explain that their task is to think through the logical steps of how this idea would be implemented to achieve an ultimate impact.

3. Group Work:
   - Groups will work together to fill out the Results Chain Template, brainstorming and writing down examples for each box.
   - They must ensure that each step logically leads to the next (e.g., the Inputs enable the Activities, the Activities produce the Outputs, and so on).

4. Each group will have 2-3 minutes to present their completed Results Chain to the plenary.

5. The facilitator will present the lecturette on the basics of Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation, connecting the concepts directly to the work the groups just completed.

6. The facilitator will briefly summarize the key learnings, highlight the common elements of a results chain and connect the activity directly to the principles of Results-based Management.

Project Idea Cards

Here are ten project idea cards, each with a simple, broad concept that can be used to initiate the "Building a Results Chain" activity. These ideas are designed to be general enough for a group to collaboratively develop into a full framework.

1. **Project Idea:** Reduce malnutrition in a remote community.
   - **Context:** A village located far from a major city with limited access to a variety of food sources.

2. **Project Idea:** Increase access to education for displaced children.
   - **Context:** A community hosting several families who have been displaced by conflict, where school enrollment for children is low.

3. **Project Idea:** Improve water sanitation in a rural village.
   - **Context:** A village where residents rely on a single, unprotected water source, leading to a high incidence of waterborne illnesses.

4. **Project Idea:** Strengthen the economic capacity of women-led households.
   - **Context:** A group of female-headed households in an urban poor area with limited income-generating opportunities.

5. **Project Idea:** Promote peaceful resolution of land disputes.
   - **Context:** A farming community with a history of conflict over land ownership and resource use.

6. **Project Idea:** Improve access to healthcare services for indigenous peoples.
   - **Context:** An indigenous community located far from the nearest health clinic with traditional health beliefs.

7. **Project Idea :** Enhance civic engagement among young people.
   - **Context:** A local government unit with a high youth population but low participation in community decision-making.

8. **Project Idea:** Develop a sustainable waste management program.
   - **Context:** A coastal community facing environmental degradation due to improper waste disposal.

9. **Project Idea:** Protect children from violence and abuse.
   - **Context:** A community with a high incidence of domestic violence and child abuse, with no formal support mechanisms in place.

10. **Project Idea:** Strengthen disaster preparedness and resilience.
    - **Context:** A flood-prone community that experiences significant damage and loss of life during the annual rainy season.

Results Chain Template

(This template is designed to be drawn on a large sheet of paper, like a manila paper, for a group activity.)

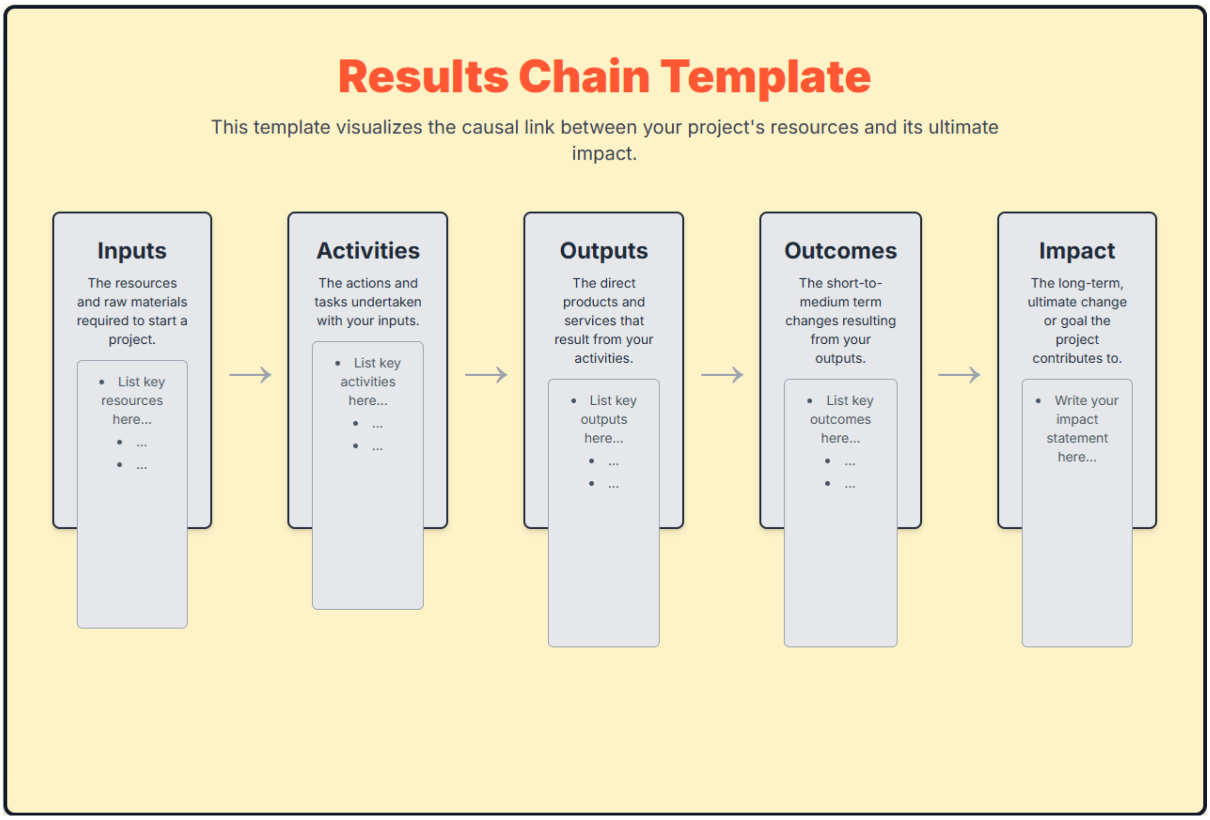

Figure 8. Results Chain Template.

Lecturette 8: What is "Results-based M&E"?

Traditionally, monitoring and evaluation often focused on whether we were just doing our activities correctly. Were the workshops conducted? Did we spend the budget? This is important, but it's not enough.

Results-based M&E (RBM) is a more holistic approach. It's a management strategy that focuses on **defining, measuring, and managing for results**. The core shift is from "doing things right" to **"doing the right things"** that will actually lead to meaningful change.

RBM connects every part of our project, from the resources we use to the ultimate impact we hope to achieve.

The RBM Results Chain: A Causal Pathway

The template you just filled out is known as a Results Chain. It's a foundational tool in RBM that visualizes the logical, cause-and-effect relationship of a project.

- **Inputs:** These are the resources we put into a project. This includes funds, staff, equipment, and materials.
- **Activities:** These are the actions we undertake. This is the "doing" part, like conducting training sessions or organizing dialogues.
- **Outputs:** These are the direct, tangible products or services of our activities. This is what we see immediately, like the number of people trained or the number of dialogue sessions held.
- **Outcomes:** These are the changes that happen as a result of our outputs. Outcomes are usually changes in behavior, skills, knowledge, or attitudes. For a training project, an outcome would be participants' increased confidence in their new skills.
- **Impact:** This is the long-term, broader effect of our project. It's the ultimate goal, such as a lasting reduction in conflict or an improvement in community health.

From Monitoring to Evaluation in an RBM System

In an RBM system, monitoring and evaluation work together to track this entire chain:

- **Results-based Monitoring** primarily focuses on the early parts of the chain: **inputs, activities, and** outputs. It tracks whether our activities are delivering the immediate results we planned.
- **Results-based Evaluation** focuses on the latter parts: **outcomes and** impact. It asks if our outputs actually led to the desired changes in the community. It's the deeper, more strategic look at whether our project was truly effective and contributed to our long-term goals.

By adopting this approach, we ensure our efforts are not just busy but are intentionally designed to achieve real, measurable, and lasting change.

SESSION 10: INTRODUCTION TO THEORY OF CHANGE

Activity 13: Developing a Theory of Change

Objective: To enable participants to apply the core principles of the Theory of Change (ToC) by collaboratively building a simple causal pathway from a project idea to a long-term impact.

Materials:

- **Project Scenario Cards:** One per group, describing a sample project idea (e.g., "A literacy program for out-of-school youth" or "A water sanitation and hygiene project").
- **ToC Template:** A big brown (manila) paper with a flowchart or boxes for:
  - **IF**
  - **AND**
  - **THEN**
  - **BECAUSE**
- Markers of different colors (one set per group).

Procedure:

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4-5 people.

2. Distribute a "Project Scenario Card" and a "ToC Template" to each group. Instruct them to read their project idea. Explain that their task is to think through the logical steps of how this idea would be implemented to achieve an ultimate impact. Emphasize that they should start with the long-term goal and work backward to identify the necessary steps.

3. Group Work:
   - Groups will work together to fill out the ToC Template, brainstorming and writing down examples for each box.
   - They must ensure that each step logically leads to the next and, importantly, identify the assumptions that must hold true for the change to occur.

4. Each group will have 2-3 minutes to present their completed ToC to the plenary.

5. Lecturette Presentation & Synthesis:
   - *(The facilitator waits for the activity and all group reports to conclude before starting this segment.)*
   - The facilitator then presents the Lecturette on Theory of Change

Theory of Change Template
(This template is designed to be drawn on a large sheet of paper, like a manila paper, for a group activity.)

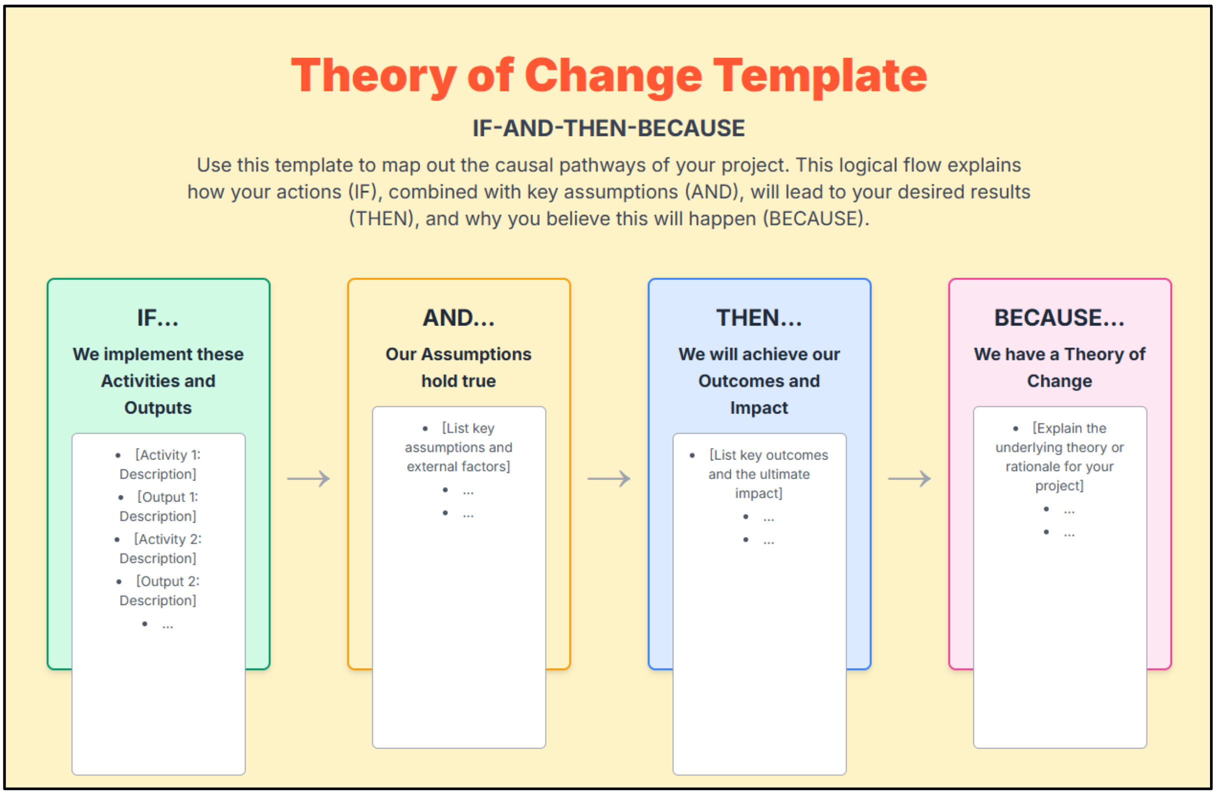

Figure 9. The Theory of Change Template.

Lecturette 9: What is the Theory of Change?

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a comprehensive and dynamic framework that outlines the **components and processes required to achieve a specific long-term objective**[19]. It is more than just a linear pathway; it is a detailed articulation of how and why a desired change is expected to occur in a given context[20]. A ToC outlines the specific interventions, whether it be a single program or a comprehensive community initiative, that are expected to achieve the desired outcomes. At its core, a Theory of Change:

- **Outlines the strategic plan for achieving specific goals** by illustrating the necessary steps to progress from the current state (problem) to the desired outcome. It maps out the causal pathways, showing the sequence of events and conditions that are expected to lead to the ultimate impact.

- **Involves clearly defining and articulating the underlying assumptions** in a manner that allows for testing and measurement. These assumptions are the beliefs about the conditions necessary for change to take place, often backed by research or expert opinion. Making these explicit allows for critical examination of the causal links and identification of potential risks.

- **Prioritizes the desired achievements of the organization over its current activities**. Unlike a simple activity plan, a ToC starts with the long-term vision and works backward, identifying the preconditions and intermediate outcomes necessary to reach that vision. This outcome-oriented approach ensures that all activities are strategically aligned with the ultimate goal.

- **Explains the "how" and "why" of change.** It details the causal mechanisms, explaining *how* specific interventions are expected to lead to particular outcomes and *why* these changes are anticipated given the context and underlying assumptions. This deepens understanding beyond a simple list of activities and results.

- **Identifies necessary preconditions:** A ToC specifies the preconditions or intermediate outcomes that must occur for the desired long-term change to materialize. These are often depicted as a chain of results, where each step is a necessary condition for the next.

[19] UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results (2009).
[20] ActKnowledge. (n.d.). *Theory of Change*.

Examples of Theory of Change for BARMM Government Agencies (*Lecture Handout*)

Consider a simplified theory of change for a project focused on increasing youth participation in community development:

- **Long-Term Objective (Impact):** Resilient and prosperous BARMM communities where local livelihoods are secure and diversified, and residents are empowered to participate in and benefit from local economic growth.
- **Intermediate Outcomes:**
    - Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), such as farmers' cooperatives or fisherfolk associations, have the skills and resources to manage sustainable livelihood projects.
    - Local government units (LGUs) effectively collaborate with CBOs to identify and support viable livelihood initiatives that are aligned with local needs and market demands.
    - Community members, particularly women and youth, have increased access to training, credit, and markets.
    - Local development plans and budgets, like the Annual Investment Program (AIP), intentionally prioritize and allocate resources for community-led livelihood and resilience projects.
- **Outputs:**
    - Training workshops on financial management, enterprise development, and climate-resilient farming techniques are conducted.
    - Micro-grants or seed funding are disbursed to community livelihood projects.
    - Public-private partnership forums are held to link local producers to larger markets.
    - Community consultation meetings are held to integrate local needs into LGU development plans.
- **Activities:**
    - Developing training curricula and materials on business planning and sustainable resource management.
    - Organizing and scheduling multi-stakeholder dialogues between LGU officials, CBO leaders, and private sector representatives.
    - Establishing a fund for micro-grants and developing a transparent application and selection process.
    - Facilitating workshops for LGU planners to integrate community feedback into the AIP.
- **Key Assumptions:**
    - The market demand for products from the target communities remains stable, or new markets can be successfully developed.
    - Local government officials and community leaders are genuinely committed to collaborative planning and resource allocation.
    - The security situation in the target communities remains stable enough to allow for sustained economic activities and community gatherings.
    - Climate-related or other natural disasters do not severely disrupt livelihood activities beyond the communities' capacity to recover.
    - Policies and regulations at the BARMM regional level support the autonomy and financial management of local initiatives.

Using the **"IF - AND - THEN – BECAUSE"** format in Theory of Change formulation, it would look like this:

IF (Activities)

- We provide capacity-building workshops for CBOs on business management, financial literacy, and climate-resilient farming.
- We facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues between LGUs, CBO leaders, and private sector partners.
- We disburse micro-grants and provide technical assistance for community-led livelihood projects.
- We assist LGUs in the process of formulating and allocating budgets for local economic development initiatives.

AND (Assumptions)

- There is a stable market demand for community products.
- LGU officials and community leaders are genuinely committed to collaboration and transparent resource allocation.
- The security situation remains stable, allowing for sustained economic activities.
- Policies at the BARMM regional level support and empower local initiatives.

THEN (Outputs)

- The training workshops and stakeholder dialogues will be successfully completed.
- The agreed-upon micro-grants will be disbursed to community projects.
- Public-private partnership forums will be held, creating market linkages.
- Community consultation meetings will be held and their outputs will be integrated into LGU development plans.

BECAUSE (Outcomes)

- These outputs will result in CBOs acquiring the skills and resources needed to manage sustainable projects.
- They will lead to more effective collaboration between LGUs and CBOs, ensuring that projects are relevant and well-supported.
- Community members will gain increased access to credit and markets, enabling them to improve their livelihoods.
- Local development plans and budgets will intentionally prioritize and fund community-led livelihood and resilience projects.

IF (Outcomes and Conditions Occur)

- These changes and conditions occur,

THEN (Impact)

- We will move closer to building **resilient and prosperous BARMM communities** where local livelihoods are secure and diversified, and residents are empowered to participate in local economic growth.

This format illustrates how specific activities, enabled by certain assumptions, lead to measurable outputs, drive desired changes in behavior and systems (intermediate outcomes), and ultimately contribute to the long-term vision.

By articulating these pathways and assumptions, a BARMM government agency can use the Theory of Change as a living document to guide its strategy, monitor progress, evaluate effectiveness, and adapt interventions as the context evolves. It provides a shared understanding among stakeholders of the underlying logic and expected change process.

SESSION 11: INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Activity 14: From Story to Structure

Objective: To enable participants to translate the narrative of a theory of change into a concise, hierarchical results framework, thereby understanding the logical connections between project components.

Materials:

- **Completed ToC Templates:** The Theory of Change templates created by groups in the previous session.
- **Results Framework Template:** A big brown (manila) paper with columns for:
    - Impact Statement
    - Outcome Statements
    - Output Statements
- Markers of different colors (one set per group).

Procedure:

1. Participants form their same small groups.

2. Ask groups to briefly review the Theory of Change they developed in the previous session. Explain that they will now translate this narrative into a more structured format: the Results Framework. This moves the project idea from a detailed story to a clear, hierarchical model.

3. Group Work:
    - Groups will work together to extract the key components from their ToC.
    - They will fill in the "Results Framework Template," populating it with their project's Impact, Outcomes, and Outputs.
    - They should focus on ensuring a clear, logical flow where outputs directly contribute to outcomes, and outcomes lead to the final impact.

4. Each group will have 2-3 minutes to present their completed Results Framework to the plenary.

5. Present the Lecturette on Results Framework

6. Briefly summarize the key learnings, connecting the structural nature of the Results Framework to the narrative of the Theory of Change.

Results Framework Template

(This template is designed to be drawn on a large sheet of paper, like a manila paper, for a group activity.)

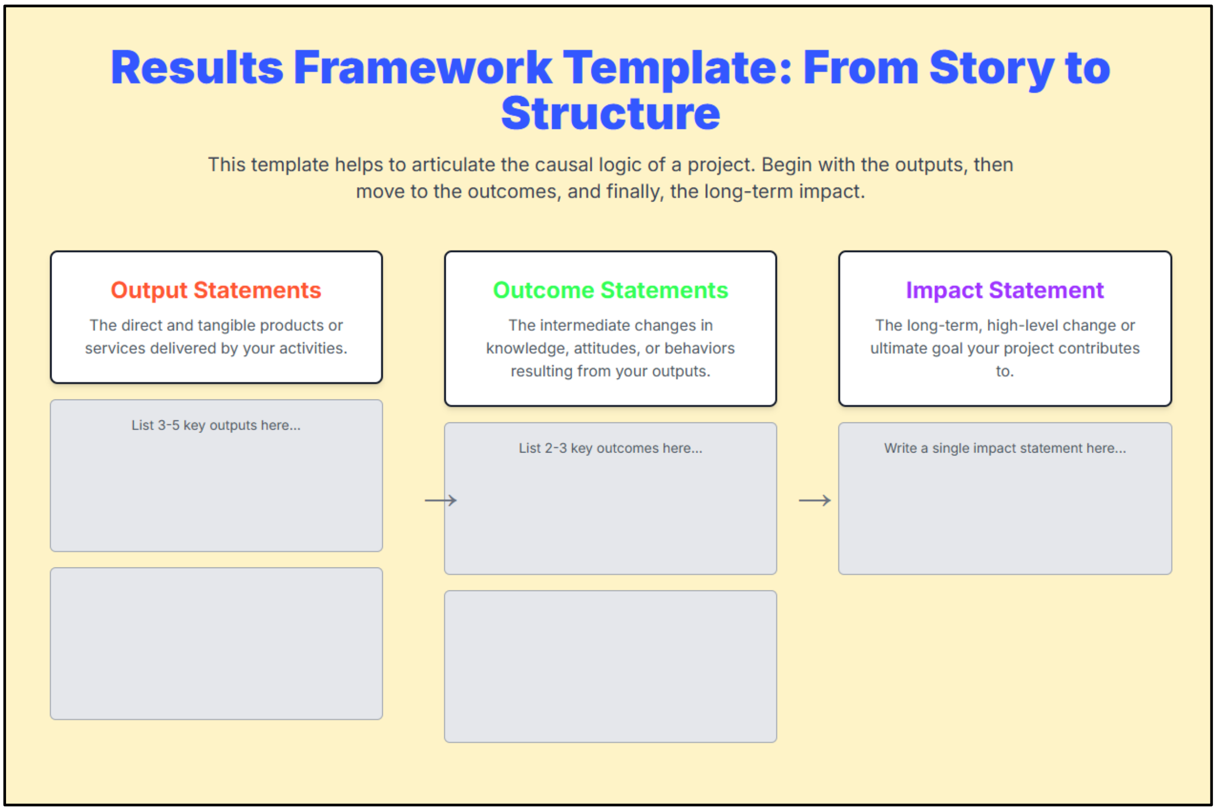

Figure 10. Results Framework Template.

Lecturette 10: What is a Results Framework?

A results framework, also known as a strategic framework, is a tool that depicts **the direct connections between intermediate outcomes of activities and the overarching objectives and goals**. It shows the causal relationships between a project's components, illustrating how each intermediate result, output, and outcome contributes to the achievement of each objective.
Essentially, the Results Framework answers the question, "What do we want to achieve?" by providing a clear hierarchy of results.

The Core Purpose of a Results Framework

- **Complements the Theory of Change:** The Results Framework is not a replacement for the Theory of Change; it's a complement. The Theory of Change is the narrative that explains the "how and why" of change, including all the underlying assumptions. The Results Framework, on the other hand, is the concise model that focuses on the "what"—the project hierarchy and the causal logic of the model.
- **Foundation for M&E Planning:** The results framework serves as the foundation for all subsequent monitoring and evaluation activities at the objective level. By clearly laying out the hierarchy of results, it becomes much easier to define what needs to be monitored and what needs to be evaluated.
- **Aligns Actions with Goals:** It helps to clarify the interconnection between our project objectives and how they align with our ultimate goal. This ensures that all of our activities are strategically aligned with the ultimate vision, preventing "mission drift."

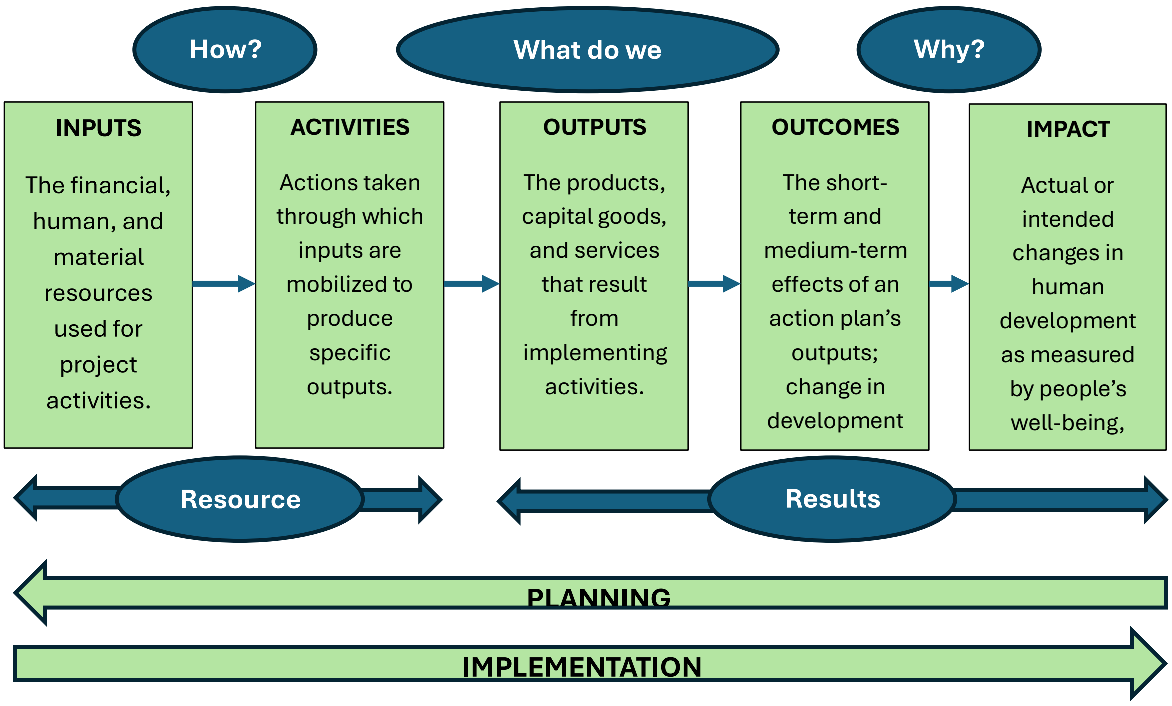

Figure 11. Sample of a Results Framework. Source: UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results (2009, p.55).

In summary, the Results Framework is a powerful tool for planning and communication. It provides a clear, shared understanding among all stakeholders of the project's logic and the results it is designed to achieve.

SESSION 12: THE LOGIC FRAMEWORK: A PLANNING TOOL

Activity 15: Building a Logical Framework

Objective: To expand a project's Results Framework by defining key indicators, means of verification, and assumptions, thereby understanding its use as a foundational MEAL planning tool.

Materials:

- **Completed Results Framework Templates:** The templates created by groups in the previous session.
- **Logical Framework Template:** A big brown (manila) paper with columns for:
    - Impact Statement
    - Outcome Statements
    - Output Statements
    - Indicators
    - Means of Verification
    - Assumptions
- Markers of different colors (one set per group).

Procedure:

1. Present the Lecturette on Logical Framework

2. Participants form their same small groups.

3. Ask groups to retrieve and briefly review the Results Framework they created in the previous session. Explain that they will now expand this framework into a complete logical framework by adding the remaining columns.

4. Group Work:
    - Groups will work together to fill out the new columns, brainstorming indicators for their outputs and outcomes.
    - For each indicator, they will identify a **Means of Verification (MOV)**, which is the data source that will be used to measure it.
    - Finally, they will identify the key **assumptions** that must hold true for their project to succeed.

5. Each group will have 2-3 minutes to present their completed logical framework to the plenary.

6. Briefly summarize the key learnings, connecting the logical structure of the framework to the practical demands of project implementation.

Lecturette 11: What is a Logical Framework?

The Logical Framework, or LogFrame, is a logic model that **describes the key features of a project (objectives, indicators, measurement methods, and assumptions) and highlights the logical linkages between them.** It is the most common tool for project design and serves as a powerful reference for both project implementers and donors.

While the Results Framework focuses on the hierarchy of results (Impact, Outcomes, Outputs), the LogFrame fills in the crucial details needed to make it a living document for management and evaluation.

The Core Components of a LogFrame

The LogFrame adds three key columns to your Results Framework:

- **Indicators:** These are your project's vital signs. For each output and outcome you defined, you must specify at least one indicator. This tells us *what* we are measuring and *how* we will know if we've been successful. We'll dive into how to develop these in a later session, but for now, you correctly identified them as the measurable signs of progress.
- **Means of Verification (MOVs):** This is the evidence. For each indicator, the MOV identifies *where* and *how* you will find the data. This could be a project report, an attendance sheet, survey results, or a transcript from a focus group discussion. The MOV gives credibility to our data and ensures we know exactly where to look for proof of our results.
- **Assumptions:** These are the external factors or conditions that must exist for our project to be successful but are outside of our direct control. You first encountered this concept in the Theory of Change. In the LogFrame, we place assumptions alongside each level of results to highlight the risks and external dependencies of our project.

Why is a LogFrame Essential?
A well-constructed logical framework is a cornerstone of effective MEAL for several reasons:

- **Clarity and Consensus:** It provides a single, clear document that summarizes the entire project's logic and plan. This helps ensure that all team members and stakeholders are on the same page.
- **Guidance for MEAL:** It acts as a ready-made checklist for all your monitoring and evaluation activities. The indicators tell you what to measure, and the MOVs tell you where to find the data.
- **Risk Management:** By making assumptions explicit, it forces the team to think proactively about potential challenges and how to mitigate them.
- **Accountability:** It clearly defines what the project is responsible for delivering, making it a key tool for reporting to donors and demonstrating accountability for results.

With the use of a logical framework, you can clearly define the objectives, results, outputs, and indicators of your project and demonstrate how they logically relate to and support each subsequent step. It also enables you to pinpoint the data sources and the underlying presumptions, that is, the prerequisites for achieving the desired results.

Objectives statements	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Goal / Impact			
Strategic objectives / Outcomes			
Outputs			
Activities			
Inputs			

Figure 12. A Logical framework template.

In essence, the logical framework is the ultimate blueprint for your project. It takes the big-picture vision of the Theory of Change and the hierarchical structure of the Results Framework and adds the operational details that turn a great idea into a successful, measurable project.

Difference between Theory of Change, Results Framework and Logical Framework

While the Theory of Change outlines the long-term change, the pathways of change, and the underlying assumptions and supporting evidence of change, the results framework outlines the project hierarchy and the causal logic of the model (of the project, program, or action plan), while the logical framework outlines high-level indicators, the means of verification, and the assumptions that need to be in place so that the causal logic works.

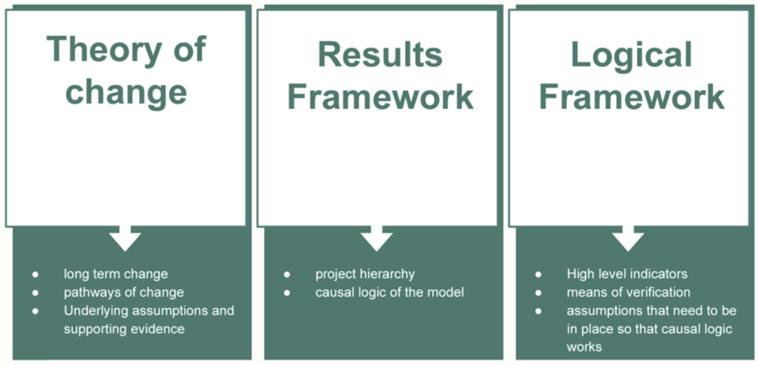

Figure 13. Difference between theory of change, results framework, and logical framework. Source: MEAL DPro Guide. Link: https://pm4ngos.org/methodologies-guides/meal-dpro/

CHAPTER 3: BRIDGING THE GAP FROM PLAN TO PRACTICE

SESSION 13: THE ROLE OF PEOPLE IN MEAL

Activity 16: Stakeholder Mapping & Listening Post

Objective: To enable participants to identify key project stakeholders and brainstorm practical methods for engaging with them, thereby linking MEAL processes directly to the people they serve.

Materials:

- **Project Scenario Card:** One per group, describing a fictional BARMM project.
- **Blank Stakeholder Map Template:** A big brown (manila) paper with a central circle for the project and surrounding boxes for different stakeholder categories (Beneficiaries, Staff, Partners, Donors, etc.). Each box has a sub-section for "How to Listen to Them."
- Markers of different colors (one set per group).

Procedure:

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4-5 people.

2. Distribute a "Project Scenario Card" and the "Stakeholder Map Template" to each group. Explain that their task is to think beyond the project's activities and focus on the people involved.

3. Group Work:
    - Groups will work together to fill out the template. First, they identify the key stakeholders for their project scenario and list them in the appropriate boxes.
    - Next, for each stakeholder, they brainstorm and write down specific, actionable methods for "listening" to that group. For beneficiaries, this might be a suggestion box or a community meeting. For staff, it might be a weekly check-in.

4. Each group will have 2-3 minutes to present their Stakeholder Map, highlighting the most creative or effective "listening" methods they devised.

5. Present the Lecturette on the Role of People in MEAL

6. The facilitator will briefly summarize the key learnings, connecting the activity directly to the lecturette that follows.

Project Scenario Card: 'Safe Spaces' Initiative (*Exercise Handout*)

Project Title: "Healing and Hope: Safe Spaces for Displaced Families"

Project Goal: To improve the psychological well-being and sense of security for families displaced by conflict in the municipality of Barangay Masagana.

Project Objective: To establish and operate a dedicated "safe space" facility for 100 displaced families over a 12-month period, offering psychosocial support, livelihood training, and a child-friendly environment.

Key Context:

- The project is implemented by a BARMM agency.
- Funding is from the BARMM Block Grant.
- The local government unit (LGU) has provided the land for the facility but has limited capacity to offer additional services.
- The families are from two distinct ethno-linguistic groups that have a history of intermittent conflict the Maguindanaon and the Iranun.
- The project staff consists of a mix of local volunteers and professional social workers.
- A local women's association is a key partner in community engagement.

Blank Stakeholder Map Template
(This template is designed to be drawn on a large sheet of paper, like a manila paper, for a group activity.)

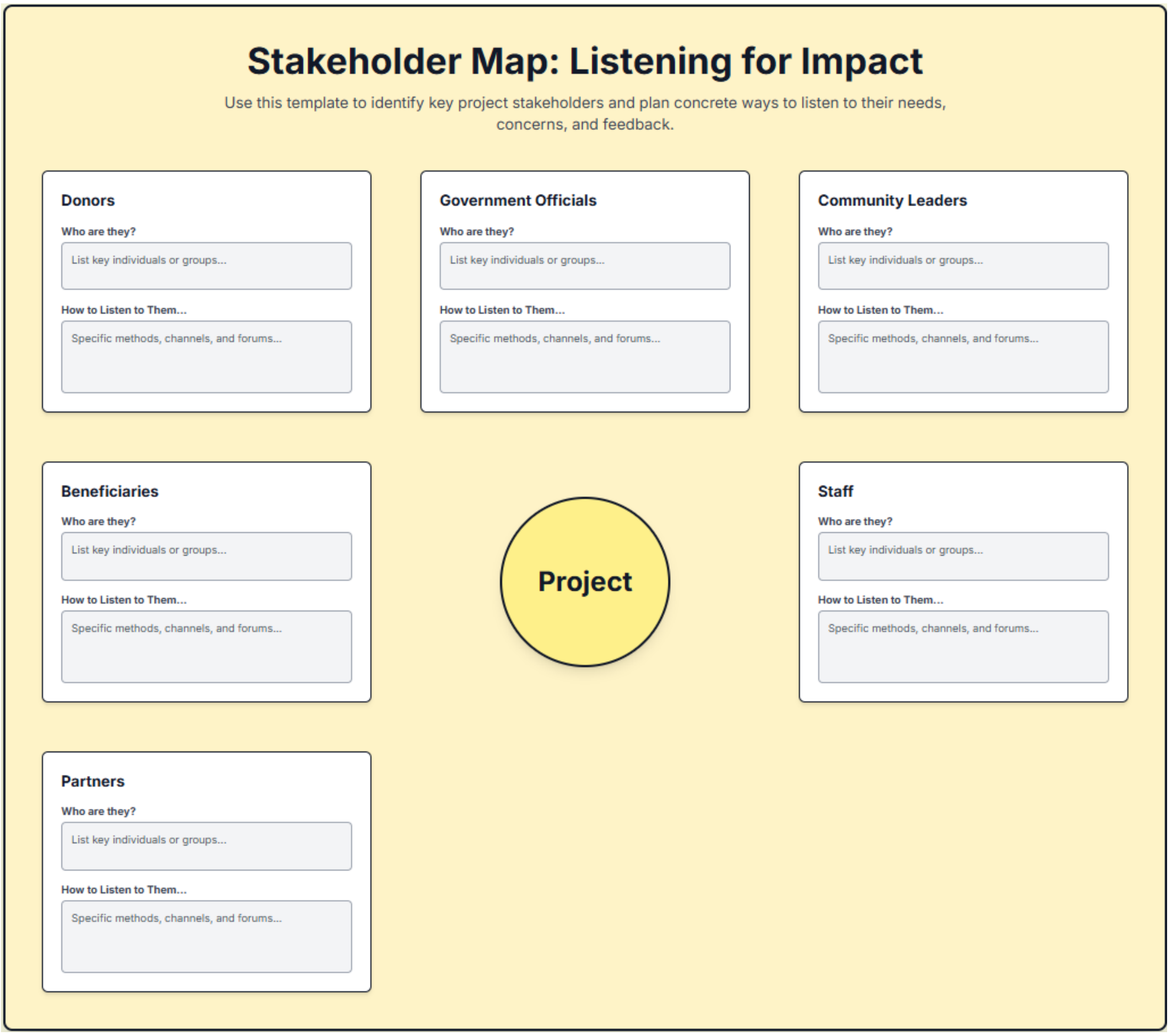

Figure 14. Stakeholder Map Template.

Lecturette 12: The Role of People in MEAL

Importance of Stakeholder Engagement

In the context of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, our stakeholders are the individuals, groups, or institutions who have a vested interest in or are affected by our projects. In the BARMM government, this extends beyond the obvious beneficiaries and donors to include:

- Our own government staff and personnel across ministries and offices.
- Local government units (LGUs), from the regional down to the barangay level, are our crucial partners.
- Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) officials and community leaders.
- Religious and traditional leaders (ulama and datu).
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including grassroots community organizations and non-governmental organizations operating in the same areas.

Engaging these stakeholders is paramount because it ensures our projects are relevant, culturally sensitive, and sustainable. This is not just a procedural step; it's the foundation of **accountability** and a primary source of **learning**. When we listen to the Bangsamoro people, we gain a deeper understanding of the local context, identify potential risks, and build a sense of collective ownership over the development process.

Beneficiary-Centered Accountability in the Bangsamoro

This principle shifts the focus of accountability from being solely "upward" (reporting to our ministry heads or international donors) to being "downward"—our responsibility to the Bangsamoro people we serve. This is a core tenet of the BARMM government's moral governance platform, emphasizing our duty to those we were created to serve.

How do we put this into practice? We must create intentional "listening posts" and mechanisms for dialogue. There are many ways to do this:

- **Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms:** We must establish formal, accessible, and confidential channels for our constituents to provide feedback or raise concerns without fear of reprisal. This demonstrates that we are responsive and take their concerns seriously. This could include a dedicated hotline, a secure drop box at the barangay hall, or a mobile feedback system.

- **Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME):** We can directly involve community members, especially members of livelihood cooperatives or barangay development councils, in designing monitoring tools, collecting data, and analyzing findings. This not only makes our data more accurate but also empowers the community and builds their capacity for self-governance.

- **Open and Accessible Communication:** We must proactively share project plans, progress updates, and evaluation findings with the community in a format and language they can easily understand. This includes using local languages (like Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausug, or Yakan), utilizing community radio, and holding barangay assemblies. This transparency builds trust and reinforces the principle of **moral governance**.

- **Community Score Cards:** This tool, where community members collectively rate the quality of the government services they receive (e.g., healthcare, livelihood assistance, or infrastructure), can be used to open a dialogue between our agencies and the communities to jointly address issues. It turns a simple rating into a collaborative problem-solving session.

By actively placing the Bangsamoro people at the center of our MEAL processes, we move beyond just measuring results and begin to build authentic, trusting relationships. This approach not only makes our government programs more effective but also upholds the core values of dignity, respect, and self-determination that are central to our work in the Bangsamoro.

SESSION 14: A GLANCE OF DATA USAGE

Activity 17: Data Detective: Sort & Discover

Objective: To enable participants to differentiate between raw data and processed information, and between quantitative and qualitative data, through a hands-on sorting exercise.

Materials:

- **Data Card Sets:** One set per group. Each set contains 12-15 index cards with different statements.
  - **Data Cards:** Raw data points (e.g., "30 participants," "A survey question was skipped," "A quote from a focus group discussion").
  - **Information Cards:** Processed insights or summaries (e.g., "The project achieved 95% of its participation target," "There is a recurring theme of frustration with the logistical support").
- Blank sheets of manila paper (one per group).
- Markers of different colors (one set per group).
- Chart or table headers for sorting: "Data," "Information," "Quantitative," "Qualitative."

Procedure:

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4-5 people.

2. Distribute a set of "Data Cards" and the sorting headers to each group. Explain that their task is to work together to sort the cards into two main categories: "Data" and "Information."

3. Group Work:
   - First, groups will sort the cards into two piles: raw data and processed information.
   - Next, they will take the "Data" pile and sort those cards again into "Quantitative" and "Qualitative" sub-piles.
   - They will post their final sorted categories on the manila paper.

4. Each group will briefly share one or two examples of each type of card and explain their reasoning for placing it in that category.

5. Present Lecturette on Data vs. Information

6. Present Lecturette on Data Collection Methods

7. Briefly summarize the key learnings from the activity, connecting the sorting exercise directly to the lecturette that follows.

Data / Information Card Sets (*Exercise Handouts*)

Instructions: Write or print each one on a small piece of metacard. Make sure that the cards under each set do not get mixed with cards from the other sets.

Set 1: Youth Leadership and Civic Engagement Project

- **Data Cards:**
    1. "25 youth participants (18-24 years old) completed the leadership training."
    2. "A post-training survey shows a 40% increase in participants' self-reported advocacy skills."
    3. "Quote from a young woman: 'I am now confident to speak up in our barangay council meetings.'"
    4. "Only 5 of the 25 participants were from remote, indigenous communities."
    5. "The training budget for transportation was underspent by 15%."
    6. "A partner NGO provided a free venue for the workshop, saving the project a significant amount."
    7. "A key informant from the LGU noted increased interest from youth in local development planning."
- **Information Cards:**
    1. "The training was successful in building youth confidence and advocacy skills."
    2. "Project activities successfully demonstrated the importance of partnerships for resource mobilization."
    3. "The project failed to achieve equitable representation from indigenous youth, highlighting a need to revise recruitment strategies."
    4. "The project's budget allocation for logistics needs to be re-evaluated for better use of funds."
    5. "A positive outcome is the shift in LGU perception, now viewing youth as partners."
    6. "The project has created an opportunity for youth voices to be heard at the barangay level."
    7. "The success of the training has built a strong foundation for future, more advanced youth programs."

Set 2: Community Peace Dialogue Initiative

- **Data Cards:**
    1. "10 dialogue sessions were held over a 3-month period with 30 regular participants."
    2. "A local leader said, 'The sessions have helped us understand the historical roots of our disagreements.'"
    3. "Attendance in the last two sessions dropped by 30%."
    4. "A pre-dialogue conflict mapping showed deep-seated mistrust between two rival clans."
    5. "Community members voluntarily formed a 'peace circle' to continue discussions beyond the project schedule."
    6. "A participant raised concerns about armed groups still operating in the area, affecting their feeling of safety."
    7. "The project facilitator noted a decrease in verbal confrontations during the later sessions."
- **Information Cards:**
    1. "The initiative successfully facilitated inter-clan dialogue and increased historical awareness among participants."

2. "The project's activities led to the development of a grassroots-led 'peace circle' for sustained dialogue."
3. "The sustainability of the dialogue depends on empowering local leaders and providing tools for self-management."
4. "A key external factor is the ongoing security risk, which impacts community participation and attendance."
5. "The project has successfully built a bridge of communication and is showing signs of reduced hostility."
6. "The drop in attendance suggests a need to re-evaluate engagement strategies or address underlying safety concerns."
7. "The project's success is contributing to a positive shift in community norms around conflict resolution."

Set 3: Livelihood and Agricultural Support Program

- **Data Cards:**
    1. "50 farmers received high-yield corn seeds and training on new techniques."
    2. "The average harvest yield increased by 25% compared to the previous year."
    3. "A farmer stated: 'The extra income allowed me to buy medicine for my child.'"
    4. "70% of beneficiaries reported using the new farming techniques for a full season."
    5. "The project's endline survey was conducted two months later than planned."
    6. "Local market prices for corn unexpectedly dropped by 10% during harvest season."
    7. "A follow-up focus group revealed that farmers felt a stronger sense of cooperation after the project."
- **Information Cards:**
    1. "The program had a clear, positive impact on household income and well-being, as validated by farmer testimonies."
    2. "The project was highly effective in encouraging the adoption of new farming practices, as shown by the 70% retention rate."
    3. "The project successfully met its key output of seed distribution and training."
    4. "External economic factors, such as market prices, pose a significant risk to the long-term sustainability of project benefits."
    5. "A delay in the M&E process affected the timeliness of the final report, a key learning point for future projects."
    6. "A positive outcome beyond agricultural yield was the strengthening of social cohesion among farmers."
    7. "The project's success is a strong case for expanding similar initiatives in neighboring communities."

Set 4: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Project

- **Data Cards:**
    1. "10 new water points were installed in the community."
    2. "A post-project survey showed that 95% of households reported improved access to clean water."
    3. "A complaint was received via the feedback mechanism that one water point was non-functional after two months."
    4. "Children's school attendance rates increased by 15% in the project area."
    5. "A Focus Group Discussion revealed a recurring challenge with maintenance and management of the water points."

6. "Project staff conducted 5 monitoring visits and noted all water points were functional during these visits."
7. "A community health worker reported a 10% decrease in water-borne diseases."

- **Information Cards:**
    1. "The project successfully met its output target of installing 10 new water points."
    2. "Initial outcomes of the project—increased water access and school attendance—are positive."
    3. "A key learning is that monitoring alone is insufficient; a functioning feedback mechanism is vital for accountability."
    4. "A potential long-term risk exists due to a lack of a clear, community-managed maintenance plan."
    5. "The project demonstrates a clear link between improved WASH infrastructure and public health outcomes."
    6. "The project's success in increasing school attendance is a key secondary outcome."
    7. "The feedback and complaints mechanism is an effective tool for identifying post-implementation project failures."

Set 5: Education and Peace Integration in Schools

- **Data Cards:**
    1. "3 teachers from each of the 5 pilot schools were trained in peace education."
    2. "An After-Action Review (AAR) noted a significant challenge in integrating new curriculum content."
    3. "The MBHTE issued a new memorandum supporting peace education."
    4. "A teacher said, 'My students are now resolving minor conflicts in the classroom without my direct intervention.'"
    5. "Only 2 of the 5 schools have dedicated 'peace corners' in their libraries."
    6. "The training was facilitated by a member of the Bangsamoro Peacebuilding Institute (BPI)."
    7. "A survey of students showed a 20% increase in their knowledge of conflict resolution techniques."
- **Information Cards:**
    1. "The training successfully enabled teachers to apply peace education concepts in their classrooms."
    2. "The project has contributed to a positive shift in student behavior, with more students resolving conflicts peacefully."
    3. "The project's outcomes have been positively reinforced by a supportive policy environment from the MBHTE."
    4. "The institutionalization of peace education faces challenges in practical curriculum integration and requires more support for teachers."
    5. "Leveraging local networks, like the (BPI), was a key success factor for the project's capacity building."
    6. "The project's impact is a good case study for how teacher training can lead to measurable changes in the classroom environment."
    7. "An important learning point is that institutional support is needed to complement grassroots efforts."

Data Sorting Board

(This template is designed to be drawn on a large sheet of paper, like a manila paper, for a group activity.)

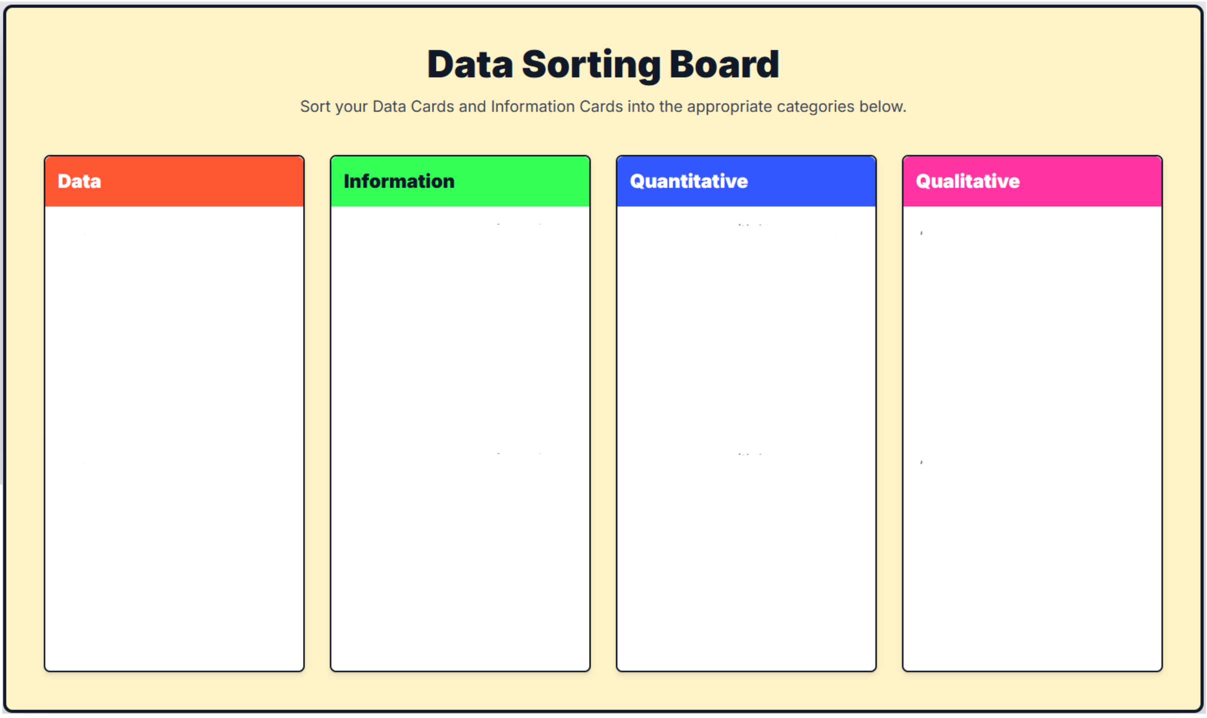

Figure 15. Data Sorting Board

Lecturette 13: Data vs. Information

The Building Blocks of MEAL

Your first task was to distinguish between Data and Information. Think of it with a simple analogy:

- **Data is a brick.** It's a raw, singular fact or figure. A brick on its own doesn't tell us much. It's just a data point, like "30 participants" or "The community leader said..."
- **Information is a wall.** It's what happens when you take those raw data points, put them in context, and analyze them. A wall, made of many bricks, tells you something meaningful, like "the training reached 30 participants, meeting our target," or "there is a recurring theme in feedback that suggests the community is in favor of the project."

In MEAL, our job is to collect the right "bricks" (data) so that we can build strong, evidence-based "walls" (information) to inform our decisions.

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Data: The Numbers and the Stories

Next, you sorted your data into two key types. Both are essential for a complete picture.

- **Quantitative Data (The Numbers):** This is data that can be measured, counted, or expressed as numbers. It helps us answer the "how many" and "how much" questions. For example:
  - Number of households reached.
  - Percentage of beneficiaries who reported a positive change.
  - The cost of a project per beneficiary. This data provides us with scale, scope, and objective measures of our progress.
- **Qualitative Data (The Stories):** This is data that is descriptive, non-numerical, and helps us understand the "why" and "how" behind the numbers. It captures experiences, opinions, and feelings. For example:
  - Transcripts from a focus group discussion.
  - Quotes from a key informant interview.
  - Observations from a site visit. This data provides us with richness, context, and a deeper understanding of the human experience of our projects.

A truly effective MEAL system uses both. The numbers give us the facts, and the stories give us the meaning.

What are Data Sources?

Data sources are what needs to be identified in terms of **where and how the information will be gathered** for the purpose of measuring the specified indicators[21]. They are the origins from which data is collected to provide evidence for monitoring and evaluation. Identifying appropriate data sources is a critical step in ensuring the credibility, reliability, and validity of MEAL findings.

In general, there are two main categories of data sources that can be utilized for monitoring and/or evaluation purposes:

1. **Primary Data** - Primary data refers to the **data that MEAL practitioners collect themselves** directly from the original source. This data is gathered specifically for the current monitoring or evaluation purpose and is tailored to answer specific questions. Tools for Primary Data Collection include:

    - Surveys: Structured questionnaires administered to a sample of individuals to gather quantitative data on attitudes, behaviors, or characteristics.

    - Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): In-depth, semi-structured interviews with individuals who possess specialized knowledge or unique perspectives on a topic.

    - Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Facilitated discussions with small groups of individuals to explore their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes on a specific topic.

    - Observations: Direct observation of behaviors, processes, or conditions in the field (e.g., observing the functionality of a newly established peace center or the dynamics of a community dialogue session).

    - Case Studies: Detailed investigations of specific instances or situations, often combining multiple primary data collection methods to provide rich, in-depth understanding (e.g., a case study on a successful mediation effort in a particular municipality).

2. **Secondary Data** - Secondary data refers to **data obtained from other pre-existing sources[22]**. This data was originally collected for a different purpose but can be re-analyzed or utilized for the current monitoring or evaluation needs. Examples of Secondary Data Sources include:

    - Project Documents: Internal documents such as project proposals, work plans, progress reports, financial records, and monitoring reports.

    - Published Articles and Research: Academic studies, policy briefs, and research papers providing broader insights and evidence.

[21] IOM. (n.d.). *Methodologies for data collection and analysis for monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines*.
[22] UNICEF. (2016). *MyMEAL: A Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluation*.

- Census and Official Statistics: Data from national statistical offices like the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) on demographics, socio-economic conditions, or gender-disaggregated data.
- Data from Research or Evaluations from Universities, Development Agencies, or Government: Reports and datasets from other organizations, or other government bodies that have conducted assessments relevant to your organization or your project.

- Conflict Monitoring Databases: Data from organizations tracking conflict incidents, displacement, and human rights violations in the region, which can provide contextual information.

Figure 16. Source: IOM Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines. Chapter 4.

The strategic combination of both primary and secondary data sources allows for a comprehensive and robust MEAL system, providing a holistic understanding of a program's progress, challenges, and impact.

Lecturette 14: Data Collection Methods

1. Surveys

In our pursuit of effective and accountable programs, we rely on a variety of tools to gather evidence. Surveys are one of the most powerful and widely used tools in our MEAL toolkit, primarily for collecting **quantitative data**. While key informant interviews give us rich, qualitative stories, surveys provide us with the numbers and statistics we need to measure progress across a large population.

What is a survey? A survey is a method of collecting data from a sample of a population to gather information on their knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or project outcomes. Its primary purpose is to systematically collect standardized information from many people, allowing us to generalize our findings and confidently say "how many" or "how often" something is occurring.

When to Use Surveys? - Surveys are particularly effective when your goal is to:

- **Establish Baselines**: To measure the starting point of a community or group before a project begins. This is essential for a credible evaluation later on.
- **Measure Change**: To track changes in indicators over time, such as in an endline study, by comparing data to the established baseline.
- **Gauge a Wide Population**: To gather data from a large number of beneficiaries or community members to ensure a representative sample of perspectives.
- **Assess Project Outputs and Outcomes**: To measure whether planned activities were completed (outputs) or if they resulted in the intended changes in a population's knowledge or behavior (outcomes).
- **Standardize Data**: To collect data in a consistent format, which makes it easier to analyze and compare across different groups or time periods.

Key Principles of Good Survey Design— An effective survey is a well-designed one. A poorly constructed survey can lead to unreliable data and a flawed evaluation. When designing a survey, we must adhere to these principles:

1. **Clarity and Simplicity**: Questions must be clear, concise, and easy for everyone in the target audience to understand. Avoid technical jargon or ambiguous terms.
2. **Relevance**: Every question must directly relate to your project's objectives and indicators outlined in your M&E plan. If a question doesn't serve a clear purpose, it should be removed.
3. **Avoiding Bias**: The language used in questions should be neutral and non-leading. You must avoid suggesting a preferred answer or making assumptions that could influence the respondent's honesty.
4. **Logical Flow**: The survey should be structured logically, starting with simple questions and gradually moving to more complex or sensitive topics. This makes the experience more comfortable for the respondent.

2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

In our work, we often need to gather rich, detailed information that goes beyond what can be captured in a standard survey. This is where the Key Informant Interview, or KII, becomes an invaluable tool.

A KII is a qualitative data collection method used to gather information from people who have specific knowledge or unique perspectives on a particular topic. These individuals, our "key informants," are chosen because of their expertise, position, or deep understanding of the community and the issues at hand.

Who are key informants? - Key informants are not just anyone. They are individuals whose insights can provide a deeper understanding of the project's context, challenges, and successes. Based on the documents we have, these could be:

- **Community Leaders:** Datus, Timuays, or other respected elders who understand traditional practices and social dynamics.
- **NGO/CSO Staff:** Field workers or program managers who have on-the-ground experience.
- **Government Officials:** Those working in local or regional government units (LGUs/BARMM) who can provide information on policy and political will.
- **Academic Experts:** Researchers or intellectuals who can offer historical context or theoretical insights.
- **"Insider-Partial" Individuals:** People who are deeply involved in a specific issue (e.g., a former combatant, a victim of violence, or an activist) who can provide a perspective that others cannot.

When to Use KIIs? - KIIs are particularly useful when you need to:

- **Explore complex issues:** When you need to understand the "why" behind a specific trend or outcome.
- **Gather historical context:** To learn about the roots of a conflict or a community's history, similar to the historical journeys we've discussed.
- **Validate findings:** To cross-reference information from surveys or other sources with expert opinions.
- **Inform project design:** To get a nuanced understanding of a new community before implementing a project.

3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

While surveys give us a broad quantitative view and key informant interviews provide deep individual insights, there are times when we need to understand how people think and interact collectively. This is where focus group discussions, or FGDs, become a critical tool in our MEAL work.

An FGD is a qualitative data collection method where a small group of people—typically 6 to 10 individuals—are brought together to discuss a specific topic under the guidance of a skilled facilitator. The power of the FGD lies in the group interaction itself. People can build on each other's ideas, challenge assumptions, and share diverse perspectives in a dynamic setting that a one-on-one interview cannot replicate.

When to Use FGDs? - FGDs are most effective for:

- **Exploring a new topic:** When you need to understand a community's beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about a new project idea or a sensitive issue.
- **Understanding Social Norms:** To uncover shared cultural values, social dynamics, and group behaviors. For example, exploring community norms around youth participation or women's roles in peacebuilding.
- **Generating Ideas:** To brainstorm potential solutions, gather feedback on a project design, or develop a Theory of Change with a community.

- **Triangulating Data:** To validate or add depth to findings from surveys or key informant interviews. If a survey shows a certain trend, an FGD can help you understand the "why" behind it.

Key Principles of a Successful FGD - A successful FGD is not just a free-for-all conversation. It requires careful planning and a skilled facilitator.

1. **Thoughtful Group Composition:**
   - The participants should be homogeneous in some way (e.g., all farmers, all youth leaders, all women) to ensure they feel comfortable speaking freely with each other.
   - The group size should be manageable, typically 6-10 people, to allow everyone a chance to speak.
2. **Skilled Facilitation :**
   - The facilitator's role is not to lead, but to guide the discussion with a pre-prepared set of questions.
   - They must create a safe and open environment, ensuring everyone is heard and that dominant voices don't overshadow others.
   - The facilitator must remain neutral and avoid imposing their own opinions or biases.
3. **An Open Discussion Guide:**
   - The discussion guide should consist of open-ended questions that encourage conversation rather than simple "yes" or "no" answers.
   - Questions should move from general topics to more specific and sensitive ones as the group builds trust and rapport.
4. **Ethical Considerations :**
   - Always seek informed consent from all participants. Explain the purpose of the FGD and how the information will be used.
   - Ensure confidentiality. Never attribute specific comments to individuals, as group members may be more candid if they know their privacy is protected.

SESSION 15: THE MEAL PLAN: A HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW

Activity 18: Building the MEAL Plan

Objective: To introduce the MEAL plan as the guiding document that operationalizes a project's strategic frameworks and to connect the conceptual work of frameworks with the practical aspects of implementation.

Materials:

- **Completed Group Outputs:** Each group's Theory of Change and Logical/Results Frameworks from the previous sessions.
- **M&E Plan Matrix Template:** Handout or large blank chart paper of the M&E Plan Matrix.
- **My MEAL Commitment Cards:** Small cards or sticky notes for the closing activity.
- **Markers of different colors.**
- **Masking tape.**

Procedure:

1. Recall the work from Day 2, where groups developed their project blueprints using the Theory of Change and Logical Framework. The M&E Plan is then introduced as the "guidebook for implementation" that operationalizes those blueprints.

2. Participants retrieve their completed frameworks. The facilitator provides a blank M&E Plan Matrix and guides the groups through a collaborative exercise to populate it.
   - **Transfer Framework Data:** Groups transfer their Goals, Objectives, Outputs, and Activities into the appropriate "Objective Level" column of the matrix.
   - **Define Collection Logistics:** For each indicator already in their framework, groups brainstorm and populate the new columns:
     - "Data Source,"
     - "Collection Method,"
     - "Frequency,"
     - "Responsibility," and
     - "Use of Information."

   This new task is the primary focus of the workshop.

3. Provide a high-level overview of an M&E plan, explaining its purpose as the central guiding document. The talk reinforces how the matrix helps operationalize the project's logic, linking strategic questions to concrete data collection and use.

M&E Plan Template: Building on the Results Framework

Purpose: This template is designed to serve as a practical guide for developing a comprehensive M&E plan. It directly builds upon the conceptual work of the Theory of Change and Logical Frameworks by transforming high-level goals and objectives into a detailed, actionable, and monitorable plan.

Document Rationale: The purpose of this document is to ensure that all project staff, partners, and stakeholders have a shared, clear understanding of what will be measured, why, and by whom. It is a "living document" that should be reviewed and updated regularly.

Section 1: Project Overview

- **Project Title:** [Insert Project Name Here, e.g., Youth Peacebuilding in BARMM]
- **Long-Term Objective (Impact):** [From your Results Framework - e.g., A more inclusive and peaceful society in BARMM.]
- **Intermediate Outcomes (Objectives):** [List the key outcomes from your Results Framework.]
- **Project Duration:** [Start Date] to [End Date]
- **Target Population:** [Describe the specific group of people the project aims to serve.]
- **Assumptions:** [List the key assumptions that the project's success depends on, as identified in your Logic Model.]

Section 2: M&E Plan Matrix

This matrix is the core of the plan. It operationalizes your project's logic by detailing how you will measure progress at every level. It is a synthesis of the M&E framework, indicators, data sources, and responsibilities.

Objective Level	Key Performance Question	Indicator	Data Source	Collection Method	Frequency	Responsibility	Use of Information
IMPACT	How has our project contributed to the broader, long-term change in the region?	[Impact Indicator]	[e.g., LGU records, policy reviews]	[e.g., Document Review, KIIs with LGUs]	Annually	M&E Team	Report to senior management, inform future advocacy.
OUTCOME	Are participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors changing as a result of our work?	[Outcome Indicator]	[e.g., Pre- and Post-Training Assessments, FGDs]	[e.g., Surveys, FGDs]	End of project cycle	Project Team	Report on project effectiveness, inform future training design.
OUTPUT	Are we delivering our planned services/products on time and in the quality intended?	[Output Indicator]	[e.g., Training Attendance Sheets]	[e.g., Attendance tracking]	Monthly	Project Staff	Track progress against work plan, identify implementation challenges.
ACTIVITY	Are we implementing our activities as planned?	[Activity Indicator]	[e.g., Activity Log, Training Reports]	[e.g., Document Review]	Monthly	Project Staff	Monitor day-to-day progress, inform weekly team meetings.
INPUT	Are the resources being used efficiently to produce our outputs?	[Input Indicator]	[e.g., Supply Chain Records, Financial Reports]	[e.g., Document Review]	Quarterly	Project Staff	Financial reporting, budget management.

Section 3: Budget and Implementation Plan

- **M&E Budget Summary:**
  - **Total Project Budget:** [Amount]
  - **Total M&E Budget:** [Amount] (5-10% of total budget)

- **Key M&E Activities and Timeline:**
  - **Baseline Study:** [Dates]
  - **Mid-Term Review:** [Dates]
  - **Endline Survey:** [Dates]
  - **Regular Monitoring:** [Monthly, Quarterly, Annually]

- **Team and Responsibilities:**
  - **M&E Coordinator:** [Name] - Responsible for overall M&E plan management.
  - **Project Staff:** Responsible for collecting and reporting on day-to-day activity and input data.
  - **External Consultant/Evaluator:** Responsible for designing and implementing the baseline and endline surveys and the mid-term review. (if applicable)

Activity 19: My MEAL Commitment

Objective: To encourage individual reflection and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge gained in the training and practical application in the workplace.

Materials:

- Small index cards or sticky notes (two per participant, preferably in different colors).
- Pens or markers.

Procedure:

1. Distribute two small cards or sticky notes to each participant.

2. Ask participants to take a moment of quiet reflection on the entire three-day training. On one card, they are instructed to write down **one key takeaway or an "Aha! moment"** that stood out to them. This should be a significant new insight or a concept that resonated with them. On the second card, they should write down **one concrete, actionable step** they will commit to taking back at their organization to apply their new foundational MEAL knowledge. This action should be realistic and achievable.

3. Invite participants to share their commitments in a brief plenary session. Volunteers can read their cards aloud, explaining their key takeaway and the action they plan to take. This reinforces learning and inspires others.

4. Collect the cards and, with the group's permission, posts them on a designated "Commitment Wall." This serves as a visual record of the group's collective learning and dedication to applying MEAL principles.

Activity 20: Course Synthesis and Next Steps

Objective: To provide a comprehensive review of the entire training, reinforce key learning points, and set a clear, motivating direction for future learning and application.

Materials:

- **Commitment Cards:** The cards from the previous "My MEAL Commitment" activity, posted on a wall.
- **Training Agenda:** A copy of the 3-day training agenda.
- **Flip chart or whiteboard.**

Procedure:

1. **Commitment Sharing (5 minutes):** The facilitator begins by inviting a few volunteers to briefly share their "My MEAL Commitment" takeaways and actionable steps. This links the final activity to the collective learning experience.

2. **Synthesis of the Journey (10 minutes):** The facilitator walks the participants through the training agenda, providing a brief, high-level recap of the three-day journey:
    - **Day 1: Foundations:** "We started with the core principles, defining MEAL not as a checklist, but as an integrated system for accountability and learning."
    - **Day 2: Frameworks:** "We moved from theory to strategy, translating our ideas into structured blueprints with the Theory of Change and Logical Frameworks."
    - **Day 3: Implementation:** "And today, we took a crucial step towards practice, building our high-level M&E plan and committing to apply what we've learned."

3. **Looking Ahead (5 minutes):** The facilitator then builds anticipation for the next stage of the training series by clearly outlining what is to come. This ensures participants leave with a sense of purpose and a clear path forward.
    - **Next Training Topics:** "The next phase of our training will build directly on this foundation. We'll get into the 'nuts and bolts' of MEAL, covering topics such as:
        - Developing specific, measurable indicators.
        - Designing and testing data collection tools like surveys and interview guides.
        - Practical data analysis and reporting techniques."

4. **Final Thanks:** The facilitator concludes by thanking all participants for their active engagement and commitment to strengthening MEAL within their organizations.

5. **Closing Ceremony Proper:** A host from the organizing agency takes over
    - The facilitator calls on 3-4 participants to share a brief testimony about their experience and key learning from the three-day training.
    - A ranking official from the organizing agency is invited to give a closing message, congratulating the participants and reinforcing the importance of applying their new knowledge.
    - The ranking official, along with the facilitator, distributes the certificates of participation/completion to each participant.
    - A closing prayer is led by a volunteer from the participants, acknowledging the diversity of faiths and beliefs.

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ABOUT THE MODULE DEVELOPER

Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga is an international development professional with over 23 years of experience in program management, research, and capacity development. He serves as the founder and Executive Director of Transforming Fragilities, Inc. (TFI), and, from March 2021 to March 2025, he was Country Director for Equal Access International (EAI) in the Philippines.

Mr. Pangcoga's career began as a field worker, giving him a unique, ground-level perspective that has shaped his extensive work in the development sector. Throughout his career, Mr. Pangcoga has worked with a wide range of organizations, either as a staff or as a consultant, including UNICEF, UNHCR, Particip and DT Global (for Subatra Programme), Ecorys (for EU IcSP), Cordaid, Plan International, World Vision, The Asia Foundation, UNDP, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, ChildFund, and Save the Children. His areas of specialization include Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL); peacebuilding and conflict transformation; preventing and transforming violent extremism (P/TVE); child protection; organizational development and management, and participatory governance. He has led numerous end-of-project evaluations, baseline assessments, and research initiatives for various international and local partners, either as an individual consultant or as the team leader of (TFI).

Mr. Pangcoga has authored and co-authored numerous research reports, policy briefs, and articles on topics including child protection, child marriage, peacebuilding, resilience, governance and civic participation, and gender and women's empowerment. He frequently applies his expertise by developing and facilitating MEAL-focused trainings and workshops for government and non-government entities in the region. This training module is a product of that extensive field and research experience, designed to provide practical, foundational MEAL skills to practitioners working to advance sustainable peace and development in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).