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GUIDELINES

OUTCOME AND IMPACT ORIENTATION

in the projects and programmes of Welthungerhilfe

Part I: Background information and definitions

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| BMZ | Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development) |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee (OECD) |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MDG(s) | Millennium Development Goal(s) |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PPM | Project planning matrix |

INTRODUCTION

1

1.1 Background

Since the international community committed itself to achieving common development goals within the framework of the “Millennium Declaration” and the “Paris Declaration 2005”, impact orientation has played an increasingly important international role in development co-operation. More than ever before, the donor community and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are called upon to reliably prove that they use the provided funds effectively and that they make an obvious contribution towards development processes in their partner countries. To be able to provide this proof, explicit orientation towards outcome and impact is necessary when programmes and projects are planned, and outcomes and impacts have to be subsequently documented.

In its concept paper “Impact-oriented evaluation of overseas co-operation by Deutsche Welthungerhilfe” in 2003, Welthungerhilfe described its intention to monitor the outcomes/impacts and effectiveness of its project work by means of an outcome and impact-oriented evaluation. The guiding principle of Welthungerhilfe’s outcome and impact-oriented evaluation is to learn from successes and failures, to draw conclusions from mistakes and to continuously improve the outcomes and impacts of development co-operation with partners and target groups.

A Welthungerhilfe working group was commissioned to promote the process of implementing outcome and impact-oriented planning, monitoring and (self-) evaluation at Welthungerhilfe. The group’s main task was to draw up guidelines defining Welthungerhilfe’s understanding of outcome and impact and to offer practical assistance with the implementation of outcome and impact orientation during the planning, monitoring and evaluation of Welthungerhilfe projects.

To make the process as practice-oriented as possible, four projects were selected from Welthungerhilfe’s portfolio and planned and implemented in accordance with outcome and impact-oriented criteria¹. Both the experience gained in this pilot process and the existing know-how of programme managers, heads of project and partner organisations were incorporated in these guidelines.

1 The planning workshops for the pilot projects (Pakistan, Madagascar, Peru, Congo) were documented in detail. If you are interested in reading these documents, the workshop documentation is available on a CD-Rom from Welthungerhilfe’s head office.

1.2 Structure of guidelines

The guidelines are divided into three parts:

- **Part I** explains the **terms and background conditions** of outcome and impact-oriented project planning and localises outcome and impact orientation within the Welthungerhilfe project cycle.
- **Part II** is a practice-oriented document which describes the outcome and impact-oriented procedure in individual project phases **step by step** on the basis of a specific project example. Possible methods which may be used during implementation of the respective project phase – depending on type of project – are listed but not described in detail.
- **Part III** contains a list of instruments and **methods of carrying out outcome and impact orientation**, and it describes the advantages and limitations of the respective instruments. The selection is based for the most part on experience gained in Welthungerhilfe projects.

The guidelines will be improved and added to on a continual basis. Part III, in particular, should be seen as a dynamic document which is updated and extended constantly.² If, for example, a partner organisation or project achieves good experiences by applying new or different methods to those mentioned here, we are glad to add these methods to our guidelines. In this way, all those responsible for projects at Welthungerhilfe and its partner organisations can make use of the latest practice-oriented instructions promptly and in turn introduce their own practical experience.

1.3 Recipients of guidelines

The guidelines are intended primarily for the staff of Welthungerhilfe and partner organisations as well as external experts on short-term contracts who have been appointed to prepare and manage new projects or new phases in existing projects.

Secondly, they help decision-makers at Welthungerhilfe, such as members of management, the Board of Directors and Project Advisory Committees as well as external consultants who have been appointed, to carry out an evaluation. The guidelines represent an important point of reference, indicating whether and to what extent project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting are outcome and impact-oriented.

Indirect recipients are also Welthungerhilfe's institutional donors and people interested in outcome and impact-oriented development co-operation, who can find out from the guidelines about relevant Welthungerhilfe processes and products and if applicable use these in their own work.

² The Division Knowledge Innovation Consultancy at Welthungerhilfe's head office is responsible for maintaining and updating the guidelines and documenting "best practices".

DEFINITION OF TERMS

2

*"When words are misused,
affairs go wrong."*
(Confucius)

In current development co-operation discussions about outcome and impact, the different organisations (DAC, Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development, DFID, etc.) define target and outcome/impact levels in different ways. In the following, the definition of terms is based on the current terminology of the Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development and DAC terms and expressions, which are becoming more widely used in the international context. Whenever possible, existing Welthungerhilfe terminology is also examined (see Figure 1).

Activities: aid activities or campaigns which lead to the achievement of certain project outputs through the use of inputs or resources.

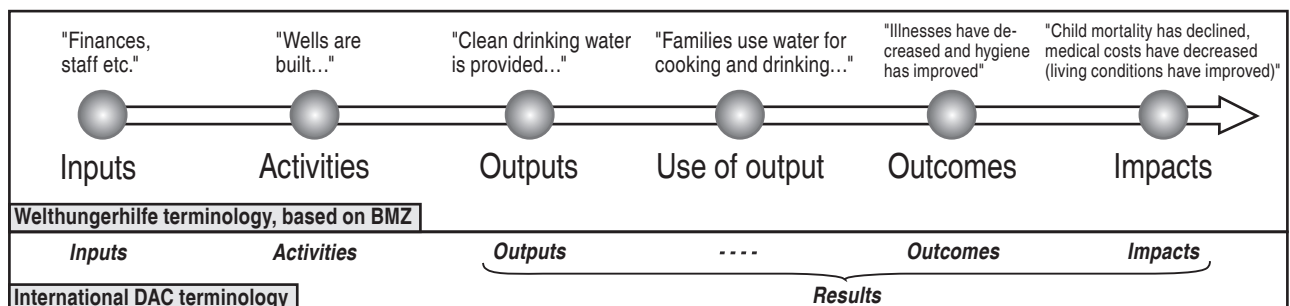
Outputs: products and services which are produced or provided by a project. Outputs are produced to achieve an outcome.

Use of output: describes the way in which outputs are used by the target group.

Outcome: short and medium-term change for the target groups that is directly related to the project outputs. The outcome is the result of the use of outputs, which has a benefit for the target group.

Impact: long-term intended and unintended positive and negative changes for various project stakeholders (target groups, partner organisations, local organisations, etc.) and in the project environment. These impacts can occur as a result of interventions during project implementation and/or after a project has ended.

Figure 1: Diagram of results chain



In the past, project work often focused on and was motivated by the level of **activities** and **results/outputs**³ achieved by a project (e.g. the number of wells built or courses held). In future, Welthungerhilfe will place greater emphasis on monitoring the **use of these outputs** by the target group (use of water, use of acquired information) and the outcomes (reduction of illnesses, improvement of income) for the target groups.

A project may achieve all planned outputs without these outputs actually being used by the target groups or their having a positive outcome/impact on the latter.

The influence of Welthungerhilfe and its partner on achievement of the desired outcomes and impacts decreases more and more above the output level. Obviously, achievement of this project purpose also depends on the activities of the target group and other external factors. However, Welthungerhilfe is responsible for the correctness of the impact hypothesis put forward in the planning process.

Welthungerhilfe or its partners measure their success according to the extent to which outcomes are achieved as defined in the plan. It is quite possible that the project purpose and the outputs needed to achieve the purpose change in the course of the project.

The term “**results**” refers both to project outputs and **desired outcomes and impacts** (as defined, for example, by the Millennium Development Goals).

By **outcome and impact orientation (DAC: “Managing for development results”)**, Welthungerhilfe understands that country and regional concepts, as well as country programmes⁴ and individual projects are designed to produce outcomes and impacts. This means that on all levels, positive outcomes/impacts are aimed at and outcomes/impacts generally (positive, negative, intended, unintended) must be observed, documented and interpreted. The findings are used to monitor ongoing projects, to support institutional knowledge management, and they should be made available to all members of staff and partners.

Welthungerhilfe’s outcome and impact orientation is characterised, in particular, by its target-group proximity and orientation. The planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects therefore focus on the level of the project purpose, in other words, on the outcome for the target group.

Impact hypotheses are assumptions about causal relationships between the implementation of an intervention and the occurrence of its outcome/impact. “If clean drinking water is provided, child mortality will decrease” is one example of an impact hypothesis.

The term impact hypothesis also describes assumptions about causal relationships between the different levels of a **results chain**. A results chain describes the logical connection between inputs, activities, outputs, their use and the resulting outcomes and impacts. The logical connection between the individual links in a results chain reveals the underlying impact hypothesis. One example of a results chain: “If wells are built and clean drinking water is provided, the families will use this water to prepare food and as drinking water, illnesses will decrease, the costs of medication and doctors’ visits will be reduced, child mortality will decrease and the living conditions of the population will generally improve.”

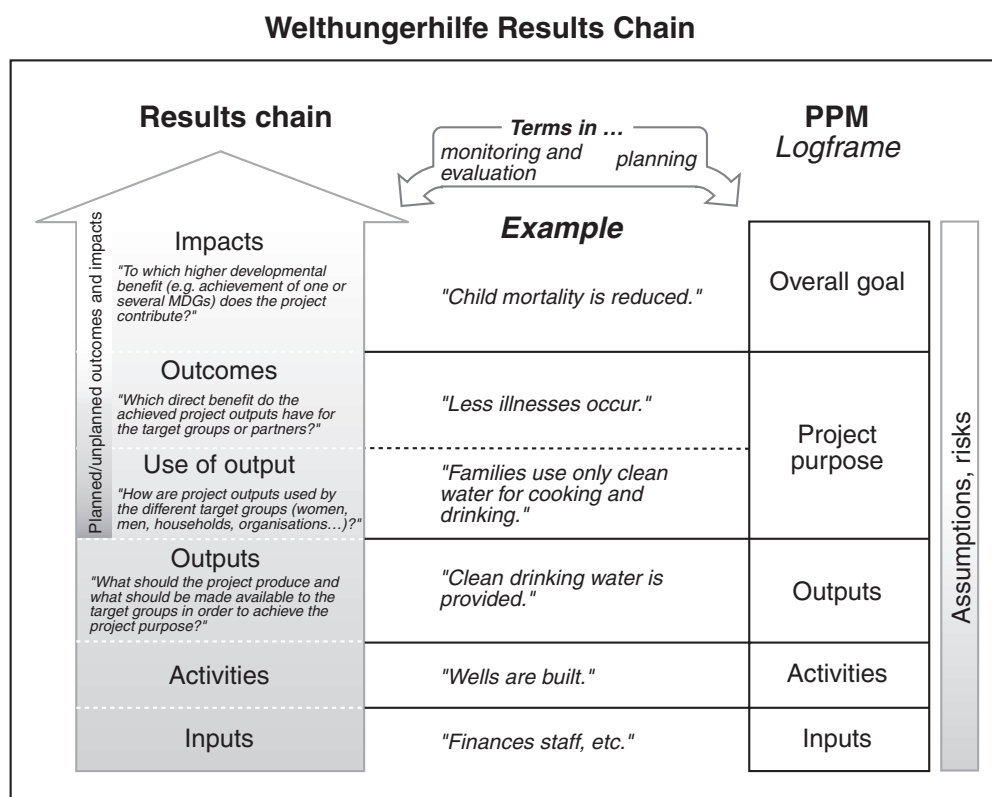
3 When these guidelines come into force, the term “results” used by Welthungerhilfe (e.g. in the PPM) will be replaced by the term “output” to bring terminology in line with that of other organisations, especially the Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development, GTZ and DAC. In English translations, this will also avoid confusion with the internationally used DAC terminology.

4 Country or regional concepts are prepared in Welthungerhilfe’s priority countries for a period of three to five years. Country concepts are developed into country programmes, which describe the specific project work in a country for a three to four-year period. Annual general plans are based on the country programmes.

In reality, results chains are complex and consist of numerous lateral connections and cross-links so that the term **impact structures** (complex cause-effect relationships) could also be used.

The results chains of development projects focus on the levels above outputs and, in particular, on outcomes. In Welthungerhilfe's project planning logic, this level corresponds to the project purpose. Despite their similarity, results chain logic and project planning logic are different in structure. Project planning logic has its origins in the planning of a project and reveals how individual inputs and activities help achieve a project or programme purpose by providing outputs. Results chain logic, on the other hand, has its origins in monitoring and evaluation. Although it is very similar to project planning logic, it not only takes into account planned, i.e. positive and intended outcomes and impacts, but also unintended outcomes/impacts. To avoid confusion, the terms used in results chain logic and project planning logic are presented in an overview in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Terminology of results chain logic and project planning logic (based on DAC glossary)



Closely linked to the concept of results chains are so-called **outcome and impact-oriented indicators**. These are defined in order to observe or gauge the desired outcomes and impacts. If, for example, a project aims to reduce the spread of water-induced diseases and therefore the costs of medication in a project region, we have to consider how this can be ascertainably the outcome/impact of a well-building project.

Preparation of outcome and impact-oriented indicators should therefore concentrate on the project purpose level.

It is important that partners or target groups and other actors who contribute towards the success of the project are involved in preparing outcome and impact-oriented indicators. They have to agree on the desired outcomes/impacts of the project. They should also be involved in deciding whether these outcomes/impacts have actually been achieved.

Outcome and impact monitoring (DAC: “Results oriented monitoring”) is applied systematically and regularly throughout the course of the project in order to observe and document short, medium and long-term changes on the project purpose level. The purpose of outcome and impact monitoring is to monitor projects and support the learning process of all those concerned. In this way, it is possible to determine early on whether the set goals are really achieved by the project. Outcome and impact-oriented indicators make it possible to monitor areas of a results chain whose outcomes and impacts can be clearly expected. Negative outcomes/impacts, i.e. those which are not planned, are not automatically detected by the outcome and impact-oriented indicators. To achieve this, so-called **observation fields** from the results chain should be monitored. While an indicator can be compared with a spotlight which casts light on a very limited area, the observation field is more like a hazard warning lamp, concentrating attention to a certain section. In contrast to the indicators, the initial situation of observation fields cannot be determined very precisely; they are too wide to achieve this.⁵

Outcome and impact monitoring also provides Welthungerhilfe with important monitoring data for management decisions affecting the organisation as a whole.

5 Based on Misereor: Leitfaden zur Antragsstellung bei Misereor (2008)

OUTCOME AND IMPACT ORIENTATION DURING THE PROJECT CYCLE

3

Outcome and impact orientation applies to the entire project cycle. This means that when country concepts and country programme plans are prepared, attention should be paid to outcomes and impacts Welthungerhilfe's country programme aims to achieve. When projects are planned, assumptions have to be made about the changes the project's output will bring about for the target groups or other actors indirectly affected by the project. These assumptions, also referred to as impact hypotheses, are vital both for planning (review of planning or outcome/impact logic) and subsequent monitoring and evaluation.

For what kind of projects does Welthungerhilfe consider stronger outcome and impact orientation particularly important?

In the fields of emergency aid, rehabilitation and development co-operation, the outcomes/impacts of projects have to be considered during the planning phase and monitored and analysed after the project has started. For all types of projects, including emergency aid and rehabilitation projects, it is important that negative, unintended project outcomes and impacts are avoided, even in the planning phase, by applying appropriate methods of analysis. A "do no harm" analysis, or an analysis of possible, unintended, negative outcomes/impacts is a binding requirement in **relevant**⁶ projects in order to avoid such outcomes/impacts.

In projects lasting less than twelve months, the focus will continue to be on output monitoring, while projects running for longer than a year (development-oriented emergency aid, rehabilitation projects and traditional development co-operation projects), outcome and impact-oriented monitoring is obligatory. For shorter projects that are extended beyond twelve months, it should be determined whether a planning modification is necessary, in which outcome and impact orientation is considered as part of the project cycle.

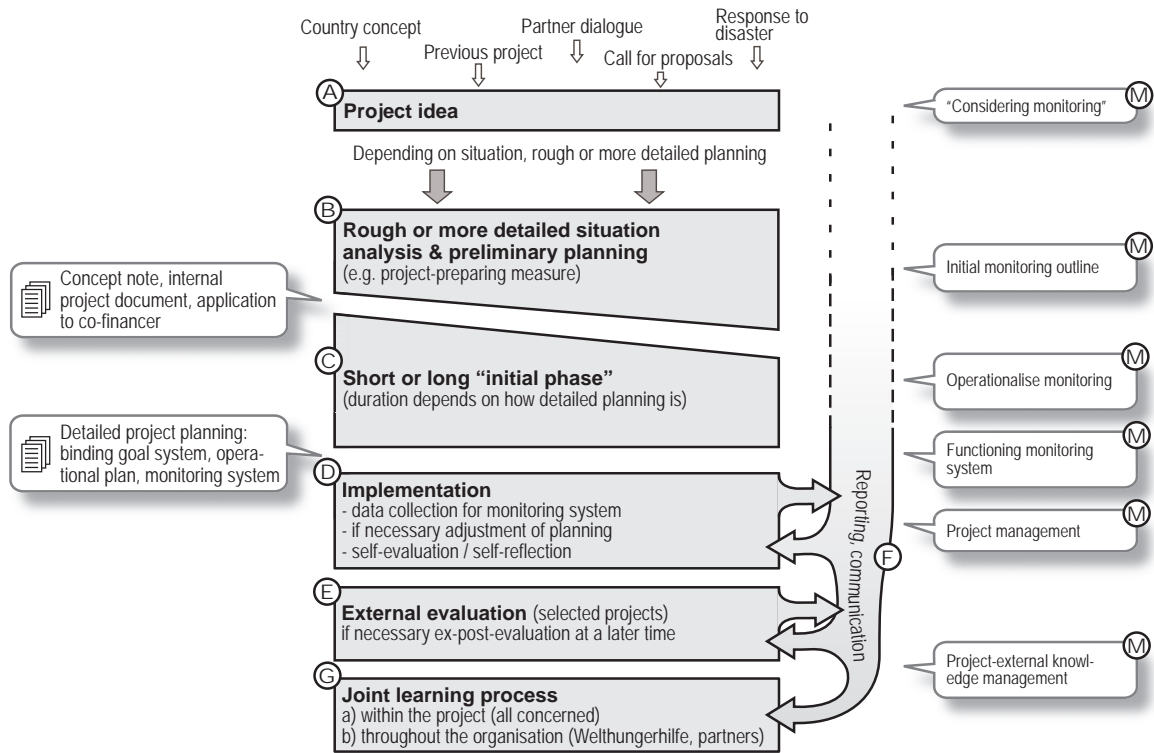
Figure 3 illustrates the ideal order of important steps within an outcome and impact-oriented Welthungerhilfe project cycle.

When and how does outcome and impact orientation occur?

The following figure illustrates Welthungerhilfe's project cycle in diagram form. The text describes the individual steps from A to G and M (monitoring).

6 By "relevant projects" Welthungerhilfe means **all** projects carried out in **highly sensitive and conflict** contexts. The term "do-no-harm" analysis is often associated exclusively with militant or (armed) **conflict situations in civil society**. By "highly sensitive and conflict contexts", however, Welthungerhilfe also refers to projects located, for example, in **ecologically sensitive geographical regions**. Here too, an analysis of possible negative project outcomes and impacts is a binding requirement.

Figure 3: Diagram of Welthungerhilfe project cycle



(A) Project idea

An idea for a project is usually proposed by one of Welthungerhilfe’s project or regional offices and/or by an existing or potential partner organisation. It can also be initiated by a “call for proposals” from a donor organisation or an acute emergency situation. The project idea is only vaguely formulated and at this stage is not planned in detail. In agreement with the head office and bearing in mind the country concept, a decision is made as to whether an idea is pursued further and whether more specific plans should be drawn up.

(B) Rough or more detailed situation analysis & preliminary planning

A situation analysis provides the information needed to describe the development and project purpose in sufficient detail and to plan the project more comprehensively. How extensive this analysis is depends on the nature of the project and the financial situation. The more detailed the situation analysis, the easier it is to make a decision about resulting project planning. An understanding of the underlying causes of the problems is crucial for the respective intervention strategy.

The situation analysis can occur as part of a **project-preparing measure**. Methods are applied in accordance with the situation (emergency aid, rehabilitation, development co-operation programme, requirements of co-financer) and sectoral orientation of the project.

Rough analysis and preliminary planning

Before Welthungerhilfe approves a project and an agreement of allocation has been issued by a co-financer, a **rough preliminary plan** is often drawn up, for example in the form of a concept note. This is specified at a later point in time, at the latest however, when the project begins. It should be remembered that the goals and outputs of co-funded projects cannot always be changed again after the project has started.

More detailed analysis and planning

If the time, know-how and financial resources are available, a detailed situation analysis and planning are carried out. It is particularly important that participating actors have a common understanding of the **goals** and implementation of the project. The planned project should be analysed in terms of its intended outcomes and impacts. Various participative analyses and planning methods → Parts II + III – are available for this purpose.

Progress of monitoring (M)

Even at this stage of analysis and preliminary planning, it is important to bear in mind subsequent monitoring, for example, by carefully recording the results of the internal project document, remembering to include resources and time for monitoring, preparing a baseline study, etc.

How detailed planning documents are depends on whether preliminary or detailed planning has occurred. These documents can range from a brief assessment of needs, a concept note to a detailed project application with co-financers. The internal project document, however, is a binding format for Welthungerhilfe's internal approval procedure.

In future, the internal project document should include not only the intended, positive outcomes and impacts (project purpose, development/overall goal) and outputs, it should also document how target groups will **use** the output provided by the project (**= level of use of output**).

The project planning matrix (PPM or logframe), which is a binding part of every internal project document, is a crucial planning element for Welthungerhilfe. Among other things, it forms the basis of monitoring and evaluation. The level of use of output must also be documented in the internal project document.

The way in which outputs provided by the project are used by target groups should be expressed in the form of indicator(s) on the project purpose level, for example: *“By the end of the project, at least 70% of the target group will draw at least 15 litres of water per day and per person – even in the three driest months – from the new shallow wells and will no longer use additional surface water for drinking or cooking.”*

Structure of Welthungerhilfe's project planning matrix

The **project planning matrix (PPM)** contains the most important and fundamental elements of the project. The PPM is one of Welthungerhilfe's key planning documents.

For the outcome and impact orientation of Welthungerhilfe's project work, it is important that more attention is paid to the project purpose level and development objective level when the goal hierarchy is formulated. Realistic project purposes should be described accurately and comprehensibly. The information needed to define goal levels sufficiently accurately is provided by a detailed situation analysis, supplemented by the necessary expertise.

Welthungerhilfe's project planning matrix contains the following levels:

| Levels | Definitions |
|--|--|
| Development objective | The development objective defines longer-term, indirect improved living conditions on the level of the target group or partner. Development is understood as a positive change/improvement in living conditions. The desired, improved situation (at the end of the project) is formulated. <i>"To which higher developmental benefit (e.g. achievement of one or several MDGs) does the project contribute?"</i> |
| Project purpose (incl. use of outputs) | The project purpose defines the intended short and medium-term, positive , direct project outcomes and impacts which should have occurred as a result of the project outputs and their use by target groups or partner organisations at the end of the project period. <i>"Which direct benefit do the achieved project outputs have for target groups or partners?"</i> |
| | Use of output (described by indicator) The project purpose also includes the use of project outputs by the target group which is a necessary prerequisite for achievement of the project purpose. <i>"How should project outputs be used by the different target groups (women, men, households, organisations, ...)?"</i> |
| Outputs | Outputs constitute the products produced by the project (created infrastructure, trained persons, services), which are needed to achieve the project purpose. <i>"What should the project produce and what should be made available to the target groups in order to achieve the project purpose?"</i> |
| Activities | Activities are the measures that are necessary to be able to produce the outputs. |
| Resources/inputs | Finances, staff, time, contributions of target group and other players. |

An analysis of Welthungerhilfe's PPM revealed recurring difficulties/weaknesses in the formulation of the PPM. Part III of these guidelines contains a checklist which picks up on these points and enables the PPM wording to be examined in terms of quality and stringency.

Progress of monitoring (M)

The considerations made in Phase B are specified. To identify possible project outcomes and impacts, the use of observation fields and livelihood factors or sustainability dimensions is useful. These observation fields serve as a reminder to register possible outcomes and impacts in areas which do not attract the immediate attention of all actors. They also help recognise unintended outcomes and impacts, pinpoint them as possible risks and if necessary adjust them during project planning. → Part III

This first draft of the monitoring system and the necessary financial and staff resources must be recorded in the respective planning documents.

C Initial phase

In the initial phase, or “**inception phase**”, plans are further detailed, examined and if necessary amended. Now, at the latest, project purposes (in other words, the desired positive outcomes/impacts), outputs and activities must be clearly specified so that all those concerned can orientate their activities accordingly. The length and scale of the initial phase depend on how detailed planning has occurred to date – the more detailed the preliminary planning, the shorter the initial phase, and vice versa.

In the initial phase, exact operational planning and the binding operationalisation of the monitoring system occur (see also Step B).

Progress of monitoring (M)

In this phase, or at the latest three months after the project has commenced, the monitoring system is operationalised. Changes in the observation fields (see Step B) are determined qualitatively and quantitatively using methods and instruments such as indicators. This means that the observation fields/indicators are re-examined and if necessary adjusted. The methods used to determine and document outcomes and impacts are defined and indicators that determine outcomes/impacts are specified.

Staff and financial resources are made available for implementation, responsibilities are clarified and the appropriate activities are considered in the operational plan. Now is the time to carry out and conclude the baseline study.

Outcome and impact-oriented monitoring should make changes apparent to many actors on different levels and fulfil different functions:

Internal project monitoring instrument: this should help initiate learning processes within the project. Effective monitoring produces early information about strengths, deficits or problems and in this way creates an important basis upon which the necessary corrective action can be taken.

Contribution towards knowledge management at Welthungerhilfe: the effective documentation of learning processes and experience gained in projects is useful for other projects and helps Welthungerhilfe as an organisation change strategies and procedures.

Contribution towards accountability: the effective documentation of outcomes and impacts helps communicate information to target groups, national authorities, donors and co-financers. It is the basis for the publication of “good practices”.

Monitoring should be:

- systematic (planned and carried out at certain intervals, in certain places, with certain actors, and using certain instruments),
- targeted (observation/measurement/collection of a few, well selected, salient indicators and observation fields),
- appropriate and practicable (technically, financially, and in terms of time required).

The results must be documented clearly and comprehensibly.

D Implementation

This is the phase when resources are used to produce outputs for the target group and therefore to achieve the desired project purpose. Traditional activity and output monitoring, but also outcome and impact monitoring, have an important monitoring function in this phase.

Progress of monitoring **M**

The informational basis for effective project monitoring is achieved by monitoring (financial, human and material) resources, implemented activities, outputs which have already been achieved and outcomes/impacts that have occurred so far.

The purpose of outcome and impact monitoring is to continuously and systematically observe the extent to which the desired goals or outcomes and impacts are being achieved and to find out whether further unplanned and possibly negative outcomes/impacts occur. To do this, the monitoring process has to repeatedly examine how critical **observation fields** change above the outputs level in the results chain.

When carrying out outcome and impact monitoring, Welthungerhilfe concentrates in particular on the level of the *project purpose*. On this level, the uses and outcomes of a project for a target group are observed (see Figure 2).

Unlike the monitoring of resources, activities and outputs, which of course is still necessary and which is based on the question: “*Are we doing what we are doing well and efficiently?*”, the guiding question behind outcome and impact monitoring is: “*Are we actually achieving the project purposes and does this bring about noticeable and sustainable changes in behaviour and an improvement in the living conditions of target groups?*”

Self-evaluation (or **self-reflection**) is an important internal instrument for project analysis/project management and is the direct responsibility of those organising implementation. **Self-evaluation** refers to the evaluation of a development intervention which is carried out by persons who are responsible for the planning and implementation of the project and who report to the management of implementation organisation, the partner or the co-financer. Self-evaluation makes learning processes during projects possible and, if necessary, plan adjustments can be made in the project cycle. **External evaluations**, on the other hand, are carried out by persons who belong neither to the body implementing nor the body financing the project.

E External evaluation

Certain Welthungerhilfe projects are evaluated by external consultants. An external evaluation examines the relationships between a project’s implementation, goal achievement and other project outcomes and impacts. Apart from obtaining important information for the institutional learning process, the aim of external evaluations is also to account for Welthun-

gerhilfe's work. Welthungerhilfe's external outcome and impact-oriented evaluation, however, focuses clearly on "learning". The external evaluation also builds upon the results of internal project monitoring and self-evaluation.

The evaluation should examine both the intended and unintended outcomes and impacts. To examine negative, unintended outcomes/impacts, the evaluation can build upon "do no harm analyses" which may have been performed in the planning phase. Of particular importance to Welthungerhilfe are the goals laid down in its statute, strategic goals as well as the goals of partners and target groups. Welthungerhilfe's external outcome and impact-oriented evaluation analyses in two directions: it **examines the impact hypotheses and results chains** on the basis of indicators, and it checks whether the planned outcomes and impacts have occurred and whether outputs and activities were sufficient and necessary to achieve this. Appropriate participative methods are also used to **examine the outcomes and impacts that have occurred from the point of view of target groups or third parties** and to find out to what this is attributable (causal research). The research refers not only to intended but also to unintended outcomes and impacts. It is not yet possible to make any conclusions about clear causal relationships, nor is it possible, within the scope of the project to prove statistically to what extent the project has contributed to the planned outcomes and impacts. However, by cross-checking both surveys in terms of the plausibility relationship between the statements of target groups and indicators, conclusions can be made about the outcomes and impacts of the project.

Given that the sustainability of outcomes and impacts cannot usually be determined until after the end of the project, ex-post-evaluations are planned for certain projects alongside intermediate and final evaluations.

To carry out this outcome and impact-oriented evaluation, intensive professional co-operation (and if necessary training) is required not only with partners and consultants but also with the staff of Welthungerhilfe.

Progress of monitoring (M)

If a final evaluation is carried out, monitoring is concluded at this stage. If an intermediate evaluation is performed, monitoring continues and any findings from the evaluation are put into practice. In both cases, the results of monitoring must be clearly documented and prepared in such a way that they can also be used for the external evaluation.

F Reporting and communication

The information obtained from monitoring and evaluation processes, especially information about project outcomes and impacts, not only serves project management. It is also of great importance to the institutional learning process of Welthungerhilfe, its partners and target groups, as well as to for the organisation's image. As far as possible, uniform terms and definitions are used in the reports. They should be written in a clear and understandable manner and documented via standardised communication channels within the organisation.

Important results of monitoring and evaluation processes and other information of relevance to the organisation as a whole are communicated within the framework of hitherto binding reporting to the "institutional memory" of Welthungerhilfe. (Case reports from partner organisations about project progress, reports for co-financers or reports for the regional offices. Welthungerhilfe's knowledge management guarantees that this information is systematised and available to all members of staff.)

G Joint learning process

Observing the outcomes and impacts of a project provides not only decision-making information for project management and inputs for a targeted and solution-oriented learning process. Knowledge about the outcomes and impacts of projects also provides Welthungerhilfe and its partners with valuable decision-making information for its strategic planning.

Evaluations should help the organisation determine, reflect upon, learn from and ultimately improve the outcomes and impacts of projects.

Learning from outcome and impact-oriented evaluation presupposes the open-mindedness, transparency of actors and their ability to accept constructive criticism. They must be willing to openly discuss both strengths and problems. A “learning culture” (and not a “mistake culture”) has to be firmly established within the institution. To achieve this, the management levels of partners and Welthungerhilfe must be in a position to see problems not as errors made by staff but as elements that make a learning process and positive changes possible.

For external consultants to be able to support the learning process, a clear position is also required here. In the outcome and impact-oriented evaluation, consultants are not controllers, they analyse the project and put up for discussion their perceptions from an external, professional and comprehensible viewpoint and their practical experience. In this context, it is especially important that consultants discuss positive conclusions and observed problems equally. The team of external consultants consisting of one local (recommended by a partner or another organisation on location) and one expatriate consultant (appointed by Welthungerhilfe’s head office) is vital for an understanding of the context as a whole.

Learning takes place during the project cycle at different locations. Learning from the results of monitoring, self-evaluation and from the external evaluation is particularly important.

In Welthungerhilfe’s **external evaluation**, the participative discussion of initial evaluation results on location (at the end of the mission) is an important initial step in the learning process. The most important findings and recommendations and their practicability should be discussed here. The results of the discussion (dissent and consensus) between the consultants and persons responsible for the project should be recorded in writing and signed.

It is important that the consultant is seen as an external “recommender”. After the consultant’s report has been approved by Welthungerhilfe’s head office, the partner and member of staff responsible for the programme department must agree which recommendations to implement and when. These decisions must be made on the basis of understandable criteria in a transparent form and be documented. During implementation, the results of implementation or non-implementation of recommendations should be subject to a critical examination, and this should also be documented as a learning experience.

Alongside this purely project-related form of learning, mention should also be made of institutional learning at Welthungerhilfe. In the past, this occurred in the form of subject-related and technical “experience reports” by the Evaluation Unit. As part of Welthungerhilfe’s institutional knowledge management, which is currently in the development stage, the Evaluation Unit will compile relevant information (such as *lessons learnt* and *good practices*) from the evaluation results and their cross-section evaluations. This should also include findings which go beyond purely the specialist and technical field.

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WELTHUNGERHILFE

We are ...

one of Germany's biggest private relief organisations; founded in 1962, we are non-profit making, non-denominational and politically independent. Our work is financed by private donations and public grants.

We want ...

to help people in developing countries improve their living conditions to such an extent that they can secure their livelihoods without outside aid. Our efforts are geared towards the needs, interests and rights of the poor population in rural regions.

We provide ...

help from one set of hands with rapid humanitarian aid in acute crisis regions and in long-term projects carried out in close co-operation with local partners, in regions where hunger and poverty determine the everyday lives of the people.

We work ...

with national and international partners from the world of politics, schools, media and other areas to ensure that we do not merely pay lip service to the idea of solidarity: development should open up opportunities and help empower people in their society on a sustainable basis.

Published by:

Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e. V.

Friedrich-Ebert-Straße 1

53173 Bonn

E-Mail: info@welthungerhilfe.de

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October 2008

Layout: Just in Print, Bonn

100% recycled paper

Cover photo: Girl in the community of San Andrés in the highlands of Ecuador

Photographer: Thomas Lohnes

Translation: Sue Pickett

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Welthungerhilfe, Sparkasse KölnBonn, Bank Code 370 501 98, Account No. 1115

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