FEED THE FUTURE
The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

PREPARING FOR AN EX-POST

Background

This doc provides quick preparation tricks and tips for Activities that want to be 'ex-post ready'. It will be updated as MSP conducts further ex-post evaluations.

Contact Information and Permissions

- ***Target population contact information in an accessible format.*** This would be a list of members of the target population that you have contacted in your project surveys or via your partners' data collection efforts. This contact info would of course ideally go beyond name and location to include phone number (multiple, if they have them) so that they can be easily contacted in future and ideally a unique number (e.g., ID) in the case that there are many people having similar or the same names in the location. Having this information in an easy-to-access format such as an Excel sheet or database would be ideal for future access by an evaluator.
- ***Partner contact information.*** As per the above, it would also be very helpful to have the contact info for the various partners (e.g., businesses, government) of the project. Given that there's the potential for turnover in these organizations, it would be ideal to gather contact information for multiple people at them & potentially also someone within the program who worked closest with the program and could in future make an introduction.
- ***Permission to contact again in future.*** In your preamble to any remaining research that you conduct, build in a request that they agree to be contacted by a future (ex-post) evaluator. That way there are no issues with a future evaluator using the contact list to re-contact the respondents.

Impacts on target population

- ***Ideally understand how the target populations have engaged with & benefitted from project-related interventions.*** It is common that beneficiaries of MSD programming have had wildly differing levels of engagement with the interventions that the project had facilitated. Making clear, if possible, which interventions / aspect(s) of the project the target population engaged with would be important so it's possible to target who is followed up with based on which aspects of the project are selected for study. For example, were they reached by interventions that improved access to inputs or also those that enhanced access to finance? Knowing how long they were engaged would be ideal as well if possible (though difficult, I realize).

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- ***Aligning results from baseline, midline and endline.*** This might be the most important one of all, and can cause nightmares for future evaluators! Often in sifting through the data it becomes clear that the data from the baseline, midline (if conducted) and endline have asked different questions so the data cannot be lined up. Or the databases are constructed such that it's not possible to see how individual members of the target population have experienced that change over time (e.g., there aren't unique #s to link them together) in the case that the Activity was using a longitudinal approach to its surveying.
- ***Local contact person(s) for future support.*** Ex-post studies typically rely on having access to an ex-staff member still living in-country following project closure who is able to assist with providing guidance at the time the ex-post is organized. Therefore, a listing of the key staff members and the sectors / objectives that they were involved with would be very helpful so that they can be contacted by the team conducting the ex-post.

Intervention focus and results

- ***Results chains or equivalent for the different interventions / objectives / systemic change areas in question.*** This is very important so that it's possible to understand the anticipated way that the activity and its interventions intended to create change, and the results that change then produced. Given that MSD activities change over time, these would ideally be updated before the close of the activity to reflect how the interventions had evolved with time. As a complement – it would be helpful to have a simply-written set of causal logic statements (or heck, even short videos with staff articulating it in their own terms) that articulates the key systemic changes targeted, how you got there, and where you landed in the end. We find that while a more formal results chain/equivalent is a very useful element, the 'logic' does not always translate – so a complementary narrative (written or spoken) can be extremely helpful.
- ***Related design documents.*** Ensuring the intervention design documents (e.g., business cases, concept notes, etc.) are well organized will greatly assist.
- ***Implementation principles.*** Document or note any key features of how (not just what) interventions were conducted that are perceived to be the 'secret sauce' to success in driving structural and behavioral shifts in the system. These will be particularly important to help the people conducting the ex-post in considering the change pathway.
- ***Endline status of the project's focus systems and systemic change objectives at project close.*** The ex-post will want to compare results from today against those at activity close. We often find that the system status at closure is not well recorded (whereas beneficiary-level results often are). Therefore, having a clear picture of the status of the target systems at or close to activity close is critical (and, when paired with the results chains and/or your assessment of progress, will make it clear how you contributed). For example – this might include data on the proportionality of adoption (e.g., of xx input firms, yy% are adopting this new practice), the evolution of the business environment, etc. As per above, it would be very, very helpful to note that if there were 5 adopting firms at endline, how many were adopting at midline or baseline?

- ***Assessment of progress towards systemic change + projections for future.*** Of the systemic changes identified above, which were anticipated/targeted? Which were less-or-un anticipated? Are there any that you see as emerging now / possible, that we should keep an eye out for? (e.g. maybe you wouldn't 'count' it as systemic quite yet, but the foundation is in place for that to possibly take off). At what stage of 'stickiness' (or whatever terminology best suits you) – are these changes? What is the team's own assessment (or that of the consultants doing the study) of what will sustain and/or scale in the coming years, and what may not. What informs these projections? Related to this, perceived risks to scale/sustainability will be interesting to look at.