

This text provides the narrative for the presentation:

Creating a holistic Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System

A. What are the issues that identify key components?

Overview:

Integrated monitoring and evaluation generates the information needed to **strengthen the delivery system** of interventions that provide “better” futures. The specific challenge of measurement in Child Development is the need to address multiple domains of development, and multiple layers of influence on that development, which come from the social, cultural and economic context.

The objective of MEL is to stimulate insight into this complex landscape by exploring the **interactive processes** between the intervention/system of provision/support, the recipients, the stakeholders, and the wider context. Sustainable, agile, systems are then built on an understanding of these interactive processes, enabling implementation to be responsive to specific needs, to be inclusive, and to address the agency (power to choose) of all those that are part of, and contribute to change. To complement this system of shared, distributed leadership, rigorous and regular monitoring and evaluation, woven into every stage of implementation, facilitates continuous learning and adaptation.

The Measurement **FOR** Change approach to MEL sees research as having a formative value. This means that measurement, and information gathering, should not be shared only at the end point of an implementation process (*of change*). Rather measurement, and the use of evidence more generally, should directly influence design, and the choice of next steps (*for change*) throughout the implementation cycle. The system is then strengthened from within, as part of a continuous, dynamic process that is responsive to changing circumstances. Measurement for Change also recognises that there is **no one-way** to gather information, there is no one best practice. Instead the implementation system, and the MEL processes which serve it, should be built on good practice, which is fit for purpose.

❖ **Slide 1 Components that relate to different levels of thinking**

MEL: a definition.
Monitoring (tracking, looking) Evaluation (thinking through, reviewing)
& Learning (making reasoned decisions).

A useful, efficient and practical MEL system will help discussion at different levels of thinking. These conversations are best held with multiple contributors who can bring into the discussion different experiences, knowledge and areas of expertise.

At a higher/strategic level the key question is **“Are we making progress towards achieving impact that is sustainable and operates at scale?”**

At a lower/component level the key question is **“Is the accessible information sufficient, appropriate and accurate enough to guide our discussions at the strategic level?”**

Reflections

- **Are you including multiple perspectives in your conversations by drawing on the thoughts of different contributors?**
- **How do you describe: effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and scaling?**
- **Does our MEL system providing information on all these 4 aspects of our programme?**

❖ **Slide 2 MEL design challenges and solutions.**

Discussion points:

- **Which of the challenges named on the slide have you faced?**
- **What have been your solutions?**
- **Are there other challenges you have faced, and have you identified solutions?**
- **Does your MEL system/process explore the complex, holistic and integrated nature of ECD?** Later slides expand on the issues of complexity and being holistic.

❖ Slide 3 Evolution of the M4C approach

The Measurement for Change approach evolved out of many strands of science and practical experience.

Links to relevant collections of papers.

<https://www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016>

<https://www.nyas.org/annals/special-issue-implementation-research-and-practice-for-early-childhood-development-vol-1419/>

https://adc.bmj.com/content/104/Suppl_1

<https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/11781/effective-delivery-of-integrated-interventions-in-early-childhood-innovations-in-evidence-use-monito>

In addition to the journal series named on this slide, the idea of M4C has also been informed and influenced by advances in neuroscience, and the fast evolving discipline of Implementation Science (the videolink on the introductory webpage of Measurement for Change describes this evolution in more detail).

Reflections

- **What is the purpose of your MEL system?**
- **Who is/are the intended audience(s)?**

❖ Slide 4 Clarity

Whatever stage you are at, whether planning your MEL, or reviewing your processes, the first step is to have a clear description of what you are already doing, as well as what you are not doing. The slides that follow expand on the dimensions that we consider valuable to think about as you develop clarity over what you want to do and can do.

As there many are different aspects to consider, and multiple dimensions of learning that your MEL system can address, you need to be intentional about what you choose to do. You cannot do everything. You cannot do it all at once.

As you discuss each of the slides clarify how you are addressing the issue (s) raised, or how you plan to address it, as well as how the information collected will be review, reflect on and used.

❖ Slide 5 Components that describe holistic development

There are many alternative conceptualisations of holistic development, some focus on the development of skills or the provision of opportunity. In this diagram the conceptualization is loosely based upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In the context of ECD the needs at the base of Maslow's hierarchy are met if a child has access to sufficient food, clean water and health care. The other levels in the hierarchy of needs are met through adequate nurturing care, expressed through a variety of positive attitudes, behaviours, policies and practices.

Research in child development has drawn our attention to the interconnection between the needs described in this hierarchy. In this approach "the whole is greater than a sum of the parts". This means that not only does an individual need more than physical resources to flourish, but also that individuals can also flourish when some needs are not being met.

Discussion points:

- What relevance does this diagram have to the "targets" of your programme design?
- What, if anything, is the diagram missing, and why?
- Having looked at this diagram do you feel that you need to better address a component?
- Does this mean adding more activities the programme, or adding to the list of things that you are monitoring?

❖ Slide 6 Components that describe Pathways and Targets of change

Lojvar's Triangle illustrates key sources of information, targets for observation and learning. A triangulation of information from each data source is needed to adequately describe the process of change.

- ❖ Observing **Individuals** – what actions are observable in the child/parent/teacher when they are **acting** alone.
- ❖ Observing **Self with Others**, - how are these actions changed as two or more individuals act with, and or respond to, others.
- ❖ **Context** – what is happening around the actions of self and others.

Discussion points

What information do you have of

- Individual actions?
- Interactions between people in your network?
- The context in which you are working?

❖ Slide 7 Components that describe the Cycle and Stages

This diagram illustrates the cyclical, circular, and continuous nature of progress towards achieving impact at scale.

At the centre is monitoring, integral to the delivery system, out of which comes the learning process.

Information is collected.

Continuous review tracks progress through the stages illustrated in the circle from:

Design (*when the model and objectives are formed*), through

Decide (*when the idea is transformed into a practical feasible system*), to

Implement (*when the model is delivered*), to

Evaluate (*when information on impact at scale can be added to information on process to help guide the evolution of the model*).

This progress will not be linear. As the outer circle in the diagram illustrates, progress will be guided by an intentional process of information gathering, by taking the time to understand what defines and underlies progress, success and may need fine tuning.

Discussion points:

- **When is the last time you were able to sit down as a team {STOP}, to {LISTEN} to what is being said about your programme, {LOOK} at what is happening, and {THINK} about what you might do next, before acting on change?**
- **How accessible is/was your data to the decision making on implementation/delivery?**
- **How could access be improved so that decisions are even more evidenced based?**

❖ **Slide 8 Components derived from the M4C-Aspirations.**

How the aspirations emerged, and what they mean in practice is described in two papers, which you can access through the website or through the link given in the notes to slide 3.

Measurement for Change also recognises that there is **no one-way** to gather information, there is no one best practice. Instead the implementation system, and the MEL processes which serve it, should be built on good practice, which is fit for purpose.

The aspirations are about the capacity TO DO. The MEL process, what indicators you collect, how you analyse and share the data, also aspires to the same capacity **to do**. As you read the 5 aspirations slides please discuss what you aspire to do, and what capacity you have, or will need to develop, to be able to do it.

For each slide reflect on:

- **To what extent are we addressing this aspiration in our programme design?**
- **To what extent are we able to review progress towards these aspirations?**
- **How will this awareness influence next steps?**

❖ **Slide 9 The Capacity to be Dynamic**

Discuss: What is the cycle through which you choose, collect, summarize/analyze, share and use your data?

❖ **Slide 10 The Capacity to be Inclusive**

Discuss: Who has been involved in your M&E process, when and how?

❖ **Slide 11 The Capacity to be Informative**

Discuss: Who has had access to the information collected, and for what purpose?

❖ **Slide 12 The Capacity to be Interactive**

**Discuss: Has it been possible to observe how key relationships have evolved over time?
What have been some of the intended or unintended consequences that you have logged?**

❖ **Slide 13 The Capacity to be People Centred**

**Discuss: Which groups and sub-groups does your data, will your data inform us on?
Who might be left out, and why?**

❖ **Slide 14 The Work Flow**

In this presentation we began the process of clarifying the approach and key components to address in ensuring that MEL system is useful, practical and efficient.

In subsequent presentations we will move from the strategic level of thinking into the details, selecting the methods and process that will help achieve these objectives.

Discuss: What thoughts have the issues raised in this slide deck provoked?