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Effective Results Frameworks for Sustainable Development

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OECD Toolkit: Launch Edition

Impact by Design

Effective Results Frameworks for Sustainable Development

Foreword

The arrival of this OECD toolkit is timely, with a scant seven years left to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and many countries still striving to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

Given the wide array of global challenges currently being faced – from climate change to a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis – and their devastating effects on the development progress that had been made over past years, optimising the use of available resources to catalyse transformative societal change, environmental protection and sustainable economic recovery has never been more critical.

Going forward, there is a clear need for enhanced strategies, robust frameworks, accurate measurement and impactful initiatives. From small-scale projects to national development strategies, effective results frameworks are crucial to maximising the impact and driving the momentum of sustainable development.

This OECD Toolkit, titled "Impact by Design", is more than just a technical tool – it provides ideas to help make the strategic and political leap towards aligning all efforts and investments with sustainable development objectives. Results frameworks, when properly used, can map out the trajectory from finance to outcomes and provide structured methods to manage complex challenges effectively. They can also help teams and organisations, large and small, boost their focus on development impact.

The toolkit provides an in-depth understanding of the components of an effective results framework, offers insights on incorporating sustainable development into existing practices, and guidance on monitoring and using these frameworks. It is a synthesis of rich discussions, case studies and technical dialogues designed to strengthen co-operation and foster a collective focus on transformational impact.

As a continually evolving resource, the toolkit will integrate new knowledge and experiences over time. It is hoped that it will serve as a practical tool to inspire the organisational transformations necessary for achieving sustainable development, and facilitate more harmonised and impactful development practices.

This effort would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions and partnership of hundreds of stakeholders over the past four years, including those in the OECD/DAC Results Community, ten governments from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean, officials from more than fifty bilateral and multilateral development agencies and ministries, and especially our partners at the European Commission and its delegations, who co-hosted our dialogues in Africa and made this toolkit possible.

With "Impact by Design" as a common reference for all governments and international development partners, it is time for strategic, harmonised action to progress towards a sustainable future.

Why this toolkit?

While the adoption of results-based approaches in development practice is on the rise, studies conducted by the OECD and other institutions persistently highlight opportunities and deficiencies in the way tools and methodologies are used to ensure a focus on sustainable development impact.

This toolkit is designed to help you increase the quality and usefulness of results frameworks in development practice. It showcases the latest insights and recommendations on how to design, monitor and use results frameworks for greater impact on sustainable development. It provides an overview of the different types of results frameworks that exist and how to enhance their design, monitoring and usage, and it gives advice on how to integrate complex issues in results frameworks, such as sustainable development, climate adaptation and inclusion.

Who is this toolkit for?

The toolkit is intended for both governments and international development agencies and ministries. The different modules provide insights and tailored guidance for strategic planners, programme and project managers, and monitoring, evaluation, data and learning managers. It is also intended to support large and smaller organisations that act as implementers of development co-operation interventions.

How to use this toolkit

This guidance toolkit will walk you through the types and components of a well-developed results framework, and how to design, use and monitor results frameworks. Each module can be considered independently and, as a reader, you are encouraged to navigate it according to your specific ("just-in-time") needs.

The modules are organised in a progressive manner, starting with basic information and moving to more advanced practices. They include checklists on issues to consider and practices to avoid, examples of useful practices and approaches, and lists of further resources and tools to explore the issues in greater detail.

Specific terminology

In this toolkit, the following terminology is used frequently and should be understood to mean:

- **Government**: Any government. We typically refer to national-level governments.
- **Partner country:** Partner country refers to countries that receive development co-operation. We only use this term in discussing relationships between partners.
- **Development partners:** Development organisations that act as development co-operation partners in another country. This includes ministries, agencies and institutions that provide bilateral development co-operation, as well as multilateral development partners including United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, global funds and international initiatives with a development focus.
- **Implementing partners:** Any organisation (civil society organisations, associations, non-governmental organisations, private sector firms, foundations) engaged in the execution of a programme or project.

Acknowledgements

This OECD toolkit responds to a request made by the Results Community of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee for better guidance to improve the effectiveness of results frameworks in support of sustainable development.

Under the responsibility of Pilar Garrido, Director of the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate, Rahul Malhotra, Head of the Reviews, Results, Evaluation and Development Innovation Division, provided strategic guidance and oversight. Alejandro Guerrero and Chantal Verger led the extensive comparative research, technical discussions and analysis supporting this OECD toolkit's evidence base. Sonja Agustsdottir, Piper Hart and Olivia Lalonde actively contributed to conceptualising, drafting and finalising this toolkit. Other analysts and experts that, over the years, contributed to the background analysis include Laura Angresius, Michael Bally, Jos Brand, Juan Casado, Takayoshi Kato, Paige Kirby, Kadambote Sachin, Julia Schnatz and Rosie Zwart. Special thanks go to Ola Kasneci for her editorial review.

This toolkit is a collective feat. The authors are deeply grateful to the OECD/DAC Results Community, whose members intensely discussed the challenges, experiments, innovations and alternatives they have explored in recent years to make their development ministries and agencies more impactful. We tried to condense those collective learnings in this practical toolkit. The authors are also thankful to the governments of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Myanmar, Peru, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda for hosting and supporting the underlying studies and inclusive dialogues on effective results frameworks and practices for sustainable development. The work with those governments, their development partners and domestic stakeholders provided the bulk of practical insights on how to make things work in complex situations.

They would also like to thank Australia, the European Commission, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom for their role as peer learners during the country case studies and dialogues, and give special thanks to the European Union's delegations for their active support during the inclusive dialogues at country level. Finally, this research would not have been possible without the engagement, candour and generosity of many senior officials and technical staff from the eleven governments mentioned above and more than 65 bilateral and multilateral development partners who participated in in-depth interviews, surveys, data sharing, focus group discussions and validation workshops.

This guidance toolkit was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
AsDB	Asian Development Bank
BPOA	Barbados Programme of Action
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CLA	Collaborate, Learn and Adapt
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GIZ	German Agency for International Co-operation
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
IaDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KRT	Knowledge Retention and Transfer
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MERLA	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning and Adaptation
MfSDR	Managing for Sustainable Development Results
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
MSI	Mauritius Strategy for Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action

NAP	National Adaptation Plan(s)
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
OPSYS	Operational System
PDIA	Problem-driven Iterative Adaptation
RBM	Results Based Management
RF	Results Framework
SAMOA	The Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPI	Social Progress Index
ToC	Theory of Change
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UK	United Kingdom
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction to Results Frameworks

Results frameworks and their importance in development practice

More than ever, development actors are called upon to join efforts and maximise the impact of individual and collective interventions to achieve sustainable development. **Results-based approaches** can help governments and international partners navigate complex development challenges, build resilience and mitigate risks – ensuring that all partners and efforts contribute to a positive impact on people and the planet.

Results frameworks are a fundamental cornerstone for implementing robust results-based approaches. They provide conceptual and visual clarity on the strategy to go from inputs to outcomes and impacts. In so doing, these frameworks (such as the Sustainable Development Goals framework) play a crucial role in addressing local and global challenges, by providing a structured method for strategising on how to tackle complex issues.

What is a results framework, in a nutshell?

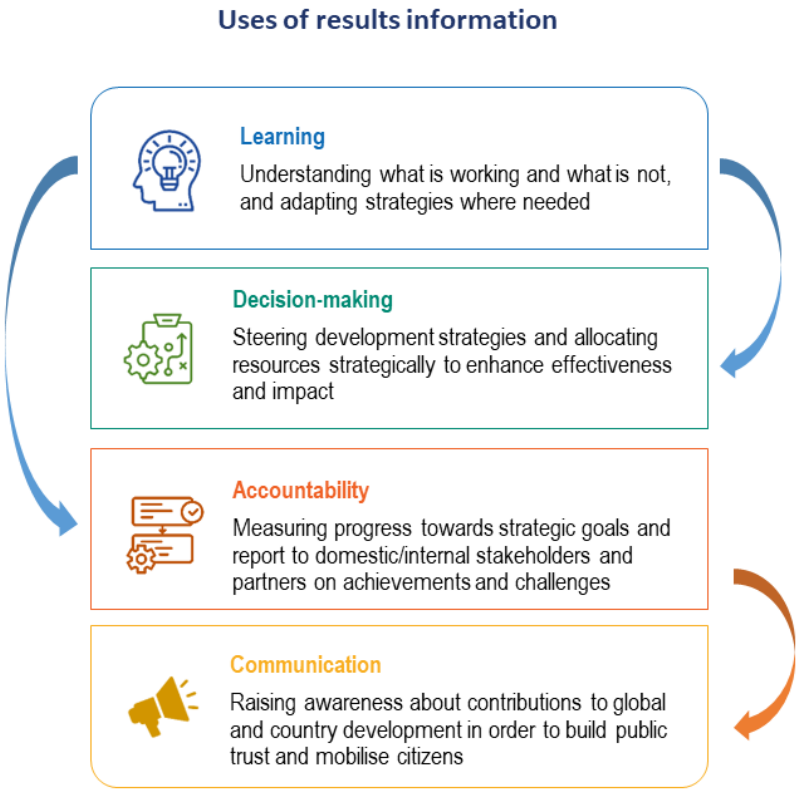
A **results framework** is a structured tool used to define, monitor, and assess the performance and impact of policies, programmes, or projects. They explicitly articulate (typically, in a graphical or tabular manner) how a strategy or intervention will achieve the objective(s), including causal relationships and underlying assumptions and risks.

A results framework generally includes **indicators** (with baseline, targets, data sources, means of verification and other metadata, for each indicator) for the **full results chain**: inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. In some instances, results frameworks only describe the desired outputs, outcomes and impacts, leaving flexibility in defining the inputs and activities that will lead to these results.

Ultimately, results frameworks enable development actors to define, collect and analyse information to measure the change they are exerting in the world, and assess how well a project or programme is performing against planned targets. It thus helps establish an evidence-based approach to monitoring and evaluation.

While it may seem a technical exercise, a **well-designed results framework** reflects a strategic intention and ensures that resources and efforts are directed towards interventions that have the highest potential for creating positive change. These frameworks facilitate evidence-based decision-making, learning and adapting, accountability, and communication (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Key uses of results frameworks



Source: OECD (2021[1]), Managing for Sustainable Development Results: Development Co-operation Fundamentals, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=1112_1112683-sr6wf7xp34&title=Managing-for-sustainable-development-results.

Ultimately, investing time and effort into developing and using results frameworks can lead to more effective, efficient, and sustainable solutions to development challenges, making a tangible difference in the lives of those affected. **This guidance toolkit will walk you through the types and components of a well-developed results framework, and how to design, monitor and use results frameworks for greater impact on sustainable development.**

A short history of results frameworks

The evolution of management tools in development heavily borrows from industrialist practice. Taylor's **Scientific Management** approach (1910s-40s) influenced the early days of development practice and aid delivery with its emphasis on efficiency and productivity, specialisation and professionalisation, the introduction of standards and replication of best practices, and data-driven decision-making. **Management by Objectives** (1950s-60s) promoted setting clear, measurable objectives and evaluating performance against these. Additional project management techniques sprang from that root, emphasising planning, scheduling and controlling activities for large or complex projects (e.g. the Critical Path Method).

Driven by the need for greater accountability, transparency and effectiveness in development projects, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) developed the **Logical Framework Approach** (LFA) in the 1960s, which became the foundation for results frameworks. The LFA provided a systematic method for organising and presenting project objectives, inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, clarifying the logical (causal) relationships between them. This ground-breaking innovation offered a coherent approach to project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Over time, and as a reaction to criticisms that LFAs were too rigid and linear, the LFA evolved into what we now know as **results frameworks**, which have become widely used in development practice. Results frameworks emerged as a more flexible and dynamic tool, underpinned by the theory(ies) of change underlying a programme or project. Approximately 88% of low- and middle-income countries have developed national results frameworks (OECD/UNDP, 2019[1]), and 97% of all bilateral and multilateral development partners extensively use results frameworks at project, portfolio and corporate levels (Guerrero-Ruiz, Schnatz, & Verger, 2021). Compared to logframes, results frameworks are more flexible in their structure, rely on standardised terminology, provide more detailed monitoring and evaluation plans, and can be applied to guide decisions not just for single projects, but for broader programmes, portfolios and policies (i.e. scalability).

Their increased flexibility owes to the emphasis on using **theories of change** to formulate them: these comprehensive descriptions and illustrations of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context encourage the use of approaches that seeks relevance, acknowledgement of complexity and uncertainties, adaptation to context and change, and the ability to test and review the 'hypothetical' causal linkages and underlying assumptions during implementation. With variations, both results frameworks and theories of change quickly became popular managerial tools in development practice since the early 2010s.

More recent trends in public management practice have led to softening the more rigid, linear, top-down aspects of results-based management further – including how results frameworks are developed and used. For example, governments and development agencies have experimented with innovative methods that emphasise the local, bottom-up definition of problems, solutions and expected results (OECD, 2015[3]), or that stress the latter parts of the results chain (i.e. *outputs*, and even more so, *outcomes* and *impacts*), giving implementers greater freedom to adapt original plans and activities as needed (Sharp & et al, 2021). However, despite these adaptations and innovations, the fundamental focus of results frameworks as a management tool, which is to drive positive development impact, remains steadfast.

Overall criteria for designing and implementing effective results frameworks

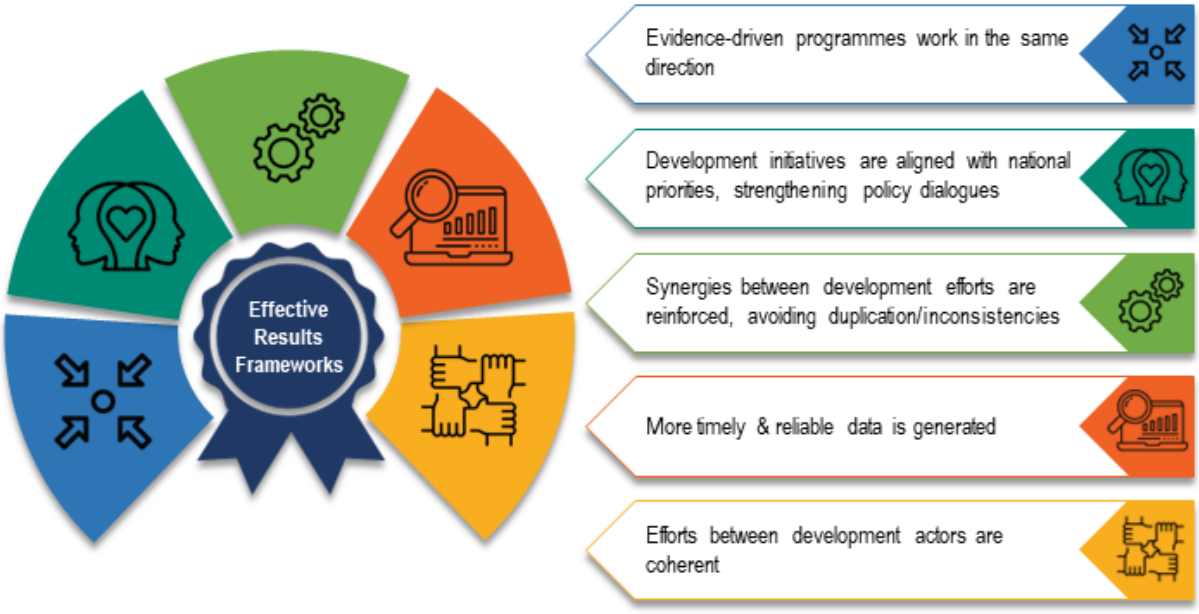
As development challenges have become increasingly complex and intertwined, and development finance is under pressure, finding ways to ensure individual and collective impact has never been more important.

Results frameworks can serve as a useful managerial tool to guide the action of each development actor. However, to ensure that they support sustainable development effectively and bolster impact, these frameworks need to be designed and used with specific criteria in mind:

Effective results frameworks should…

1. **Foster alignment and coherence for sustainable development across individual and collective efforts**. The framework shall consider the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, and shall ensure that all development policies and interventions remain coherent and support governments and institutions in delivering results on the ground (**Module 1**)
2. **Remain flexible and adaptable to context changes**. They shall allow the possibility of adjusting inputs, activities and short-term outputs, while staying focused on achieving longer-term outcomes and positive impacts.
3. **Strengthen ownership and ensure all development efforts work in the same direction**, are driven by strong evidence, and are delivered in a consistent and effective way. This shall in turn help to overcome the current fragmentation of development efforts, building synergies, avoiding overlapping or even inconsistency between development programmes, and maximising collective impact at global and country levels (**Module 3**).
4. **Help generate and use timely and reliable data**, ideally by harmonising indicator choices, reducing the use of parallel monitoring systems, and encouraging internal and collective efforts to expand the availability of (and capacity to analyse) results data for informed decision-making, learning and reporting (**Module 4**).
5. Are used in ways that **promote a culture of results and learning**, with leadership and staff actively using the results information to foster and communicate their impact at institutional and individual levels (**Module 5**).
6. **Stay lean and fit-for-purpose**, focusing on servicing end-users of the results information, in the most efficient, user-friendly manner.

Figure 2. Effective results frameworks: Benefits



Key components of results frameworks

The **results framework is a tool that serves to gather information on how a project, programme or policy intervention is translating inputs into outcomes and impacts**.

Underlying structure or logic

Most results frameworks (e.g., at programme and project levels) have an underlying structure which describes how change is hypothesised to happen. The *logical framework approach* or the use of *theories of change* are the most common methods of structuring results frameworks, but other methods are emerging in development practice (see Figure 4, part A).

Typically, the underlying structure comprises a set of assumptions, risks and external factors that describe how and why the development intervention is intended to produce results. It generally includes indicators (with baseline, data source, means of verification, etc., for each) that reflect how inputs and activities will produce outputs, which then will lead to specific outcomes and impacts.

☞ Note that, in some instances, a results framework may rely on a different logic for structuring the results. On the one hand, a designer may decide to only reflect the desired outputs, outcomes and impacts in order to leave full flexibility over defining the inputs and activities that will lead to these results. On the other hand, he or she may prioritise the 'representativeness' of the set of results to be pursued and monitored, such as, for example, when designing a corporate results framework that may cover a number of 'headline results' that are considered sufficiently representative of hundreds or thousands of individual projects. See **Module 2** for further information.

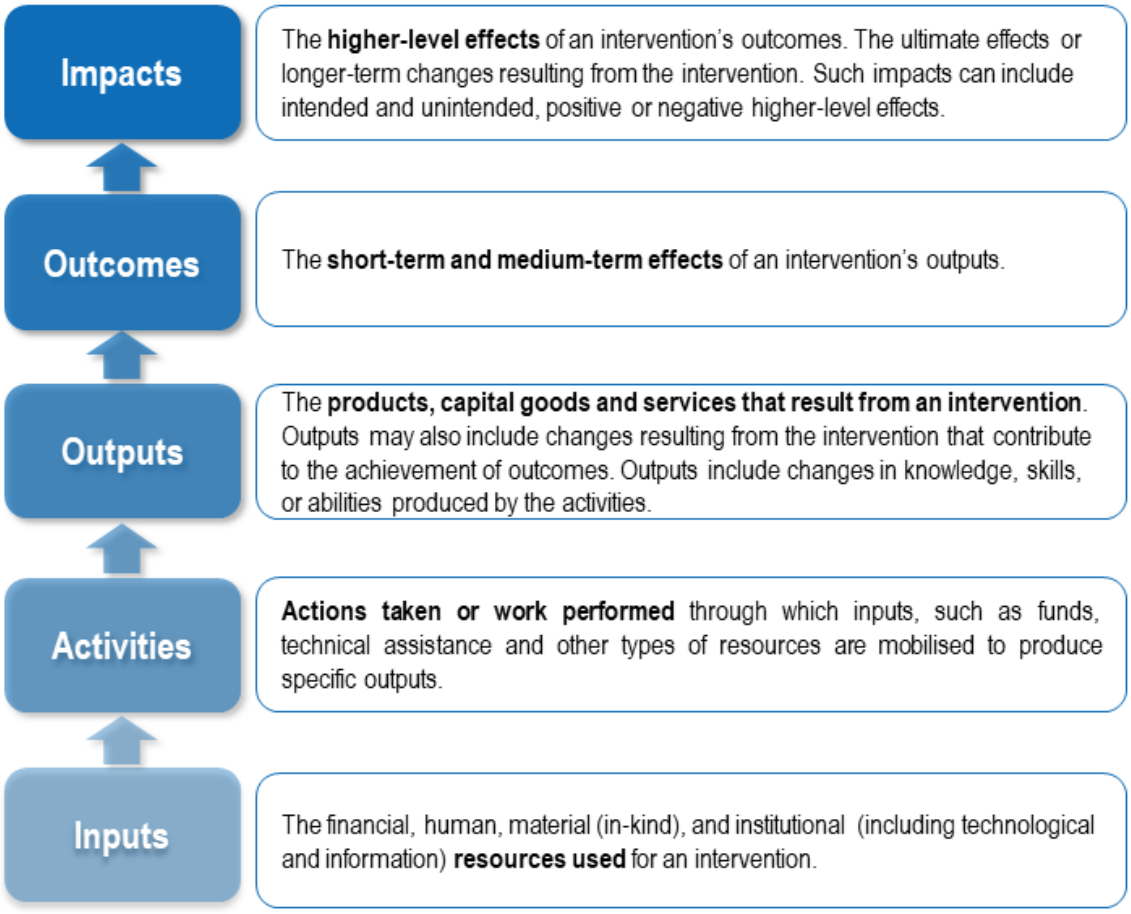
Main components

While there is no "one size fits all" approach, given that organisations operate in varying environments and are subject to different governing processes, some key elements contribute to the development of effective and useful results frameworks:

The **results chain** is a fundamental component of most results frameworks. It is the causal sequence of a development intervention that stipulates the different stages leading to the achievement of the desired objectives. In general, the results chain is formulated using indicators, starting with input indicators, which then link to activities and outputs, and culminate in outcomes and impacts (Figure 3). Each element of this framework contributes to the next, and the links between each element are as important as the results themselves.

Figure 3. The Results Chain

The cause-and-effect sequence from inputs to impacts of a development intervention



Source: (OECD, 2023)

Indicators are thus essential elements of results frameworks and enable development organisations to monitor and report accurately on how an intervention is performing.

An **indicator** can be a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable of interest related to the intervention and its results, or to the context in which an intervention takes place. An indicator provides simple, verifiable and reliable means for tracking changes and the performance of a development intervention (OECD, 2023). *Selecting indicators* can be a difficult task; it is therefore important to apply specific criteria during the selection process, which will be detailed in the following modules.

Each indicator in the results framework comes associated with the following elements:

- A **target,** as the intended, usually quantitative, value for the indicator. The target is generally set at the beginning of an intervention and is expected to be achieved by a specific point in time with available resources.
- A **baseline**, as the original value for the indicator at the beginning of the intervention.
- **Means of verification**, as a description of how the change in the indicator will be assessed. Occasionally, only **sources** are listed. In other results frameworks, responsibilities are described.
- **Assumptions**, as the enabling conditions that are presumed to be true or in place at the beginning of the intervention. The expectation is that these assumptions will hold true during the implementation of the intervention or, if these assumptions change, adequate action will be taken.
- **Risks**, as the factors that could materialise during the intervention and derail the results chain. The expectation is that implementers will adopt **mitigating actions** to avoid or reduce the impact of these potential risks on the results chain.

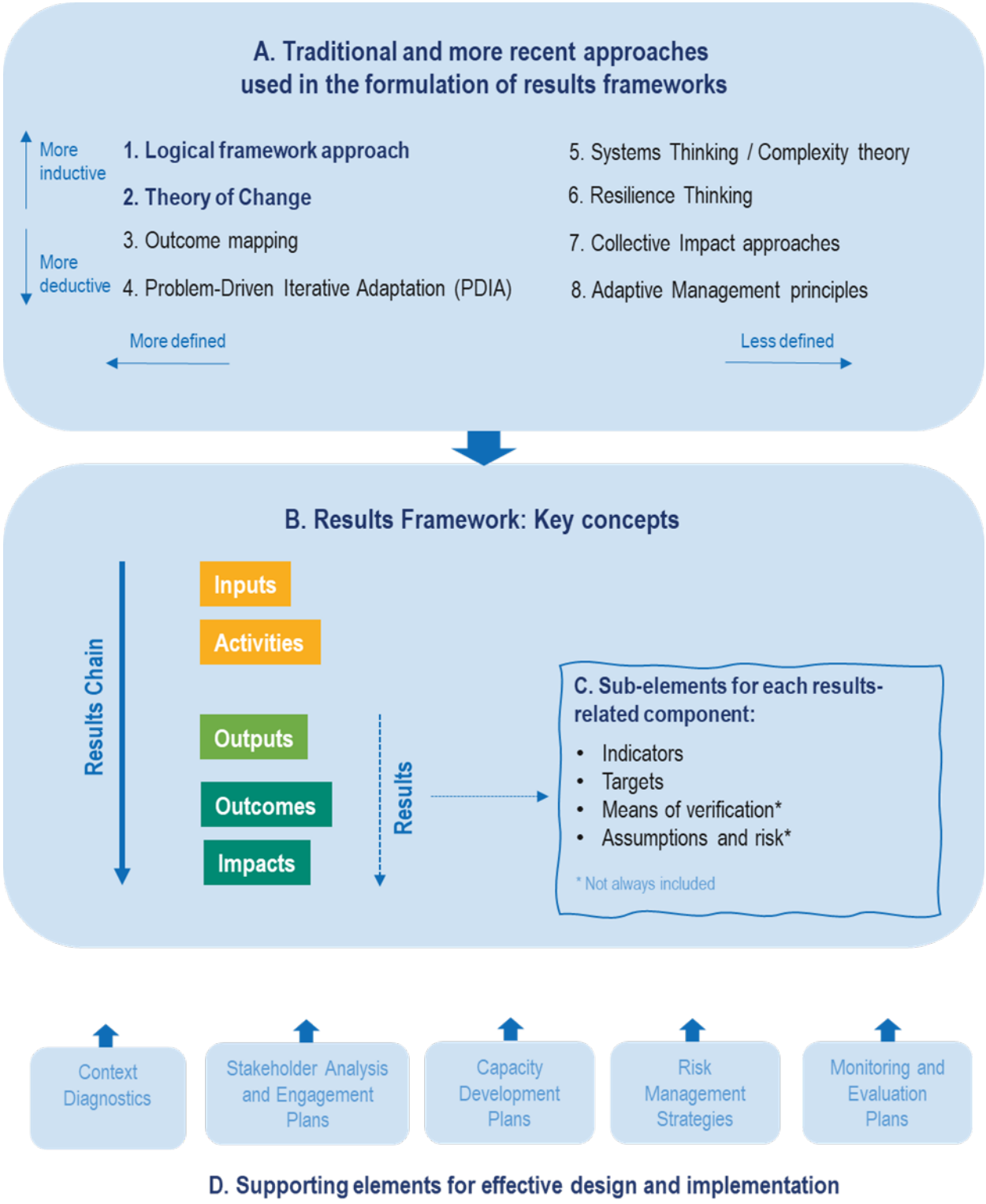
Other supporting elements that contribute to the effective design and use of results frameworks include:

- **Situation** or **context diagnostics,** which allow for a thorough understanding of the problem, actors, capacities, possibilities and risks.
- **Stakeholder analyses and engagement plans,** which serve as a systematic tool for identifying, understanding and planning ways to engage with relevant individuals, groups or organisations who have a stake in a project, initiative or strategy, and are essential for the successful design and implementation of the results framework.
- **Capacity development plans** (when needed), which should focus on addressing the capacity constraints of key implementers and related stakeholders.
- **Risk management strategies**, which should describe potential risks for the intervention and provide a more detailed account as to how these risks are being (or could be) mitigated. These strategies are a particularly useful complement in highly volatile, or fragile, contexts.
- **Monitoring and evaluation plans**:
    - **Monitoring** refers to a continuing process that involves the systematic collection or collation of data (on specified indicators or other types of information). It provides managers and other stakeholders of an intervention with indications as to the extent of implementation progress, achievement of intended results, occurrence of unintended results, use of allocated funds and other important intervention- and context-related information (OECD, 2023). Monitoring requires establishing baselines to describe the situation prior to an intervention and including targets and indicators to assess whether performance is on- or off-track (OECD, 2014).
    - **Evaluation** is the systematic and objective assessment of a planned, ongoing or completed intervention, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the intervention's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. It also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an intervention (OECD, 2023).

Finally, for the effectiveness of a results framework, other elements, such as providing sufficient guidance, staff time and resources for the design and use of the framework, and fostering a results culture within the organisation, are also necessary. Figure 4 provides a visual summary of the core components needed for effective results frameworks.

Figure 4. In focus: Understanding results frameworks

A schematic representation of key approaches and components relevant to the design and effective implementation of results frameworks:



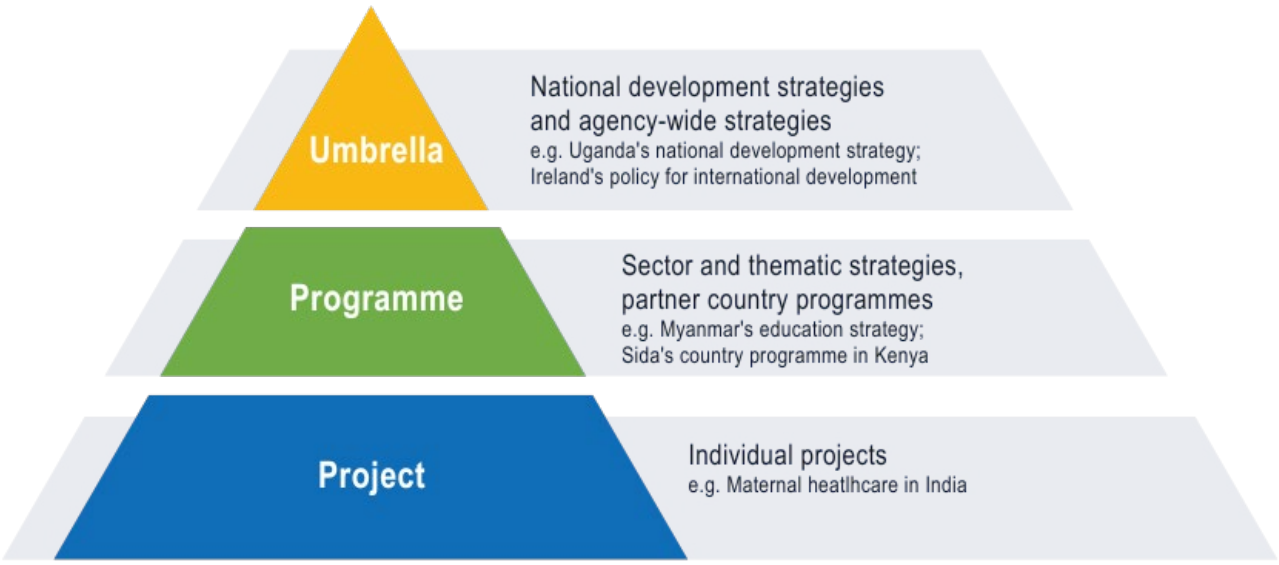
Types of results frameworks

Governments and development agencies (and the individuals working within these organisations) have different needs for results information and data, depending on their role and level.

These distinctive needs typically lead to three broad categories of results frameworks, based on whether they focus on individual interventions (e.g. projects), or at middle or higher levels of management:

- **Overarching level** (e.g. a national development strategy, or a corporate/agency-wide framework).
- **Portfolio level** (e.g. a sector, thematic, or country-level programme), and
- **Individual intervention level** (e.g. a single project).

Figure 5. Types of Results Frameworks



At all levels, results frameworks typically follow the structure of a results chain, linking inputs to activities, outputs, and finally outcomes and impact (OECD, 2018).

Ultimately, the formulation of a results framework and the selection of indicators should be guided by the specific objectives and applications of the results information at a particular level. The methods for collecting, processing and reporting this information back to stakeholders should also align with these objectives to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

Take, for example, a country aiming to achieve sustainable development. The sustainable development strategy establishes actions across multiple sectors. Government intends to use the results information to guide policy decisions and prioritise budget allocations, but also to demonstrate progress to citizens and international partners and gather support and legitimacy. The results framework would thus include headline indicators across sectors, that would ideally try to be representative of government action in all relevant sectors, while adding up to good metrics of sustainable development. Or it may rely on global frameworks, such as the SDGs, to ensure that indicator selection aligns with sustainable development.

Overarching results frameworks

Umbrella frameworks offer a way to ensure that a government's or organisation's strategic priorities are translated into expected results. They provide a common framework to anchor other subsidiary frameworks (e.g. at sector- or project-level) to overarching strategic priorities.

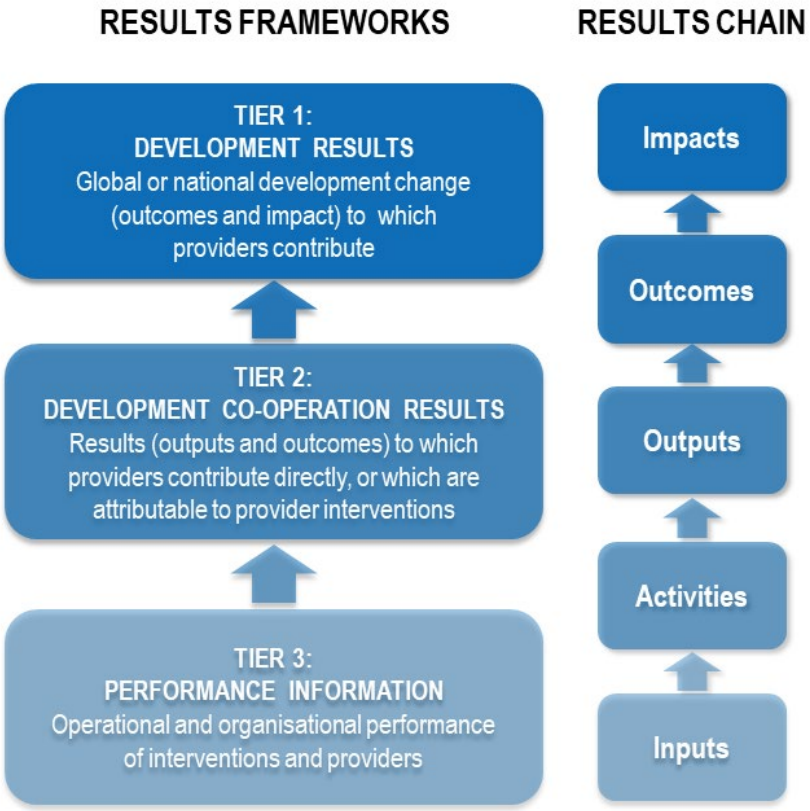
- For governments:

  Country results frameworks are often part of national development strategies or sector planning documents. They help monitor mid-term and long-term strategic goals, and strengthen the accountability, transparency, and coherence of action across government and with other domestic and international partners. When these frameworks also integrate the SDGs and other international frameworks, they can additionally be used to track progress towards sustainable development.

- For development co-operation partners:

  Corporate results frameworks are umbrella frameworks that allow development partners to ensure that their development co-operation policies and strategies are results-oriented, e.g. Switzerland's international co-operation strategy 2021-24. Although there is not a set structure for corporate results frameworks, development partners have typically structured them in three tiers – closely tracking the results chain (Figure 6). Corporate results frameworks provide an anchor for the development of portfolio- and project-level results frameworks.

Figure 6. Typical structure of corporate results frameworks



Source: (OECD, 2017)

- **Go Deeper: See Module 2**

Portfolio-level results frameworks

A portfolio-level results framework is a strategic tool used to plan, monitor and evaluate the collective outcomes and impacts of a set of related interventions, projects or programmes under a common theme, such as a government's sector programme, a development agency's operations in a specific country, or an organisation's thematic initiatives. It provides an aggregate view of progress and performance, to enable improved decision-making, learning, accountability and communication about the aggregated results. (For further information see **Module 3**).

Project-level results frameworks

A project-level results framework outlines the intended results of a specific project and tracks progress towards these results. For example, for a government road project, the framework would map inputs (*materials*, *labour*), outputs (*kilometres of road built*), outcomes (*improved transportation*), and impact (*economic growth*). In a women's empowerment project, the framework might detail inputs (*training resources*), outputs (*number of women trained*), outcomes (*increased decision-making*), and impact (*improved gender equality*). **Module 3** expands on this matter.

Overview of this guidance toolkit

This introductory module covers basic details for understanding results frameworks and their use as a management tool in development practice.

To learn more on any particular aspect, please consult the following modules:

- 1. – Integrating sustainable development in results frameworks – key considerations
- 2. – Designing overarching (country and corporate) results frameworks
- 3. – Designing programme- and project-level results frameworks
- 4. – Strengthening monitoring systems
- 5. – Using results information
- 6. – Monitoring cross-cutting issues: Leave No One Behind (LNOB)
- 7. – Monitoring climate adaptation and resilience

1. Integrating sustainable development in results frameworks – key considerations

Guiding principle

Managing for Sustainable Development Results approaches should maximise the impact of efforts towards achieving social, economic and environmentally sustainable development that leaves no-one behind. […] Set clear expected results measured by indicators aligned to the SDGs. […] Promote coherent, cross-sector and cross-disciplinary approaches and incorporate them into measurement, learning and reporting systems, in line with the integrated approach of the SDGs.

Guiding Principle 1, Managing for Sustainable Development Results

1.1. Importance of integrating sustainable development in results frameworks

Integrating sustainable development into results frameworks is crucial for several reasons:

- **Balanced progress:** Sustainable development promotes a balanced approach to economic, social, and environmental dimensions, which is crucial for long-term success and stability. Incorporating it into results frameworks ensures all these dimensions are considered in planning, implementing, and evaluating initiatives.
- **Long-term vision:** Sustainable development encourages long-term thinking and planning. Integrating it into results frameworks helps organisations focus not just on immediate outputs, but also on long-term outcomes and impacts.
- **Alignment with global ambitions:** Many sustainable development frameworks have been adopted by countries worldwide, or in specific regions, as a common framework for their development. Integrating these into results frameworks helps align organisational objectives with global agreements and goals.
- **Resilience and adaptability:** Sustainable development principles foster resilience and adaptability to changes and challenges. By integrating them into results frameworks, development actors can better anticipate and respond to future uncertainties and risks.
- **Stakeholder engagement**: Sustainable development often involves engaging a wide range of stakeholders, promoting inclusivity and shared ownership. Integrating it into results frameworks can improve stakeholder relations, accountability, and transparency.

Anticipating challenges and disincentives

While integrating sustainable development into results frameworks is largely seen as beneficial, some common misperceptions, challenges or risks discourage practitioners from considering this step:

- **Complexity**: Sustainable development includes economic, social, and environmental dimensions, all of which can be challenging to incorporate and balance within a single results framework. This might increase perceived complexity and make it harder to set clear, focused objectives and indicators.
- **Measurement challenges**: Measuring progress towards sustainable development can be seen as difficult due to its long-term, multi-dimensional nature. This might create the perception that tracking progress will be more difficult and raise concerns about how to demonstrate results in the short term, which is often a requirement for many funders or stakeholders.
- **Resource-intensive**: Incorporating sustainable development considerations might require additional resources for data collection, monitoring, and evaluation. Organisations with limited resources might be concerned about how to proceed.
- **Potential for greenwashing or SDG-washing:** There's a risk that development strategies and initiatives might claim to be sustainable without making substantive changes, also known as "greenwashing" or “SDG-washing”. For example, one could claim alignment to a certain SDG without meaningful consideration of its content, implications or measurement practices. This could undermine the credibility of results frameworks if sustainable development is not genuinely integrated and demonstrated in practice.
- **Risk of overemphasis on environmental factors:** While environmental sustainability is important, there could be a risk of overemphasising this dimension at the expense of social and economic factors if not carefully balanced. This could lead to unintended negative impacts on certain communities or economic sectors.

These challenges, however, are not reasons to avoid integrating sustainable development into results frameworks, but rather considerations to address in the process. With proper planning, stakeholder engagement, and a commitment to genuine change, these challenges can be managed and overcome.

Self-assessment questions

- Reflect on your organisation's current approach to **results reporting**. To what extent does it incorporate the **three dimensions** of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental)? Are there any areas where the balance could be improved?
- Consider the **potential challenges** of integrating sustainable development into your results framework discussed above. Which of these challenges resonate most with your organisation's context, and what strategies could you employ to address them?
- Evaluate the **extent of stakeholder engagement** in your current results framework. How might integrating sustainable development principles improve this engagement, and what specific steps could your organisation take to promote inclusivity and shared ownership?

Issues covered in this module

- Mapping existing global and regional frameworks for sustainable development, and how they relate to each other
- A deep dive into the SDG indicator framework, including:
  - Its key characteristics
  - How it is organised
  - How to assess the depth of alignment of results frameworks to the SDGs
  - How to assess and decide on the inclusion of SDG indicators in results frameworks
  - Individual assessment of all SDG indicators (Annex).

1.2. Prominent results frameworks for sustainable development

Global and regional results frameworks provide invaluable insights into strategies and metrics that have proven effective in promoting sustainable development. By aligning results framework with these models, we can ensure that our efforts contribute to broader development goals, leverage shared learnings, harmonise ways of measuring development and foster synergies with initiatives at multiple levels. Using prominent results frameworks as a reference point can enhance individual impact while helping drive collective progress towards a more sustainable future. The following is a list of prominent frameworks that explicitly define expected results for one or many dimensions of sustainable development:

Global frameworks for sustainable development

United Nations: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDG framework is the most prominent framework for sustainable development. It comprises 17 interconnected goals, 169 targets and 249 indicators aimed at addressing the world's most pressing challenges. The goals, ranging from poverty eradication to climate action, are designed to be achieved by 2030. The SDGs provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity, aspiring to guide global, national, and local actions towards sustainable development for all. Discussions are ongoing on ways to improve the framework for continued relevance beyond 2030.

Given its importance, the SDG framework is assessed in detail in this module (from section 3 onwards).

➢ Link: https://sdgs.un.org/

UNFCCC: Paris Agreement monitoring, reporting and verification framework

Adopted in 2015, the Paris Agreement is an international treaty aimed at combatting climate change and its impacts. While lacking a standalone results framework, it sets up a system for monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of nations' climate actions. This includes Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) whereby countries outline their climate targets and measures, a transparency framework for regular reporting on greenhouse gas inventories and implementation progress, a five-yearly global stocktake assessing collective progress, and a non-punitive compliance mechanism. Although not a conventional results framework, the Paris Agreement's MRV components track progress towards climate goals, focusing primarily on the climate-related aspects of sustainable development.

➢ Link: https://unfccc.int/

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-30)

The Sendai Framework is a global agreement designed to significantly decrease disaster risk and losses across various sectors, focusing on preventing and reducing hazard exposure and increasing preparedness. It involves comprehensive measures at the economic, structural, legal, social, and other levels to boost resilience. It recognises the need for political commitment and collaboration among state-level governments, local authorities, the private sector and non-state actors. The framework sets out four action priorities and uses a results-oriented approach with specific, measurable global targets and indicators to assess progress in its implementation.

- Link: https://www.unece.org/sendai-framework

United Nations: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The MDGs were a set of eight global development targets established in 2000, aimed at reducing poverty, improving health and education, and promoting gender equality and environmental sustainability by 2015. Due to measurement inertia, some countries and organisations still measure the MDGs as part of their "unfinished business". Some elements and MDG indicators were incorporated into the SDG framework.

- Link: https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

Regional and thematic frameworks for sustainable development

African Union: Agenda 2063 Results Framework

The African Union's Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the African continent over a 50-year period. Its results framework outlines a series of goals, priorities and indicators to monitor progress towards the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its citizens. Key focus areas include inclusive growth and sustainable development, political and economic integration, good governance, democracy and human rights. The results framework also emphasises the importance of Africa's cultural identity, heritage and values, as well as its role in the global arena. Agenda 2063 promotes African solidarity and unity while addressing challenges such as climate change, conflicts and health issues by harnessing the continent's natural resources, human capital and innovative potential.

- Link: https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview

European Union's Results and Indicators for Development Co-operation

The European Union provides an open suite of standard indicators that integrate sustainable development organised in thematic clusters, including: green alliances and partnerships; human development, peace and governance; sustainable growth and jobs; migration and mobility; science, technology, innovation and digitalisation; and gender equality.

- Link: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/results-and-indicators

Sustainable development frameworks for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

SIDS face unique challenges due to their small size, isolation, and vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters. While they often use global frameworks such as the SDGs to track their progress, some SIDS-specific frameworks and initiatives have been developed to address their particular development needs and priorities. These frameworks include:

1. *The Barbados Programme of Action* (BPOA): Adopted in 1994, the BPOA is the first global framework that specifically addresses the challenges faced by SIDS. It outlines 14 priority areas

for sustainable development in SIDS, including climate change, natural disasters, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, land resources, energy resources, tourism, biodiversity and waste management.

- *Link:* https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/conferences/bpoa1994

2. *The Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the BPOA* (MSI): The MSI, adopted in 2005, builds on the BPOA and provides a detailed plan for its implementation. It emphasises the need for enhanced support from the international community, effective partnerships, and regional cooperation to address the unique challenges faced by SIDS.
   - *Link*: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/conferences/msi2005
3. *The SAMOA Pathway*: The Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, adopted in 2014, is a global framework that reaffirms the commitments made in the BPOA and MSI. It highlights the need for a renewed partnership between SIDS and the international community, and it identifies specific priority areas for sustainable development results in SIDS, including climate change, disaster risk reduction, oceans and seas, waste management, sustainable tourism and renewable energy.
   - *Link*: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/samoapathway.html
4. *Regional frameworks*: Many SIDS are also involved in regional frameworks that include results components tailored to their specific contexts. Examples include the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Strategic Plan, the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, and the Indian Ocean Commission's Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development.
   - *Link*: https://caricom.org/doctype/strategic-plan-strategy/
   - *Link*: https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-Pacific-Roadmap-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf

   While these frameworks are tailored to address the specific challenges and priorities of SIDS, they often complement and align with global sustainable development frameworks, such as the SDGs.

OECD Green Growth indicators

The OECD Green Growth Indicators provide a comprehensive framework for assessing countries' progress in achieving green growth, focusing on environmental efficiency, natural assets, and socioeconomic context and policies.

- Link: https://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/green-growth-indicators/

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards

The GRI Standards provide a framework for sustainability reporting, offering metrics for environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. They aim to promote transparency and accountability in businesses.

- Link: https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/

Social Progress Index (SPI)

The Social Progress Index evaluates countries based on social and environmental indicators. It focuses on people's quality of life, assessing societal needs and wellbeing beyond economic measurements.

- Link: https://www.socialprogress.org/

The list above does not intend to be exhaustive, but all the results frameworks and models presented are currently used by governments and international development partners to measure one or more dimensions of sustainable development.

Box 1.1. Comparing sustainable development frameworks

While each of the frameworks discussed above serves a different purpose and context, there are several key similarities among them:

1. **Focus on Sustainable Development**: All the frameworks are centred around the concept of sustainable development, addressing its economic, social and environmental dimensions. They aim to balance immediate human needs with the long-term health of the planet.
2. **Results-Oriented**: The frameworks are results-oriented, focusing on outcomes and impacts rather than just inputs and activities. They emphasise the importance of achieving meaningful, substantive change.
3. **Performance Indicators**: Each of the frameworks uses a set of indicators to measure progress towards their objectives – with emphasis on outcomes and impacts. These indicators provide a way to quantify and track changes over time.
4. **Stakeholder Engagement**: The frameworks recognise the importance of involving a wide range of stakeholders, reflecting the interconnected nature of sustainable development. They promote inclusivity and shared responsibility.
5. **Long-Term Vision**: The frameworks all embody a long-term vision for a more sustainable future. They encourage forward-thinking and long-term planning.
6. **Adaptability and Flexibility**: Given the complex and dynamic nature of sustainable development, the frameworks are designed to be adaptable and flexible. They allow for adjustments and modifications based on changing circumstances and new information.
7. **Global Alignment**: Although some of the frameworks have a specific regional focus, they all align with the global vision of sustainable development as encapsulated in the SDGs. This reflects a shared commitment to a common set of principles and goals.
8. **Accountability and Transparency**: The frameworks emphasise the importance of accountability and transparency, often requiring regular reporting and review to ensure progress is being made and commitments are being met.

Global frameworks with a focus on means of implementation and effectiveness

The previous mapping included global and regional agreements which focus on development outcomes and include a form of results framework or indicators associated with the agreement.

It is important to mention other significant references in the development sphere, such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Grand Bargain, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness or the Busan Partnership Agreement. These frameworks predominantly aim to mobilise and streamline resource mobilisation for sustainable development, and to enhance the effective delivery of development finance, rather than directly outlining development outcomes. In other words, these global agreements serve as operational guides focusing on the 'how' of development, not the 'what.'

In designing results frameworks, the usefulness of these global references lies in helping define input indicators and targets (i.e. financial and non-financial resources), and in ensuring effective and efficient operational processes and activities that can increase the chances of development impact, rather than in defining and tracking sustainable development outcomes.

Recognising this distinction is critical to appropriately utilising these global normative references in designing effective strategies and results frameworks.

Self-assessment questions

- Examine the various sustainable development frameworks presented earlier. Which **framework or combination of frameworks** aligns best with your organisation's mission, objectives and context?
- Evaluate your organisation's current approach to **long-term planning** and **adaptability**. How do these compare to the **common characteristics** found in the sustainable development frameworks presented?
- Reflecting on the importance of **accountability** and **transparency** in sustainable development frameworks, assess your organisation's current practices. How frequently and transparently does your organisation **report on its progress** towards its development objectives? How could this be improved in line with the principles of these frameworks?
- Consider how your government or organisation, at a strategic and operational level, is integrating **other global reference frameworks** in defining financial and non-financial input indicators, quality assurance of processes, and partnership approaches needed to deliver on your results framework. Are current financing and delivery practices and processes aligned with the **principles** underpinning those supporting frameworks?

1.3. Deep dive: The Sustainable Development Goals framework

Introduction to the SDG framework

The SDG framework was created to offer a shared blueprint for navigating complex multidimensional challenges and can help bolster development co-operation's collective impact to effectively support sustainable development everywhere (OECD, 2021[1]). The SDGs can serve as a common standard to co-ordinate efforts by governments, development partners, the private sector and other development actors.

Origins, strengths, and limitations

The SDG framework was the result of international negotiations culminating in the UN's adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. Political consensus among member states, informed by extensive stakeholder consultations, set the initial framework. Post-adoption, continuous technical improvements have been made, particularly around refining the indicator framework, to ensure its robustness and relevance.

Figure 1.1. The 17 Global Goals

That iterative process of political and technical consensus-building led to a truly universal and integrated framework of 17 goals and 169 targets that reflects diverse perspectives. This inclusive process, however, made the framework larger and more complex than that of the preceding Millennium Development Goals. Additionally, due to the consensus-based nature of the process, some targets may lack the specificity needed for easy measurement, while others reflect political compromises that could limit their ambition or clarity. These limitations are being addressed over time with regular reviews and improvements, or by allowing elements of the framework to be adjusted to the specific contexts where it is applied.

Using the SDG framework and focusing on pursuing SDG results through development interventions offers many advantages, including the ability to navigate complex challenges using the same language and data, build partnerships around a consensus agenda and maximise the impact and value of every investment (OECD, 2021[1]).

Key characteristics of the SDG framework

Universality

The SDG framework, unlike past development models, introduces the concept of **universality**, asserting that all countries, regardless of their development stage, bear responsibility for achieving sustainable development. This shift acknowledges that challenges are global, not isolated, demanding collective and equitable responses. Such universality enriches results frameworks by endorsing a shared narrative and mutual accountability, leading to more harmonised efforts and measurement practices. By applying the SDGs as a shared reference point, governments and development agencies can enhance coherence, strengthen partnerships, and promote global solidarity that is critical in tackling our shared developmental challenges. Less noted is the possibility of building bridges and fostering more productive policy dialogue

around development outcomes, particularly in contexts of low mutual trust between partners, as the SDGs provide a consensus agenda and a streamlined language for discussing sustainable development issues.

Integration of social, economic and environmental dimensions

The SDG framework uniquely integrates social, economic and environmental dimensions, reflecting the **interconnectedness** of these aspects in achieving sustainable development. By drawing on the SDG indicators, results frameworks can ensure a **holistic approach**, addressing these three dimensions concurrently rather than in silos. For example, SDG 8 indicators promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth (environmental, social and economic dimensions combined), full and productive employment (economic and social concerns in balance) and decent work for all (various social dimensions addressed). Similarly, SDG 11 indicators aim to make cities inclusive (social), safe and resilient (environmental), and sustainable (economic). Incorporating such multidimensional SDG indicators into results frameworks encourages a balanced perspective, fostering comprehensive solutions that consider the intricate interplay of social, economic and environmental factors in development.

Inclusiveness and multi-stakeholder approaches

The SDG framework underscores the value of inclusiveness and a multi-stakeholder approach, as sustainable development is a collective task requiring diverse perspectives, pooled resources and concerted efforts. Integrating the SDG framework into results frameworks fosters an inclusive process by actively encouraging contributions from all societal sectors, including governments, civil society, the private sector and academia. Inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches not only incentivise addressing a wide range of development challenges, but also promote ownership, responsibility, and commitment among diverse actors. In practice, results frameworks that benefit from inclusive approaches for their development, monitoring and usage tend to be more effective and lead to more durable development endeavours.

Organisation of the SDG results framework

A results framework of 17 goals, 169 targets and 249 SDG indicators

The structure of the SDG framework revolves around three components. There are 17 overarching **goals**, each addressing a critical aspect of sustainable development. These goals are further divided into **targets**, which are monitored through **indicators** to assess progress.

To note:

- **SDG targets**: The 169 targets are a mix of quantifiable objectives and open-ended ambitions. Two thirds of the targets (107) are considered "outcome/impact targets", as they are specific and measurable. The remaining 62 targets are "means-of-implementation targets" that are more process-oriented and thus tend to be more open-ended, i.e. without a specified target value.
- **SDG indicators**: The 249 SDG indicators are all quantifiable metrics. They take the form of single, multi-layered, or composite indicators. Some SDG indicators are re-used for various goals. The total number of unique SDG indicators is 232. Find our detailed analysis in this electronic Annex .

In terms of content, the 17 SDGs encapsulate a broad spectrum of development issues, ranging from poverty eradication to climate action, from quality education to gender equality. While each goal has a specific focus, they are intrinsically interrelated, reflecting the complex and interconnected nature of sustainable development. Their collective realisation represents a balanced and comprehensive approach to achieving a sustainable future for all. The following section will further explore these interlinkages.

Interlinkages between goals, targets and indicators

Interlinkages within the SDG framework refers to the intricate relationships and dependencies among the goals, targets, and indicators. These interconnections may take various forms, such as synergies, trade-offs, or indirect impacts. Synergistic interlinkages imply that progress in one area can spur advancements in others. Conversely, trade-offs suggest that progress in one goal may hinder progress in another. Indirect impacts denote subtler, cascading effects that may not be immediately apparent.

The diversity and multitude of these interlinkages are immense, reflecting the complexity of sustainable development. For instance, sustainable agriculture (SDG 2) can positively impact climate change mitigation (SDG 13), while also influencing water quality (SDG 6) and rural development (SDG 15). Similarly, quality education (SDG 4) can empower women and girls (SDG 5), thereby promoting gender equality, which in turn can spur economic growth (SDG 8).

Significant strides have been made in understanding these interlinkages, thanks to innovative analytical tools and methodologies. These include network analysis, systems thinking, and scenario modelling, which have shed light on the complexity and dynamics of these interconnections, providing valuable insights for policy design and implementation (Kroll, Warchold and Pradhan, 2020[2]) (Bennich, Weitz and Carlsen, 2020[3]).

Integrating an understanding of SDG interlinkages into results frameworks can enhance the effectiveness and coherence of development initiatives by enabling a more strategic, holistic and nuanced approach to achieving sustainable development.

Some **tools to explore SDG interlinkages** include:

- Enabling SDGs (Joint European Research Council)
- SDG Accelerator and Bottleneck Assessment (UNDP)
- SDG Compass (United Nations)
- SDG Toolbox (UN Global Compact)
- Analysis of SDG indicators characteristics (OECD)

Thematic groupings and synergies

The SDG framework can be strategically organised around thematic groupings or clusters of synergies. These clusters represent areas where multiple goals intersect and can be mutually reinforcing, providing a more cohesive and integrated approach to sustainable development. Table 1.1 describes frequently used ways to consider thematic groupings for the purposes of results framework development.

Table 1.1. Thematic clusters of SDG indicators

Thematic Priority:	Priority SDG indicators:
Poverty and Inequality:	SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and some SDG 8 indicators (Decent Work and Economic Growth).
Health and Well-being:	SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and some SDG 6 indicators (Clean Water and Sanitation).
Education and Skills:	SDG 4 (Quality Education), some SDG 8 indicators (Decent Work and Economic Growth).
Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability:	SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and some SDG 12 indicators (Responsible Consumption and Production).
Peace and Justice:	SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and some SDG 10 indicators (Reduced Inequalities).
Urban Development and Infrastructure:	SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), and some SDG 6 indicators (Clean Water and Sanitation).
Rural Development and Infrastructure:	SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and some indicators across the SDG framework where urban-rural data disaggregation is relevant, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) on rural settlements, and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).
Gender Equality and Empowerment:	SDG 5 (Gender Equality), some SDG indicators across the framework where gender is a cross-cutting issue (see **Module 6** on Leaving No One Behind).
Partnerships and Global Cooperation:	SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), and SDG indicators across all the other SDGs that require international cooperation and/or refer to the international transfer of resources, financing, technology, data or knowledge.

By organising the SDGs into these thematic groupings, a results framework can better leverage the synergies among them, allowing for more effective and efficient planning, implementation, and monitoring of sustainable development initiatives.

Criteria to assess the SDG indicators

As seen in the Introduction, indicator selection should primarily consider the relevance of the indicator to the priorities, specific objectives and context of the strategy, programme or project. The ultimate driver of indicator selection should be to meet an information need in terms of learning, decision-making, accountability or communication.

However, other considerations (e.g. cost, complexity, synergies, sustainability) are equally important in order to develop effective results frameworks. As such, the six DAC Evaluation Criteria can serve as a useful guide in selecting SDG indicators for results frameworks. These criteria help link specific characteristics of the SDG indicators with dimensions of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Assessing SDG indicators with an evaluative eye

Criterion	Considerations	**Possible variables** (to assess the criterion)
Relevance	Does the SDG indicator align with the intervention objectives and the needs and priorities of the target population/country? It is worth considering if the indicator is frequently included in national development plans and other development co-operation results frameworks, and whether it will generate relevant data on the intended change, which can be effectively used for decision-making, learning, accountability and communication?	• **Reflects a strategic priority** • **Nature of indicator** (ideal: outcomes/impact) • **Relevance of the issue for development co-operation results frameworks** (ideal: very high) • **Inclusion** in **national development plans** and **development co-operation results frameworks** (ideal: very high) • **Possibility of data disaggregation** (ideal: high) • **Communication effectiveness** (ideal: very effective)
Coherence	Does the SDG indicator align with other interventions or policies, both within the programme and externally? This is where the number of synergies the indicator has with other SDGs becomes important, and whether the complexity of an indicator (e.g. multi-layered, composite) can support coherence between economic, social and environmental factors.	• **Synergies with other SDGs** (ideal: more) • **Complexity** (ideal: comprehensively reflects the issue)
Effectiveness	Can the SDG indicator accurately measure the desired changes in the world? The complexity of the indicator, its communication effectiveness, and the type of change it signals can influence this.	• **Type of change** (ideal: absolute change) • **Level of control** (ideal: internal) • **Communication effectiveness** (ideal: very effective) • **Aggregability** for reporting (ideal: high)
Efficiency	This measures the cost-effectiveness of data collection and communication for the SDG indicator. Factors such as the number of available data sources, the frequency of data collection, and the level of data aggregation and disaggregation can be significant.	• **Data sources** (ideal: many available) • **Complexity** (ideal: low) • **Frequency of data collection** and **levels of data disaggregation** increase the cost of monitoring.

Criterion	Considerations	**Possible variables** (to assess the criterion)
Impact	Potential of the action to contribute to broader SDG achievements. Factors relevant for this criterion include whether the indicator reflects outcomes and impacts, the number of synergies the indicator has with other SDGs, whether it's a leading or lagging indicator, and whether the indicator is also driven by external factors.	• **Nature** (ideal: outcomes/impact) • **Synergies with other SDGs** (ideal: high number) • **Degree of influence** (internal or externally driven) • **Level of control** (Leading or lagging indicator)
Sustainability	Potential for the impact to continue after the action ends. The frequency of data collection signals the extent to which the indicator is a standard measure, and the indicator's typical inclusion in other plans and strategies can indicate its sustainability, as it links with broader development efforts in the same direction.	• **Frequency of data collection** (ideal: typically, data is frequently collected in many contexts) • **Inclusion** in **national development plans** and **development co-operation results frameworks** (ideal: very high)

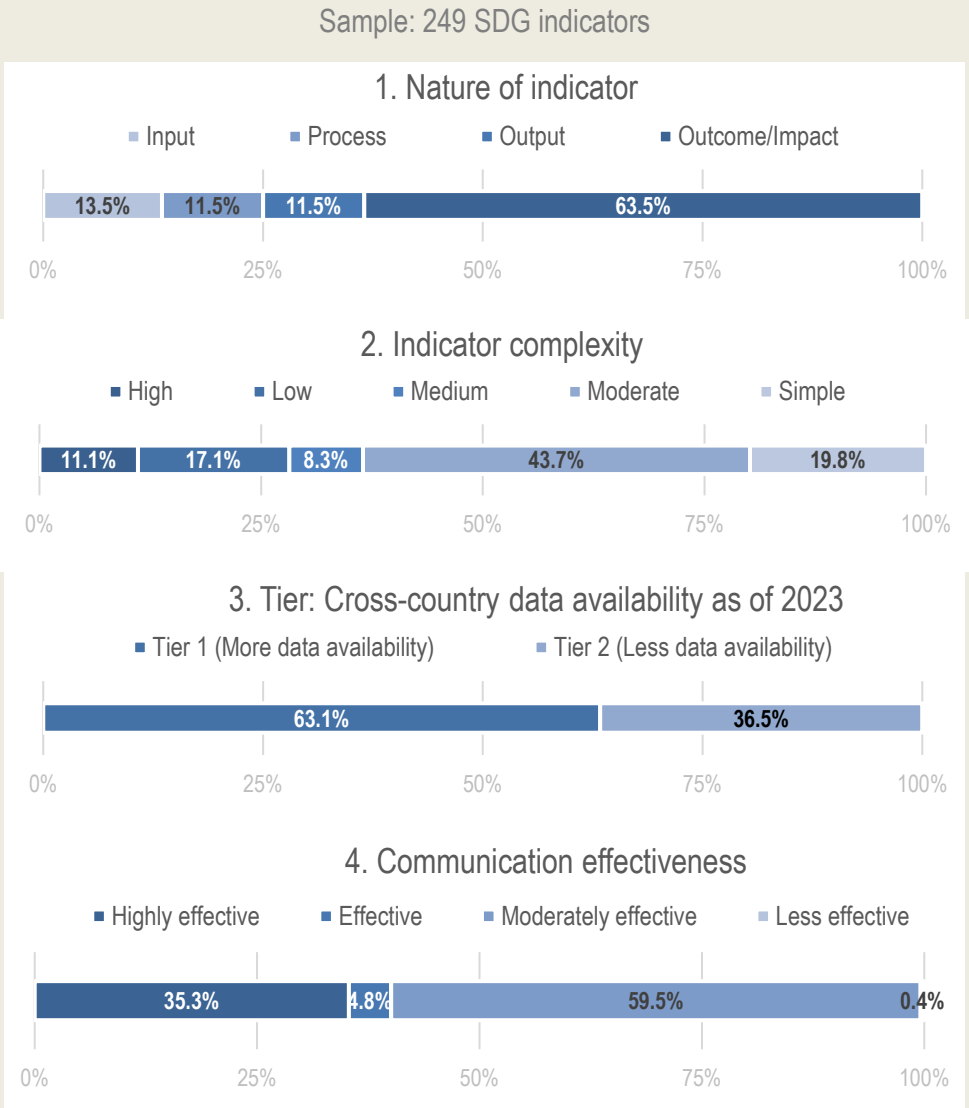
Source: Authors' own elaboration based on the assessment included in this electronic Annex. See discussion there on the assessment framework presented above. A preliminary assessment for each of the 249 SDG indicators is also included in the Annex.

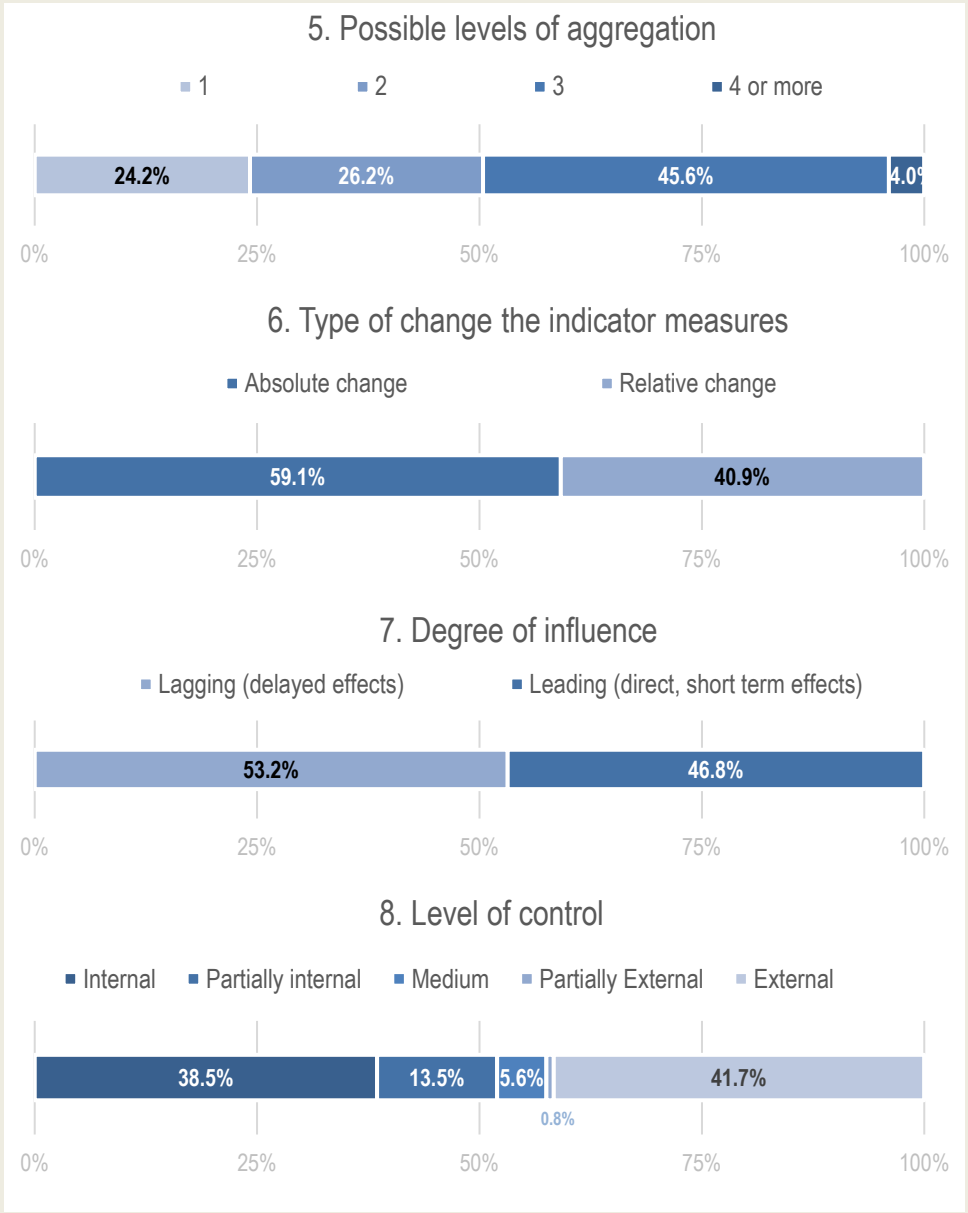
A guide to selecting SDG indicators

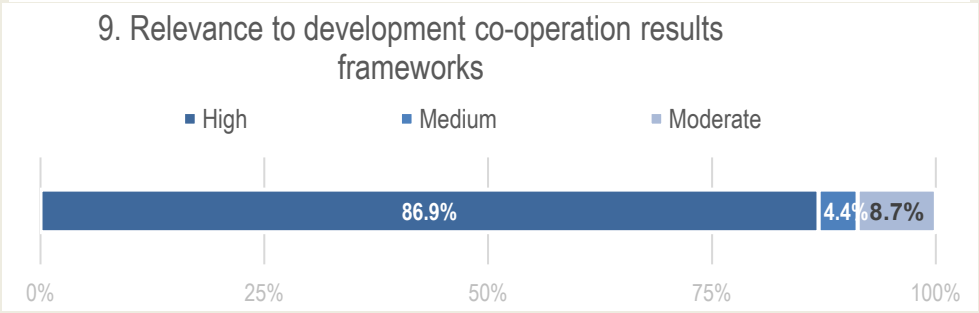
A thorough understanding of the characteristics of 249 SDG indicators, and clear criteria to consider in selecting them for use in results frameworks, can help ensuring that results frameworks produce strategically and contextually relevant information, do so in coherent, effective, and efficient manner, and they emphasise outcomes and impacts. It can also help anticipate additional investments needed for data collection for some, less widespread, SDG indicators.

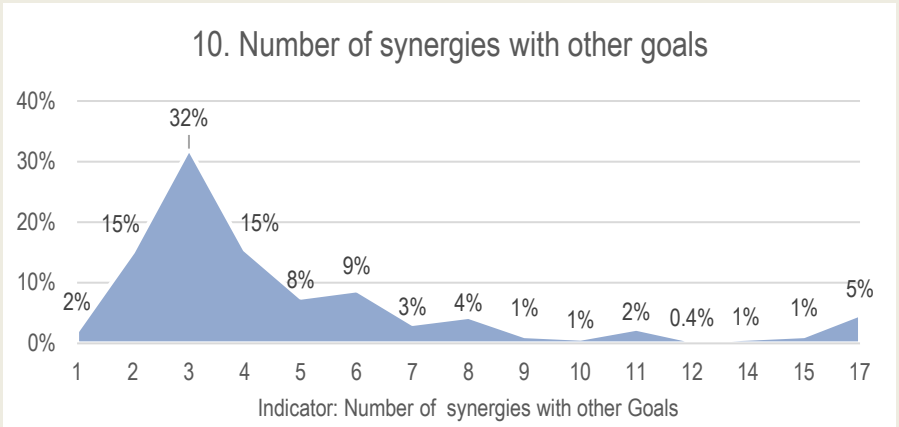
To guide your SDG indicator selection based on the evaluative criteria described above, please consult this annex, which includes explanations for the 13 assessment variables, and an indicator-by-indicator review. The dashboard below (Figure 1.2) provides an overview of how the 249 SDG indicators fare against the variable suggested in the previous table.

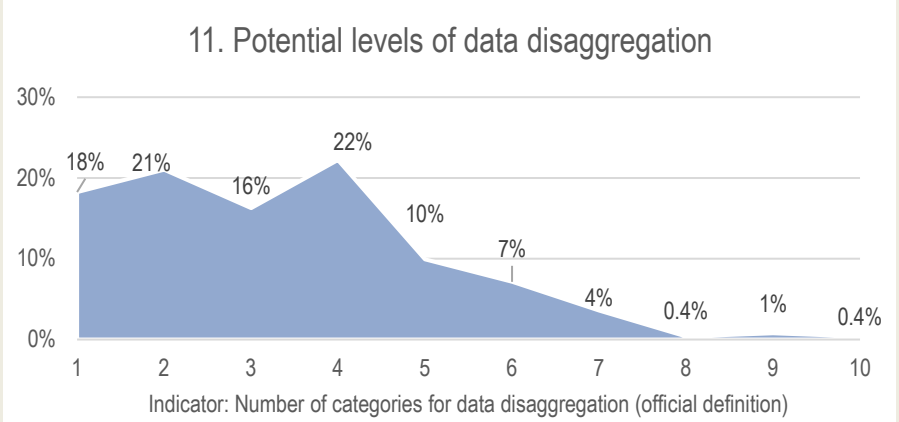
Figure 1.2. Dashboard: Assessment of the SDG framework

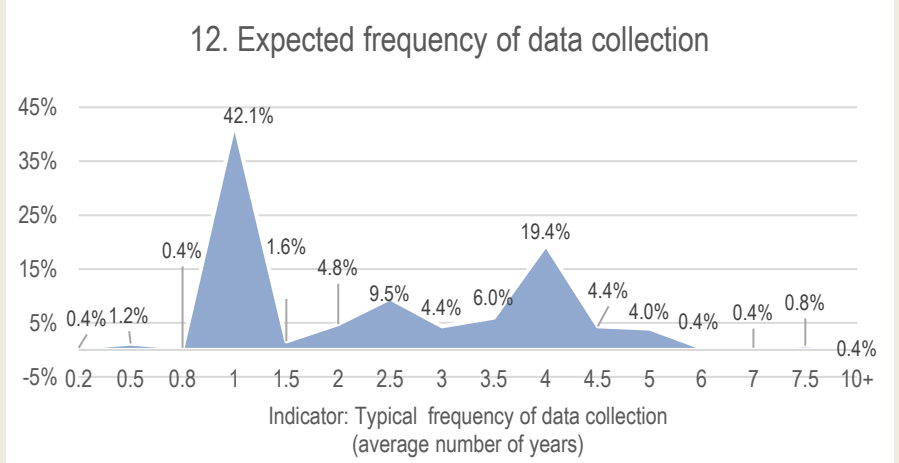


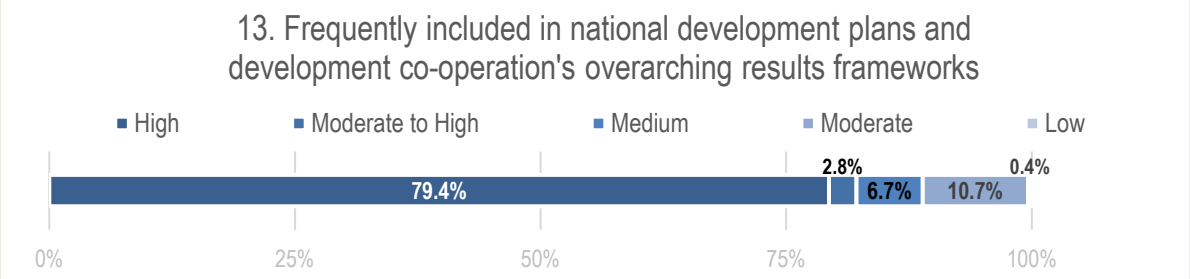

5. Possible levels of aggregation
1
2
3
4 or more
24.2%
26.2%
45.6%
4.0%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
6. Type of change the indicator measures
Absolute change
Relative change
59.1%
40.9%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
7. Degree of influence
Lagging (delayed effects)
Leading (direct, short term effects)
53.2%
46.8%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
8. Level of control
Internal
Partially internal
Medium
Partially External
External
38.5%
13.5%
5.6%
0.8%
41.7%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%


9. Relevance to development co-operation results frameworks
High
Medium
Moderate
86.9%
4.4%
8.7%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%


10. Number of synergies with other goals
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
32%
15%
15%
8%
9%
2%
3%
4%
1%
1%
2%
0.4%
1%
1%
5%
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
14
15
17
Indicator: Number of synergies with other Goals


11. Potential levels of data disaggregation
30%
20%
10%
0%
18%
21%
16%
22%
10%
7%
4%
0.4%
1%
0.4%
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Indicator: Number of categories for data disaggregation (official definition)


12. Expected frequency of data collection
45%
35%
25%
15%
5%
-5%
42.1%
19.4%
0.4%
1.2%
0.4%
1.6%
4.8%
9.5%
4.4%
6.0%
4.4%
4.0%
0.4%
0.4%
0.8%
0.4%
0.2
0.5
0.8
1
1.5
2
2.5
3
3.5
4
4.5
5
6
7
7.5
10+
Indicator: Typical frequency of data collection
(average number of years)


13. Frequently included in national development plans and development co-operation's overarching results frameworks
High
Moderate to High
Medium
Moderate
Low
79.4%
2.8%
6.7%
10.7%
0.4%
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%

Self-assessment questions

- Reflect on the language and approach your government or organisation uses in discussing the importance or **relevance of aligning to the SDG framework:**
  - Is it considered a **universal agenda** applicable to all countries, where the domestic and international dimensions shall be considered together? Is leadership on the driver's seat, or is it considered a more technical exercise?
  - To what extent your **organisational structure and ways of working** allow you to strategize, plan and deliver programmes and projects that simultaneously integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, **cross-sector approaches**, holistic approaches, etc? What are the key obstacles or hurdles?
  - Does your government or organisation **use the SDGs** as an anchor or frame to establish (co-financing, implementation) **partnerships** with other governments or organisations? If not through the SDGs, what other narrative or framework is being used to discuss sustainable development issues?
- If SDG indicators are being used in your strategies, programmes and projects, take a moment to reflect on the **approach** your government or organisation is currently using to **select SDG indicators:**
  - Are there **clear criteria** for indicator selection used across the institution?
  - What are the **dominant drivers**?
    - To what extent **data availability, political priorities**, **diagnostics** and/or **consultative processes** determine what gets measured in terms of SDG indicators?
    - At what **levels of results reporting** is the use of SDG indicators more common?
  - Are these SDG results being **monitored and reported** regularly? Is the reporting a standalone, **separate exercise**, or does it happen as part of overall **results reporting**? What are the key audiences or users for that information?

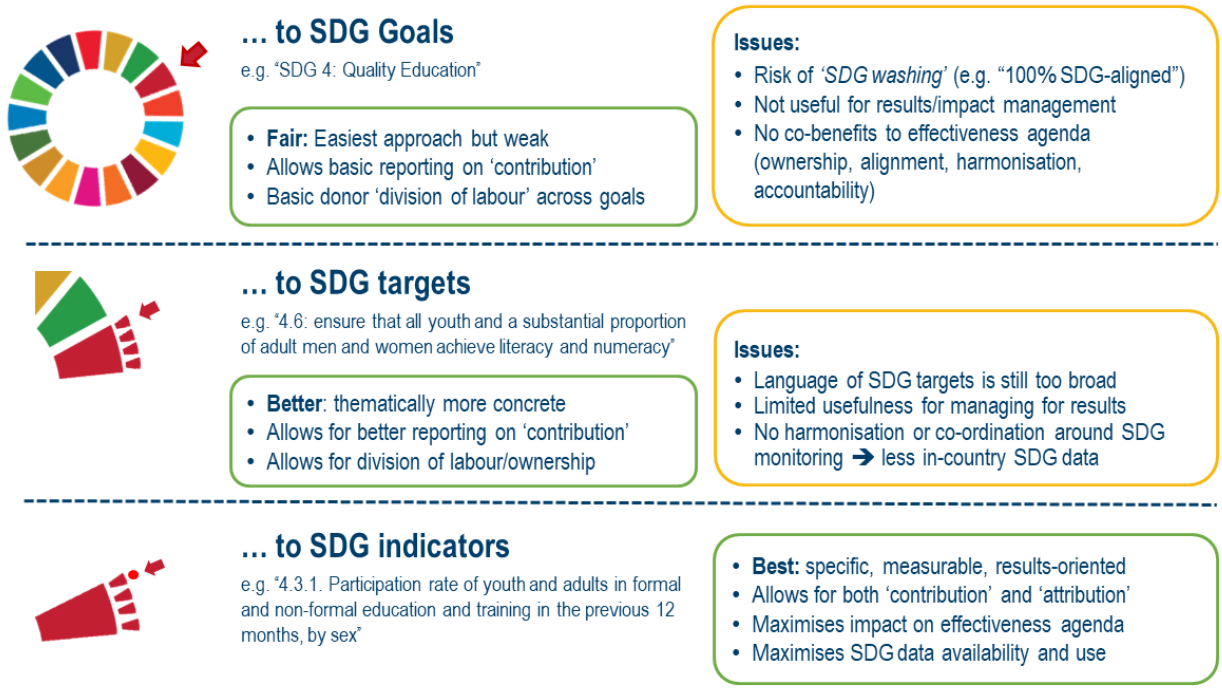
Measuring alignment of development efforts to the SDG framework

Measuring the percentage of SDG indicators (or similar indicators) used in results framework has become a standard practice in assessing the SDG orientation of results frameworks. This section presents a systematic approach on how to do so.

Depth of SDG alignment

SDG alignment can start at the level of *goals*, *targets* or *indicators*. Alignment to goals (considered *soft alignment*) is easier than aligning to targets and indicators. OECD research shows the costs and benefits of the three levels of SDG alignment, which Figure 1.3 summarises below.

Figure 1.3. Depth of alignment to the SDG framework: What do we mean?



Source: Authors' elaboration on the basis of (OECD, 2019[4]) and (OECD, 2021[5]).

A more nuanced way of assessing SDG alignment is to look at whether, in selecting SDG indicators, the official international definition and methodology for the indicator are used, or whether the indicators have been adjusted or a suitable alternative (i.e., a proxy indicator) replaces it:

- **Full alignment:** The SDG indicator follows the official definition and methodology
- **Partial alignment:** The SDG indicator closely follows the official definition or methodology, but it has been adjusted to refer to a sub-set of the target (e.g., a specific region, social group or industry).
- **Proxy indicator:** The indicator is different to the relevant SDG indicator, but it closely aligns with the associated SDG target.

These two steps for thinking about SDG alignment can help officials in charge of policy, strategy, programme or project design to monitor the degree of alignment to SDG results across their government or agency.

Status and prospects

By using the common SDG framework to its full potential, development actors can contribute to increased co-ordination and decreased fragmentation at the country level, enhanced synergies and maximised collective impact. The more the SDG indicators are used to measure the results of development interventions, the better data and evidence can be generated. Using the SDG indicators can enhance the availability of data for more informed decision-making.

Governments

Progressively, governments across the world have instituted mechanisms to monitor and report on SDG progress, while increasingly integrating elements of the SDG framework into their country planning documents and systems.

In practice, the process of establishing linkages between national or sector results frameworks and the SDGs has been non-linear, with three take-aways useful to note:

- Most countries had to **reconcile** competing global and regional frameworks (see section 1.2 above) with political priorities, and most national development plans tend to reflect a mix of intentions.
- Faced with **data constraints** or legacy indicators, countries developed national monitoring frameworks that include a mix of official SDG indicators and country-tailored alternatives (proxy indicators). That said, the share of official indicators used in practice has increased over time.
- Integrated **cross-sector approaches** were rare in national strategies developed between 2015 and 2019, but countries are increasingly acknowledging synergies, multipliers and trade-offs in their strategies and results frameworks. Experiences in integrated short-term planning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to this trend.

Overall, these national trends towards integrating sustainable development concerns enable, in turn, greater collective use of the SDG framework at lower levels of policymaking, planning, programming, partnerships and statistics (Figure 1.4).

International development partners

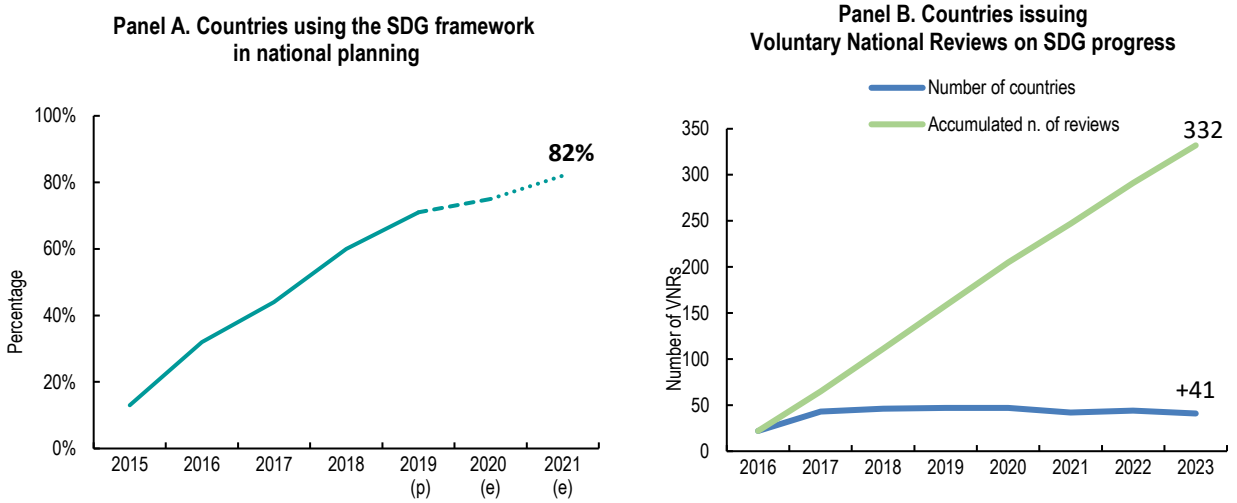
Among international development partners, more than half have set a corporate results framework that fully or partially aims to achieve SDG results. Use of the SDG framework for planning and measuring results at country level remains more limited, with only one third of development partners systematically or frequently using SDG indicators in their country-level results frameworks (OECD, 2021[1]).

Progress in embracing the SDG framework as a results framework has been slow but steady. Ensuring that the selection of indicators is harmonised with best practices is paramount for broader data availability and co-ordinated impact on sustainable development.

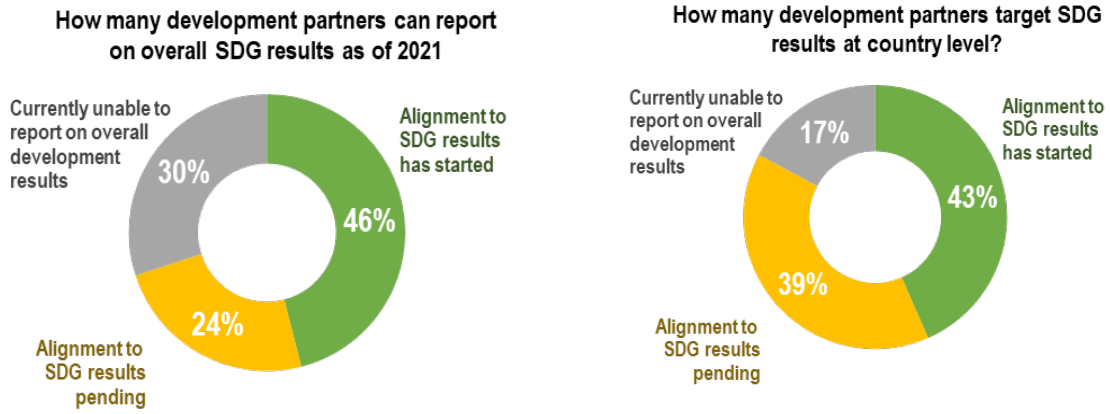
This OECD toolkit is a contribution in that direction.

Figure 1.4. Use of the SDG framework by countries and international development partners

Countries



International development partners



Note: Samples include, respectively, governments from UN member states, and 57 bilateral and multilateral development organisations, representing 97% of all official development financing reported to the OECD.
Source: Authors' calculations based on (GPEDC, 2023[6]) data, a sample review of new national development plans from 2019-21, (UN, 2023[7]) and (OECD, 2021[5]).

Self-assessment questions

- Reflect on the **depth of alignment to SDG results**:
  - How deeply are the SDGs embedded into your government's or institution's strategies and programmes? Is SDG integration done mostly at the level of goals, targets, or indicators?
  - Does your government or institution follow the official SDG definitions and methodologies when selecting indicators, or does it adapt or replace them with suitable proxies? Is the approach clear and understood by those in charge of applying it to the development of results frameworks?
  - Does the overall approach lead to any unintended consequence that could be addressed?
- Consider the prospects for further **SDG integration**:
  - If your government or organisation has initiated a process of integrating SDG priorities and indicators internally, what is **driving the pace** of SDG integration?
  - What are some key **achievements and challenges** your government or agency has faced in integrating the SDG framework into your national (or high-level, corporate) results frameworks? What about the level of integration downstream, into sectors, programmes or projects?
  - How does your institution **reconcile** other global and regional frameworks, and, with internal or context-specific political priorities in aligning with the SDGs? Is there a prioritisation exercise or conscious approach on how to proceed?
- Reflect on the potential to use **the SDG framework as a common standard** for results monitoring, internally and across development partners:
  - Are there mechanisms in place to encourage the **wider use of the SDG framework** at various levels of policymaking, planning, programming, partnerships, and statistics?
  - How is your institution **promoting cross-sector approaches** and acknowledging the synergies, multipliers, and trade-offs that exist in development, such as the ones that the different SDGs show?
  - How does your institution **harmonise its indicator selection** with best practices to ensure broader data availability and coordinated impact on sustainable development?

2. Designing overarching (country and corporate) results frameworks

Guiding Principle

Development organisations set for themselves clear expected results measured by indicators aligned to the SDGs, and design and apply flexibly sound methodologies at corporate, portfolio, country, sector, programme and project levels to achieve these results.

Guiding Principle 1, Managing for Sustainable Development Results

Development challenges have become increasingly complex and intertwined, and development finance is under pressure. More than ever, effective steering from the top of governments and development organisations is needed to ensure all efforts are internally and externally coherent, and lead to sustainable impact. However, despite progress, most governments and development organisations still struggle to manage for results at this level, or to sufficiently integrate sustainable development into their results frameworks.

Issues covered in this module

- A results framework is developed to reflect the overall strategy of the government/organisation
- Strategic planning is aligned to national/corporate objectives and the SDGs
- Overarching (country and corporate) results frameworks are developed with sustainable development in mind
- The indicator framework is aligned to the SDGs

2.1. A results framework is developed to reflect the overall strategy of the government/organisation

Why is this important?

Developing overarching results frameworks is crucial for both governments and development partners:

- For governments, results frameworks provide a roadmap to align policies and initiatives with national development goals. They offer a structured approach to identifying, prioritising and tracking the impact of interventions, thereby promoting transparency, accountability and resource

efficiency. These frameworks encourage evidence-based decision-making, leading to more effective, targeted and sustainable solutions for developmental challenges.

- For bilateral and multilateral development cooperation agencies, such frameworks are equally important. They not only facilitate alignment with countries' priorities, but also promote coherence and synergies within the complex web of international development efforts. Results frameworks help these agencies demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their aid, enhancing accountability to their stakeholders. Furthermore, they enable learning and improvement by providing valuable data on what does and does not work, ultimately contributing to the global knowledge base for effective development co-operation.

Introducing an overarching results framework has many proven benefits, but leadership may hesitate in order to avoid reputational risks associated with any potential shortfall. However, these overarching frameworks primarily serve as an opportunity to strengthen leadership credibility and promote a culture of transparency and accountability. First, they demonstrate a commitment to evidence-based decision-making, enhancing legitimacy by showcasing a strategic, disciplined approach to development. Second, they position leadership as proactive and responsive, willing to identify and address areas of improvement, thereby fostering trust among citizens and other stakeholders. Finally, they present an opportunity to celebrate successes and generate positive publicity. The adoption of an overarching results framework associated with a national development strategy or development co-operation policy signals a bold, forward-thinking approach to development that values learning and continuous improvement, ultimately leading to more impactful and sustainable outcomes that will be appreciated by the public and wider stakeholders alike.

Self-assessment questions

- Is there an **overarching strategy** in your government or organisation (such as a national development plan, a mid-term strategy or a corporate strategy)? If not, is there an alternative method for formulating medium-term strategic priorities?
- Does your current situation **allow leadership and management** to sufficiently access the relevant information on performance and results that they need for learning, decision-making, and internal and external accountability and communications?
- If there are information gaps, what are the **main challenges** that prevent addressing those gaps?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

Both governments and development partners shall:

- Establish a clear vision and objectives: Define the overarching goals and development priorities, ensuring alignment with national or organisational strategies.
  - **Avoid:** Setting overly ambitious or vague goals that could lead to confusion or lack of focus. Ensure the goals are realistic, clear and aligned with available resources.
- Engage stakeholders: Consult and involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including government departments, other development partners, civil society and private sector representatives, to ensure a collaborative approach and broad ownership.
  - **Avoid**: Be cautious of selective or tokenistic engagement, which could undermine the legitimacy of the process and lead to a lack of buy-in or ownership among key stakeholders.
- Develop an underlying logic for the framework, based on its intended use: Identify the outputs, outcomes and expected impacts (see the three-tier logic discussed in the **Introduction** for an

example). Consider including inputs and activities necessary to assess organisational performance and to achieve stated objectives. While establishing a clear cause-and-effect relationship between the elements in an overarching framework is more difficult, as these frameworks reflect complex and very diverse interventions across sectors, at a minimum, ensure that there is a logical connection between the indicators that are included.

  - **Avoid**: Resist the temptation to overcomplicate the framework with too many objectives or layers. It should be simple enough to facilitate understanding and use.

- Define performance indicators: Select relevant, measurable and meaningful indicators to track progress and assess the impact of interventions. Our research shows that the number of indicators in overarching frameworks increases for each order of magnitude of the related budget (15-30 for budgets under one billion USD, 35-75 for budgets below 10 billion, and between 75 and 200 for larger budgets, such as those of national governments or multilateral development banks).
  - **Avoid**: Beware of choosing too many indicators, or ones that are difficult to measure or do not provide meaningful information about progress and impact.
- Set targets and baselines: Establish realistic targets and baseline data to enable performance measurement and comparison over time.
  - **Avoid:** Setting arbitrary targets without considering baseline data, as this could lead to unrealistic expectations and discouragement.
- Ensure data quality: Develop robust data collection, management and analysis systems to ensure reliable, timely, and accurate information for decision-making.
  - **Avoid**: Be aware of potential biases or errors in data collection and analysis, which could undermine the credibility of the results and decisions based on them.
- Allocate resources: Allocate sufficient human, financial, and technical resources to support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the results framework.
  - **Avoid**: Resist underestimating the resources required for effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This could lead to overburdened staff, delayed activities or incomplete data.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation system: Develop a systematic process for tracking progress, assessing performance and capturing lessons learned, to inform decision-making and enable continuous improvement.
  - **Avoid**: Beware of treating this as a bureaucratic exercise rather than a valuable tool for learning and improvement. It should provide useful, actionable insights (see **Module 4**).
- Communicate results: Share progress and achievements with stakeholders and the public, promoting transparency, accountability, and learning.
  - **Avoid:** Sharing information selectively or in an overly technical manner. Ensure it is comprehensive, understandable and accessible to all stakeholders.
- Review and adapt: Regularly review the results framework and make necessary adjustments based on new data, changing circumstances or emerging lessons, to ensure continued effectiveness and relevance**.**
  - **Avoid**: Resist sticking rigidly to the original plan when evidence suggests a need for change. Flexibility and responsiveness to emerging lessons and changing circumstances are key to success.

Tips to go a step further

For most advanced governments and institutions, overarching results frameworks have become an instrument not just to track overall results, but to consolidate a process of organisational transformation that affects tangible and intangible elements. In particular, the introduction of these frameworks is used to foster six types of transformations:

Foster a culture of learning: The overarching framework, when supported and used by leadership to discuss progress, encourage a mindset that views failures and shortcomings not as pitfalls, but as opportunities for learning and improvement. For example, the MOPAN Assessment Report 2021 praised UNICEF for its "*continual learning*" approach to organisational development supported by a robust culture of results and a strong results-based management system in place.

Promote cross-sectoral and cross-agency co-ordination: Overarching frameworks create incentives to break internal and external barriers and ensure that all efforts are co-ordinated to avoid duplication, promote synergies and enhance impact. They can act as a coherent anchor to improve the division of labour within an organisation, or at country level. Rwanda's *Vision 2020 Umurenge Program*, for example, was lauded for its effective co-ordination among different government departments, international development partners and NGOs, enhancing efficiency and impact.

Use technology for data management and visualisation: As an extension to these frameworks, some institutions employ digital tools for more efficient data collection, analysis and visualisation, to facilitate decision-making and communication. The World Bank's Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) initiative uses technology extensively to manage and visualise data from its complex impact evaluations, improving accessibility and understanding of results.

Incorporate gender and social inclusion considerations: The overarching results framework can be used to reflect the needs and perspectives of all segments of the population, including women, youth, and marginalised groups, across all the actions of government or the development organisation. It not only adds a quantitative, monitorable aspect to the theme, but it raises its political importance internally. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy is a good example, with its results framework explicitly focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (see **Module 6**).

More advanced governments and development agencies are further leveraging their overarching results frameworks to increase agility, utility and capacity to navigate uncertainty by adopting adaptive management approaches and flexibility, utilising predictive analytics and scenario planning, integrating risk management mechanisms, investing in related capacity development across the organisation, promoting a culture of innovation and scaling, applying a systems perspective to developing this type of framework, and innovating on how they use these frameworks to strengthen accountability (e.g. to parliament) and communications (e.g. to the public) (see **Module 5**).

2.2. Strategic planning is aligned to national or corporate objectives and the SDGs

Overarching results frameworks are a critical tool to guide the investments of each development actor in a comprehensive way and offer a powerful instrument to mainstream sustainable development in policies and programmes. To that end, the frameworks need to reflect all dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated manner and harmonise how results are measured to better support collective efforts toward sustainable development.

Among other international frameworks of reference discussed in **Module 1**, the SDGs, universally adopted by all United Nations (UN) member states in 2015, offer a common platform that covers all three dimensions of development (economic, social, and environmental), with a set of commonly agreed goals, targets and robust indicators. Governments and their international development partners can draw on the SDG framework, as it provides a common language for sustainable development, helping to ensure that the efforts of all stakeholders are geared towards shared aspirations.

Why is this important?

Sound development planning is a prerequisite for positive impact on sustainable development:

- National development strategies can serve to highlight and prioritise development objectives for achieving the SDGs. They also serve as a rallying point for ministries, subnational governments, domestic actors and international development partners, promoting coherence. Informed by an inclusive and results-oriented process, quality national development strategies lead to better development plans with lasting impact, while enhancing legitimacy, strengthening accountability and providing a commonality of purpose as well as a space for development actors to engage.
- Development co-operation policies and strategies used by development co-operation agencies can provide a medium-term vision on how the development co-operation portfolio will contribute to sustainable development. These should be geared towards clear intended results for sustainable development, such as the ones included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The strategic results framework should reflect the priorities in the medium-term vision. In this way, it can help reconcile domestic and international commitments, including the SDGs, and integrate social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development under a common umbrella. It should clearly articulate how other sector and thematic strategies will contribute to the expected results.

In setting overarching objectives for their development strategies, ministries and development co-operation institutions need to reconcile national and corporate objectives with global agenda goals. While there are various global or regional agendas that can be referred to, the SDGs stand out as a universal results framework that provides all development stakeholders with a common roadmap for collaborative and comprehensive approaches towards sustainable development (see **Module 1**).

Self-assessment questions

- Is the national development plan or corporate development co-operation strategy geared towards clear, intended results that reflect the SDGs?
- If not, what other reference frameworks are used to integrate sustainable development considerations?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

Governments:

- Foster an inclusive approach in defining national priorities for sustainable development. Engage national development actors – including civil society, private sector, parliamentarians and local governments in:
  - organising systematic opportunities to participate in planning dialogues,
  - communicating about these opportunities broadly and well in advance, and
  - addressing issues that may hinder inclusive participation, e.g. language, access to information and weak or missing representative institutions.
- Draw on evidence, learning from past strategies and considering emerging issues and opportunities, to set strategic priorities and inform the development of the national framework for sustainable development.
- Focus on sustainable development results:
  - Long-term sustainability: Define the long-term vision for national development with clear strategic priorities that are consistent with international agendas for sustainable development.
  - Outcome-orientation: Establish a country results framework that embeds sustainable development targets and indicators (reflecting outputs, outcomes and impacts) into national development planning documents.
  - Costing: Develop an integrated national financing framework (or similar instrument) that sets out how national development plans will be financed and implemented, and support the mobilisation and management of development resources.

Development partners:

- Set the long-term vision for the development co-operation programme, its medium-term strategic priorities and its intended results, in line with international and domestic commitments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Set out a clear approach to poverty reduction, reducing gender inequalities, and leaving no-one behind, and covering the three dimensions of economic, social, and environmental development.
- Define clear geographic, thematic, and sectoral priorities which draw on your strengths and are consistent with your policy commitments and strategic priorities.
- Develop a cross-government policy for humanitarian assistance, respecting international agreements, and anchored in relevant legislation and accompanied by a realistic implementation plan.
- Present a clear rationale for deciding where and how to engage at global, regional, and country levels - choosing appropriate channels, instruments and partners with which to engage.
- Allocate geographic, thematic, and sectoral resources – globally, regionally and at country level – in a way that is consistent with your policy commitments and strategic priorities.

Tips to go a step further

Use the SDGs as a critical lever to promote policy coherence for sustainable development: in paying greater attention to the impact that domestic policies have on other countries who are affected by those policy choices, policy coherence can increase the positive impacts of domestic policies, and avoid or mitigate the negative ones. The SDGs can enhance co-ordination mechanisms for identifying and managing transboundary impacts, supporting whole-of-government and whole-of-society commitments, and informing debate and follow-up at government level.

Governments:

- Enhance co-ordination within government to ensure all policies remain coherent with sustainable development objectives.
- Enable continuous debate, putting policy challenges on the agenda of dialogue with all stakeholders at country level, based on insights from quality reporting and assessments.

Development partners:

- Ensure readiness of line ministries, giving ministries clear responsibility, resources and capabilities to assess the direct and indirect effects of their policies on developing countries, combined with co-ordination and consultation mechanisms.
- Strengthen connections between development co-operation and other policies at home to promote integrated approaches to development co-operation at country level e.g. developing a cross-government policy framework enabling a coherent, whole-of-government approach to all development co-operation activities.

Resources

- Chimhowu A. O., Hulme, D. and Munro, L. T. (2019): The 'New' national development planning and global development goals: Processes and partnerships.
- UNDP (2016): Citizen Engagement in Public Service Delivery The Critical Role of Public Officials.
- World Bank (2011): Steps for designing a results-focused capacity development strategy : a primer for development practitioners based on the capacity development and results framework Washington, DC: World Bank.
- GPEDC (2022): Geneva 2022 Effective Development Co-operation Summit Declaration (paras 23 and 24 on inclusive and participatory action dialogues at country level)
- OECD/UNDP (2019): Making Development Cooperation More Effective: How Partner Countries are promoting effective partnerships; Part I of the Global Partnership 2019 Progress Report.
- OECD (2022): Understanding the spillovers and transboundary impact of public policies. Consult chapter 3 on the path to policy coherence explores the untapped potential of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in articulating transboundary effects of domestic policies on developing countries.
- OECD (2023): Using the SDG framework in results frameworks: An assessment and classification of SDG indicators.

2.3. Overarching (country and corporate) results frameworks are developed with sustainable development in mind

Why is this important?

A **country results framework** lays out the pathway of key deliverables leading to the achievement of the objectives set out in the national development strategy. It is also the basis upon which monitoring and evaluation systems will track progress. These frameworks include agreed objectives and set the milestones, targets and results indicators – at output, outcome and impact levels – to be met on the way to achieving them. Country results frameworks serve to focus development efforts on priority areas and ensure that success is defined by results achieved, rather than activities undertaken. Further, these frameworks bolster accountability among development practitioners and provide a basis for evidence-based dialogue on successes and challenges experienced in implementing development plans.

Development partners' corporate results frameworks are the overarching frameworks that guide their development co-operation strategies, in articulating the way the strategy is expected to achieve its objectives. Corporate results frameworks are translated into flexible country-level results frameworks. Sector or thematic results frameworks can also be developed to ensure clear objectives, targets and indicators are set to measure the results of their respective interventions, which are programmed and managed at corporate level.

Aligning country and corporate results frameworks to the SDGs is **the best way to ensure results frameworks are harmonised** and aligned to countries' development objectives.

Self-assessment questions

Governments

- Does the national development strategy or government strategic plan define development priorities, targets and associated results indicators? If targets and/or indicators are missing, can these be found in sector strategies and plans instead?
- At which level do these results frameworks refer to the SDGs (goals, targets, indicators)?

Development partners

- Does your organisation have a corporate results framework in place?
- To what extent does your results framework incorporate SDG results indicators?

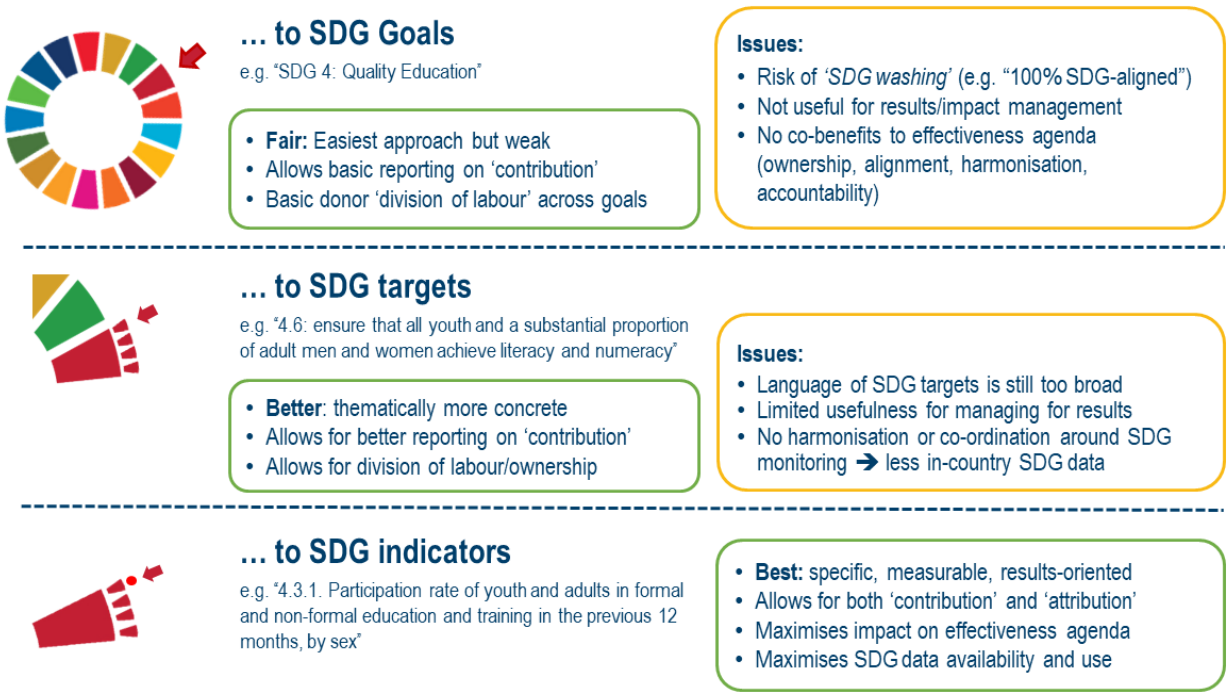
Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- While there is no standard format, frame the results framework in a way that illustrates how the strategies, plans, interventions, and resources will contribute to achieving the expected results, reflecting the causal relationships between each level of the results chain. See the Introduction.
- Describe underlying (explicit or implicit) assumptions about the causal links between inputs, activities and results, as well as evidence and risks for these elements of the results chain.
- Alongside the narrative and visualisation of the theory of change or logical model, design an indicator set or a performance measurement framework focusing on outcomes.
- To incorporate the SDG targets and indicators in your results frameworks, take a three-step approach as follows:

1) Recognise links to the 2030 agenda in your strategic framework, e.g. by mapping your strategic priorities to SDG targets (where appropriate).
2) In designing country and corporate results frameworks, identify most relevant SDG targets and indicators (see **Module 1**).
3) Prioritise SDG indicators that reflect outcomes or impacts.

Seek to align at the indicator level to maximise the potential of harmonised frameworks, rather than at goal or target level (Figure 2.1). Although aligning at the level of SDG indicators can be harder, it allows for the delivery of all the co-benefits that can stem from the four development effectiveness principles being implemented, contributing to SDG data availability as a public good, and collectively maximising the impact of development co-operation on achieving the SDGs.

Figure 2.1. Different levels of alignment to the SDG framework



Tips to go a step further:

- **Develop cross-sector approaches and include them in measurement, learning and reporting systems**. Many development actors face difficulties in using the SDGs to their full potential through cross-sector approaches. Most governments and development agencies do not make use of integrated methodologies that are more demanding in terms of co-ordination due to their complexity. Avoiding sector silos and mainstreaming cross-cutting issues remains challenging.
- **Apply system-thinking approaches**. This can be particularly useful in addressing complex crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The SDG framework offers a way to visualise the interconnectedness of the COVID-19 effects with other economic, social and environmental dimensions (avoiding sector-silo responses) so as to help countries prepare holistic responses to the triple health/economic/social crisis unleashed by such pandemics.

Good practice

An example of effective practices in designing overarching results frameworks:

Box 2.1. Finland's thematic theories of change for overall results management

Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has created thematic theories of change for its priority areas, defining its contribution to Agenda 2030, with each expected outcome or output result linked to specific SDG targets. The consultative and reflective process that Finland undertook involved understanding its leverage and sphere of influence; in particular, how Finland could, through its development co-operation modalities, support the specific goals of the 2030 Agenda. This involved examining questions such as how Finland could influence the way in which job creation could support the decent work agenda as defined in the SDGs. This exercise helped clarify Finland's specific contributions to the SDGs.

Finland's theories of change are interlinked with the SDGs in many ways. Each priority area's impact statement is connected to the specific SDG goal it is seen to contribute to. The outcome- and output-level result statements are also linked to the specific SDG targets to which they contribute. Moreover, the aggregate indicators developed on the basis of these theories of change are aligned with the SDGs and should be disaggregated according to sex, age and disability. An important assumption in taking this approach was that increased alignment of indicators with the SDGs would increase their usefulness. Linking the theories of change to the SDGs has also supported cross-sectoral approaches and identification of relevant SDG-aligned indicators.

Source: https://eba.se/en/reports/thematic-theories-of-change-contributing-to-the-agenda-2030/19919/

Resources

- OECD (2018): Development co-operation results for the 2030 Agenda: A guide to apply the Sustainable Development Goals, targets and indicators in results frameworks
- OECD (2022): Switzerland's system for measuring results of development co-operation
- Examples of corporate results frameworks: EU Results Framework (EURF); Global Europe Results Framework (GERF); Asian Development Bank Results framework 2019-24.
- OECD (2021): See how Finland uses thematic Theories of Change to promote cross-sectoral approaches and a visualisation of the interactions between SDGs (Box 2.1).
- OECD (2023): Using the SDG framework in results frameworks: An assessment and classification of SDG indicators.

2.4. The indicator framework is aligned to sustainable development

Why is this important?

The SDGs offer a menu that all actors can use for their results frameworks, selecting and applying SDG targets and indicators in accordance with their respective priorities. Using the SDG framework can therefore help to reduce the proliferation of indicators, minimise the risk of parallel and costly reporting mechanisms, and contribute to bridging data gaps. While the alignment process takes time due to measurement and organisational constraints, an increasing number of development actors include SDG indicators as they develop or refine their results frameworks.

Self-assessment question

What is the share of official SDG indicators in your overarching set of indicators, and is this proportion increasing?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- Identify the most relevant SDG indicators that fit with your goals, reflecting your objectives and sector/thematic priorities.
- Assess relevance and cost of SDG indicators, noting that data availability for a specific indicator may vary depending on countries. **Module 1** offers a series of criteria to assess the SDG indicators. An additional electronic annex based on relevant criteria for use.
- Use alternative or proxy indicators when SDG indicators are not suitable for the particular situation:
  - Alternative indicators should: i) be directly related to SDG indicators, even if introduces slight adaptations (*partially aligned or derived* indicators) to target a specific population or geography, or to incorporate an additional issue; or ii) clearly address an SDG target substantively, as a substitute to the official SDG indicator (*proxy* indicator).
  - **Avoid:** Using the level of SDG "goals" as the main reference point for SDG alignment. The Goals are formulated in very broad terms and alignment to the Goals may not significantly different than former classifications by sectors. The transformative potential of using the SDG framework, with its integration of the various dimensions of sustainable development and its interlinkages, is only clearly manifested at the level of targets and indicators (see Figure 2.1).
  - Give preference to indicators that are already commonly used by governments and other development partners, to avoid the proliferation of indicators and minimise the risk of parallel reporting mechanisms.
- Minimise the number of standard indicators that will be aggregated at the national or corporate level. This is important to avoid unnecessary and costly measurement requirements and focus on the quality of monitoring and evaluation. Alternatively, complement those standard indicator sets with a list of *recommended* indicators.
- Focus on outcome-level indicators. This is important to give flexibility in aligning to specific contexts and evolving situations. In addition to standard indicators, optional output-level indicators can be selected by country offices or line ministries based on the national context and their need for learning and managing programmes (see **Module 3**).
- Prevent measures from becoming targets. This is crucial for achieving desired outcomes. To achieve this, ensure a balance between the number and variety of indicators used in relation to the goals or targets they are designed to serve. Having too few indicators for a specific target can lead

to an over-emphasis on those indicators and an increased risk of redefining the target to align with the indicators, rather than the other way around. (Rakhyun, 2023[8])

- Provide precise indicator definition sheets and methodology notes for each standard indicator. This will facilitate aggregation at the corporate or national level.

Good practice

- The European Union's structure of the Global Europe Results Framework and annexed methodological notes.
- New Zealand's use of the SDGs to support a country-focused results approach.
- Switzerland's balance of context-specific and standard indicators.
- The Asian Development Bank's approach to cascading standard results indicators across the organisation.

Resources

- OECD (2023): Using the SDG framework in results frameworks: An assessment and classification of SDG indicators.
- Examples of indicator sets: UNICEF Update of the Integrated Results and Resources of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025; Global Europe Results Framework (GERF).
- UN (2023): List of SDG targets and indicators.
- UN (2023): Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators as of 31 March 2023.
- OECD (2018): The 2030 Agenda and Development Co-operation Results. See *List of outcome-oriented SDG targets* in Annex 2 and of *Means of Implementation SDG targets and indicators* are presented in Annex 4.
- Kim (2023): On the unintended, adverse effects of measurement (including the Goodhart's Law that every measure which becomes a target ceases to be a good measure), see Rakhyun E. Kim Augment the SDG indicator framework, Environmental Science and Policy, Volume 142, April 2023, pages 62-67
- *Forthcoming*: Towards a global database of indicators (see Box 2.2 below)

Box 2.2. Working towards a global indicator database

Many development organisations regularly produce lists and databanks of standard indicator sets (at corporate level, or for sectors, thematic initiatives, or specific countries/regions). Putting these indicator sets into a common, easily accessible bank will help stakeholders to identify the most typical ways of measuring certain results, as well as variations that may meet individual needs, and innovative ways that are being developed to measure less tangible results. In promoting the use of common indicators, such a database would facilitate harmonisation around results.

An analysis of 13 corporate and sector results frameworks and indicator sets of bilateral and multilateral organisations (AsDD, AfDB, EU, FAO, IaDB, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, USAID) provides key considerations for the building of a global indicator database. Despite various differences in terminology, presentation and definition of terms and calculations, commonalities across frameworks nevertheless offer a common basis for a global indicator databank which could provide names of indicators, measurement units, types of disaggregation and data sources for measurements. SDG-tagging could state the degree of connection with particular SDG indicators.

Detailed descriptions of indicators should include a definition of terms, level of disaggregation, methodology of calculation to provide available information in a standardised way, baselines, targets and means of verification. The frequency of use of each indicator should be specified. Similar but not identical indicators should be clustered, specifying whether they are official SDG indicators, derived indicators, aligned indicators or proxy indicators.

2.5. Summary checklist for designing effective overarching (country and corporate) results frameworks

- ✓ Do you have evidence-based, broadly owned and long-term **development priorities** with **clear overarching goals aligned with those priorities** and international commitments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
- ✓ Is there a **results framework aligned to the overarching goals** and explaining how specific outputs and outcomes will contribute to reaching those goals with underlying assumptions?
- ✓ Is there a **clear financing framework** with resources commensurate to the goals and a rationale for allocating those resources across regions, sectors and themes in a way that is consistent with policy commitments and long-term development priorities?
- ✓ Is there a select number of **relevant, measurable and meaningful indicators** with realistic targets and baseline data to track progress and assess the impact of interventions?
- ✓ Are you using **SDG indicators**, or otherwise are your indicators directly or closely linked to SDG indicators, and are they commonly used by governments and development partners?
- ✓ To what extent are you giving preference to **outcome-level indicators**?
- ✓ Is there a clear **rationale for identifying standard indicators** that will be aggregated at the national or corporate level, and are there precise indicator definition sheets and methodology notes for each standard indicator?
- ✓ Are you **planning to review and adapt the results framework** on a regular basis?

3. Designing programme- and project-level results frameworks

Guiding Principles

Development organisations set for themselves clear expected results […] and design and apply flexibly sound methodologies at corporate, portfolio, country, sector, programme and project levels to achieve these results.

At country level, development organisations align their indicator framework to [countries' own] results frameworks, prioritising national indicators that are aligned to the SDGs. They synchronise planning cycles with […] countries' own cycles and harmonise their respective results frameworks to minimise costs and avoid duplications.

Development organisations focus on achieving long-term outcomes rather than only on short-term deliverables. Depending on the circumstances, managers can adapt the deliverables and arrange resources as required to achieve the desired outcomes.

Guiding Principles 1, 2 and 3, Managing for Sustainable Development Results

Programme and project results frameworks are the main instruments for guiding implementation at country level. They need to rely on best practice in results framework design. They also need to ensure that all efforts within the organisation or government contribute to their strategic objectives, ensuring consistency across different organisational levels, sectors and initiatives.

Beyond this internal alignment, results frameworks can be used as anchors for more joined-up approaches across development stakeholders at country level. In aligning to countries' overarching results frameworks, harmonisation and co-ordination of development efforts can be fostered, efficient synergies built, consistent approaches maintained and costly overlaps between development interventions avoided.

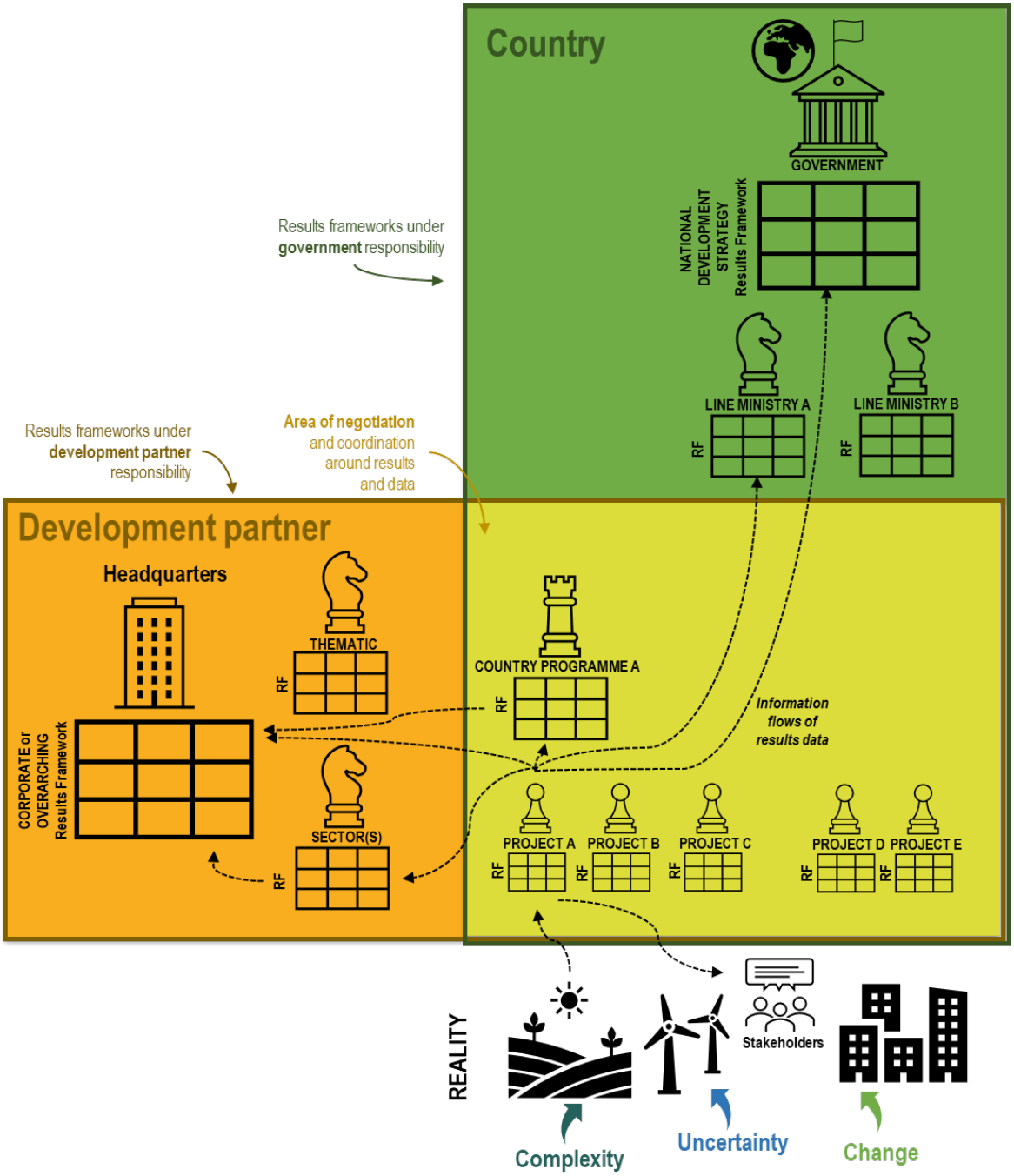
Flexible, agile organisations can more easily adapt to different contexts, partnerships and evolving situations. This requires allowing for the possibility to tailor results frameworks to each context. It also requires that the underlying logic and results frameworks can be adapted during implementation to manage evolving situations, while keeping the focus on outcomes rather than activities or outputs.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the balance needed in crafting effective results frameworks for programmes and projects. They must be well-designed and relevant to the development challenge in question, aligned with higher-level frameworks and partners' frameworks (vertical and horizontal *coherence*), and adaptable, with a focus on outcomes and impact. Striving for the progressive harmonisation of results frameworks used by governments and international partners is crucial to reconciling these often competing requirements in the medium term.

This module provides advice and options to assess and integrate the various needs in a practical manner.

Figure 3.1. Interlinkages between results frameworks at various levels

Potential flows of results information from the intervention to the strategic level



Note: **RF** = Results framework. For simplicity, the above figure does not include cross-sector information needs. However, addressing sustainable development issues comprehensively will usually require the involvement of various sectors and ministries (with various data needs).

Issues covered in this module

- Programme- and project-level results frameworks are well-designed
- Effective programme- and project-level results frameworks are linked to strategic objectives
- Effective programme- and project-level results frameworks foster ownership, harmonisation and co-ordination at country level
- Effective programme- and project-level results frameworks are flexible and fit to specific contexts and evolving situations

3.1. Programme- and project-level results frameworks are well-designed

Why is this important?

Well-designed results frameworks are essential beyond specific projects or programmes. They help align efforts with strategic goals, facilitate institutional learning, enhance communication of impact and inform decision-making, fostering overall coherence, effectiveness, and credibility of the government or development organisation. Studies estimate that the return to investing in good monitoring and evaluation approaches falls between US$ 4 and US$ 54 per dollar invested (Bamberger, Mackay and Ool, 2004[9]).

High-quality results frameworks across the portfolio of programmes and projects enable comprehensive reporting on overall results, facilitating better alignment, integration and synergies among diverse development efforts, thereby enhancing collective impact.

This is particularly important for international development partners, as they design results frameworks for over 80 percent of their development projects and for over 67 percent of their country programmes (OECD, n.d.[10]).

Self-assessment questions

- To what extent do you develop results frameworks at sector, programme and/or project levels?
- What strengths and weaknesses do those frameworks present?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- Ensure that the guidance, processes and templates for developing results frameworks for programmes and projects follow standard good practice (see an indicative checklist below).
  - **Avoid**: Excessive rigidity or burden in terms of requirements. Some interventions (e.g. small projects, locally-led interventions) and contexts (e.g. volatile, unpredictable situations) may require more flexible approaches (e.g. narratives, ex-post outcome harvesting).
- Adapt the guidance and formats to the specific stakeholders that will lead the development of the intervention and associated results frameworks.
- Facilitate guidance for indicator selection (see **Module 1**).
  - **Avoid:** Approaches that only consider internal indicator needs. Interventions need to be context-sensitive, and a review of key sector indicators in the country is important.
- Ensure that the process of approving programmes and projects includes a quality assurance mechanism or helpdesk function that can advise on results frameworks, as a backstop.

Checklist to consider when designing programme and project results frameworks

1. Situation Analysis and Needs Assessment
   a) Was a situation analysis conducted to understand the issue(s) and need(s) to be addressed?
   b) Is there a sound understanding of the local dynamics, including the roles of key players and other existing or planned interventions in the same area/sector?
   c) Is the value added of the programme/project clear and understood by partners and stakeholders?
2. Clear and Measurable Objective(s)
   a) Is the objective of the programme or project clear, concise and specific?
   b) Does the objective respond to the issues and needs identified in the situation analysis?
   c) Is the objective measurable?
   d) Is the objective aligned with the organisation's overall goals?
3. Stakeholder Engagement (of implementing partners and individuals/groups impacted by the project)
   a) Are the different groups of stakeholders identified and their roles and responsibilities defined?
   b) Are stakeholder engagement actions to design the intervention and identify the expected outcomes and indicators described in the programme or project document?
   c) Is there a plan for engaging with stakeholders throughout the programme/project lifecycle (i.e. in planning, monitoring, evaluation and decision-making)?
   d) Is the plan regularly updated to reflect changes in stakeholder needs or priorities?
4. Underlying Logic
   a) Does a logical framework ("*logframe*"), or an alternative method to formulate the intervention (e.g. theory of change), describe the activities, outputs and outcomes that will contribute to the targeted objective included in the document?
   b) Is the logframe clear, concise, well-structured and with realistic timeframes?
   c) Does the logframe show the causal relationships between the project's activities, outputs, outcomes and impact?
   d) Are the risks that the project might face and the assumptions underlying the expected change identified and prioritised?
5. Performance Indicators
   a) Are performance indicators specified in the programme or project document?
   b) Are (most of) the indicators specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound?
   c) Are (most of) the indicators aligned with the programme's or project's objectives and the logframe?
   d) Are there indicators referring to outputs and outcomes (vs only inputs or activities)?
   e) Are the data sources for each indicator specified?
6. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
   a) Is a monitoring and evaluation plan included in the programme or project document?
   b) Is the plan clear, concise and well-structured?
   c) Does the plan include the baseline and target values for key indicators to be able to measure change?
   d) Does the plan include the methods and tools for collecting data on the performance indicators?
   e) Does the plan provide for the conditions for success and risk factors to be monitored?

f) Does the plan specify who will collect the data, how often it will be collected, and how it will be analysed?

g) Are templates in place to collect the data and report progress towards results in a standard way to facilitate aggregation at the programme and organisational levels?

7. Risk Management

a) Is a risk management plan included in the document?

b) Does the plan include mitigation strategies for high-priority risks?

c) Is the plan regularly updated to reflect new risks or changes in risk levels?

8. Budget and Resources

a) Is a budget included in the document?

b) Is the budget realistic and based on sound assumptions?

c) Are the resources needed to implement the programme or project adequately identified and allocated?

9. Sustainability

a) Is sustainability considered in the design of the programme or project?

b) Is there a plan for ensuring the programme or project's sustainability beyond its completion?

c) Does the plan consider the programme or project's environmental, social, and economic impacts?

Resources

- World Bank (2012): Designing a Results Framework for Achieving Results: A How-to Guide
- Asian Development Bank (2020): Guidelines for Preparing a Design and Monitoring Framework
- USAID (2022): Developing Results Frameworks
- Swedish International Development Agency (2020). Results-Based Management in Contribution Management *[self-paced presentation]*
- Council of Europe (2022). Results-based Management: A Practical Guide.

3.2. Effective programme- and project-level results frameworks are linked to strategic objectives

Why is this important?

Each organisation has its own architecture to deliver on its strategy and reach its objectives, which can involve different levels of decision-making. As seen in Figure 3.1, governments implement their national development strategies and policy priorities through line ministries and specialised agencies, which often have their own (more detailed) sector policies, strategic plans and results frameworks. Many development partners also develop country strategies or partnership frameworks in their partner countries. In turn, many also develop sector or thematic strategies that cut across multiple countries. Individual projects either contribute directly to achieving the top-level objectives or, more frequently, do so indirectly, under the umbrella of sector, thematic or country programmes.

This interconnected ecosystem of strategies and frameworks varies from context to context and influences each other. However, to preserve a strategic direction and avoid fragmentation of efforts, it is important that programme- and project-level results frameworks remain coherent and geared towards achieving the overarching objectives set at the top level. This requires linking overarching priorities with portfolio results and aligning project-level results with strategic priorities.

Sector, thematic or country programmes can serve to facilitate the connection between discrete interventions and the overall objectives. These intermediate results frameworks can include objectives and indicators that reflect specific overarching goals and describe how a series of interventions, with specific outputs and outcomes, will contribute to reaching those objectives.

Self-assessment questions

- To what extent, and in which ways, do programmes and projects **align with the overall goals and** the (national or corporate) **results framework(s)**?
- How well do **sector, thematic or country programmes** connect **discrete interventions** and **overall objectives**? Are there any **areas of improvement** to be made in aligning project-level results with strategic priorities?
- Consider the mechanisms in place for **aggregating information** from multiple projects across your government or agency. Are **standard or mandatory results indicators** being used for aggregation and reporting? How effective and efficient are your **current guidelines** and **information-management systems** in facilitating this process? How could the monitoring and measuring of strategic results be improved?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- Clarify the **set of priorities** and (limited number of) **higher-level results frameworks** and **indicators** that shall serve as reference point to measure strategic priorities.
  - **Avoid**: Proliferation of very specific priorities over time due to changing leadership. Focus on formulating priorities that align with the overall mandate and longer-term development goals.
- Establish **protocols**, **formats** and **incentives** to align programmes and projects with the overarching priorities and results frameworks of the government or development organisation.
- Integrate **consensus development agendas**, such as the SDGs, to facilitate harmonisation with partners around planning, monitoring, financing and data.
- Review the **quality and coherence of your results frameworks** (use the assessment in Box 3.1).

Box 3.1. Exercise: Assessing the quality and coherence of your portfolio of results frameworks

Governments and development partners manage broad sets of programmes and projects across policy areas and geographies. The average quality of results frameworks may vary significantly across those portfolios. It is therefore advisable for strategic planning managers and portfolio managers to regularly carry out light assessments (every one to three years, depending on organisational needs), to understand the evolving strengths and challenges of current practices in developing results frameworks.

Portfolio managers at various levels can perform a combination of desk reviews and limited portfolio analyses to assess the present situation and identify the most pressing challenges and missing elements. The goal is to identify current gaps and propose incremental and feasible steps in the short- and medium-term to strengthen the effectiveness of results frameworks:

1. Identify the scope and hierarchy of your government's or organisation's stock of results frameworks

(a) Map out your stock of results frameworks

Collect and review the following documents:

- Strategic level:
  - *Overarching development policies and strategies* – even if these documents do not include proper results frameworks, they typically set out the objectives to achieve.
  - *Overall performance documents* used to report on the results of your portfolio or budget (e.g. annual reports, reports to parliament, Ministry of Finance, etc.), even if they may not include results information at the moment. This step helps visualise the existing internal and external mechanisms for accountability and communications.
- Intermediate level:
  - *Country strategies or partnership frameworks* [for development partners]: Collect existing country strategies or partnership framework documents for programme countries (where these have been developed).
  - *Sector strategies and thematic frameworks* [for governments and development partners]: Collect sector or thematic strategies and frameworks (where these have been developed).
- Individual intervention level:
  - Collect a variety of *project documents* your government or development organisation has developed relevant to the portfolio of review (for example: project documents describing objectives, activities, etc.; grant applications from external implementers; partnership documents in co-funded activities; etc.). If your portfolio of projects is large in number, you will need to select a representative sample. Make sure to *randomly* select between 35 and 40 project documents (so they include a variety of examples covering, e.g., different sectors with different qualities in intervention design and results frameworks).

    Organisational chart: A very detailed chart is desirable, so as to be able to better understand the hierarchy, accountability lines, division of labour and available support within the ministry and other stakeholders. The organisational chart is a powerful visual tool to understand the internal accountability and needs for results data within the organisation or ministry.

(b) Identify the flows of results information

Based on the documentation, review the needs for results data at the three levels specified above, and classify them based on how each organisational area will use them (i.e., accountability, communication, learning, decision-making). This rapid assessment will help you visualise your data needs and gaps.

2. Assess the strengths and weaknesses in the current stock of results frameworks

A functional system requires quality results frameworks that respond to institutional priorities. Perform a light review of the cascade of priorities within your organisation or government and compare these against the (sample of) project documents, following the checklist described above. You can use this assessment guide to perform this portfolio review or rely on your own internal criteria.

To carry out the assessment, use the above "checklist to consider when designing programme and project results frameworks", applying for each item the classification to summarise where your portfolio (as a whole) stands against benchmark practices. This will give you a clear view of strengths, and identify areas where more detailed guidance, capacity development or process re-engineering may help in improving the results-orientation of your portfolio.

3. Measure the level of alignment and coherence of results frameworks used at various levels

Finally, use the outputs produced in steps 1 and 2 to gauge the overall alignment of your portfolio of results frameworks to your strategic priorities. This can help in identifying gaps and addressing areas that require support, such as the development of standard indicators to facilitate anchoring to priorities.

Note: The above guidance is indicative. Governments and organisations should consider adjustments or extensions to this exercise on the basis of their specific protocols and knowledge needs. For continuous improvement, it is advisable to use this exercise to set a baseline initially, and to repeat the review with some regularity (every one to three years).

Good practice

- Through a cascading architecture approach, the **Asian Development Bank** (AsDB) is working to strengthen linkages between results "levels" – both cascading results downward and cascading results upward – where before there was a gap. To do this, AsDB is focusing on department-wide work plans, down to individual staff level, ensuring staff and department incentives are linked with corporate targets and goals. AsDB's information system is also being transformed to make it easier to store lessons, tacit knowledge, and key information learned by project teams that can be shared before end-of-project reports. AsDB has also reviewed country-level results frameworks and how to strengthen connections between these and corporate results.
- **UNESCO**'s approach to aggregating results from project to corporate programme and budget level is rooted in its operational principle: projects must anchor their project-specific results frameworks to corporate outcomes and internationally agreed development goals. Mechanisms for encouraging the use of results data for accountability, steering and learning include statutory reports (grouped currently in two categories that respectively focus on activities/outputs and on outcomes/impact), evaluations and UNESCO's governance structures (field and headquarters). UNESCO's six-month statutory reporting cycle enables overall governance to review and steer programmes, based on both progress towards results and budget execution.

Resources

- Canada (2022): Results-based management for international assistance programming at Global Affairs Canada: a How-to Guide
- Capacity4Dev (2023): Results and Indicators for Development
- World Bank (2023): Measuring and reporting results; Corporate Scorecard; the IDA Results Measurement System
- Compare various real-life approaches for project results frameworks: Denmark; Finland; Norway; Asian Development Bank; Inter-American Development Bank

3.3. Effective programme- and project-level results frameworks foster ownership, harmonisation and co-ordination at country level

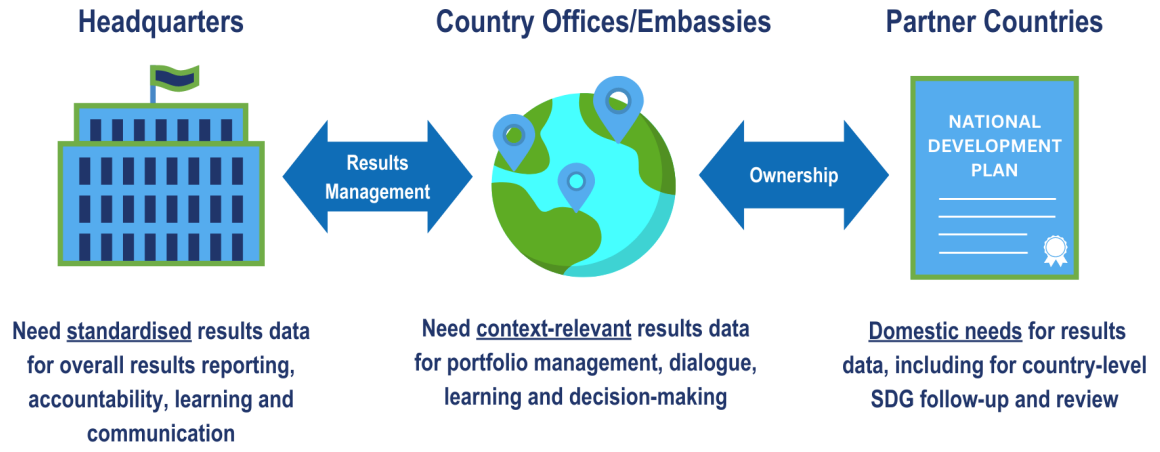
Why is this important?

Aligning to country results frameworks is a prerequisite for fostering ownership. Each country has primary responsibility for its economic and social development, and the 165 governments endorsing the 2011 Busan Partnership Agreement committed to relying on country-led results frameworks to guide their support to partner countries. Similarly, SDG target 17.15 calls on all development partners to respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development, with progress measured by the extent of use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools by international development partners (SDG indicator 17.15.1).

Action dialogues at country level are needed to build trust and foster co-ordinated engagement. While reaffirming the country ownership principle, the 2022 Geneva Summit Declaration stressed that "open, inclusive and participatory action dialogues at the country level are essential to build a common understanding and stronger partnerships, enabling each to make their best contribution to the national and other commonly agreed development goals".

Aligning to national results frameworks requires reconciling different agendas. Results frameworks serve different purposes and their use varies according to the stakeholder involved. Governments use data and results information to design and steer national strategies, co-ordinate the development interventions of all domestic and international actors and assess progress towards sustainable development. Development ministries and agencies at headquarters primarily use results information for domestic accountability and communication, while their country offices tend to use it to manage country programmes and projects (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. A balancing act: Different actors have distinctive needs for results data



For these actors, aligning to country-defined results while also contributing to their own organisation's results framework to meet their own needs requires a balanced approach. In practice, their corporate results frameworks must be designed in a way that enables their steering and accountability functions while at the same time leaving room for context-based approaches that can align to their partner countries' national objectives and results frameworks.

Self-assessment questions

- Reflect on the importance of **aligning to countries' results frameworks**. How does your organisation currently apply the principle of respecting each country's **policy space and leadership** in establishing policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development (SDG 17.15)? What **improvements** can be made to better align with the principles of country-led results frameworks?
- Given the importance of **open**, **inclusive and participatory action dialogues** at the country level for building common understanding and stronger partnerships, assess your organisation's current approach to such dialogues. What strategies or practices have been successful, and what areas could be improved or expanded upon? How does your organisation discuss and **negotiate results** to be pursued in country contexts where trust between partners is low?
- Consider the different **data needs** of various stakeholders, from governments to headquarters and country offices of development partners. How does your organisation **balance** these different needs, particularly when it comes to standardised results indicators and data for overall results reporting, versus context-relevant results data for policymaking, portfolio management and accountability? What strategies could be used to improve this balance, considering the specific context and needs of each stakeholder?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

Governments:

- Enable greater development partner alignment with the country's results frameworks and data, by clarifying **responsibilities** in national planning and monitoring (where needed), and by promoting **sector and subnational alignment** (coherence) with national priorities and frameworks.

- Strive for **harmonisation** around a **core set of development indicators**, in liaison with centre-of-government institutions and national statistical offices, and **develop public data platforms** that are user-friendly and facilitate timely and reliable access to disaggregated data.
- Review and update **development co-operation frameworks**. Governments should review their country's development co-operation architecture, and key policies and frameworks guiding co-operation should be updated accordingly. This ensures that they remain relevant and useful amid the countries' changing context, evolving needs, and lessons learned.
  - **Avoid**: Developing new frameworks without sufficient consultation and buy-in from domestic stakeholders.

Development partners:

- Build **flexibility** into **corporate results frameworks** and other higher-level frameworks so they can leave country managers scope for alignment at country level. Among others:
  - Include a **mix of standard and optional indicators** in the corporate set of indicators:
    - Limit the number of standard indicators that are mandatory or aggregated across the organisation to meet headquarters' needs, and
    - Give country offices the possibility to identify or select optional indicators based on the national context, the need to align to countries' results frameworks, and country office needs for results information for learning and managing the country programme.
  - Review the current stock of **prioritised national and sector results indicators** and strive to use the same indicator formulation to measure outcomes and impacts. This step will contribute to data harmonisation at country level.
  - Make your **results frameworks public**, in particular to other development partners and country stakeholders. This will help promote harmonisation and convergence around similar results.

Both:

- Promote **inclusive planning** and **consensus building**. Both governments and development partners should ensure that planning processes are inclusive, and that they work towards building consensus on development targets and indicators. This promotes mutual accountability, shared responsibility, and more effective co-operation.
- Enhance the quality and results orientation of existing **co-ordination mechanisms**. Strengthen sectoral and multi-sectoral coordination and coherence at all levels.
  - **Avoid**: The mechanisms should go beyond mere information sharing and facilitate substantive dialogue around development needs, intended results, and collective decision-making.
- Strengthen the **link between results planning and financing**. Governments and development partners should work to increase transparency in funding mechanisms (budget allocations and international development finance) and shift towards results-based financing that aligns with the countries' development priorities and intended results.

Good practice

The below is an example of a good practice for designing programme- and project-level results frameworks:.

Box 3.2. Switzerland's system for measuring impact

Switzerland has developed a comprehensive system for measuring the impact of its international co-operation. Its results framework includes a menu of standardised outcome and output indicators to choose from. They contribute both to the strategy's objectives and to SDG targets, and they are standardised for all priority themes. Whenever feasible, SDG indicators are selected as standard. Switzerland maintains the flexibility to choose a maximum of 50% of context-specific indicators which are not selected from the list of standard indicators.

Source: Switzerland's system for measuring results of development co-operation

Resources

- OECD (2023): Achieving SDG Results in Development Co-operation: A Comparative Study
- Dunning, C., Rose, S. and McGillem, C (2017): Implementing Ownership at USAID and MCC: A US Agency-Level Perspective, Centre for Global Development Policy Paper7
- UNDCF (2016): Addressing changes and challenges in monitoring and review of development co-operation

3.4. Effective programme- and project-level results frameworks are flexible and fit to specific contexts and evolving situations

Why is this important?

Making good use of data and results information to manage programmes and projects requires delegating authority to field managers. There is a strong correlation between the degree of responsibility given to managers at the field level and the use of results information for decision-making and learning at country level.[1] The Guiding Principle 2 for Managing for Sustainable Development Results ("Adapt to context") calls for development organisations to provide managers with the authority and flexibility to tailor the management approach, depending on the type of engagement and local context, and to be flexible enough to adjust to rapidly evolving situations, based on evidence-monitoring and other sources of information. Depending on the circumstances, managers need to be able to adapt deliverables and arrange resources as required to achieve desired outcomes.

Self-assessment question

To what extent can managers: i) tailor their approaches to each specific context when designing a programme or a project, and ii) adjust the path of an ongoing programme or project in light of changing local contexts and results information to ensure the expected outcomes are met?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- Provide guidance and encourage managers to:
  - conduct quality context analysis and keep track of local dynamics and needs.
  - identify and monitor the conditions for success (and/or assumptions) and risk factors in achieving the intended outcomes.
- Make it explicit to managers and partners that, in implementing programmes and projects, they should focus on achieving long-term outcomes rather than on delivering short-term outputs only.
- Provide managers with sufficient flexibility to tailor their approaches and processes to each specific context when designing programmes and projects.
- Empower programme and project managers to adjust the path of a project during its implementation in light of changing local contexts and results information to ensure the expected outcomes are met.
- Resist the tendency to impose tight controls and a focus on reaching pre-set measurable targets. This can prevent staff from using their own skills, knowledge and creativity to solve problems in ways that maximise the impact of the programme/project.
- Balance the risks of giving staff more autonomy with providing appropriate training and incentives and supporting appropriate capacities to work adaptively and to develop and use appropriate results and monitoring frameworks for this.
  - **Avoid:** Not addressing symptoms of an organisational culture that (formally or informally) discourages managers and staff from adapting plans and projects. Even when guidelines and processes may allow for review and course correction, an excessive institutional focus on reporting on activities and on delivering as planned (for fiduciary and auditing purposes, for example) tends to create risk aversion and disincentives to alter the original plans even when the intervention is not likely to deliver the expected outcomes without significant adjustments.

[1] OECD (2021). A Baseline survey of the Guiding Principles on Managing for Sustainable Development Results

Good practice

Below is an example of a good practice for designing programme- and project-level results frameworks:

Box 3.3. Adaptive theories of change

Encouraging more 'adaptive theories of change' to support ongoing decision-making during implementation

As a flexible tool to think about and plan for results, theories of change (ToC) have become a popular innovation in development practice. They reflect the way the intervention is expected to achieve (or achieves) change. The ToC represents how people understand change to occur in a given context, including explicit (or implicit) assumptions about the causal links between inputs, activities and results – often also including evidence and risks for these elements of the results chain.

More recently, the emphasis has been placed on an ongoing review and adjustment of theories of change as programmes and projects confront reality, learn from, and adapt to it. Some international development partners (such as Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States) have developed guidance for more adaptive theories of change, which measure both attainment of a core set of benchmark results and more intermediate measures of progress. For instance, USAID's 'complexity-aware theories of change' acknowledge uncertainty and assumptions at the start and establish a robust monitoring framework and plan to adapt. These organisations support and encourage specific partners to conduct regular review or 'strategy testing' sessions. These should be structured processes, with regular review points identified in advance, where evidence and data on progress are examined and any actions or changes needed identified and then acted upon. Other methods seen as useful for supporting ongoing decision-making during implementation include outcome-mapping, developmental evaluation or forms of outcome-harvesting or process-tracing, among others.

Resources

- **USAID's Collaborate, Learn and Adapt (CLA) framework** demonstrates how empowering staff to work adaptively requires work both on the enabling environment (including culture, internal processes, resourcing) and on individual staff's capacities to collaborate, learn and adapt throughout a programme cycle. To try and embed CLA within the organisation, USAID made it a required part of the programme cycle and developed a range of CLA-specific training and tools including:
  - Knowing When to Adapt – A Decision Tree to help staff resolve challenges in programming and think through when to adapt and on what basis those decisions will be made.
  - Pivot Log Template – a tool to track significant changes made in an activity or project and the reasoning behind them.
  - A CLA framework and maturity tool – which offers examples of what CLA looks like at different stages of maturity (from not-yet-present to fully institutionalised) and can be used by staff to assess current capacities and practices, and plan which areas need improvement and where to best target training and support.
- ODI (2019): Making adaptive rigour work: principles and practices for strengthening MEL for adaptive management.

- Rogers, P., and Macfarlan, A. (2020): An Overview of Monitoring and Evaluation for Adaptive Management, DFAT Monitoring and Evaluation for Adaptive Management Working Paper Series Number 1 and What is adaptive management and how does it work? DFAT Monitoring and Evaluation for Adaptive Management Working Paper Series Number 2.

3.5. Summary checklist for designing programme- and project-level results frameworks

- ✓ Are clear protocols, formats and incentives established to align programmes and projects with the overarching priorities and results frameworks of your organisation?
- ✓ Is there guidance and a quality assurance mechanism in place to help programme and project managers design results frameworks and select indicators?
- ✓ Does this guidance explicitly encourage programme and project managers and partners to focus on achieving long-term outcomes rather than on delivering short-term outputs only?
- ✓ Are the programme and project managers and their partners receiving appropriate training and incentives to work adaptively and to develop and use appropriate results and monitoring frameworks?
- ✓ Is there flexibility for programme and project managers to tailor their approaches and processes to each specific context when designing programmes and projects?
- ✓ At country level:
    - Is there a development co-operation framework enabling greater development partner alignment to national priorities and results frameworks?
    - Are the funding mechanisms transparent and is the budget linked to the development priorities and intended results?
    - Is the contextual analysis keeping track of local dynamics and needs?
    - Can programme and project managers choose context-specific indicators which are not selected from the list of standard indicators, and can be used to harmonise around a core set of development indicators?
    - Are the existing national and sector results indicators used by default?
    - Are your results frameworks public?

4. Strengthening monitoring systems

Guiding principles

Development organisations strengthen and maximise use of partner countries' monitoring and statistical systems, enhancing national capacity to plan and develop results frameworks as well as to produce and analyse data, including disaggregated data to capture results related to populations left behind.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are set up to produce credible quantitative and qualitative evidence that meets the needs and capacities of the development organisation and its partners.

Guiding Principles 3 and 6, Managing for Sustainable Development Results

Monitoring and evaluation are vital sources of evidence and data. Timely, complete and reliable data are essential, not only for guiding implementation at project level, but also for designing policies, informing strategic programming, fostering institutional learning, and reporting on progress towards achieving the SDGs. Credible quantitative and qualitative evidence also supports country ownership, transparency, mutual accountability and inclusive partnerships. Crises show the importance of getting timely, secure and disaggregated data to guide the response effectively. Yet, at the same time, they risk provoking disruptions to monitoring and reporting capacity, calling for innovative approaches such as remote monitoring.

Major opportunities are arising with the data revolution. Still, the continued scarcity of solid, objective and disaggregated data and statistics in countries continues to pose a significant risk to delivering Agenda 2030. Many countries continue to lack data systems that are fit for policymaking and accountability to the people. Furthermore, statistical and monitoring systems of partner countries are underutilised by development organisations.

This requires development organisations to strengthen efforts to establish agile monitoring and evaluation systems that are not only fit for their needs and those of their partners, but are also able to connect and draw on partner-country systems and data, and to harness digitalisation. In addition to using country systems and data, the GPEDC Geneva Summit Declaration calls development partners to support countries' national statistical and information management systems, including in their digital transformation, and their ability to improve data quality and disaggregation, and to strengthen their capacity in the collection and processing of information, data management and use for statistics in development.

Issues covered in this module

- Monitoring and evaluation systems are fit for purpose
- Countries' monitoring and statistical systems are strengthened and used effectively
- Both quantitative and qualitative information is collected

4.1. Monitoring and evaluation systems are fit for purpose

Why is this important?

Fit-for-purpose monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems provide management and their partners with credible quantitative and qualitative evidence that is vital to steer, learn, report and communicate on development efforts.

- Monitoring helps to guide project implementation towards the expected results, providing indications of implementation progress and other important context-related information. It is a continuing process organised by the project manager that involves the systematic collection of data.
- Evaluation provides an objective assessment of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of an intervention. It happens at a given time during the course of or at the end of an intervention.

Project monitoring requires that data be collected at regular intervals. Data is usually collected by staff working on the ground and using paper or spreadsheets. Two interconnected evolutions are taking place: i) remote monitoring approaches, building on experience working in crisis situations (such as Covid-19 or conflict-sensitive contexts), and digitalisation, eased by increasing internet connectivity and new IT tools. Each comes with specific opportunities and challenges.

Monitoring remotely

Remote monitoring is in line with recent localisation trends emphasising the need to empower local partners. Distant monitoring methods used in conflict-sensitive contexts were extended during the COVID-19 pandemic, when monitoring and reporting capacity was disrupted, with staff having difficulties accessing project implementation sites and interviewing stakeholders.

Ensuring the quality of data shared by partners requires specific measures. This includes developing clear guidelines setting reasonable monitoring standards. It also calls for balancing the use of digital technologies with other data collection methods. This might be needed to reach the marginalised and most vulnerable people who do not use online services due to lack of network infrastructure, lack of affordable internet service and devices, and/or gaps in skills and ability.

Harnessing digitalisation

Digitalisation offers many benefits to development organisations' leadership, staff and partners. For senior management, benefits include the ability to quickly view and communicate progress, with more efficient M&E and reporting processes. For staff and partners, the benefits may include the ability to access and analyse data reported in the system by themselves and others.

Still, many development organisations are struggling to develop adequate information systems. Even sophisticated digitalisation tools can be difficult to implement and require significant time and resources to set up properly. Digitalisation efforts often require a change from "business as usual" information-sharing processes. It also involves significant up-front and ongoing financial and human-resource investments. For this reason, dedicated attention is needed to gain staff and management buy-in for new processes, and to communicate new processes to partners.

Specific consideration should be given as to how to handle qualitative information. While there are interesting opportunities to use machine-learning and artificial intelligence to process qualitative data, these innovations should be balanced with a human-centred approach that is able not only to look back at what has already been done, but also to look towards the future.

Self-assessment questions

Are your monitoring and evaluation systems set up to produce **credible quantitative and qualitative evidence**? Are the systems **adequately resourced**? In the list below, consider which priority actions are needed to ensure your system meets your needs and capacities and those of your partners.

To what extent does your **information system** support the collection, aggregation, analysis and sharing of results information? Is your **system digitalised** in a way that meets your needs while ensuring connectivity with the systems of your partners?

Do you have experience with **remote monitoring**? If so, what worked well and what needs to be further developed to ensure that quality and comprehensive information on programme implementation is delivered on time (e.g. guidelines, training, IT equipment)?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

Monitoring systems

- Design monitoring plans associated with programmes and projects in ways that specify the frequency, scope and intended use of the monitoring data, i.e., the elements that should be monitored regularly to help make informed decisions. These elements relate to:
  - *Time*: are the activities delivered on time?
  - *Cost*: is the budget spent according to plan?
  - *Scope*: do the actions follow the plan?
  - *Quality*: are the outputs being delivered with the expected quality?
  - *Human resources*: are staff performing their tasks as expected? Is the team working efficiently?
  - *Context*: are risks and opportunities arising?
  - *Use*: are the intended uses of results data clear and spelled out?
- Align data collection tools to the results framework: monitoring reports are done by comparing programme and project achievements against expected results, timelines and costs.
- Tailor data collection methods to each context. In some contexts, using non-digitalised collection methods is needed to reach those furthest behind. In others, qualitative or remote methods might be more fitting.
- Where it exists, use the organisation's digitalised information systems for reporting data at the country or programme level. This will help aggregate data and therefore facilitate its use in centralised systems.
  - **Avoid:** Ignoring standard practices for collecting similar data in the country or territory of interest. Are other government entities or partners already collecting equivalent data? Can

these processes be synchronised or harmonised to increase the quality, depth and sustainability of data collection in that particular context.

Digitalisation/Information systems

- Secure internal buy-in, communicating on the benefits of digitalisation, consulting broadly internally and/or making it a high-level priority.
- Take an iterative approach that seeks to achieve progress through gradual change and feedback. This can involve piloting new approaches before expanding their use or progressively increasing the number of projects captured in the information system.
- Use the digitalisation process to reflect on and clarify what information is actually essential, seizing the opportunity to rationalise what elements to capture and how.
- Provide appropriate training to help ensure the success of new digital tools.
- Select systems that are manageable, adaptable, and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they still fit the needs of their users.

Tips to go a step further

Monitoring in crisis situations: Remote methods for data monitoring using telephone, emails (for documented evidence) and (online) survey tools may be required in conflict situations and other crises which limit access to key stakeholders. Specific accompanying measures are needed.

- Simplify results monitoring and add flexibility in deadlines as a short-term response (e.g. keeping financial reporting while adjourning 'narrative' results reporting requirements).
- Draft a plan on how to collect data when travel is restricted. This can include:
  - collecting contact details
  - setting up digital training methods to instruct local data collectors on efficient data collection practices
  - planning regular data discussions to verify the accuracy of the data.
- Use larger samples when relying on digital data collection methods given that higher non-response rates can be expected. Concerns related to data protection favour using appropriate digital technologies, such as secure mobile applications.
- Triangulate information. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data from various sources and using diverse methods is useful to get a comprehensive and objective picture.
  - Complement quantitative data, especially that collected via digital methods, with additional data collection methods and qualitative information. This is needed to overcome reporting gaps and get the views of marginalised groups such as the elderly, poor or illiterate, as well as, in some cultures, women.
  - Check data provided by partners and use third-party monitoring whenever possible to reduce reporting bias**.** This can be done through citizen journalists and peer data collection, using existing relations with communities, or relying on secondary sources provided by GPS, satellite imagery, photos and videos. Reducing reporting bias also requires using female surveyors to speak to women.
- Develop risk assessments and mitigation plans This is needed to ensure the safe involvement of local partners. The mitigation plan should identify alternative data sources to replace or

complement the primary data source. It should also include a remote verification plan listing specific tasks, documentation and possibly remote training options for staff so that the data collected meets the quality agreed with partners.

Evaluation: for specific information and guidance on evaluation, consult the six DAC evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – and the two principles for applying those criteria here. These criteria provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of an intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project or activity). They serve as the basis upon which evaluative judgements are made. Broader information on evaluation systems is available on the EvalNet website. See also Table 1.2 for insights on how to assess SDG indicators with an evaluative eye.

Good practices

Digitalisation, information systems and artificial intelligence

Investing in digital systems that support the identification, management and reporting of results data has been a recognised gap and a priority for governments and international development partners.

Several development organisations have used a phased approach to secure staff and implementing-partner buy-in when upgrading their information system or transitioning to a new information platform. In the case of the European Union, increasing the number of projects captured in the system with each reporting cycle allowed for the observation of increased efficiencies over time. Other organisations: i) relied on external experts for reporting data into an interim platform, reducing the immediate workload of staff and partners; ii) ensured that the final system would feed back information (e.g. in the form of dashboards), providing a benefit to staff in exchange for the additional workload; or iii) planned final trainings that went beyond ‘point and click’ functionality, to focus on topics related to results-based management and reporting good practice.

Some organisations, such as the Asian Development Bank, are conducting early-stage pilots of using basic artificial intelligence to support the problem and results analyses that inform project design. An important consideration in exploring such initiatives has been managing expectations, namely about the continued importance of human inputs to ensure contextual relevance and exploration of innovative approaches.

Box 4.1. Strengthening interlinkages between results frameworks digitally

Information systems to support the collection and aggregating of results monitoring data

In areas with robust internet connectivity and established data protocols, cloud-based monitoring platforms enhance the speed and usability of results data reporting, leading to better management and decision-making. Interactive online templates used at design stage can also facilitate vertical alignment to strategic priorities in a dynamic manner. While the internet and advanced digital solutions can greatly streamline data collection, their utility is contingent on a thorough understanding of the decision-making processes integral to implementing the programme or intervention. In situations where real-time, cloud-based data entry isn't feasible, alternative strategies should be in place, such as the use of standardised spreadsheet templates which can be shared via email or even physical copies, if necessary.

Source: World Bank (2012). Designing a Results Framework for Achieving Results

In practice, deploying systems for better management of results data is more than adding a new app

To ensure results data availability for programme and project monitoring, and to ensure more efficient and timely corporate results reporting, the **European Union** designed and rolled out OPSYS in 2022-23, a homegrown solution that allows the encoding of all logframes in a structured system, incentivises the use of standardised indicators to report on various corporate results frameworks, and facilitates quick access to indicator values in a dashboard. In addition to customising the IT solution (rather than relying on an off-the-shelf product), thorough change management strategies, training and close involvement of operational and managerial units across the results chains were shown to be important for the successful deployment of the system.

Source: EU (2023). OPSYS.

Resources

- USAID (2023): Monitoring toolkit, A set of guidance, tools, and templates for monitoring USAID strategies, projects, and activities.
- Finland, Guidelines for programme design, monitoring and evaluation
- BMZ Digital Global - Tools of Development Co-operation
- GIZ Online Monitoring Tool – More efficient reporting for the German Development Co-operation by means of web-based data collection and analysis
- OECD (2019), Managing for Sustainable Development Results and Covid-19 - Technical report
- OECD (2021), Development Co-operation Report 2021: Shaping a Just Digital Transformation

4.2. Countries' monitoring and statistical systems are strengthened and used effectively

Why is this important?

National monitoring and statistical systems play a key role in designing public policies, monitoring their effects and reporting on progress towards sustainable development. Robust national systems that increasingly incorporate administrative data and enable countries to regularly collect their own reliable and timely data is a long-term goal for governments and all development actors. Still, many countries lack national statistical and administrative data systems that can support effective and inclusive policymaking. Census data and key surveys managed by national statistical offices are infrequent or outdated, while administrative data systems such as routine registration of births and deaths and the production of vital statistics, are often incomplete. Two challenges must be addressed:

- *Lack of funding from both domestic and external sources for data and statistics.* Challenges to funding for development data include the public-good nature of data, uncertain fiscal returns, political economy constraints and complementarities between different types of data that imply low returns on investment.
- *Ineffective support to national statistical and monitoring systems*, due to:
  - *Fragmented approaches*, with more diverse stakeholders that support and need data and statistics and competing priorities leading to the development of parallel monitoring systems, instead of financing national systems and retaining the institutional capacity for data collection and use over time within national statistical systems.
  - *Insufficient strategic focus and direction to support statistical systems*, including specifying comparative advantage and sustainable outcomes, and adopting a mainstreaming approach that goes beyond specific support for sectoral data. Having shared guidance for international support to national statistical and monitoring capacity would help to strengthen co-ordination between development partners and alignment to country priorities.

Long-term commitments to invest in countries' national statistical and monitoring systems are key to producing more relevant, granular, timely and harmonised data in the future. These investments must be done in an effective and co-ordinated way.

In using national systems, development partners strengthen country ownership, help to build co-ordinated approaches and mutually reinforcing partnerships, and foster transparency and mutual accountability.

Self-assessment questions

What efforts are you making to strengthen countries' statistical and monitoring capacities? To what extent are your investments supporting countries' long-term strategic priorities in the development of national statistical and monitoring capacity? Are your efforts co-ordinated with other development partners?

How do your monitoring approaches ensure that they maximise the use of countries' monitoring and statistical systems? Whenever you collect your own data through parallel processes, is there a clear rationale for doing so, and is there precise guidance regarding the sustainability of data-collection efforts, interconnectedness with the national statistical system, and availability of data?

Actions to consider in order to strengthen country data systems

Governments

- Strengthen statistical and administrative data systems:
  - Invest in a sustainable, equitable and integrated national statistical system that reflects national policy priorities, enables the monitoring of the national development plan and the SDGs, and helps improve service delivery.
  - Follow a demand-driven, bottom-up approach in installing statistical capacity in local governments.
- Adopt a national strategy and budget for the development of statistics to secure domestic resources and mobilise and strengthen the alignment of development partners' support.
- Improve data governance with a legal basis and governance framework in line with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, providing a clear institutional mandate to the national statistical office to ensure quality assurance and co-ordination between data-producing agencies and new data actors in the extended data system.
- Organise regular co-ordination meetings with development stakeholders to co-ordinate support, harmonise statistical production and foster transparency and mutual accountability.

Development partners

- Ensure that support to national statistical and monitoring systems is co-ordinated among the different national stakeholders.
- Support more harmonised approaches to funding at the international level.
- Invest in the long term to support the capacity of national statistical systems, aligning data support with countries' needs and priorities, including their digital transformation and ability to improve data quality and disaggregation.
- Ring-fence a share of project and programme resources to help close sector-related data gaps based on a common agreement on data priorities and needs, in line with the SDG indicators.
- Co-ordinate funding of data collection efforts to avoid duplication and increase value for money, collaborating to map existing data sources such as household surveys and administrative surveys, making duplications visible and taking action to prevent them in the future.

Actions to consider in order to improve the use of country data systems

Governments

- Deepen efforts to use data and results information to inform policy decisions and as a basis for programming, monitoring and accountability.
- Provide timely, open and easy access to data to users and decision-makers at all levels, within and beyond government.
- Invest in improved capacity of decision-makers to read, interpret and analyse data and results information.
- Strengthen trust in data by taking measures to protect data of individuals and social groups in line with existing international standards.

Development partners

- Use the country's national statistical system to report on development interventions.
- When you cannot avoid collecting your own data through parallel processes, take steps to ensure that your data-collection efforts are sustainable and connected with the national statistical system; and make your data available, while respecting safeguards in line with international standards and principles for open data.
- Support data use and capacity for data use throughout the national statistical system. Support data literacy among civil society organisations and media to promote evidence-based dialogue on development co-operation.

Good practices

- Many development partners (e.g. Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom) support the strengthening of national monitoring systems to collect foundational data such as civil registration and vital statistics, censuses and surveys, which underpin the reporting of many SDGs. They also help to develop innovative methods and new data, such as satellite data, to ensure that statistical systems are modernised and sustainable. They increasingly emphasise the sharing and co-ordination of data and information amongst relevant entities.
- Paris21 offers platforms for dialogue between statistical actors in a country with development actors. Partnerships with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data promote open data, global standards and the disaggregation of data to ensure that no one is left behind. The Bern Network promotes the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data, which enables anyone to track and analyse the state of financing for data, connect to partners and access a broad range of resources to advocate for more and better data.

Resources

- OECD (2020): Key trends in development co-operation for national data and statistical systems
- GPEDC (2022): Bern Call to Action
- GPEDC (2022): Effective Development Co-operation Summit Declaration
- GPEDC (2020): Enhancing Effectiveness to Accelerate Sustainable Development: A Global Compendium of Good Practices.
- GPEDC (2021): Data for Development Dialogue: Good Practice at Country Level
- OECD (2021): Data for Development Profiles: Official Development Assistance for Data and Statistical Systems

4.3. Both quantitative and qualitative information is collected

Why is this important?

Quantitative information is important to measure what is being achieved and assess progress towards objectives. Quantitative information is often favoured as it is collected routinely (through the monitoring system) and is easy to aggregate and communicate. Moreover, number-based results can be compared and are perceived as more objective than qualitative information.

Qualitative information is vital to complement quantitative information and document how change is happening. It is best suited for measuring progress that is complex, multi-faceted or multidimensional. Qualitative information increases understanding of the diversity of causal pathways for different

constituents. It also helps to account for the institutional and human dynamics that affect outcomes, enabling the information on why it works in some places and not in others. Qualitative information in the form of stories and narratives is also crucial to communicate with people and engage with the public.

Qualitative information is often perceived to be impressionistic. It is more easily questioned for bias, often being criticised for 'cherry picking' cases. Gathering robust qualitative information around attitudes, behaviour, relationships, influence, systems, power dynamics, social norms and public goods is indeed challenging. Institutions need to go beyond stories of change and case studies towards more rigorous approaches, including qualitative research methods, to measure and show qualitative results.

Bringing numbers to qualitative results can facilitate their communication and use. Hybrid (or mixed) indicators quantify qualitative data, involving qualitative assessment factors (e.g. using checklists) for measuring them. They best capture data on multifaceted concepts like efficiency or participation. Hybrid indicators are measured by indexes, milestone scales or scorecards.

Qualitative indicators are also possible and can be preferable for measuring performance in certain areas, for instance in the democracy and governance sector. They take the form of a narrative assessment that measures change over time against specific, predetermined criteria.

Self-assessment question

To what extent and how are you collecting qualitative information to complement quantitative data?

Actions to consider when collecting qualitative information

- Select and shape indicators using an iterative process, thinking about which indicator types and formats are most appropriate and considering resources and potential data sources.
  - *Use an explicit rationale to select the type of indicators* (quantitative, hybrid, qualitative) that will be used (domain of activity, level of complexity, multifaceted approaches).
- Apply a robust methodology: adopting a qualitative research approach in the generation of qualitative evidence will make qualitative information more credible. Data sources need to be selected with transparency and rigour, and case selection must be built in a systematic manner – this is imperative to make robust generalisations as well as to strengthen acceptance of qualitative and mixed-methods evidence to evaluate attribution.
  - Note that rigorous case selection for qualitative information is not the same as for quantitative information. Since qualitative information helps understand the diversity of causal pathways, random selection is unlikely to be very useful. Moreover, there is no scientifically optimal sample size. However, transparent and reasoned case-selection with specific, predetermined criteria is important.
- Bring clarity as regards the use of qualitative information and how such information can be linked to quantitative indicators.
- When considering digitalisation, pay attention to how to handle qualitative information, in order to keep a human-centred approach that is able to look towards the future.

Good practices and resources

- Many institutions combine quantitative monitoring with qualitative methods, e.g. using partner testimonials to complement quantitative data and ensure reporting at output and outcome level is evidence-based. They increasingly combine data with reliable stories about what was (or wasn't) achieved, and lessons learned from the experience. The use of hybrid indicators to quantify qualitative information is also increasingly used with different categories or levels of scorings.

- Evaluation teams are also increasingly adopting iterative mixed methods approaches, for instance employing a range of qualitative and quantitative methods across a sample of countries to enable ongoing analysis, triangulation and validation of findings.
- The Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) developed by Bath Social and Development Research (BSDR) has been designed to offer a credible and cost-effective assessment of the extent to which changes in wellbeing that have been self-reported by intended beneficiaries can be attributed to specified social and development interventions in complex contexts.
- Skovdal, Morten and Cornish, Flora (2015) Qualitative research for development: a guide for practitioners, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/64207/

4.4. Summary checklist for strengthening monitoring systems

- ✓ Does your monitoring plan specify the frequency, scope and intended use of the monitoring data?
- ✓ Is proper guidance on collection tools and methods widely shared within the organisation?
- ✓ (Where it exists), is the staff trained to use the organisation's digitalised information systems for reporting data at the country or programme level?
- ✓ Do you have specific methods and procedures in place for remote monitoring in case a crisis limits access to key stakeholders?
- ✓ Is your investment in strengthening statistical and monitoring systems informed by a long-term vision, aligned with country needs and priorities, and coordinated with other stakeholders?
- ✓ In which ways can you improve data governance, ensuring quality assurance while protecting data of individuals and social groups?
- ✓ Whenever you collect your own data through parallel processes, is there a clear rationale for doing so, and is there precise guidance regarding the sustainability of data-collection efforts, interconnectedness with the national statistical system, and availability of data?
- ✓ How can you improve the capacity of decision-makers to read, interpret and analyse data and results information?
- ✓ Are you equipped to collect robust qualitative information and able to specify how it can complement quantitative data?

5. Using results information

Guiding principle

Results information, which includes quantitative and qualitative data and evidence from both monitoring and evaluation, is used for learning and decision-making at every level – ranging from corporate- to project-level – alongside its use for communication and accountability.

Guiding Principle 4, Managing for Sustainable Development Results

There is scope to increase use of results information. Making good use of data and results information is critical to secure domestic and international resources for national development, design right policies and deliver effective public services, enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of development co-operation efforts, and maximise their impact. Results information should be used to:

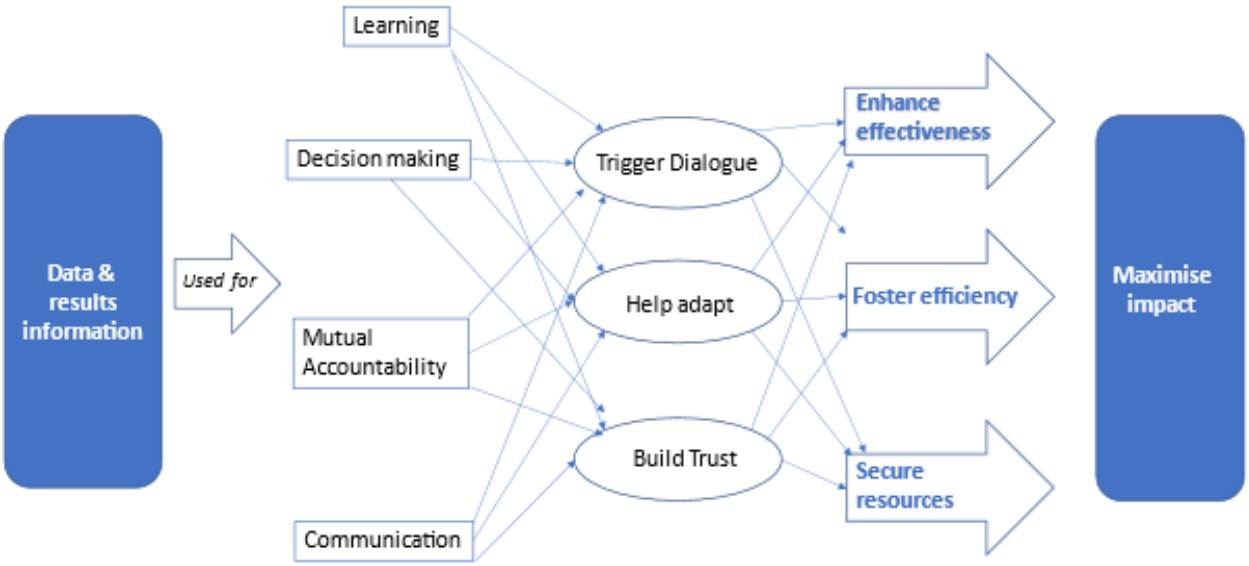
- learn what works and what does not and make changes as needed at national, programme and project levels;
- steer collective development efforts at country level;
- foster domestic and mutual accountability, providing feedback to domestic stakeholders and partners on achievements, challenges, and learning; and
- communicate to various audiences at national and partner-country level to raise awareness, build public trust in and mobilise citizens into action for the SDGs.

While results information can be used in multiple ways, its actual use depends on the way quantitative and qualitative data are compiled, managed and shared, as well as on the tools, space and time given to staff and partners to use it. It is therefore important to clearly specify the purpose and ways in which results information is being used and to support knowledge management systems. In parallel, governments and development partners need to combat dis- and misinformation that hinder trust and slow down effective behaviour change (Figure 5.1).

Issues covered in this module

- Results information is used for learning
- Results information informs decision-making and steering of development programmes
- Results information supports domestic and mutual accountability
- Results information is used to communicate and support transparency

Figure 5.1. Multiple benefits of results information



5.1. Results information is used for learning

Why is this important?

Using results information to learn is vital for improving development effectiveness and maximising the impact of development co-operation programmes, even more so in times of instability. Fostering learning is needed both within and between organisations.

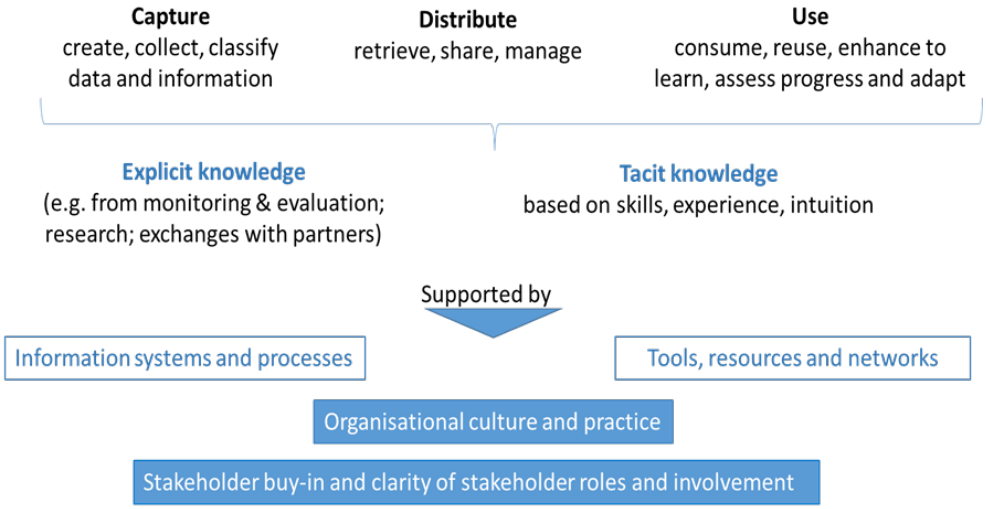
Strategic learning allows governments and development organisations to realign their objectives, structures and processes to ensure a more effective pursuit of overarching goals and expected outcomes.

Operational learning connects learning and adapting and enables the adjustment and refinement of ongoing and future interventions to ensure more effective performance against expected results.

Mutual learning among partners at country and sub-national levels fosters broad-based ownership, supports locally led problem solving, and ensures sustainability. (MfSDR Guiding Principle 3, third key element (OECD, 2019[11])).

Learning from results information and other sources of information requires an integrated approach to collecting, assessing, sharing and using information and knowledge, accompanied by supportive organisational cultures and practices, appropriate systems and processes, and adequate tools, resources and networks (Infographic 5.1).

Infographic 5.1. An integrated approach to enabling learning



Self-assessment questions

- Is results information from M&E used for learning at all levels in the ministry/development organisation?
- What organisational priorities, tools and systems do you have to facilitate learning and how do you use it to inform future programming, adapt ongoing programmes and enhance mutual learning?

Actions to consider

- Create an organisational environment that supports learning:
  - give space and incentives for officials to learn, including through candid self-evaluation (e.g. in including a learning objective in individual staff performance objectives);
  - develop information-sharing systems (e.g. learning databases on evaluation findings; thematic or sector networks of experts).
- Select relevant information (whatever your position in the ministry/development organisation):
  - ensure you have access to information that is relevant for strategic, operational, or mutual learning. To this end, leadership should resist the tendency to prioritise collecting information for accountability at the expense of information that is useful for learning;
  - use qualitative information (contextual narrative, stories, local knowledge) alongside quantitative data from monitoring and evaluation;
  - do not underestimate the usefulness of tacit knowledge based on individual skills, experience and intuition, alongside explicit knowledge that comes with M&E, research and exchanges with partners.
- Foster country ownership of results information and mutual learning:
  - (*depending on your position*) foster or engage in national or sub-national co-ordination mechanisms to: i) use results information generated by national and local systems; ii) share learning; iii) foster mutual collaboration and accountability; and iv) inform joint analysis, monitoring and reporting;

  - hold regular dialogues among stakeholders involved in the same thematic or sector area;
  - design participatory approaches in problem analysis, design, planning, monitoring, evaluation and use of results.

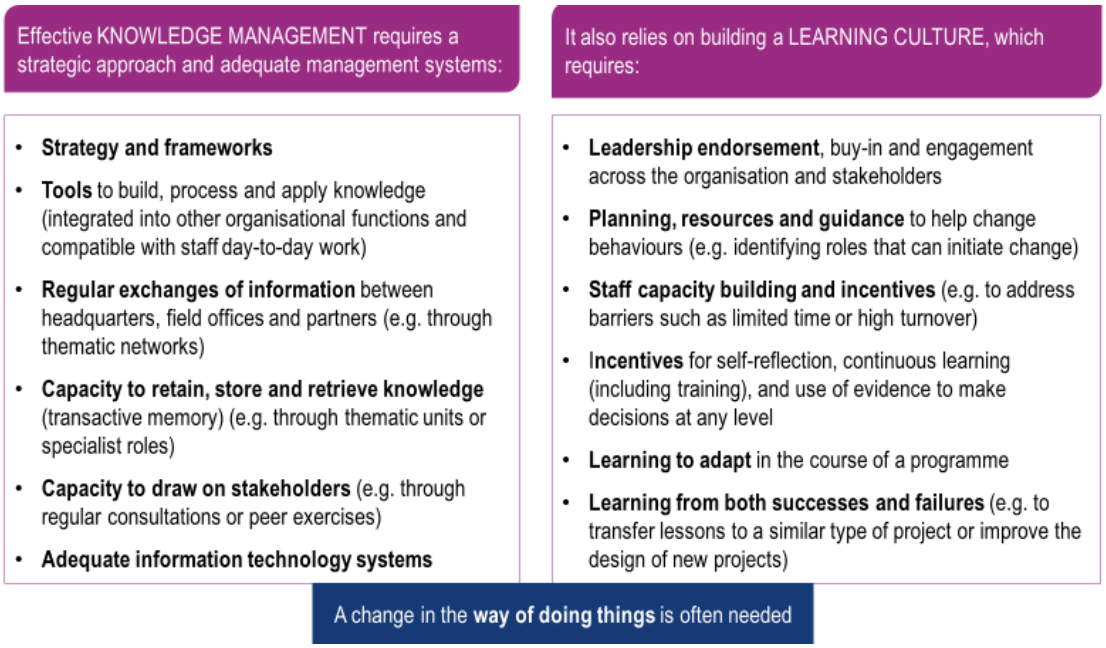
- Learn what works, but don't forget to also learn from failures. Be open to examining what hasn't worked, as well as what has, to make better decisions at the programming or design stage or to adapt during the course of a project.
- Take stock and transfer knowledge and learning within and beyond your organisation. Ensuring that learning circulates and is not lost, whether there are staff movements (transfers) or not (retention), enables more effective programme delivery and better results:
  - use internal networks and external coordination meetings with partners to transfer learning;
  - draft short summaries of lessons and handover notes and store them in formal systems, such as shared drives, for learning uptakes.

Tips to go a step further

Foster knowledge management. Effective knowledge management facilitates organisational and mutual learning. There is no "one size fits all" solution for fostering knowledge management. Approaches and systems must be tailored to specific needs, contexts and desired outcomes. Yet it is important to embed knowledge management into strategic, operational and human-resource management, and follow specific steps (Figure 5.2):

- Develop a strategic approach, with processes, capacities, tools and resources that help capture, store and disseminate knowledge.
- Establish fit-for-purpose data and information systems.
- Foster a culture of learning which involves strong leadership roles, mapping of different stakeholders' interests and roles, appropriate capacities and incentives, and often a change-management process to trigger behaviour change.

Figure 5.2. Good practices for knowledge management



Good practice

Some positive experiences and resources for using results information follow.

Box 5.1. USAID Knowledge Retention and Transfer (KRT) toolkit

To retain knowledge of programmes and their histories, underlying rationales and relevant relationships, and avoid reinventing systems, losing programmatic momentum and disrupting key relationships, USAID has established a Knowledge Retention and Transfer (KRT) toolkit.

The KRT model comprises: i) a toolkit providing templates and resources to help capture, organise and transfer information – this includes a handover memo as a centrepiece of the model as well as phone calls to capture tacit information; ii) an implementation plan to co-ordinate roles and responsibilities, with hyperlinks to relevant tools and a checklist; and iii) a maturity matrix, which is a self-assessment tool to help operating units check progress in KRT and plan for improvements. It is complemented by a feedback tracker, with staff reporting back via e-mail on the KRT implementation to inform improvements to the tools and support for uptake.

Source: https://usaidlearninglab.org/community/blog/strengthening-knowledge-retention-and-transfer-during-staff-transitions

Other good practices

- Finland (2019): How do we Learn, Manage and Make Decisions in Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation, Evaluation on Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation, 2019/3
- OECD (2023): USAID Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
- OECD (2022): Learning from evaluations to improve project quality - JICA's annual evaluation report
- OECD (2022): Global Affairs Canada's internal capacity building approach for results-based management
- OECD (2021): United Kingdom REX – The Results and Evidence Exchange
- OECD (2023): Good practices in knowledge management and learning

Resources

- ADB (2021): ADB Knowledge Management Action Plan (KMAP) 2021-2025
- IDOS/DIE (2021): What have we learned about learning? Unpacking the relationship between knowledge and organisational change in development agencies
- Multi-Donor Learning Partnership (2022): Return on Knowledge – How international development agencies are collaborating to deliver impact through knowledge learning, research and evidence
- OECD (2019): Learning from Results-Based Management evaluations and reviews | READ online (oecd-ilibrary.org)
- UNICEF (2021): Global Knowledge Management medium-term strategy 2021-22 - Putting knowledge to work to achieve rights and results for children
- USAID Learning Lab (2023): Managing Knowledge

5.2. Results information informs decision-making and steering of development programmes and projects

Why is this important?

Data and results information are critical to steer development efforts and enhance effectiveness and impact. They should inform both strategic and operational decision-making.

Use of data and results information can lead to better strategic decisions. Having a clear, documented picture of what was achieved in the previous term (and what was not) helps the political leadership and organisational management to design new development strategies and make evidence-based budget allocations and programming decisions. Political priorities might be reconsidered because of new evidence provided.

Use of data and results information can improve delivery and impact on the ground. Programme and project managers gain from using solid evidence (for instance, coming from past evaluations of similar types of initiatives) when designing new programmes and projects, including in making assumptions and assessing risks. In monitoring their implementation, they can use the information gathered to make decisions that will facilitate the delivery of programmes' and projects' outcomes, even if the context evolves.

Evidence-based strategic and operational decision-making requires that appropriate, quality results information is available on time and in the right format. It is therefore crucial to clearly define what type of information is needed at each level of the organisation and what the source of this information will be, before organising the data-collection and aggregation systems – supported by adequate guidance and training – so that the right data is available on time for strategic or operational decision-making. Experience shows the importance of motivation and incentives: actual use of results information by senior management for decision-making turns an administrative task into one where people are more motivated to collect and use the results information. Still the lack of reliable and disaggregated data remains an obstacle (see **Module 3**).

Self-assessment questions

- Is results information from monitoring, evaluation and other sources of evidence used for decision-making at all levels in the ministry/development organisation?
- What are the key obstacles that deter leadership, management and implementers from using the results information more systematically and effectively?

Actions to consider

To connect learning with decision-making across the organisation

- Ensure the right information is available at the right level and the right time, enabling a flow of information across the system, drawing on quantitative and qualitative evidence from programme-monitoring, evaluations, research, partners and other sources.
  - Clearly define what type of information is needed at each level of the organisation.
  - Specify the different types of indicators that will be used for decision-making at each level.
  - Identify what the source of this information will be (e.g. monitoring and evaluation systems, research departments, country national systems, external sources, etc.).
  - Develop clear guidance on how the data and results information should be collected, analysed and made available at the right level and the right time.

- Plan evaluations so that their findings can feed into strategic decisions (e.g. new national strategy, renewal of innovative programmes).
- Enhance staff capabilities in collecting, analysing and using data as well as in conducting or commissioning evaluations, including by providing appropriate training.
- Foster staff engagement through setting up information systems in a way that allows users to review their results data and to see how it feeds into the whole data set at sectoral, regional and corporate levels.
- Make sure incentives go from individual to corporate levels, linking individuals', teams', divisions', and directorates' accountabilities and contributions to organisational results.

To connect learning with strategic decision-making by leadership

- Use results information to inform programming decisions and budget allocations. In addition to the benefits that management will gain from evidence-based decisions, it is important that leadership leads by example in making good use of the information collected throughout the organisation.
  - Ensure that appropriate results information (e.g. annual results reporting aggregating and analysing data collected throughout the organisation, strategic evaluation recommendations, etc.), is available on time for strategic decisions.
  - Tailor both the content and format of the information to the needs of targeted decision-makers (e.g. political leadership, top-level managers, executive boards), favouring short, strategic briefing notes with clear points and an annex providing background documentation.
  - Communicate throughout the organisation on the actual use of results information by leadership, and the ways in which that helped advance the mission of the organisation.

To use monitoring and evaluation data to manage programmes and projects

- Purposely design and implement monitoring and evaluation activities with the end user in mind.
  - Avoid making monitoring and evaluation too technical.
  - Set and revise monitoring and evaluation needs using an iterative process alongside updating the theory of change/logical framework.
  - Provide adequate guidance, strengthen staff capabilities and give staff time for the ongoing interpretation of evidence and creation of processes for continuous improvement (e.g. documenting evidence-informed conversations).
  - Make it explicit that programme and project managers are expected to leverage learning for: i) adapting deliverables and arranging resources as required, based on evidence and learning, to achieve the desired outcomes; ii) improving similar types of projects; and iii) influencing future programming.
- Develop an organisational environment conducive to adaptive management approaches (see **Module 2.3**).

Tips to go a step further

Promote evaluative thinking as a capacity and process that is embedded throughout implementation. Evaluation is not only relevant at the start and end of an intervention. Monitoring practices can shift towards being more evaluative – asking "why" questions – alongside collecting monitoring data. Increasingly, some donors and their partners are experimenting with learning partners, who are independent and can play a role in asking these "why" questions, helping to ensure that evidence and data is being acted upon on an ongoing basis, rather than simply being collected. This can also provide a useful check on the rigour of the approaches being used (Ramalingam, Wild and Buffardi, 2019).

Make the case for investing in results frameworks to leadership and decision makers. Leadership has a key role in fostering the results agenda and building an organisational culture of results and learning. The following points can help you in explaining how the strategic use of results approaches, tools and systems at all levels within the organisation can be a game changer in the actual practice of development co-operation, and a catalyst for more effective and better coordinated approaches at country level, which are crucial to maximise impact of development efforts. There is strong evidence that institutions that have invested in results approaches and systems aligned to the Guiding Principles on Managing for Sustainable Development Results are able to:

- Sharpen the focus on sustainable development across the institution.
- Develop coherent and mutually reinforcing government approaches and strategies.
- Navigate complex, cross-sector development challenges.
- Align more easily to countries' policies and systems.
- Adapt to evolving situations.
- Co-ordinate with other partners on the ground.
- Engage more frequently in partnerships.
- Report and communicate on the results achieved and their contribution to sustainable development.

Good practice

Some positive experiences, lessons and resources for using results information follow.

Box 5.2. Designing and measuring core indicators to inform decision-making and learning at different levels

A number of donors are experimenting with different approaches to designing and measuring core results indicators, such as:

- Bedrock indicators. These are a core set of benchmark indicators that remain fixed throughout the programme (i.e. at the outcome and impact level), with greater flexibility at lower levels of the results chain (e.g. outputs, activities).
- Open-ended/basket indicators. A 'basket' is like a menu of indicators, of which the programme is expected to achieve a selection, while 'open-ended' indicators aim to achieve a degree of tangible reform in a given area without pre-specifying exactly what this will look like.
- Learning/adaptive practice indicators. These attempt to measure processes of learning and adaptation, usually by counting the number of learning activities undertaken or adaptation measures (such as the volume of evaluation reports produced during a programme, the percentage of theory of change templates that were modified throughout a programme, or whether an intervention has been stopped or restructured if found to be unsuccessful). Such indicators have not yet been able to assess the quality of a programme's learning process very effectively.
- Measuring risks and assumptions. This involves the measurement of assumptions made at the outset of a programme and the level of risk associated with its activities. For example, USAID's 'context indicators' measure programmes' political, social and economic conditions.

Other good practices

Australia's DFAT reshaped its performance assessment system to boost monitoring, evaluation, research, learning and adaptation (MERLA) across its development programme. DFAT considers that regular and

systematic MERLA is essential to: i) assess programmes' effectiveness and efficiency; ii) support adaptive management of investments; iii) provide the basis of reporting to Parliament and the public; and iv) contribute to dialogue with development partners.

Other members of the Results Community have upgraded their dashboards to provide managers with more user-friendly, real-time access to visually compelling project and portfolio data that they can drill down into to serve their management needs.

Resources

- Finland (2019): How do we Learn, Manage and Make Decisions in Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation
- USAID (2023): USAID Collaborate, Learn and Adapt (CLA) framework
- ODI (2019): Making adaptive rigour work: principles and practices for strengthening MEL for adaptive management
- Rogers, P., and Macfarlan, A. (2020): An overview of monitoring and evaluation for adaptive management and What is adaptive management and how does it work?
- OECD (2021): Achieving SDG results in development co-operation - Summary for policy makers
- UNFPA (2022): The A-Compass: The UNFPA adaptive management model

5.3. Results information supports domestic and mutual accountability

Why is this important?

Taxpayers, parliaments, citizens and partners expect to know how governments and development organisations are allocating their funds and whether their work is making a difference. This is why **domestic accountability** has, to a large extent, driven the RBM systems of many development organisations.

This has raised a number of issues:

i) the selection of indicators is influenced by their expected use, which is often reporting back to the legislative body (or the relevant governing body), resulting in a tendency to set too many indicators at the corporate level and too little for useful learning and decision-making at other levels;

ii) the demand for accountability risks leading to incentives for meeting short-term targets at the expense of pursuing longer-term outcomes;

iii) political considerations also often influence the definition of indicators, without considering how the information will be used or the related methodological implications; there are cases where the pressure to measure certain indicators, despite the lack of a clear methodology or gaps in data, has produced inadequate results information.

Besides domestic accountability, **mutual accountability** is crucial to delivering development effectiveness. It should be pursued at country, programme and project levels, and involve regular and structured dialogue with governments and local authorities and among partners. MfSDR Guiding Principle 3 calls for development organisations to foster mutual accountability when engaging in partnerships, with a clear understanding of the common goal and each party's contribution to achieving shared outcomes and sharing risks, while regularly assessing the effectiveness of the partnership. (MfSDR Guiding Principle 3, fourth key element (OECD, 2019[11]).

Self-assessment question

In what ways are you providing feedback to domestic stakeholders and partners on achievements?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

To support domestic accountability

- Revisit your overarching indicator framework to define the number of standard indicators set for accountability purposes: a limited number of indicators might be sufficient for accountability at the corporate level, but more context-based indicators, as well as performance indicators, are needed for steering and learning at country, programme and project levels.
- Streamline reporting requirements for accountability purposes and clearly specify their function. In doing so, you will avoid over-burdening partners with unhelpful data collection processes:
  - Minimise reporting requirements for accountability purposes to what is actually useful at national or corporate level.
  - Harmonise your reporting requirements with those of other partners.
  - Make those requirements clear and easy to access.
- Use governments' monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks to the greatest extent possible.

To support mutual accountability

- Set clear objectives and roles: when engaging in partnerships, ensure there is a clear understanding of the common goals and each party's contribution to achieving shared outcomes and sharing risks.
- Define common outcome indicators: each partner may have different input and (short-term) output indicators, but they should agree on the outcome indicators that will measure progress towards the common objective(s).
- Agree on the monitoring system that will track how the intervention is progressing towards delivering the expected results.
- Regularly assess the effectiveness of the partnership: this can be done through regular, formal stocktaking, complemented with e-mail exchanges. Assessments should draw on qualitative and quantitative information from the M&E system as well as from the evaluations themselves, and on partner countries' own data, systems and results frameworks.

Good practices and resources

Domestic accountability

- Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) Architecture for Results for International Assistance. To better balance accountability and learning, GAC introduced this results "nesting model" with a limited number of key corporate performance indicators and complementary indicators, that can be aggregated from project to portfolio level.
- To strengthen the use of results data for reporting on project, programme and portfolio performance, many organisations have set up workshops and trainings to ensure that reporting requirements and use of results data are clear for staff and partners. A few organisations have also used new methodologies for rating and incorporating the progress of ongoing activities toward delivering targets in the project results framework, or have digitalised different types of management tools and systems to help staff with project management and reporting (e.g. a digital

grant-management assistant, which makes it easier to access and navigate through the different rules and regulations). They have also adjusted staff incentives to encourage more candid reporting of project results data and useful lessons.

- Some development partners are promoting more light-touch, agile reporting, using simple templates for strategy-testing, or designing faster processes for approving novel and more experimental interventions. In giving greater flexibility and autonomy to partners in developing and using results frameworks, grant arrangements are more conducive to the use of these approaches, which facilitate faster approvals and adaptation while satisfying donors' risk management needs.

Mutual accountability

- The Global Partnership Monitoring process provides evidence on progress in implementing effective development co-operation commitments at the country, regional and global level, supporting accountability among all development actors. Led by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), it offers an opportunity for strategic dialogue among all development stakeholders at country level, building on the findings of monitoring at national level.
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) articulates the UN's collective response to supporting governments in addressing national priorities and gaps in the pathway towards sustainable development. Co-signed by the government and the UN country team, it includes a detailed results framework, and is accompanied by a monitoring, reporting, evaluation and learning plan, thereby fostering mutual accountability.
- Several countries have also instituted development co-operation frameworks to enforce mutual accountability mechanisms. An illustration is Tanzania's development co-operation framework, which runs until 2024-25, and defines the overall objectives and principles surrounding the development partnership as well as the undertakings committed to by the various partners supporting Tanzania's development.
- In a few countries, development partners use high-level co-ordination mechanisms (e.g. the Key Political Partners Group in Nigeria) to drive critical agendas through effective political dialogue and pursue a mutual accountability approach with government at national and sub-national level.

5.4. Results information is used to communicate and support transparency

Why is this important?

Development communication today is central to achieving core organisational and policy objectives. Demonstrating that development efforts lead to positive and sustainable change can help build political and public support and foster active engagement towards sustainable development. For this purpose, development communicators pursue four goals:

- raising awareness about sustainable development
- changing attitudes, building trust and support for sustainable development
- seeking advice and consulting citizens for feedback and advice
- promoting action and encouraging citizens to adopt sustainable behaviours and engage in communities.

Beyond domestic purposes, transparency is a requisite to build mutual trust and learn collectively at country level. Therefore, MfSDR Guiding Principle 3 invites development organisations to promote transparency, sharing their results frameworks and ensuring that results information and data are available to all involved

stakeholders and the broader public – including to specific target groups – using understandable language and appropriate communication channels (MfSDR Guiding Principle 3, fifth key element, (OECD, 2019[11])).

Governments and development partners also need to equip themselves to combat mis- and disinformation that affect sustainable development in many ways. Most directly, such falsehoods discourage citizens from adopting sustainable behaviours like getting vaccinated or reducing their carbon emissions. More indirectly, mis- and disinformation reduce people's trust in institutions that are trying to make sustainable development happen. This lack of trust is also a challenge for international development actors. Despite their efforts to communicate about their results and fight corruption, many people still believe that development aid is wasted.

Self-assessment questions

Do you have elements of a development communication strategy to foster public support and engagement in sustainable development activities?

Are your results frameworks, information and data of high quality, timely, and publicly available?

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

To raise public awareness and foster critical engagement and support for sustainable development:

- Identify the various audiences in the general public, including:
  - influencers (e.g. CSOs, foundations, local authorities) who can help mobilise people and promote action for sustainable development; and
  - watchdogs (e.g., parliaments, media) who can help to meet commitments on accountability and build public trust in development work.
- Frame narrative and tailor messaging to audience and communication purposes (i.e. explaining issues, showing results, highlighting shared goals and values, or inspiring people into action). This ensures the message will be listened to and acted upon. In doing so:
  - combine timely data with reliable stories
  - avoid jargon
  - don't reinforce stereotypes
  - don't hide the truth
  - don't moralise.
- Select communication channels depending on your audience. Using appropriate channels – whether they relate to the media, public spaces or digital communication – is important to reach the targeted audience. In doing so, also keep the purpose and budget in mind. Do not hesitate to go multi-channel to resonate with audiences in different places at different times.
- Use diversified formats depending on your audience, e.g. articles, videos, podcasts, etc. Do not hesitate to use visual formats such as infographics, as they can improve understanding and connect with an audience faster.
- Engage in selected partnerships. In campaigning jointly with others (e.g., civil society, multilateral organisations, businesses, municipalities), you can benefit from their expertise and networks, maximising outreach and potential impact.
- Develop internal communication skills and secure a decent budget for development communication. Digital, editorial, analytical and outreach skills are needed, requiring competent staff and adequate training. Don't hesitate to value communication skills and develop training as important means to motivate communicators.

To promote transparency:

- Share your results frameworks. This applies to all levels, from national/headquarters to project level. In sharing their results frameworks, stakeholders get clarity on who does what in a specific geographic area, sector or domain. At national level, the analysis of results frameworks can help governments to guide development efforts, assessing where there are gaps or risks of ineffective overlaps. Sharing results frameworks at programme and project level can foster harmonisation, with newcomers aligning their sets of indicators to the ones already used by other stakeholders.
- Make your results data public, ensuring that results information and data are available to all involved stakeholders, other development partners working in the same sectoral or thematic area, and the broader public – including to specific target groups. In doing so:
  - make sure that qualitative information complements quantitative data, providing the context and contributing to explain why and how the results were achieved or not;
  - avoid hiding what does not work;
  - use language that is understandable by the audience;
  - use appropriate communication channels and formats (e.g. national reports and web portals at national or headquarter level, leaflets at project level).
- Use results information to inform dialogues at country, programme and project levels, seeking feedback from the involved stakeholders and other partners. This will build trust with your counterparts and partners. It will also help you in shaping your future strategies, programmes and projects.
- Document any feedback received during these dialogues. Qualitative knowledge is as important as quantitative data to analyse situations. It needs to be communicated and transferred to colleagues and partners, e.g. in the form of short summaries.
- Plan the preparation of high-level results reports well in advance. In doing so, ensure they are prepared in an inclusive way and will be released in time to influence national or global processes (e.g. ahead of the UN High-level Political when preparing SDG Voluntary National Reviews).

Tips to go a step further

- **Segment your audience further**, using surveys and social media analytics to develop a more refined set of audience profiles. Besides socio-demographic factors, such profiles can take into consideration people's differing **attitudes to sustainable development, lifestyles** and **personal interests, moral values** and **preferences**, and **media habits**.
  - You can then better **understand how specific audiences engage with development and which channels they use, and further tailor communication messaging and tools.**
  - You can also get closer to your audience using formats such as podcasts, interactive microsites and mobile apps that allow communicators to reach targeted groups without intermediaries.

Good practice

Example of portals and reports to communicate results

- Transparency on spending and results - The Dutch portal on development co-operation activities
- Going digital - The "Norwegian development aid - statistics and results" portal
- USAID's Dollars to Results
- Norway's NORAD results platform
- Spain's SDG contributions platform.

- Inter-American Development Bank's Development Effectiveness Overview 2022
- Asian Development Bank's 2022 Development Effectiveness Review

Resources

- OECD (2014): Engaging with the Public - Twelve lessons from DAC Peer Reviews and the Network and DAC Development Communicators
- OECD DevCom Toolkit (2023): Guidance and advice for SDG communicators
  - Fighting Mis- and Disinformation: 7 steps for development communicators, OECD/DEVCOM, 6 December 2022
  - Communicating for gender equality: 7 principles identified by Felix Zimmermann, OECD DevCom Coordinator
  - The SDG Communicator Blog with stories and examples on different topics and countries
- The #Act4SDGs website, the global mobilisation to inspire citizens to take action on the SDGs.
- The #2030isNow campaign by the European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships on Twitter
- Find visual assets and messages on the #FlipTheScript campaign on the Trello board

5.5. Summary checklist for making full use of results information

- ✓ Is it clear which information will be used for each purpose and who should have access to this information?
- ✓ Is there appropriate training and clear guidance on how the data and results information should be collected, analysed and made available at the right level and the right time?
- ✓ Does your information system enable using qualitative information alongside quantitative data?
- ✓ Are you equipped to take stock of learning and transfer knowledge inside and outside your organisation?
- ✓ Are you tailoring the content, format, and channel of the information to each targeted audience?
- ✓ Is the organisational environment and staff incentives supporting learning, including learning from failures?
- ✓ Are you using results information to inform dialogue with partners and counterparts at country level, including through using co-ordination mechanisms?
- ✓ Are you providing clear guidance on reporting requirements, and harmonising and streamlining those requirements?
- ✓ Are your data and results information available to all involved stakeholders, other development partners working in the same sectoral or thematic area, and the broader public?

6. Monitoring cross-cutting issues: Leave No One Behind (LNOB)

Guiding Principle

Managing for Sustainable Development Results approaches should maximise the impact of efforts towards achieving social, economic and environmentally sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

Guiding Principle 1, Managing for Sustainable Development Results

The promise to *leave no one behind* (LNOB) is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is rooted in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which commits all UN Member States to eradicate poverty, discrimination and exclusion, and to reduce the inequalities that undermine the potential of individuals and humanity as a whole (UNDP, 2022[12]). It is underscored by the twin promise to "reach the furthest behind first", requiring States to reach the poorest of the poor, combatting discrimination and rising inequalities within and amongst countries, and their root causes. Instead of a sole focus on extreme poverty, as was the case with the Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 2030 and LNOB encompass the reduction of all forms of inequality (United Nations, 2016[13]).

Most development actors consider that "LNOB is not only necessary for reasons of justice – to improve equity; tackle exclusion, discrimination and inequality; and promote human rights and the social, political and economic participation of disadvantaged groups – but also because a more inclusive society supports social cohesion, governance, security and economic growth, improving quality of life for all and making the Sustainable Development Goals achievable" (OECD, 2018[14]).

LNOB is often translated into programming through targeted actions and programmes that focus on specific LNOB groups. Targeted approaches can provide quick and visible results while empowering the rights-holders. Many development organisations combine this targeted approach with a mainstream one. Mainstreaming LNOB can provide more long-term and sustainable results by removing barriers to inclusion and building countries' capacities (OECD, 2018[14]).

LNOB should be integrated into results frameworks. This requires further action in strategic, operational, relationship and performance management to adopt an adaptive, flexible and context-specific programming approach to account for the complexities of this cross-cutting issue.

Issues covered in this module

- Clearly define and communicate the concept of LNOB and LNOB commitments
- Conduct a context and exclusion analysis to identify LNOB target groups and locations
- Integrate LNOB into the results chain and select indicators
- Monitor progress on LNOB

6.1. Clearly define and communicate the concept of LNOB and LNOB commitments

Clearly defining the concept of LNOB and communicating to all stakeholders what the implications for the development programme are is important, as there is no single agreed definition of LNOB. However, there are many commonalities across LNOB concepts and approaches. LNOB definitions often favour specific policy angles ranging from reducing poverty to diminishing inequalities, fighting discrimination, ending exclusion and promoting human rights-based approaches. The definitions often focus on broad categories of excluded groups such as women and girls, people with disabilities, children or youth (OECD, 2018[14]). LNOB concepts often focus on intersectionality and call for a multidimensional approach. The individuals defined at risk of being the furthest left behind are deprived across multiple dimensions and face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (see Box 6.1).

Box 6.1. The LNOB concept – some examples

The UN approach to LNOB

The UN Shared Framework for Action on Leaving No One Behind sets out a conceptual framework for LNOB which addresses horizontal and vertical inequalities, inequalities between countries and intergenerational equity. The inequality dimensions are evaluated in terms of equality in opportunities and outcomes, equity and fairness as well as non-discrimination. It mandates UN agencies to focus on three interrelated concepts:

- Equality: the imperative of moving towards substantive equality of opportunities and outcomes for all groups;
- Non-discrimination: the prohibition of discrimination against individuals and groups on the grounds identified in international human rights treaties; and
- Equity: The broader concept of fairness in the distribution of costs, benefits and opportunities (UN, 2017[24]).

The Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation's (SDC) LNOB concept and commitments

In the SDC's conceptualisation, people who are left behind are those who, first, are subject to extreme poverty according to the OECD-DAC multidimensional poverty index (which covers five dimensions: economic, human, socio-cultural, political and protective), and/or, second, are excluded from sustainable development processes on the basis of origin, ethnicity, religion, race, disability, economic status, age, sex and gender and other grounds of exclusion. Who is excluded depends on the respective target group (SDC, 2018[16]).

SDC has laid out four specific LNOB commitments: 1) focusing on people living in poverty, giving special consideration to the poorest of the poor, and recognising the multiple dimensions of poverty; 2) aiming

for transformative change by tackling exclusion, discrimination and inequality; 3) ensuring that populations left behind or at risk of being left behind are considered in all new SDC co-operation and thematic strategies; 4) enhancing information systems and the production of disaggregated data that reveal the challenges of those left behind and strengthen the relationship between duty-bearers and rights-holders.

The German Agency for International Cooperation's (GIZ) approach to LNOB

GIZ considers the eradication of poverty, inequality and the LNOB principle as mutually reinforcing. It defines poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that, besides economic poverty, includes aspects such as education, health, nutrition, sanitation, political and social participation, as well as specific forms of freedom. Inequality refers to both intra-state and inter-state inequality. For GIZ to leave no one behind means specifically including those that would otherwise fall through the cracks. The concept is seen as highly contextual and, inter alia, includes people that suffer from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ, 2021[17]).

6.2. Conduct a context and exclusion analysis to identify LNOB target groups and locations

Why is this important?

The LNOB concept needs to be contextualised to be useful in specific country and regional contexts. At a global level, for example, those left behind could be the poorest 20% of the population, but in the context of a specific project, the definition might focus on those who are excluded from the specific services, spaces or interventions that the project seeks to address (SDC, 2018[16]).

Context and exclusion analyses serve to identify LNOB target groups and locations. Assessments can be based on qualitative and quantitative data from local, bilateral or international sources. It is crucial to include local stakeholders and draw from local knowledge in order to capture local sensitivities appropriately. Development partners have adopted different approaches to this analysis, but generally, exclusion analysis helps to answer the following questions: Who is (or is at risk of being) poor, excluded or left behind? From what? Why? By whom? When and/or where does poverty/inequality/exclusion occur? (See Box 6.2).

It is essential that all the dimensions of inequality are taken into account when conducting context and exclusion analyses. These dimensions include gender, race, ethnicity, faith, socio-economic status, class, caste, geographic location, age, ability, sexual orientation, religion, migration status. Specific attention should be paid to the different axes of inequality, including socio-economic situation, race, age and gender, and the potential compounding effects of these inequalities when they intersect. Applying an intersectional lens helps identify where individuals or groups are situated along each axis and can help to identify those who are most likely to be left behind.

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- Analyse data from a range of sources, including the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, regional statistical offices, national human rights institutions, international human rights mechanisms and civil society organisations, and draw from local knowledge as much as possible.
  - *In some contexts, data availability can be a major challenge and excluded populations are often undercounted or not represented at all. These blindspots must be factored in.*
- When identifying LNOB groups, apply inclusive approaches and seek the views of diverse stakeholders, including those who may lack a voice.

  - **Avoid**: Making a symbolic but not meaningful effort (tokenism) to include stakeholders that are generally under-represented or excluded from consultative or decision-making processes.
- Apply an intersectional lens and aim to understand how LNOB groups might experience multiple sources of deprivation or intersecting inequalities.
- When planning projects that will support LNOB groups who are at risk and marginalised by country authorities, plan carefully and take precautions in order to protect these groups from further risks. This might entail:
  - not disclosing the identity of vulnerable groups in data collection or targeting less politically sensitive groups first, in order to open pathways for work with other at-risk groups (OECD, 2018[18]).
  - partnering with other organisations that represent a specific interest of the government, e.g. the ILO, since country authorities are typically interested in employment policies.
  - mixing in other target groups who are not subject to the same discrimination as the main target group and enjoy rights that the LNOB group does not, e.g. organise a workshop on freedom of expression in a country where artists enjoy that right, but journalists do not, and put forward the importance of this right from the perspective of artists.
- Put in place relevant mitigation measures to protect vulnerable groups, e.g. by setting up a safeguard system which considers the unintended effects of interventions on specific groups.

Good practice

Some positive experiences and lessons for monitoring LNOB follow.

Box 6.2. Context and exclusion analysis – good practice examples

GIZ's exclusion analysis

In its LNOB indicator toolkit, GIZ provides the following questions to lead the context and exclusion analysis:

- Who is (or is at risk of being) poor, excluded or left behind? (Who is the target group of the intervention?)
- Are there regional differences?
- Which definition of poverty/inequality/LNOB is recommendable for the specific context? Which dimensions of poverty/inequality/exclusions exist?
- What is the target group excluded from?
- Why? What is the main (or underlying) cause of poverty/inequality/exclusion?
- By whom?
- When does exclusion occur?
- Where does exclusion occur?
- What are the needs of the target groups?

Source: (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ, 2021[17])

Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation's exclusion analysis

When mapping areas of exclusion, the Swiss Agency (SDC) uses poverty assessments and analyses relating to power, gender, fragile contexts and political economy. It specifically analyses power relations by considering the following questions:

- Who holds the power?
- What is the relationship of the poor and excluded groups with other groups, the government, markets and civil society?
- What needs to be changed?
- What does the government concretely do (or fail to do) for the left-behind segments of the population in its country or in global political dialogues, international norms and initiatives?
- Which reform actors could be mobilised to facilitate access to excluded groups, to enhance the representation of their interests and to co-design actual initiatives?
- What scope for action does the SDC have for influencing the political will of the government and the political economy conditions that need to be changed for effective and sustained results?

Source: (SDC, 2018[16])

Resources

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, can be a helpful tool for contextual analysis. It examines how people experience poverty in multiple, overlapping ways and identifies acute deprivations in health, education and standard of living across 10 indicators related to SDGs 1,2,3,4,6,7 and 11 (UNDP and OPHI, 2022[8]). The MPI can help to identify groups who are experiencing the most severe deprivations and thus help to reach those who are furthest behind.

Complementary guidance

- Enabel (2020): Ex-ante Equity Assessment Tool - a tool to identify groups left behind and to apply an equity lens to interventions' design and monitoring and evaluation
- SDC (2018): Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation Guidance: Leave No One Behind
- OECD (2022): Understanding the multidimensional nature of poverty covers Sida's approach and tools for Multidimensional Poverty Analysis.
- OECD (2022), Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls - Guidance for Development Partners
- OECD (2022): Operationalising Leaving No One Behind, Good Practice Note for UN Country Teams, UN Sustainable Development Group
- OPHI (2022): Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

6.3. Integrate LNOB into the results chain and select LNOB indicators

Why is this important?

As a cross-cutting issue, progress on LNOB is more difficult to monitor than progress on a specific sector of intervention (e.g. education or health). Therefore, when designing the results framework for a programme or a project, LNOB indicators should be included at all levels of the results chain to reflect the LNOB focus throughout.

Measuring progress on leave no one behind has also specific implications, in particular in selecting LNOB indicators. Engaging target groups and project partners directly in formulating the indicators is important to ensure that they reflect multidimensional deprivation in the respective context.

Challenges in selecting LNOB indicators

LNOB indicators can measure absolute disadvantage, e.g. the percentage of refugees and asylum seekers without access to basic sanitation – or relative disadvantage, e.g. the percentage-point difference of refugees and asylum seekers without access to basic sanitation compared to the national average (UNICEF, 2021[19]).

A good LNOB indicator is either:

- targeted – providing information about a specific group within a population, *e.g. the proportion of girls who do not have access to education;*
- disaggregated – providing information on different sub-groups, enabling comparisons to be made between at least two groups, *e.g. the proportion of girls who do not have access to education by disability, migratory status and ethnic origin;*
- group-difference based – assessing outcomes between a group left behind and the rest of the population, *e.g. the percentage-point difference between the proportion of girls who do not have access to education and the rest of the population.* (UNICEF, 2021[19])

Using disaggregated data

Data availability can be a major challenge and must be considered when deciding the level of disaggregation for LNOB indicators. Agenda 2030 calls for data to be disaggregated, where relevant at least, “by income, sex [and gender], age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location” (UN, 2020[20]).

Some actors propose including more factors that are common sources of discrimination. For example, religion, health status (HIV), marital and family status (UN, 2017[24]). While improving data availability is an important policy objective for supporting LNOB, choices about indicator disaggregation need to be pragmatic (see Box 6.3).

Box 6.3. Disaggregated LNOB indicators – various approaches

- Finland disaggregates all indicators by sex, disability, and age. Sex-disaggregated data is generally available, age-disaggregated data exists less, and finding data disaggregated by disability is challenging.
- GIZ has set a minimum requirement that every indicator in the results framework be disaggregated by gender and one other vulnerability factor. SDC has adopted the same approach.
- The Caribbean Development Bank always disaggregates by gender, and for some projects by age and disability in addition.

Aligning with the SDGs

While LNOB does not have its own designated targets and indicators in the SDGs, it is reflected in a number of the goals, including most importantly, those calling to end poverty (SDG 1) and counter inequalities (SDG 10). For example, SDG target 10.2 reads *"By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status*."

When development partners and governments align the indicators for their results frameworks as much as possible with the SDGs, this brings all partners together around shared results. All SDGs can be useful for measuring inequalities if disaggregated as either targeted or group-difference indicators to reflect LNOB. In addition, many SDG indicators directly measure economic, social, political and global inequality and discrimination, all of which are important elements of LNOB.

The following is an exemplary, non-exhaustive list of SDG indicators capturing LNOB (UN, 2017[24]):

Indicators on *discrimination* include all those on SDG 5 and many of those on SDG 10, specifically:

- 5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
- 10.3.1 Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law

Indicators relevant for *income and economic inequalities*

- 10.1.1 Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population
- 10.2.1 Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by age, sex and persons with disabilities
- 8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age group and persons with disabilities

Indicators relevant for *social inequalities*:

- 1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable
- 1.a.2 Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)

Indicators relevant for *political inequalities*:

- 16.7.2. Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group
- 16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months

Indicators relevant for *global inequalities*:

- 13.b.1 Number of least developed countries and small island developing states that are receiving specialised support, and amount of support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, for mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change related planning and management, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities
- 16.8.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organisations

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- Integrate LNOB objectives in the national development plan or in country strategy and programmes.
  - **Avoid**: Including LNOB objectives only as a separate category, as this lens should be applied across sectors and priority areas – building on the diagnostics of roots causes of exclusion, inequalities and marginalisation.
- Include qualitative and/or quantitative LNOB indicators at each level of the results chain, considering at which level of the results chain it is supposed to measure change: i.e. at the input, process, output, outcome or impact level. Privilege disaggregated outcome and impact indicators.
- Ensure LNOB indicators are context-specific, provide information about defined groups within a population, and are adapted to the particular level of intervention, i.e. national, sub-national, programme or project-level.
- Make (regular) indicators more LNOB-sensitive by including further disaggregation characteristics or combining multiple characteristics to reflect intersectionality and the multidimensionality of LNOB. In doing so, ensure data is available or easy to collect.
- Align the results frameworks of programme- and project-level interventions with the results frameworks established by governments to ensure country ownership in LNOB definition and measurement.
- Align with the SDG indicators where possible, as this can support more co-ordinated approaches across development partners.
- Engage LNOB target groups in the indicator formulation and include their perspectives in the logic of the intervention.
- Establish a reliable baseline data and realistic target for each LNOB indicator and develop a data-collection and monitoring plan.
- Support capacities to produce inclusive, accessible, and disaggregated data systems and prioritise support to administrative data systems - such as civil registration - that include the whole population.

Resources

- Canada (2021): Global Affairs Canada's approach to feminist evaluation practices, in particular, GAC's approach to including the voices of those left being.
- GIZ (2021): Indicators matter to LNOB: An Indicator Toolbox to leave no one behind in fighting poverty and inequality
- UNFPA (2022), Guidance on integrating the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind in UNFPA evaluations
- UNICEF (2021): A Guidance Note for Leaving No One Behind
- GPEDC (2022): Bern Call to Action (section on LNOB)

6.4. Monitor progress on LNOB

Why is this challenging?

Monitoring development partners' efforts in addressing LNOB is a first important step. Two DAC policy markers track development co-operation activities that target gender equality and disability as principal or significant objectives: the OECD/DAC gender equality policy marker and the OECD-DAC policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. Even though not all LNOB dimensions are covered, these markers help track LNOB commitments and are key accountability tools in the context of the 2030 Agenda. They can contribute to identifying gaps between policy and financial commitments and incentivise efforts to close them.

However, policy markers cannot and do not intend to measure the outcome or impact of a programme or project. They must be complemented by monitoring and evaluation instruments to assess this.

Monitoring and evaluating results for LNOB can be challenging, as the underlying poverty and inequality dynamics can be hard to capture, and the changes required to produce results on LNOB objectives often only become visible as transformational change occurs over the long term. Availability of data also represents a challenge, as it can be difficult to collect and it can be outdated, limited or even biased. Due to these challenges, many donors emphasise performance information (e.g. the type and number of activities supported) to demonstrate how well they conduct development co-operation, rather than focusing on achieving development results (OECD, n.d.[21])

As mentioned above, multidimensional and inclusive approaches are key to addressing LNOB, to enabling sustained escapes from poverty and to preventing impoverishment, and should be streamlined in all aspects of programming, including in the monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes. Iterative and mixed methods – relying on quantitative and qualitative data reflecting lived experiences – are critical to measuring progress in a way that captures the multidimensional and intersecting aspects of LNOB. A combination of tools, mixed methods and frameworks are therefore required to monitor programme implementation and track progress on LNOB. Dedicated strategic evaluations at the organisational level can also help assess the success of mainstreaming LNOB and evaluate the overall effectiveness and impact of this approach in leaving no one behind.

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

Governments

- Look for the most recent available data from various sources – interpret data with caution and triangulate information, as some data can contain biases.

- Use qualitative data and evidence gleaned from focus groups or interviews with individuals from LNOB groups, as these can provide valuable knowledge on transformative change and the views of LNOB groups.
    - **Avoid**: Generalising from narrow evidence. Qualitative methods based on focus groups and interviews offer in-depth and insightful perspectives on the root causes of exclusion and marginalisation, which can be then generalised by applying other qualitative and quantitative methods adjusted on the basis of these insights (with a view to generate relevant metrics for future systematic monitoring of change).
- Ensure that the monitoring captures any unintended consequences of projects and programmes on the situation of excluded groups and people.
- Include civil society and local stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process so that their views can inform the evaluation of results. Such inclusive approaches can help account for complexity and volatility in poverty and inequality dynamics while bringing local knowledge to the forefront to promote more sustainable impact. Local actors can also play a key role in signalling unintended consequences on LNOB.
- To evaluate a programme's contribution to overall progress on LNOB in a given context, use system-level indicators. These indicators track progress of institutions and policies on LNOB.
- Foster co-ordination between public agencies, research institutes, civil society and development partners, as this can help overcome data challenges, produce rapid assessments, improve the use of evidence and raise political will around LNOB.

Development partners

- *(In addition to the above),* report against the DAC policy markers on gender equality and disability.

Good practices

Monitoring LNOB at programme level. While monitoring LNOB in results frameworks matters most at project level due to its contextuality, headquarters can quantitatively monitor the overall LNOB focus of their programmes. Examples include GIZ's portfolio analysis of the number of projects which include LNOB in their results frameworks and SDC's monitoring, at the programme level, the number of people from LNOB groups that benefit from projects.

Using the DAC Evaluation criteria. The DAC evaluation criteria can be used as entry points to asking pertinent questions in order to deepen understanding about the extent to which interventions have promoted progress on LNOB: how, in what ways, and for whom. Reflecting on the multi-dimensional and inter-generational nature of poverty and inequalities, the criteria looking at relevance (e.g. is the intervention reaching the poorest/most vulnerable people?), effectiveness (e.g. do interventions sufficiently account for differential results across groups?) and sustainability (e.g. to what extent does the intervention allow people benefiting from it to maintain their graduation out of poverty?) are especially relevant.

GPEDC Monitoring Framework and LNOB. LNOB is part of the revised Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation's monitoring framework, an exercise that is taking place in 2023. The monitoring framework includes aspects of inclusiveness in the development of country-level strategies and the use of distributional analysis by development partners to define intervention targets and indicators. While the monitoring framework does not address the monitoring of LNOB progress directly, it will give useful information on the availability of appropriate data and the use of data-based assessments for reaching the marginalised for participating countries (GPEDC, 2022[31]).

Resources

- UNDP (2022): Formative evaluation - Integration by UNDP of the Principles of Leaving No One Behind
- GIZ (2021): Indicators Matter to LNOB: An indicator toolbox to leave no one behind in fighting poverty and inequality
- OECD (2020): The OECD-DAC policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities - Handbook for data reporters and users
- OECD (2016), Handbook on the OECD/DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker
- UN (2022): Operationalizing Leaving No One Behind - Good Practice Note for UN Country Teams
- SDC (2018): Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation Guidance: Leave No One Behind
- OECD (2021): DAC Evaluation Criteria
- GPEDC (2023): Monitoring Guidance: LNOB indicators for development effectiveness (2023-26).

6.5. Summary checklist for integrating an LNOB perspective into results frameworks

- ✓ Has the contextual analysis been conducted at a sufficiently granular and disaggregated level?
- ✓ Do the contextual analysis and results framework take into account multidimensionality and the intersectionality of different inequalities?
- ✓ Have key stakeholders and LNOB target groups been consulted during the contextual analysis and in the selection of indicators?
- ✓ Have LNOB-sensitive indicators been integrated at every level of the results chain?
- ✓ Can some of the LNOB-sensitive SDG indicators be used?
- ✓ Where there are data availability challenges, has the project/programme foreseen ways to support further data collection and/or data collection at a disaggregated level?
- ✓ Have relevant mitigation measures to protect vulnerable LNOB groups from risks and unintended consequences related to the project/programme been put in place?
- ✓ Have qualitative data-collection methods been put in place to help capture the views of local populations and LNOB groups during monitoring and evaluation?

7. Monitoring climate adaptation and resilience

Climate change is a global threat faced by all countries across the world. The regular severe floods, fires, droughts and hurricanes underline the current climate emergency. In this context, it is essential to scale up climate adaptation efforts and build resilience against the future impacts of climate change.

Government and development partners both have important roles to play in fostering climate change adaptation efforts, so territories and communities develop in a climate resilient manner.

To support global goals on climate change adaptation and to implement the Paris Agreement, climate change adaptation and resilience concerns will need to be built into all types of results frameworks from the design stage of any strategy, programme or project.

What is Climate Adaptation?

IPCC's definition: In human systems, the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects; human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects (Matthews et al., 2021[23]).

OECD DAC's definition of climate change adaptation activities: An activity should be classified as adaptation-related if it intends to reduce the vulnerability of human or natural systems to the impacts of climate change, including climate vulnerability, by maintaining or increasing resilience, through increased ability to adapt to, or absorb, climate change stresses, shocks and variability and/or by helping reduce exposure to them (OECD, 2018[24])

Issues covered in this module

- Integrating climate change adaptation into results frameworks
- Conducting climate change risk and vulnerability assessments
- Selecting adequate indicators to measure climate adaptation and resilience
- Monitoring results of climate change adaptation initiatives

7.1. Why is it important?

As support for climate change adaptation action continues to grow and as development partners providing climate finance strive to meet the climate finance target of USD 100 billion per year, integrating climate change adaptation and resilience concerns into results frameworks and adequately measuring the effectiveness and outcome results achieved by adaptation projects has never been more important.

Yet international development partners and governments face multiple challenges in measuring climate adaptation and resilience efforts, and in correctly defining and attributing the results and impacts of such adaptation-related investments. These challenges include difficulties related to observing the effectiveness of an adaptation and resilience project unless a climate risk materialises (e.g. without the test of a hurricane or drought), difficulties in establishing the counterfactual (e.g. the capacity of a population to cope, adapt and overcome a climate-induced crisis without the intervention), and challenges related to gaps in data availability, granularity and quality; unclear benchmarks/targets; and rapidly shifting baselines.

The use of adequate results indicators, baselines, and methodological approaches to plan for and monitor climate adaptation and resilience is thus paramount. First, to improve the impact of climate adaptation and resilience efforts. Equally important, to ensure that climate investments indeed align with adaptation goals.

7.2. Integrating climate change adaptation and resilience into results frameworks

Some investments and development interventions can be explicitly designed for the primary purpose of supporting climate change adaptation efforts, in which case they will be designed with specific outcomes related to adaptation in mind. These are called targeted interventions.

However, current concerns about sustainable development call for integrating a lens on climate change adaptation and resilience across all interventions. Mainstreaming climate adaptation concerns involves looking at all strategies, programmes and projects (regardless of the sector or topic) from a climate adaptation and resilience perspective to ensure the sustainability of each intervention by accounting for climate risks and vulnerabilities (e.g. a road construction project in an area subject to intense weather events).

Whether the intervention is targeted specifically to climate change adaptation or integrates a climate change adaptation lens, including climate-sensitive outputs and climate-related indicators and baselines throughout the results chain can ensure that the results framework is also fit to measure progress on climate change adaptation ambitions.

Due to uncertainties related to the future impacts of climate change, the results frameworks for climate change adaptation should be based on flexible and adaptive approaches that can be adjusted throughout the lifetime of the intervention. These adaptive approaches should be applied to all levels of the results chain and be reflected in the monitoring and evaluation phase as well.

Actions to consider

- Climate change adaptation and resilience needs are context-specific and highly dependent on local and regional social, economic and environmental factors. Thus, results frameworks need to be based on adequate context analysis and consultative processes with potentially impacted stakeholders.
- When designing a climate adaptation strategy or programme (and its related results framework), maintain flexibility and keep in mind that climate change impacts are often volatile and difficult to predict, even when using the latest scientific models – although they do provide a close

approximation to the expected change in a particular territory. It is therefore necessary to be able to adapt baselines and indicators to changing scenarios.

- The impact of climate adaptation programmes and projects on increasing climate resilience may only be measurable in the long term. Therefore, consider including longer-term climate 'impacts' in your intervention logic and results chains, with a view to reflecting on how inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes should be shaped in order to contribute to longer-term adaptation and resilience.
- Align results frameworks as much as possible with national results frameworks on climate adaptation and with international dialogues, such as the UNFCCC process.
- Whenever relevant, and even if climate adaptation is not the primary objective of the programme or project, privilege the use of indicators that can account for climate adaptation and resilience considerations (see section 3 below).

Good practice

Some positive experiences and lessons for mainstreaming climate considerations follow.

Box 7.1. Creating enabling conditions for mainstreaming climate considerations

Canada's integration of environmental sustainability in international assistance programming

Global Affairs Canada recognises that environmental sustainability is a critical factor in poverty reduction and sustainable development. It requires that environmental sustainability be reflected in all project outcomes in accordance with the Agency's Sustainable Development Strategy.

An **environmental integration process** is applied to ensure the integration of environmental sustainability in each project. This process includes an environmental analysis of proposed policies and programming and the integration of environmental sustainability considerations in their design, implementation and monitoring. This leads to two main approaches: one integrated and the other targeted.

An **integrated approach** is applied to safeguard or enhance results and the environment through the incorporation of environmental sustainability considerations into all projects. This requires identifying specific environmental indicators and targets corresponding to the environmental sustainability considerations reflected in the project outcomes.

Example of expected outcomes and indicators in an integrated approach:

- *Intermediate outcome: Enhanced sustainable management of healthcare facilities in district X of country Y*
    - *Environment Indicator: #/total health care facilities supported by the project managing biomedical waste in accordance with environmental standards established by the government.*

A **targeted approach** is used when the project targets environment-related opportunities specifically, or when the state of the environment is such that other development efforts would be compromised in the absence of targeted initiatives. This requires developing specific environment outcomes, indicators and targets.

Example of expected outcomes and indicators in a targeted approach:

- *Environment intermediate outcome: Enhanced water quality of rivers in district X of country Y*
    - *Environment Indicator: #/total of kilometres of riverbanks protected with buffer zones of at least 10 metres from agricultural land in district X*

Source: Global Affairs Canada (2022), Results-Based Management for International Assistance Programming: A How-to Guide

Resources

- EU (2020): Monitoring and evaluation of national adaptation policies throughout the policy cycle
- ADEME (2019): Elaboration and implementation of a local adaptation strategy or action plan
- OECD (2009): Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation

7.3. Conducting climate change risk and vulnerability assessments

Before embarking on the design of a results framework that integrates climate change adaptation and resilience concerns, it is important to **conduct a climate change risk and vulnerability assessment.**

What are climate change risk and vulnerability assessments?

A **climate risk assessment** assesses the extent to which climate-related risk impacts on people, assets, value chains, infrastructure and ecosystems. There are a variety of available climate risk assessment methods and both governments and development partners will have to choose what is most appropriate for the specific context within which they are working and considering available resources, capacities and objectives (GIZ, 2022[25]). You can find a variety of tools to carry out these assessments in the "Resources" section below.

Climate vulnerability can be determined by three interacting factors:

- Exposure to climate stressors
- Sensitivity to those stressors
- Adaptive capacity to manage stressors

A climate vulnerability assessment can identify the what, where, when and why of vulnerability, considering the social, economic and environmental systems upon which people depend (USAID, 2016[26]). As with climate risk assessments, there are a variety of methods available and the appropriate method will be dependent on the context, the objectives of the intervention, availability of resources and capacities (see links in resources below). A combined climate risk and vulnerability assessment addresses both the vulnerability to and the impacts of climatic hazards.

Climate change risk and vulnerability assessments are essential to give an understanding of a country's or territory's specific climate vulnerability. They can provide a baseline against which progress on climate change adaptation can be reviewed, and can serve as a useful tool to monitor how adaptation priorities are changing over time. It is important to consider that climate risk and vulnerability assessments will include a number of uncertainties as it is difficult to determine the future impact of climate change in a given context. Climate change risk and vulnerability evolve with time and are tied to a number of other variables, such as the progress of socio-economic development more broadly and technological advancement, which may contribute to mitigating the impact of climate change over time (see Table 7.1).

Conducting climate change risk and vulnerability assessments is resource-intensive. This task will become easier in the future as countries conduct their own risk and vulnerability assessments in the context of their:

a) **National Adaptation Programmes of Action** – plans submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by Least Developed Countries which identify priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate needs with regard to adaptation to climate change (UNFCCC, n.d.[27]);

b) **National Adaptation Plans** – a process established under the Cancun Adaptation Framework of the UNFCCC to identify medium- and long-term adaptation needs of all countries, and develop strategies and programmes to address these needs (UNFCCC, n.d.[28])); and

c) **UNFCCC National Communications** (OECD, 2015[29]).

Table 7.1. Information potentially relevant to risk and vulnerability assessments

Issue	Relevant information
Climate hazard-related information	• Quantitative models that project precipitation and temperature changes at different scales • Quantitative models that examine the consequences of temperature and precipitation changes (e.g. droughts, floods, sea-level rises, changes in pest and disease outbreaks) • Qualitative information (e.g. expert judgment and stakeholder consultations), that can enhance or validate information about local-level climate hazards
Exposure of people and assets to climate hazards	• Hazard maps depicting the location and distribution of people, infrastructure and ecosystems in areas that are or may be affected by hazards
Sensitivity and the degree to which people and assets are affected, positively or negatively, by climate variability and change	• Database of previous impacts of hazards – e.g. crop loss, economic loss, human and animal deaths • Models to estimate the impact of past or future climate hazards on e.g. crops, livestock and ecosystems • Maps depicting the location and distribution of fragile or poor-quality housing, land and infrastructure, as well as degraded ecosystems and marginal populations • Local observations, experiences with climate hazards
Adaptive capacity and the general ability of institutions, systems and individuals to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences	• Development data and indices (e.g. population, inequality, debt, economic productivity, trade flows, education levels, foreign direct investment, disease patterns) • Ecosystem goods and services • Census data, household surveys • Institutional capacity assessments • Local coping and adaptation strategies
Consultations with local communities and stakeholders in the context of a risk and vulnerability assessment are also essential to **understand local conditions and the concerns of local communities**.	

Note: While the above list is comprehensive, it does not cover all the potentially relevant elements associated with a given context.
Source: (GIZ (2013), as cited in OECD, 2015[30]):

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- Take into account vulnerability and how that impacts the ability of populations to adapt to climate change – focus on the vulnerability, discrimination and poverty experienced by people living in the area of intervention and how their exposure to climate change differs from the rest of the population.
- Consult on the risk and vulnerability assessment with local communities, local farmers, civil society and LNOB groups.
  - **Avoid**: Symbolic consultative processes where relevant stakeholders are not present or not empowered to have a meaningful voice. A good understanding of the situation, characteristics and views of potentially impacted populations is fundamental to good assessments
- Consider gender differences and women's experiences of climate change adaptation, in particular the experiences of women in rural areas. Apply an intersectional lens to the analysis to understand how climate change can impact different groups in different ways.
- Use indigenous knowledge where possible to inform climate risk and vulnerability assessments. The combination of scientific information and indigenous knowledge can give a valuable insight into adaptive capacities.
- Consider climate change impacts on biodiversity as well. Preserving and strengthening ecosystems' resilience to climate change is key for human resilience and adaptation capabilities.

Resources

- World Bank (2023): Climate Change Knowledge Portal
- ISIMIP (2023): The Inter-Sectoral Impact Model Intercomparison Project
- GIZ, Adaptation Community: Climate Risk Assessment Method Search Engine
- GIZ (2022): Scoping Study: A Comparison of Climate Risk Assessment Methods to Support Informed Decision-Making
- GIZ (2021): Assessment of climate-related risks: A 6-steps methodology
- IPCC (2022): Key Risks Across Sectors and Regions in: Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- IPCC (2020): the Concept of risk in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report: A summary of cross-Working Group discussions
- Climate ActionTool (2017): Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments
- Climate ADAPT (2023): Assessing Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities
- SMR (2023): Risk Systemicity Questionnaire (Excel)
- SMR (2023): The Resilience Maturity Model
- USAID (2016): Climate Vulnerability Assessment: An Annex to the USAID Climate-Resilient Development Framework

7.4. Selecting adequate indicators to measure climate adaptation and resilience

Defining indicators for climate change adaptation can be challenging due to data availability issues and difficulties related to measuring impact. Often the progress is not measurable until much later or it may be difficult to attribute progress on adaptation to a specific intervention.

Identifying appropriate indicators for capturing climate adaptation and resilience efforts continues to be an area of exploration and experimentation for all steps of the results chain. Given the multifaceted and context-dependent nature of climate adaptation and resilience, as of mid-2023 there is no technical consensus on a final set of indicators for measuring the results of climate adaptation and resilience efforts.

Climate adaptation efforts will vary depending on context and other factors such as local socio-cultural elements. Specific climate adaptation indicators must therefore be designed for each intervention and should be adapted to the context of each intervention, taking into account local climate risks and vulnerabilities.

Due to uncertainties related to the future impacts of climate change, the effectiveness of climate adaptation interventions has been frequently (and imperfectly) measured by focusing on processes and outputs – for instance, indicators that measure the policies and plans put in place, rather than outcomes and how the intervention has reduced climate risks and bolstered adaptive capacity (Jeudy-Hugo, 2022[31]). To compensate for this shortcoming, emphasis must be placed on relying on sound theories of change to link those processes and outputs to the “theorised” outcomes and impacts along the results chain. A regular review and update of the theories of change, based on the latest evidence on the effectiveness of climate adaptation investments, will also be necessary.

Selecting indicators

When defining indicators for results outcomes or impacts of climate adaptation interventions, also consider that the baselines for measurement are not completely fixed (or stable) and the effectiveness of the

interventions is sometimes best measured by comparing (when possible) to the counterfactual scenario, i.e. if the intervention would not have taken place.

Climate risk and vulnerability assessments are an important source of information to ensure that indicators are adapted to the specific context, carefully defined and based on available data. The indicators should be developed based on a consultative approach with national authorities and should be aligned with national adaptation priorities.

- Using indicators that disaggregate by gender and other factors such as disability, age or level of income is essential to prevent maladaptation and ensure that LNOB groups are not made more vulnerable to climate change (see **Module 6.3**). *Maladaptation* is when a project fails to reduce vulnerability to climate change and, in some cases, may even have the opposite effect and exacerbate vulnerability.

Climate adaptation and resilience in the Sustainable Development Goals framework

When development partners and governments align the indicators in their results frameworks as much as possible with the SDGs, all partners are brought together around shared results. The Sustainable Development Goals set out specific targets and indicators related to climate change adaptation in SDG 13 on *Climate Action*. Other SDGs also include important environment-related targets and indicators that could be useful, for instance SDG 6 ("*Clean water and sanitation*"), SDG 7 ("*Affordable and clean energy*"), SDG 11 ("*Sustainable cities and communities*"), SDG 14 ("*Life below water*") and SDG 15 ("*Life on land*").

For illustrative purposes, a couple of examples of climate-related SDG indicators include:

SDG Target 13. 1 – Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

- Indicator 13.1.1: Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population
- Indicator 13.1.2: Number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid

- Use a mix of activity, output, outcome and impact indicators, especially since climate change adaptation and resilience investments will often not produce results in the short term.
  - **Avoid:** including activity/process indicators alone, without any direct or indirect method to assess the actual outcomes or impacts.
- Consider that baselines and targets are difficult to estimate due to the uncertain nature and volatility associated with climate change. Comparing the situation before and after an intervention may not be sufficient for assessing its effectiveness and impact without taking a broader (systems) look at correlates and interactions. The baseline may have to be revised to provide a more accurate understanding of what would have happened in the absence of the intervention (OECD, 2021[32]).
- Aim to use disaggregated data as much as possible, as climate change is global, but adaptation and resilience tend to have local characteristics.
  - **Avoid**: As a nascent area of attention for governments and international development partners, data availability might be a constraint in many jurisdictions. Consider (with other partners) how to pool efforts to progressively institutionalise the collection of data for salient adaptation issues that are particularly relevant for that jurisdiction.

- The selected indicators should be aligned as much as possible with relevant indicators used in national strategies on climate adaptation, hence they should be defined in collaboration with national authorities.
- Ensure that the indicators are aligned with international processes and the global goal of adaptation in Article 7 of the Paris Agreement on enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change.

Good practice

Examples of sets of climate change indicators and other resources follow.

Box 7.2. United Nations' Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators

The United Nations Statistical Commission adopted the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators in March 2022 as the framework for climate change statistics and indicators to be used by countries when preparing their own sets of climate change statistics and indicators. The scope of the Global Set covers the climate change aspects defined by the five policy areas of the IPCC, namely drivers, impacts, vulnerability, mitigation and adaptation. The Global Set is intended to help countries develop national programmes to regularly produce climate change statistics and indicators, in order to improve data availability and support the implementation of the Paris Agreement as well as the climate-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators. It will contribute significantly to filling data gaps and improving data comparability internationally, thus also facilitating the selection of indicators for development interventions and helping to monitor climate adaptation and mitigation.

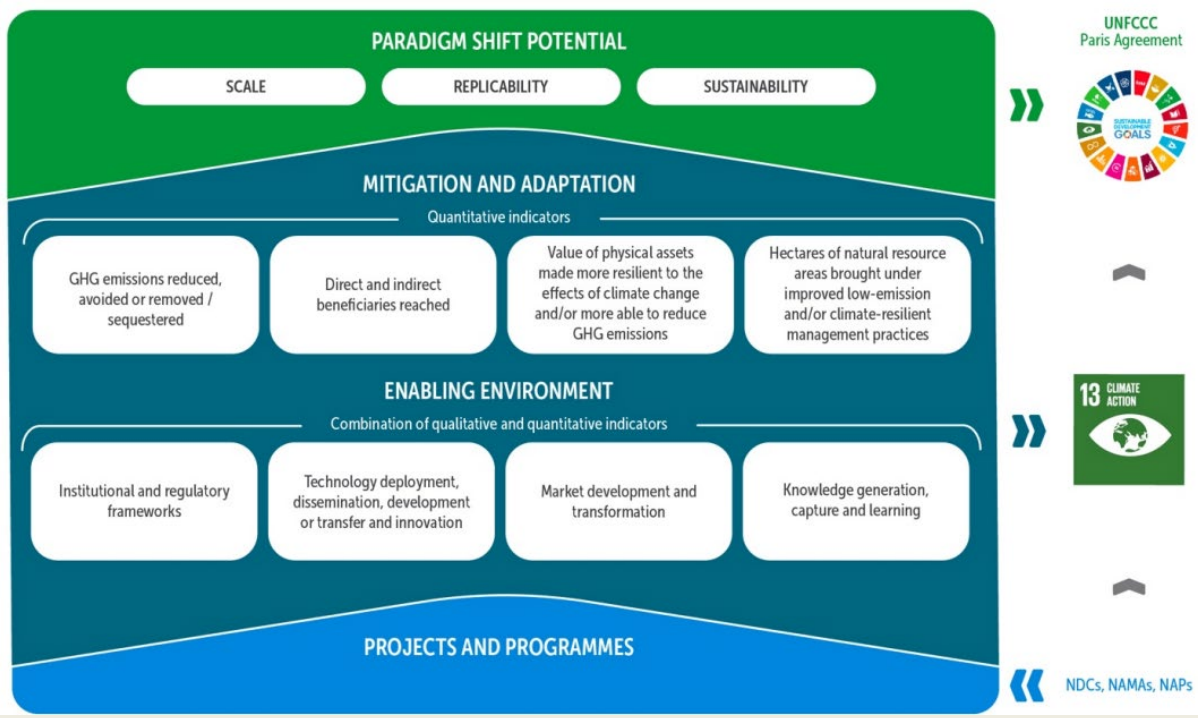
The Global Set includes a Climate Change Statistics and Indicators Self-Assessment Tool (CISAT) which assists countries to assess the resources needed to develop a national programme on climate change statistics. It also includes Implementation Guidelines that specify the key steps needed to produce national climate change statistics.

Source: United Nations (2023), Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators, Implementation Guidelines, United Nations Statistics Division,

Box 7.3. Green Climate Fund's Integrated Results Management Framework and Indicators

This results framework enables tracking how projects and programmes are contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation outcomes, as well as how these interventions are supporting enabling conditions and environments that can promote a paradigm shift. It includes two sets of four core indicators that monitor contributions to mitigation and adaptation on the one hand, and support to creating an enabling environment for the climate response, on the other:

Figure 7.1. Overview of the Integrated Results Framework



Each of the *core indicators* includes a set of *supplementary indicators* which enable the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to track progress at a more granular level. For example, see the supplementary indicators below for the core indicator "*Direct and indirect beneficiaries reached*":

- Number of beneficiaries adopting improved and/or new **climate-resilient livelihood options**
- Number of beneficiaries with **improved food security**
- Number of beneficiaries with more **climate-resilient water security**
- Number of beneficiaries covered by new or improved **early warning systems**
- Number of beneficiaries **adopting innovations** that strengthen climate change resilience
- Number of beneficiaries **living in buildings** that have **increased resilience** against climate hazards
- Change in **expected losses of lives** due to the impact of extreme climate-related disasters in the geographic area of the GCF intervention (number of individuals)

Data for all seven supplementary indicators is expected to be disaggregated by sex (female/male).

Source: Green Climate Fund (2022), Integrated Results Management Framework: Results Handbook (includes indicator sets)

Resources

- EU (2023). Results and Indicators for Development: Resilience, Conflict Sensitivity and Peace (see proposed indicators for environmental resilience)
- EU (2023). Results and Indicators for Development: Sustainable Cities (see proposed indicators for strengthening urban resilience to natural and manmade disasters as well as other indicators related to climate adaptation and resilience).
- EU (2023): Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (see proposed indicators for resilience and adaptation in agriculture)
- United Nations (2022): Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators
- United Nations (2022): Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators, Implementation Guidelines
- OECD (2020): Common Ground between the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework
- GIZ (2013): Adaptation made to measure - A guidebook to the design and results based monitoring of climate change adaptation projects
- GIZ, IISD (2014): Repository of Adaptation Indicators, Real case examples from national Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
- World Bank (2020): Adaptation Principles: A Guide for Designing Strategies for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience
- Climate ADAPT (2022): Monitoring and evaluation for climate change adaptation: A synthesis of tools, frameworks and approaches.
- EarthEval (2017): Good Practice Study on Principles for Indicator Development, Selection, and Use in Climate Change Adaptation Monitoring and Evaluation
- Climate ADAPT (2023): Adaptation Support Tool

7.5. Monitoring results of climate change adaptation initiatives

Effective monitoring and evaluation of climate change adaptation and resilience efforts can foster enhanced learning and lower the risk of maladaptation.

Unfortunately, many governments and development partners underinvest in developing monitoring and evaluation systems, and this is particularly true for climate adaptation. The reasons for this include:

- *Perception of burden:* Measuring climate adaptation and resilience indicators adds additional workload, even for organisations that have well-established monitoring and evaluation systems. Unless climate adaptation and resilience are the primary goals of a strategy or intervention, the default behaviour might be to exclude monitoring indicators that capture those dimensions.
- *Lack of technical consensus:* The lack of a universal consensus on indicators for climate adaptation that could help harmonise measurement and data-gathering efforts across development actors constitutes another shared challenge; and so does the diversity of sectors concerned by climate adaptation projects – ranging from transport to agriculture to water management.
- *Short-termism:* The impacts of climate adaptation and resilience efforts are, in some cases, only measurable years after the project has been completed. This inability to observe results in the short term may discourage efforts to monitor this area of concern.
- *Complexity of attribution:* Multiple drivers, such as socio-economic development and technological advancement, may also contribute to a desired outcome or impact and it may be difficult to attribute the outcome/impact to a particular intervention (OECD, 2021[32]).

In terms of international process and the development of national monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the IPCC's Working Group II on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability has found that countries are increasingly progressing in the development and application of monitoring and evaluation systems for climate change adaptation, even if only about 25% of countries (which are parties to the UNFCCC) had an M&E framework in place in August 2021. New and updated Nationally Determined Contributions are also starting to contain more quantitative time-bound targets that can help facilitate the monitoring of progress on adaptation (UNFCC, 2023[33]). It is important to look to these international processes for inspiration and align monitoring and evaluation approaches as much as possible with what governments are developing in this context.

Module 4 presented standard good practice to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of results frameworks. While these practices and suggestions also apply to the specific issue of climate adaptation and resilience, the additional actions listed below can help mitigate the issues listed above and improve results monitoring.

Actions to consider and pitfalls to avoid:

- Align with national monitoring and evaluation systems as much as possible and ensure co-ordination between different sectors and levels.
- Ground monitoring and evaluation objectives and processes in thorough consultative practices with those stakeholders most at risk of experiencing the climate impacts (OECD, 2021[32]).
- Apply mixed methodologies and rely on both quantitative and qualitative assessments to monitor climate adaptation efforts and changes in climate risks (OECD, 2021[32]). Keep in mind that indigenous and local knowledge can provide important qualitative information relevant to understanding sustainability and resilience.
- Consider information from international monitoring processes such as the Paris Agreement's Global Stocktake, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Take into account that the impacts of climate adaptation programmes and projects on increasing climate resilience may only be measurable in the long term.
- Due to the uncertainties related to climate adaptation, the information from monitoring and evaluation should be used to adjust future policy development and interventions on climate adaptation.
- Given methodological uncertainties as to how best to monitor adaptation and resilience, create spaces for cross-learning, encourage innovative approaches, and capture and disseminate lessons and acquired knowledge from successive iterations.
- Engage local and national stakeholders in assessing emerging findings from monitoring and evaluation to foster learning through an iterative and adaptive approach.
- Give visibility to your climate adaptation and resilience results in your overarching results reporting mechanisms.
    - **Avoid**: While this is a difficult area to communicate on, avoid using very technical language when sharing your results. Contrasting stories of resilient and impacted communities, together with your results data, can help stakeholders better understand the stakes at hand, while raising awareness and attention to the climate adaptation agenda.

Good practice

Example of the African Development Bank approach, lessons and other resources follow.

Box 7.4. African Development Bank's Strategic Framework on Climate Change and Green Growth

The African Development Bank (AfDB) introduced a Strategic Framework on Climate Change and Green Growth in 2021, which consists of an Action Plan that articulates how the Bank's individual operations will be implemented and includes targets, indicators as well as a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL) framework. The bank monitors its climate change actions to be able to track, evaluate, correct, report, and learn from previous projects, as well as to assess the bank's impact through climate investments.

The results framework in the Climate Change and Green Growth Strategic Framework (2021–30) and the Action Plan (2021-25) are structured in line with the broader Results Measurement Framework of the institution. There are four levels of indicators:

- **Level 1***: Contribution.* Development outcome and impact indicators that monitor development progress in Africa, in areas which the Bank is seeking to contribute to
- **Level 2***: Attributable results:* Sector and project results (outputs/outcomes) indicators
- **Level 3:** *Operational performance*. Indicators related to the effectiveness of Bank operations
- **Level 4:** *Financing.* Input indicators, measuring the allocation and efficiency of investments.

Source: OECD (2022), Learning and Adapting in turbulent times, 14th Results Community Workshop, Key Messages

Resources

- UNFCC (2022): Adaptation Committee, Draft technical paper on monitoring and evaluation of adaptation at the national and subnational level
- OECD (2022): Adaptation in the global stocktake, OECD/IEA Climate Change Expert Group Papers
- OECD (2015): National Climate Change Adaptation – Emerging Practices in Monitoring and Evaluation
- OECD (2021): Strengthening Climate Resilience: Guidance for governments and development co-operation
- DTU (2016): Monitoring & Evaluation for climate change adaptation: A summary of key challenges and emerging practice. Understanding, discussing and exemplifying the key challenges of M&E for adaptation
- ADEME (2016). Monitoring and evaluating climate change adaptation at local and regional levels: Learning from international experience to develop an M&E methodology

7.6. Summary checklist for integrating climate adaptation in results frameworks

- ✓ Is the results framework based on adequate context analysis and consultative processes with potentially impacted stakeholders?
- ✓ Is the results framework aligned with national results frameworks on climate adaptation and with international dialogues, such as the UNFCCC process?
- ✓ Is the climate adaptation strategy or programme (and its related results framework) flexible enough to adapt to changing climate impact scenarios?
- ✓ Does the intervention logic and results chain include longer-term climate impacts?
- ✓ Have local communities, local farmers, civil society and relevant LNOB groups been consulted in the preparation of the climate change risk and vulnerability assessment? Has the climate risk and vulnerability assessment been based on a combination of scientific information and indigenous knowledge of adaptive capacities?
- ✓ Does the climate risk and vulnerability assessment take into account gender differences and women's experiences of climate change adaptation, in particular the experiences of women in rural areas? Has an intersectional lens been applied to understand how climate change can impact different groups in different ways?
- ✓ Does the results framework include a mix of activity, output, outcome and impact indicators, especially since climate change adaptation and resilience investments will often not produce results in the short term?
- ✓ Is disaggregated data available? Even if climate change is global, climate adaptation and resilience tend to have local characteristics.
- ✓ Are the indicators aligned as much as possible with relevant indicators used in national strategies on climate adaptation and with international processes such as the global goal of adaptation in Article 7 of the Paris Agreement on enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change?
- ✓ Is the monitoring and evaluation plan aligned with country's monitoring and evaluation systems? Does it maximise synergies and harmonisation of indicators and data?
- ✓ Have mixed methodologies and both quantitative and qualitative assessments been applied to monitor climate adaptation efforts and changes in climate risks?
- ✓ Has information from international monitoring processes such as the Paris Agreement's Global Stocktake, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction been considered?
- ✓ Is there awareness that the impacts of climate adaptation programmes and projects on increasing climate resilience may only be measurable in the long term?
- ✓ Is the information from monitoring and evaluation used to adjust future policy development and interventions on climate adaptation?
- ✓ Have spaces been created for cross-learning and disseminating lessons and acquired knowledge from successive iterations on monitoring and evaluation of climate adaptation and resilience? Do these spaces engage local and national stakeholders.
- ✓ Is sufficient visibility given to the climate adaptation and resilience results in your overarching results reporting mechanisms? Are you avoiding using very technical language in sharing your climate adaptation and resilience results?

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