

# **CSCF Monitoring, Evaluation and Lesson Learning Guidelines**

## **1. Introduction**

These monitoring, evaluation and lesson learning guidelines are for projects supported by DFID's Civil Society Challenge Fund (CSCF).

The guidelines explain why it is important to develop good systems for monitoring, evaluation (M&E) and for learning and sharing lessons. They provide details on the CSCF requirements for monitoring and evaluation, with specific guidance on logframes, indicators and baselines. They also explain what lessons grant holders should be looking for and how these tools will be used.

Good monitoring and evaluation is important because these activities:

- support accountability for the effective use of funds, both upwards to DFID, parliament and UK public – and downwards to those a project seeks to benefit,
- improve performance by focusing projects on delivering outputs and achieving outcomes and impact,
- provide a system to record lessons learned which can be shared and used by DFID and others to improve strategies, project design and activities.

## **2. The CSCF Monitoring & Evaluation Framework**

Monitoring is a continuous internal process, conducted by project managers to check the progress of development interventions – in this case CSCF projects – against pre-defined objectives and plans (outputs and activities) as set out in the logical framework.

Evaluations take place towards the end of the project. They ask what has happened and why, and answer specific questions related to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project. Evaluations make use of the information recorded during the monitoring process.

The CSCF uses a mixture of monitoring and evaluation to fulfil both lesson learning and accountability functions. Accountability works in two directions, financial (upward) accountability for the effective use of funds to DFID and the UK public, and (downward) accountability to the people in whose name the funds are raised for the achievement of objectives which impact on stakeholders and lead to poverty reduction. Identifying lessons learnt is a key aspect of monitoring and evaluation. Lesson sharing is emphasised in all reporting. The CSCF intends that these lessons are shared, learned from and applied so that they continually improve development practice.

### **3. Reporting requirements**

The main monitoring tools for the CSCF are logical frameworks, quarterly financial reports, annual reports and the project completion report.

We ask for an independent external evaluation to be carried out towards the completion of a project. The Project Completion Report (PCR) should address any issues raised in the evaluation and reflect on its recommendations, when laying out the way ahead after the period of funding ceases. The evaluation and the PCR should be submitted within three months of the completion of the project.

In addition, we will ask grant holders to provide us with material for case studies. This material will be used in DFID internal and external communications to illustrate the impact of our work with civil society organisations. Case study material should be provided annually from year 2 onwards at the same time as the Annual Report. We may also ask for case study material to be submitted earlier to meet DFID publication requirements. Where this is the case there will be no further requests for case study material that year.

All reports require grant holders to complete an Achievement Rating Scale (ARS). The format for this is shown in the templates for each type of report. It is important that the overall score and justification is filled in. We no longer require detailed explanation about activities however an overall assessment of the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of activities is required. The ARS should follow the outputs and indicators used in the logframe and all should be numbered.

The monitoring and evaluation requirements for CSCF projects are listed on the next page:

Requirement of grant holder	Timing	TripleLine / DFID responsibility
<p><b>Review and refine logframe at project inception</b> to prepare for use as a project management tool</p>	<p>Within 3 months of grant approval</p>	<p>Provide feedback and approval of revised logframe.</p>
<p><b>Quarterly financial reports</b> summarising expenditure (as part of the quarterly grant claims process – for further details, see CSCF Financial Management Guidelines)</p>	<p>At the end of each quarter.</p>	<p>Provide feedback or process payment.</p>
<p><b>Annual Reports</b> making use of regular monitoring and reflection over the year amongst the project team and their stakeholders to check whether the project is on track and leading towards the objectives laid out in the logframe.</p> <p><a href="#">Annual Report Form</a></p>	<p>Due 30 June each year (apart from the final year). Covers the period from 1 April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. If a project covers less than 3 months of a reporting year, there is no need to submit an annual report for that year. Instead it should be rolled into the previous or subsequent annual report.</p>	<p>Provide feedback and agree changes to the logframe or risk status of the project so that DFID's and Triple Line's systems can be updated.</p> <p>If changes to the logframe are agreed (in writing), extra care should be taken to ensure all parties make use of the same amended logframe from that point onward.</p>
<p>Material for <b>case studies</b> which will illustrate project achievements and allow DFID to publicise how funding is being used to reduce poverty in ministerial speeches, on DFID's website and in other publications.</p> <p><a href="#">Case Studies Template</a></p>	<p>Annually from year 2 and onwards, at the same time as the Annual Report.</p>	<p>Identify and use appropriate case studies for dissemination</p>

<p><b>Final evaluations</b> should note what happened and why, assess impact and identify lessons from the process of implementation that may be of use to others.</p> <p>Please refer to the <a href="#">Evaluation Terms of Reference</a> for guidance on what to include.</p>	<p>Towards the end of the project and before completing the Project Completion Report</p>	<p>Triple Line to provide feedback on evaluation report to grant holder and DFID.</p> <p>Account for the use of CSCF funds and use lessons to develop knowledge across DFID and to other development partners.</p>
<p>Complete the <b>Project Completion Report</b> which provides an important record of what has happened and been achieved over the lifetime of the project.</p> <p><a href="#">Project Completion Report Form</a></p>	<p>Within 3 months of the end of DFID funding</p>	<p>Triple Line to provide feedback on PCR to grant holder and DFID.</p> <p>Collate lessons learnt and disseminate as appropriate.</p>

#### **4. What makes for good monitoring and evaluation practice**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should be integrated as part of the project design and project management process from the outset. M&E should allow for reflection and provide a reporting system for project managers and stakeholders. Monitoring (including setting baseline indicators and gathering data), evaluation and reporting must be planned for, managed and resourced. These tasks are an essential part of good project management: they are not simply a statistical task or external obligation.

To ensure these processes work well, CSCF projects should:

- Identify clear purpose and output statements for the project and set these out in a logical framework as required in the proposal.
- Establish specific and measurable indicators, including targets for the project purpose and outputs. Indicators should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timebound).
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for monitoring and (internal and external) evaluation.
- Make sure staff time and a budget are set aside for data collection, monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities.
- Set up monitoring systems at the outset, including the collection of baseline data.

#### **5. The logframe**

The logframe is used in DFID and most other international development agencies to strengthen the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects. It is an important management tool to describe logically why carrying out particular activities is expected to achieve the outputs (results) that will together produce the change and overall impact specified at the purpose level. All CSCF projects must have a logframe. Only the first column needs to be completed at the concept note stage, but the whole logframe needs to be completed and submitted as a component of full proposals.

The logframe is useful for anyone involved in a CSCF project as:

- It brings together in one place a clear, concise and accessible explanation of all of the key components of a project.
- It clarifies how the project is expected to work and what it is going to achieve, and helps to ensure that inputs, activities, outputs and purpose fit together.
- It identifies the main factors related to the success of the project by summarising in the final column both the assumptions and the risks that the project team will need to manage.
- It clarifies how project progress and success (qualitative and quantitative) will be assessed and provides the basis for monitoring and evaluation.

The logframe must be reviewed and reported against annually in the Annual Report, and at the end of the project in the Project Completion Report. The logframe forms the basis of the contractual relationship between DFID and the project team. DFID expects that the project will achieve what was stated in the purpose by the end of the project in exchange for the funding supplied. However, the logframe is a prediction, the situation on the ground may change during the course of project implementation, requiring adjustments to outputs and output indicators in order to achieve the purpose. Any significant changes in the project should be communicated to Triple Line as soon as possible via email. Once agreed, the changes should be stated in the Annual Report and logframe.

It is the revised logframe which should be used in subsequent annual reports, the evaluation and the PCR.

### **5.1. Making the logframe fit for measuring CSCF impact**

The objective of the CSCF is to support civil society organisations to help poor and excluded people to enhance their capacity to organise and get heard, and to demand better services and better access to them. The CSCF as a whole needs to provide evidence of measurable impact on poor people's lives and evidence that the governance changes to sustain that impact are actually happening.

To do this, CSCF projects are responsible for setting objectives in their logframes that will enable Triple Line and DFID to monitor each project's performance against the aims of the fund. This means that:

- A CSCF project's goal should show the wider development changes the project will contribute to. At the highest level, this would be the Millennium Development Goals.
- A CSCF project's purpose-level objectives should be focused on changes in the empowerment of the poor and their capacity to demand their rights (and changes in the access to and quality of services where relevant). The project team is expected to be able to achieve the project purpose by the end of the funding period.
- A CSCF project's outputs are selected on the basis of being those outputs (or outcomes/results) that together are necessary to achieve the project purpose. The project's activities are designed to contribute to the achievement of the outputs. Note that there should be separate outputs for capacity building and building support for development (for CSCF projects from 2009 and onwards).

During the first few months of the grant period, Triple Line will work with prospective grant holders to ensure that their logframes are in a form that will enable grant holders, DFID and Triple Line to assess results and measure impact of the CSCF programme.

The context in which a project is operating may change during the lifetime of the project. Some of the assumptions that the project made at the start may

alter over time. The logframe is designed to be a living document and a practical management tool which can be revised and updated in agreement with Triple Line/DFID. The purpose statement cannot be changed but outputs and indicators may be amended. It is expected that indicators will be strengthened on the basis of baseline data by the time the first annual report.

By the end of the project, results may not be exactly as planned. However, there will still be some impact and change both intended and unintended, positive and even in some cases negative changes. This information needs to be recorded so lessons can be learned. Annual Reports and the final evaluation and Project Completion Report provide an opportunity for this. Through an honest examination of what actually happened against the planned results important lessons for future projects can be learned.

## **5.2. Logframe matrix**

The logframe should be simple and concise. Goal, Purpose and Outputs must be specified in full, and anticipated activities should be summarised. The logframe should be no more than 4 sides of A4 paper. It should be a stand-alone document explaining the intentions of the project comprehensively, at first glance, to the reader.

The example on the next page shows the basic logframe format. In designing the project it is normal practice to start with the main problem that will be addressed and then to work down the levels logically, analysing the key causal factors contributing to the problem. This 'problem tree' is then used to construct the positive logframe, identifying activities and outputs that contribute to the achievement of the purpose which should be a positive statement related to the main problem. The next step is to consider the resources required as inputs to complete the activities. Having done this, it will be necessary to consider whether the resources required are likely to be available and appropriate to the situation and then to modify the framework accordingly – in other words, plan downwards, think upwards.

It is also important to note that the best logframes are designed with stakeholder involvement to ensure everyone concerned understands the relationship between inputs and the desired outcomes and impact. Both the direct beneficiaries (primary stakeholders) and project partners (secondary stakeholders) should be involved in the formulation of the project logframe.

More detailed guidance on developing Logical Frameworks can be found in [The Tools for Development Handbook](#) (section 5, Logical Frameworks). Note that Tools for Development indicates that progress towards the Goal should be measured. This is not a requirement for the CSCF.

<b>Project Summary (NS)</b>	<b>Measurable Indicators</b>	<b>Means of Verification</b>	<b>Important Assumptions</b>
<p><b>GOAL:</b></p> <p>Higher level goal to which the project will contribute (e.g. MDGs, poverty reduction). Please note that the goal is not intended to be achieved through the project alone.</p>			<p>What external conditions are essential for the project to make its expected contribution to the goal?</p>
<p><b>PURPOSE:</b></p> <p>What will be achieved? Consider what will change, who will benefit and how, and the impact the project will have in relation to the CSCF aims.. This should be one statement.</p>	<p>The quantitative measures or qualitative evidence by which achievement of the purpose will be judged. These should be numbered.</p>	<p>Sources of information that will be used to assess the indicator(s) These should be numbered according to the numbering used in the indicators.</p>	<p>Risks and external conditions on which the success of the project depends.</p>
<p><b>OUTPUTS:</b></p> <p>Identify the set of realistic measurable outputs (outcomes/results) that will be needed to work together to ensure the achievement of the Purpose (Outputs are not simply completed activities – if training is the activity then a completed training session is simply a completed activity, behaviour change as a result of receiving the training would be an output). Normally projects have four or five outputs. These should be numbered,</p>	<p>SMART Indicators must be included for each output. Preparing useful and timebound indicators is an essential element for effective monitoring and reporting. These should be numbered and correspond to the output numbering.</p>	<p>Sources of information to be used to identify whether the indicators have been met These should be numbered according to the numbering used in the indicators.</p>	<p>Risks - factors not within the control of the project that may restrict the achievement of the outputs or the achievement of the purpose, even if all the outputs were achieved</p>
<p><b>ACTIVITIES:</b></p>	<p>A summary of the project budget and other key inputs and resources to complete the activities</p>		

These are the tasks to be completed to produce the outputs. They should be given numbers corresponding to the relevant output.

### 5.3. Developing good indicators

Logframes provide useful management tools to assess progress when good indicators, based on collectable data have been selected, and project staff are clear about their responsibilities for collecting the data. Indicators make it possible to observe and report progress and demonstrate results. They can also help the project team to make decisions about what they need to do when progress against particular outputs is not satisfactory.

DFID defines an indicator as “a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor”.

**CSCF indicators must be SMART:** Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timebound. The table on the next page is a guide to understanding the characteristics of SMART indicators:

Selection criteria for indicators				
Indicator selection criteria	Outcome	Poor proposal for an indicator	Why indicator is <u>inadequate</u>	Possible refinement of indicator (within a given timeframe)
<b>Specific</b> or “Precise meaning”	Better understanding of UN mandates and UN work.	Government officials, social leaders speak about UN.	Who one should consider a social leader is arguable. No baseline/target.	Number of parliamentary or media references to (specified) UN conferences or resolutions up from 10 to 30 per year.
<b>Specific</b> or “Valid “	Job creation through micro-enterprise.	Micro-capital finance available in 5 regions, up from 2.	Availability of finance is a <i>means</i> , not an end result. The <i>purpose</i> is to create employment growth.	Increase from 200 to 500 in number of people <i>employed</i> by trained micro-enterprises.
<b>Measurable</b> or “Practical”	Enhanced capacity of school planning system.	Improved job prospects for those who leave school early.	Job prospects can only be assessed when students graduate – many years from now. No baseline/target.	Increase in school enrolment rate from 85% to 95%.
<b>Attainable</b> or “Clear direction”	Transparency in public sector finances.	Reduced number of corruption cases.	Transparency awareness may (at least initially) lead to number of prosecutions going <i>up</i> – not <i>down</i> . No baseline/target.	Policy and practice changed to make protocols of tender board meetings available for public inspection (yes/no).
<b>Relevant</b> or “Owned”	Local development planning responds to priorities of the poor.	Increase from 50 to 200 in number of community funding proposals submitted to local planning authority.	Beneficiaries do not care about how many proposals are <i>received</i> , but how many are <i>approved</i> .	Percent of local development funds actually allocated to community initiatives (submitted by NGOs, CSOs) increased from 25% to 50%.
<b>Trackable/Timebound</b> or “Data availability” and related to timed milestones so that progress can be shown during the course of implementation	Professional standards and independence of media strengthened.	Quality of journalistic coverage in terms of independence, ethics, professional standards as well as coverage of vulnerable groups.	Too many elements in the indicator, all open to subjective judgment. No national data collection. No baseline. Can have professional standards without covering vulnerable groups. No indication of how to judge progress over time.	Increase in number of media independently established and financed (from 2 to at least 6), by end of year 2. Public survey results with satisfaction with ethical media coverage of at least 40%., by end of year 3.

Based on UNDP guidance: <http://www.undp.org/eo/methodologies.htm>

## **5.4. Baselines**

Baselines are a quantitative or qualitative description of the situation at the start of the project. Articulating this clearly allows for progress to be demonstrated as things change. In advocacy work changes may be subtle but significant, involving changes in knowledge, understanding and attitude that lead to changes in personal behaviour and collective behaviour in the form of policy or legal change, or the actual implementation or enforcement of existing laws. Baseline data may already have been collected in making the case in the project proposal. If not, projects should build baseline studies into the first year of project implementation. Failure to do this means that project staff may find it difficult to show progress or demonstrate impact later on.

## **6. Lesson Learning and Dissemination**

During the lifetime of a project many lessons will be learnt. Sometimes they will be lessons from success and sometimes they will be hard but useful lessons learnt from failure. These lessons may help others to build on what worked well or avoid similar mistakes.

To tease out lessons, project teams need to understand what works - or has not worked - where, with whom, under what circumstances, and why. This means being able to analyse the context in which the work was done, what work was done and what the outcomes of that work were. At the planning stage the logframe will help project teams to understand the relationship between these three factors.

Lessons might arise from interesting problems and how they have been tackled, in what circumstances and with what success. There might be other lessons about the assumptions that were made and how these turned out not to be right. Other people may avoid making the same assumptions. Risks may have been poorly identified, or could have been managed better.

Lesson learning can only happen when there is time to reflect on practice, identify lessons, publicise them to others and when others have the chance to absorb and apply the lessons. Ideally project teams should schedule regular meetings for this type of reflection on the project and to record monitoring information. In the first instance monitoring should be giving the project team and stakeholders the chance to learn lessons and improve their practice. This requires open-mindedness in reviewing progress so that difficulties can be acknowledged rather than disguised.

### **6.1. What lesson learning areas are partners in CSCF looking for?**

The CSCF funds a broad variety of projects but there are a number of lessons which will be of interest to all partners. These include:

- How did you get organised for making an impact and lesson sharing?
- How did you enable your target group to get heard through effective empowerment and advocacy?

- What better services and access for marginalised groups were you able to provide in difficult circumstances and how could this be sustained?
- What innovative service delivery were you pioneering and what would we need to think about to apply this elsewhere?

For the whole of the CSCF portfolio of projects, DFID would want to be able to learn:

- How can the UK partner best add value?
- What can be learnt overall about the reasons for success and failure?
- What lessons can be learnt from the way the CSCF process is being managed?

## **6.2. Audience and means of dissemination**

Lessons need to be targeted to be shared effectively. It may be helpful when listing lessons to name whom you think the specific audience for the specific lesson might be. This will help others to organise the information in the most accessible way. Different audiences might be:

- DFID (the CSCF fund managers, Civil Society Department or other parts of DFID)
- Other funding agencies
- UK support organisations
- Overseas CSOs by type (e.g. TUs), and by sector (e.g. health, education)
- Partner governments

The Annual Report provides an opportunity for documenting lessons learned. DFID uses these lessons internally to inform future planning, policy and strategy.

Projects should also consider how information about the project and lessons that may have widespread value can be disseminated through their own CSO networks, using newsletters, publications, workshops and seminars and by allowing regional staff to meet together to share experiences.