North-South Series for Local Authorities

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M&Eting the need for results

Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation
for Municipal International Cooperation

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. WHY THIS BASIC BOOK ABOUT M&ETING THE NEED FOR RESULTS?

Because municipal international cooperation is like high level sports

'Knowledge is power', is an old saying that applies to the world of high level sports and beyond. Based on objective data collected by neutral devices, such as stopwatches, heart rate monitors or power meters, athletes are constantly kept up to date on the possibilities and behaviour of their bodies in order to improve their performance.

But how does high level sports relate to the story of municipal international cooperation? Apart from the fact that a certain level of endurance is a minimum requirement for both disciplines, there are more parallels to be drawn. In 2013 the development cooperation sector is under increasing pressure to show tangible, concrete results. This is also the case for municipal international cooperation, which is still a relatively new agent within the entire sector.

International arrangements such as the Paris Declaration (2005) and the Busan Partnership (2011) emphasise the importance of a result-oriented approach. Particularly in times of economic and financial crisis, sponsors want to see concrete results in exchange of financial support. This is no different in the context of local authorities. Cities and municipalities use public resources in order to support such programmes, which may or may not be co-financed by national or regional governments.

Because monitoring and evaluation support the municipal policy

This basic book aims to meet the growing need of high-quality monitoring of the implementation of plans within the programmes of municipal international cooperation. The objective of the introduction is to present the basic principles of planning, monitoring and evaluation to the reader. High-quality monitoring starts with good, clear planning, regardless of the tools or methodology used.

The following cartoon sums up perfectly what M&E is all about.[1] M&E helps verify whether our action is achieving the planned effect. That is what result-oriented project management is about. The man on his cloud is convinced that his plan to grow small plants is working. The necessity of watering the plants was clearly observed in the course of the planning process. The offered solution was obvious and this action/activity (watering) would support the plants' growth process. Everything was implemented as planned and yet it failed to contribute to the pre-defined objective, because either the cloud was blown away by the wind or the watering simply had to be executed differently or the process was affected by other factors as well.

1 The caricatures are from Herrero, S. (2012), *Integrated Monitoring, inProgress* (see bibliography), with thanks to InProgress for the use of these cartoons (www.inprogress.com).

These decisive factors may or may not have been possible to predict, may or may not have an external cause… That is not the issue. If we want the plants to grow, we need to check regularly that what we are doing is contributing to the intended effect. We can draw lessons from this process and we can allow other parties wanting to grow plants to draw lessons as well. And that is where M&E comes in.

M&Eting the need for results is therefore a necessity: monitoring and evaluation are important, not because they are an obligation or enforced, but because they help understand and see more clearly what your project achieves in practice.

What can you expect?

The subject of this introduction in M&E is municipal international cooperation in its broadest sense. We do not only focus on strengthening the administrative capacity of the twin town, we also take into account the local authority's activities and plans in order to broaden support in Flanders. We are convinced that the terms we offer here can be a comprehensive framework to define activities, results, objectives and indicators that are applicable to the city-to-city cooperation and the activities in the North. They are the general principles for exercises in strategic and operational planning. By extension, this basic book can also provide inspiration for general planning exercises within the context of local government. This inspiration can also be used for monitoring, accountability and learning processes within the municipality. Of course certain techniques, methods or concepts still have to be moulded and adjusted to the specific context of the municipal activities. Undoubtedly not all steps or methodologies apply to all individual municipal activities and choices will have to be made here and there. It is our objective to provide a basic introduction that is as complete as possible to the world of monitoring and evaluation and how these are connected to the planning stage.

This basic book is a starting point. It provides the basic terms and principles for planning, monitoring and evaluation and it aims to invite local authorities and their partners to take the next step when they finish reading it. VVSG invites local authorities to follow a process that searches and experiments with a tool that is custom moulded for the cities and municipalities, a tool that offers an adequate foundation for planning and measuring, for accountability and for learning from the implementation on an individual, collective and certainly also institutional level. This way, M&E can become a tool to pursue and improve municipal policy.

Knowledge is indeed power. However, certain aspects are mainly measured for learning purposes. We can learn how to improve our programmes, how our partner relationship with a municipality in the South is perceived and what the scope is of our activities in our own municipality to raise awareness. The objective is to know whether we have achieved what we planned and what we have learned from that process. As in high level sports, the objective is not to stop cycling half way up a mountain and especially to see how we can approach things differently or more quickly next time (and how we can advise other climbers based on our own experience). This basic book is mainly meant as a guide to avoid becoming discouraged at the bottom of the mountain. Its main objective is to offer guidance to integrate M&E even more in municipal international cooperation. A first step towards *Mo-Eting the Needs for Results*.

"This basic book is mainly meant as a guide to avoid becoming discouraged at the bottom of the mountain."

1.2. WHAT IS MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)?

The concepts of monitoring and evaluation are closely related, but do not have the same meaning. Below we clarify the difference and we define the terms.

1.2.1. Definitions

Monitoring

Monitoring is about systematically and continuously following the progress of an activity or project in order to verify whether the implementation is going according to plan and to decide whether any adjustments are necessary based on the gathered information. For example, if it appears that you are never going to attract the planned number of guests for your world party, perhaps you should invest more in advertising and communication, or when it becomes clear that your twin town is suddenly without a coordinator to organise an exchange between schools, you should meet with the twin town to discuss a solution.

The monitoring is usually done by the project owners with or without the cooperation of other agents involved in the project. The focus is on data collection and pooling data in short reports or memos (monthly, quarterly, six-monthly, annually). This data can be quantitative (numbers, sizes, etc.) or qualitative in nature (attitudes, perceptions, etc.).

This handbook frequently uses certain typical project management terms. Here and there we will explain these terms within a text box.

- Project owner: the organisation or person responsible for implementing a project or activity.

- Agents: organisations, structures, institutions, and municipal departments playing a certain part in this context. For example, when you are organising an activity for young people, the youth organisations, youth centres and possibly also the schools are important 'agents'. They are actively committed to the target group and the 'youth' topic.

- Target group or beneficiaries: the aim of projects is to make changes for a certain group, such as the officials or residents of a municipality or certain neighbourhoods. This specific group is often referred to with the term target group: the project and the activities are set up for this group. People from the group are then often selected for direct involvement in the activities: officials, youth work and sustainable development or all the women living in the neighbourhoods, for example. These people are referred to with the term beneficiaries. Beneficiaries can also be agents.

- Stakeholders: this term refers to persons, departments or institutions with an interest in the project (regardless of their attitude towards the project). Stakeholders are often also agents playing an active part in the project.

- Projects: projects are a set of activities described together as a whole, with a start date and an end date, a certain budget and a division of tasks. These activities are usually carried out in the short term. Projects contribute to the realisation of processes. Sometimes reference is made to a 'project cycle': this assumes that you start by observing a problem, you then set up a plan to address the problem, you implement and monitor the plan, you evaluate it and then you arrive at other problems, which you can then address. This document uses the term programme in a similar sense as project (or as a collection of projects).

- Process: the process is the interaction between agents in a particular domain and the way the various agents position and manifest themselves. Processes do not have a very clear start and end date and tend to run in the longer term.
The strengthening of local government or the strengthening of support for development cooperation in the municipality are examples of processes. Processes are often supported by separate projects, on the condition that the projects are written in such a way that they take into account the final objective and the change process.

- Objective (general/strategic objective or specific/operational objective in specialist jargon): objectives are about the change your activities or projects wish to contribute. They articulate a desired change in a certain condition that is experienced as a problem. For example, the local market in a twin town is not very popular, so that local farmers do not get a good price for their product (or fail to sell their product altogether). One of the problems is the fact that the local government does not maintain the market place well because it lacks the resources. A project can provide an answer: the specific objective is to ensure that local government can provide a better service for the maintenance of the market. This in turn contributes to a better income for the local farmers (general objective). Other words for this are: aim, general objective, overall objective, impact... and effects, purpose, outcome, specific objective.

- Result: a result is a direct consequence of your activities. Other terms used for this are: intermediate results, output, etc.). For example, you organise an exchange between schools in the North and South by e-mail, drawings and photographs about how children spend their free time. The result is that children in both schools gain a better understanding of what children do in their spare time in the North/South.

Evaluation

Evaluation is about the assessment of a project or activity and its results and consequences. The assessment is made by comparing the objectives and the results defined at the start of the project. Sometimes a comparison is made with the situation at the start of the project, a sort of starting point. An evaluation is performed at specific times, for example halfway into the implementation of the project or at the end of the project (or at the start of a new phase), or because there is a specific problem. An evaluation makes a clear statement on:

- **The relevance of a project:** are we doing the right things when we look at the context and issues?
- **Efficiency:** are we doing things the right way, are we using the resources appropriately, how is the communication and division of tasks going?
- **Effectiveness and impact:** are we achieving the results and are we contributing to change? Can we really say that things have changed since the start of the project or in comparison with places where there was no project?
- **Sustainability:** to what extent will the results and changes continue to exist after the project?

A definition of these 'criteria' is provided on page 11. An evaluation also aims to clarify unexpected results.

> *"The planning and definition of your project or activity are also essential. They complete the planning, monitoring and evaluation triangle."*

In principle, an evaluation involves a lot more people. Sometimes evaluations are performed by an external person, but they can also be carried out internally. Below we list the advantages and disadvantages of internal/external evaluations. As with monitoring, data must be collected and observations must be written down in a report.

Evaluation	(Possible) advantages	(Possible) disadvantages
Internal evaluation	• The 'evaluators' are familiar with the work, the objectives and the results. • Sometimes people find it easier to talk to insiders. • It is not as threatening, which sometimes makes it easier for the people involved to accept certain observations and criticism. • It is inexpensive. • You can use peer reviewers: colleagues you invite to take a look at the project.	• It may be in the interest of the 'evaluators' only to see the positive side. Sponsors therefore often want an external evaluation. • The 'evaluators' may be less familiar with certain evaluation techniques. • Somebody must be given enough time to complete the exercise.
External evaluation (performed by someone outside the organisation / cooperation without an interest in the project)	• The evaluation is more objective, as it is performed from a certain distance. • The evaluators have expertise and knowledge and may possibly also introduce innovative insights / methods.	• An outsider sometimes finds it difficult to understand what you wanted to do. • Those directly involved may feel threatened and as a result be less open and less prepared to cooperate. • The costs can be high.

	• Some people find it easier to speak to outsiders. • The observations (particularly the positive ones) gain more credibility. • You can distribute the tasks somewhat. Please note that even an external evaluation involves a lot of work for you to ensure that the evaluation is successful.	• An outsider sometimes finds it difficult to understand what you really want to find out with the evaluation and therefore may not give you what you need in order to move forward.

List of possible advantages and disadvantages of internal or external evaluation

The above clearly indicates that monitoring and evaluation is based on data collection. The planning and definition of your project or activity are also essential, as they make the triangle of planning, monitoring and evaluation complete. This is described in the diagram below[2]:

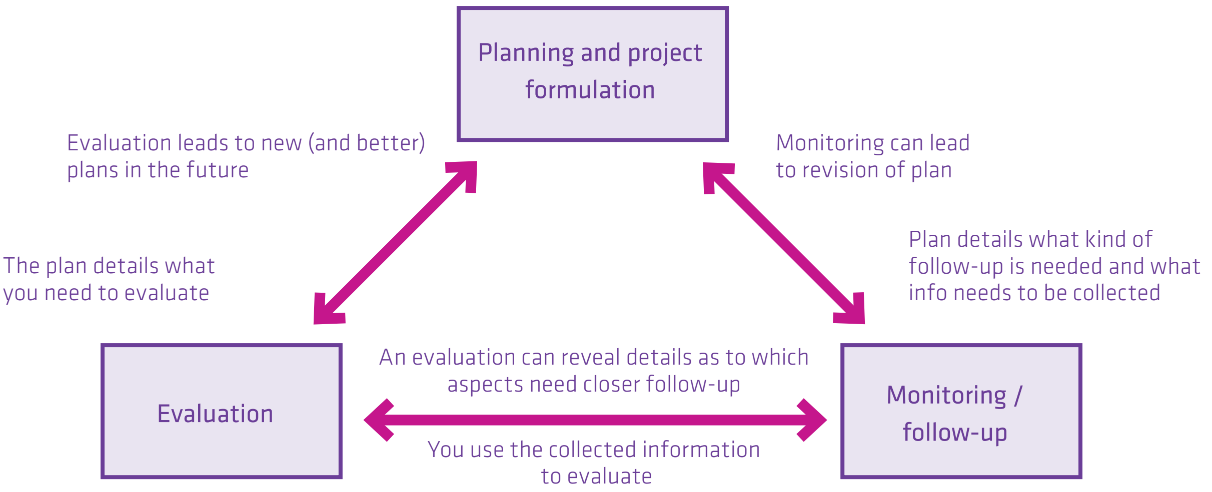


Figure 1: the link between the plan, the monitoring and the evaluation

Planning, monitoring and evaluation are all part of what we call the cycle of projects/programmes based on the partners' vision and mission and the identification of a programme. These relationships are clarified in the following diagram.

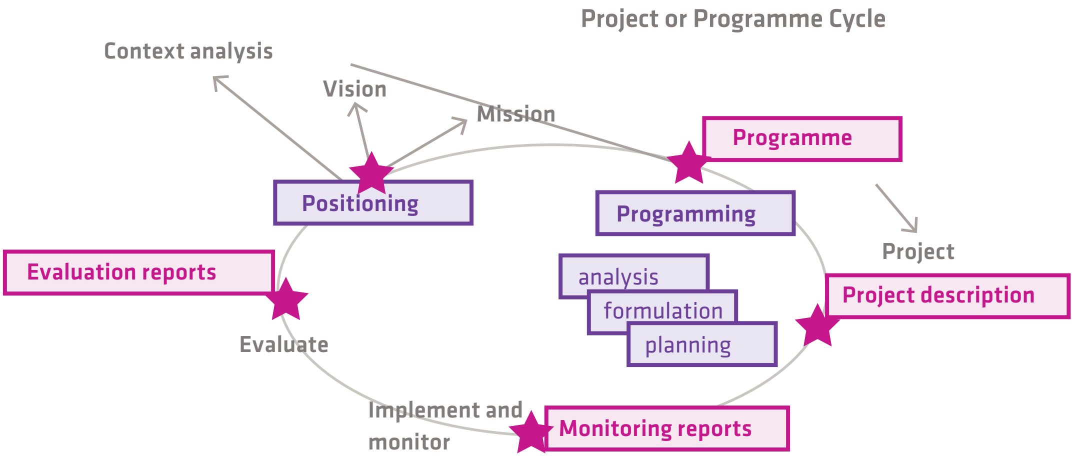


Figure 2: some project management issues to consider

2 The diagram is based on Adams, J. and Pratt, B (2009) *Sharpening the development process. A practical guide to monitoring and evaluation.*

How do you assess a project? The so-called DAC criteria for evaluation

In the 1960s, an expert group for development cooperation was set up within international organisation OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development: the Development Assistance Committee or DAC. DAC was interested in the question how 'help' and the results of this help can be assessed. The experts proposed certain criteria, which still apply today and are referred to as the DAC criteria. When defining a project and multi-annual plan, municipalities also have to demonstrate to the subsidising donors to what extent they take into account each of these criteria. This plays an important part in a file's possible approval. Below we provide a simplified explanation of these criteria:

- Relevance: relevance is the extent to which a project has been adjusted to the priorities, the policy of the involved agents (and higher governments) and the needs of the target group and partners.
- Efficiency (goal-orientation): efficiency refers to the relationship between the resources used and the concrete results and more particularly the question whether the resources were used optimally and the project was well managed.
- Effectiveness: effectiveness measures the extent to which projects have achieved their objectives. It considers factors that have affected the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives.
- Impact: impact is the extent to which projects have contributed to meaningful changes in society and people's living conditions.
- Sustainability: sustainability is the extent to which the project results continue to exist without project support. This includes financial sustainability, institutional sustainability, socio-cultural sustainability and political sustainability.

More information about DAC and a glossary of terms (in English and French) is available at http://www.oecd.org/dac/.

The DAC criteria for evaluation

1.2.2. Views on monitoring and evaluation

There are various views of what monitoring and evaluation should be. These visions are closely related to the way you think you can bring about change: change within and by local authorities, changes in how people think about development cooperation, change in how people and organisations contribute to a more just world, etc.

Technical approach

Change can be seen as a linear and technocratic process. The waste management in the municipality, for example, is simply a question of deploying enough dustbin lorries: a technical intervention (A) leads to clean streets (B). According to this view, change is achieved through a sum of projects and activities and less attention is paid to general change processes. Services to citizens are seen as a technical problem and there is less focus on access to services. This view of change is linked to a technocratic view of monitoring and evaluation: you monitor how technical solutions and tools are used and you can assess this by taking into account quantitative data in a neutral way free from any value judgement. The starting point is that the solutions to problems are known and that insufficient change is therefore caused by poor management (or the poor administration and use of resources). Typically, this view rarely questions or adjusts the design of the projects (the project plan). Monitoring and evaluation rather result from increasing management control and standardising procedures.

Pluralistic approach

Another approach to change is the view that says that change does not happen in a linear way, change is affected by many factors[3], change is a complex process often not progressing in a predictable way, many different

3 In other words, it is often very hard, if not impossible, to link a certain change straight to your project or intervention (the problem of attribution). Often the right term is a 'contribution' to change.

agents are involved and they can experience change very differently. This view of change is linked to another view of monitoring and evolution, which we refer to here as the 'pluralistic' view: there is not just one answer, but various perceptions of reality and opinions about problems and solutions, which are all justified. The success or failure of a project will probably be seen and assessed differently by different groups. This means that monitoring and evaluation are not only based on objective criteria, but should also take into account qualitative data and assessments are rather interpretative and based on analysis of different elements. Services to citizens are only a technical process to a certain extent: the question whether citizens want and are able to use the services and whether this contributes to the quality of their lives is key. In this view, monitoring and evaluation typically look for various explanatory factors and aim to expose the underlying mechanisms of change. There is a lot of room for stakeholders to include their views in the evaluation and the adjustment of the project design is not taboo.

Of course there is room for a wide range of monitoring and evaluation approaches between these two extremes. This publication tends to lean towards a non-linear view of change: municipalities that wish to help strengthen administrative capacity in the South, support and other attitudes of the population towards North-South issues, know that they are investing in very complex change processes. A technical approach to monitoring and evaluation will not be sufficient to capture and understand this complexity. The principles we explain below play an important part in evaluation and monitoring.

- **Participation:** various stakeholders must be able to share their opinion or perception of the activities and the results. This gives them the opportunity to affect monitoring and evaluation. It is also possible to arrange with the various agents what they feel is important enough to be monitored: according to them, which data should be collected? They can also help collect this data systematically: this can contribute to their capacity to collect data about matters that concern them. For example, schools entering an exchange programme may want to know what the consequences are for the pupils and a simple tool can help them to monitor any changes of opinion in pupils. The advantage is that the efforts are distributed and the various agents collect information about matters that are important to them.
- **Simplicity and efficiency**: monitoring and evaluation remain a complex issue and efforts are required to avoid making matters unnecessarily complicated and to keep them as simple as possible. It is important that everyone contributing to a project or a certain activity knows what it is about and that the efforts (of data collection and reporting) are proportionate to the project size and available resources (time and money). It is important that you can perform as much of the monitoring and evaluation yourself with your partners and that the investment in time and money remains reasonable. Spending half your budget on monitoring and evaluation activities is not reasonable. For example, if you want to know whether the population knows your city-to-city cooperation, you can organise an annual survey of the entire population, but that costs a lot time and money. You can also choose to establish to what extent the members of the municipal advisory councils are familiar with the city-to-city cooperation, for example by handing out a form with three questions at meetings of five advisory councils and processing the answers quickly in an Excel file. The results of this more limited survey in a group that should be better informed in principle should indicate the situation for the rest of the population.
- **Attention for diversity** (including gender): because people experience change differently, it is important to consider diversity when involving people and gathering data, as men and women, older and younger people and different ethnic groups experience change in their own way.
- **Focused on collecting 'good information', analysing this information and using it for taking decisions**: it is important to gather information that can actually be used. In other words, the gathered information must say something about the project, the implementation and the results and must therefore be relevant. Gathering information makes no sense if no arrangements have been made about who is going to use this infor-

mation and why. Information is also useless if it is not processed properly. If the information is not analysed and processed, it cannot result in any decisions about adjustments or change.

- **Attention for unexpected results and alternative sources of information**: because change is often difficult to predict, you should be open to any unexpected results (both positive and negative) and you should include information that reaches the project or the project owners informally in the monitoring and evaluation process.

" This publication leans towards a non-linear view of change: municipalities invest in very complex change processes."

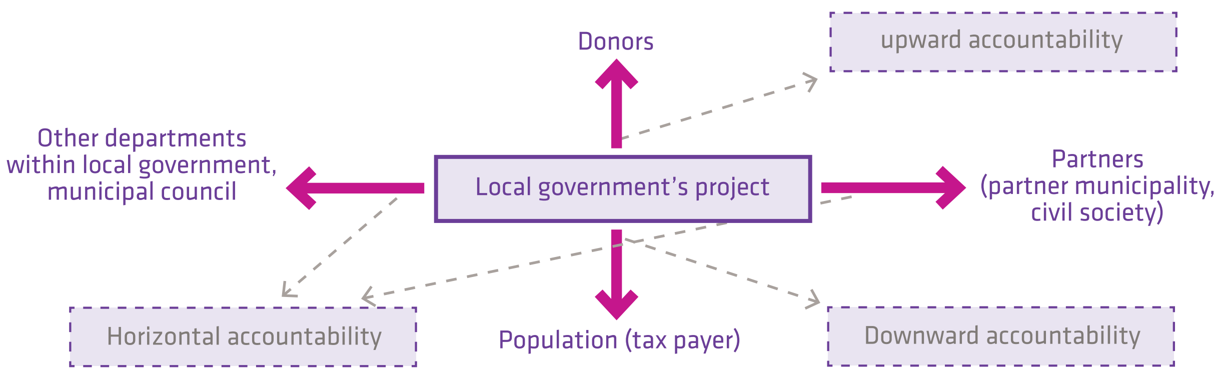
Internal final evaluation in Santo Tomas (Nicaragua), the twin town of Mol

1.3. WHY MONITORING AND EVALUATION?[4]

Cities in the North and South use resources to implement projects and achieve change. They often do so in partnership with other agents in the municipality. Some municipalities also engage in city-to-city cooperation with a partner in another continent. In every partnership, there is shared responsibility for the good use of these resources, regardless of whether they are provided by the city treasury or subsidy donors. This assumes that as partners, you find a way to follow (monitor) the work properly within the city-to-city cooperation and to regularly assess (evaluate) whether you are achieving the results you had planned. Monitoring and evaluation are important for five reasons: accountability, project implementation improvement, learning, supporting or sharing policy choices and communication. Below we explain these reasons further. We clarify that monitoring and evaluation go much further than simply checking 'whether you did what you said you would do' or 'whether you used the money wisely'. However, we should acknowledge that this element of 'inspection' is also a part of monitoring and evaluation. The difference is mainly in the context and the way that monitoring and evaluation conclusions are used. Is monitoring and evaluation a means of punishment, pulling out money for every 'mistake', terminating the cooperation or taking coordinators off a project, or is it a means that allows people and departments to evolve using their existing capacity in order to do things differently and better in the future? If project coordinators and the involved departments do serious and transparent work, are aware of the obstacles and risks and are prepared to listen and adjust, there is no reason to use evaluations as sanctions in our opinion. However, a rather threatening and unsafe policy environment (many political problems, little trust, no room for initiative or questioning), it seems understandable to us that people and project coordinators do not see monitoring and evaluation as a tool, but as a problem and a tool of exercising control and power.

1.3.1. Accountability

This sometimes seems the most important reason. Those who implement projects, usually do so not for themselves, but to solve identified problems and/or respond to concrete questions from certain groups. There must be a certain trust in the responsible implementation of the projects, which is why accountability for the use of resources is important.
Accountability works in several directions: both horizontally (to the left and right) and vertically (upward and downward [5]), as shown in the figure below.



Accountability in different directions

4 Most of this section is based on Bakewell, O. (2009) *Sharpening the development process. A practical guide to monitoring and evaluation*. Some adjustments were made to suit the context of city-to-city cooperation.

5 A synonym for 'downward accountability' is 'domestic accountability'.

- **Accountability towards the population and local groups** (also referred to as downward accountability): the aim of projects is that they eventually (directly or indirectly) benefit the population and help solve social problems. The project owners therefore have to demonstrate what they do and how they contribute to improved services and interaction with the population or a changed attitude towards certain problems in the population and organisations, for example. Projects are often financed with tax money. The duty of accountability lies with the city itself and final responsibility with the politicians.
- **Accountability towards the donors** (also referred to as upward accountability): the subsidy donors want to see the results of their subsidies. They also have to justify their reasons for financing North-South projects to tax payers. Those who receive subsidies directly or indirectly must be able to explain how the resources were used. In this case, the duty of accountability lies with the city itself and final responsibility with the politicians.
- **Internal accountability** (within the municipality with other departments and within the local council and executive): particularly officials invest time in setting up and implementing projects within the city-to-city cooperation or projects to raise awareness and provide development education. The time of officials is valuable: they have to guarantee good services to the citizens. Those who use the time of officials for projects have to be able to explain to the head of the administration and the politicians why this time is well spent. In this case the duty of accountability lies with the coordinators of the city-to-city cooperation in both cities and/or the project owners.
- **Accountability between partners** (in city-to-city cooperation, for example): the partners share the responsibility for good results, they are accountable to each other and they have to be able to engage in (respectful) dialogue about how they worked together and how projects were managed in both municipalities. In this case the duty of accountability lies with both cities in the partnership and final responsibility with the politicians.

All directions and levels of accountability are important. In practice the emphasis is often on accountability to the donors. However, cities and municipalities are also under pressure to ensure good accountability to the population, particularly in the case of politicians: dissatisfaction among the population is immediately reflected come election time. This pressure increases as the importance of the projects increases (with greater implications for the municipality's budget, for example) or is more visible to the population.

1.3.2. Implementation improvement

Permanently monitoring the implementation of projects, arrangements, use of the budget, etc. demonstrates how the resources are being used. It also allows you to quickly detect any problems or indications that the project or the cooperation are not achieving the desired results. Interim evaluations help to gain an overview of the entire project or cooperation and to assess whether it is moving in the right direction. They can also result in adjustments to the project structure or internal organisation. The constant monitoring of resource spending is important in terms of a possible redistribution of the budget towards other result areas. It is important to realise that every planning document is a guide that must be seen as dynamic. Frequent monitoring keeps its finger on the pulse of the project and allows adjustments where necessary

Technological monitoring tools

Monitoring on the activities level can often be kept simple. In Herent and in many other municipalities, they use modern technological tools such as Skype for programme monitoring. During weekly Skype conversations, the existing arrangements are followed up, the programme's progress is discussed on a content level and a financial level and new arrangements must be followed up. This weekly Skype contact has been very important for the implementation of the programme.

Also, the part that social media can play in the follow-up of activities should not be underestimated. Facebook or Twitter in particular, but also Vimeo, YouTube, blogs, etc. are important tools for planning and following up activities to raise awareness. They do not just help the promotion and advertising, they are also media that can collect and follow up on responses in sample surveys to check whether the message to raise awareness was well received by the public. The North-South department of the municipality of Zoersel very regularly communicates about development cooperation activities on its Facebook account. Communication about the world party, but also about the number of grant applications, what is happening with the city-to-city cooperation with Bohicon in Benin, etc. This is the North-South department's way of permanently accounting for its activities and resources and raising support for its activities at the same time. In that sense its initiatives to write a blog about a shipment or a foreign work trip to the twin town partner are also crucial. One example of this is the exchange of young people between Harelbeke and its Namibian partner Eenhana (http://jongerenmakendebrug.wordpress.com/).

1.3.3. Learning

The monitoring and evaluation of an individual project can teach some interesting lessons for other projects or other forms of cooperation. These lessons can be applied to current projects or new projects in order to repeat the achieved successes. However, learning requires planning and organisation or it will never happen. A monitoring and evaluation plan therefore has to provide space and time for analysis and reflection together with the different stakeholders. The implementation of monitoring and evaluation is instructive in itself: the implementation strengthens specific competencies in officials and other agents involved in projects: it teaches several agents to use data collection techniques with the population, analysis methods, etc.

Sharing practical examples in Nicaragua

The close monitoring of certain achievements in a programme can lead to the identification of good (or less good) practice examples. These practices can then be shared with other municipalities, which will then speed up the learning process of these municipalities. An interesting example of this can be found in Nicaragua. The city-to-city cooperation between Nueva Guinea and Sint-Truiden experimented with a biogas plant and ecological toilets as well as many other environmentally friendly measures. These two initiatives were closely examined by other municipalities Ciudad Darío (twinned with the Flemish municipality of Lommel) and Santo Tomás (twinned with the Flemish municipality of Mol) during their visit to Nueva Guinea.

During this study trip the other municipalities adopted the examples of Nueva Guinea and adjusted them to their own context. This meant that the unit price per ecological toilet fell considerably, for example. They then shared this new practice with Nueva Guinea. This interaction ensured more efficient implementation of the ecological toilets project.

1.3.4. Underpinning and providing information on policy choices

Monitoring and evaluation provides information that can be used for decisions about the direction of the project in the future. They answer questions such as: do we still have to organise this world party? Is offering a djembe workshop in our schools the best way to ensure that our pupils become world citizens? What do we really need to strengthen our city-to-city cooperation, so that the activities can really contribute to better financial management and local tax management? And so on.

Evaluation underpins the policy choice of new administration

If a local authority chooses to enter into city-to-city cooperation, it needs to have the necessary support. The city-to-city cooperation must be supported by civil society, the administration and most certainly also by the politicians. It is characteristic of a local democracy that the political administration is elected every so often (the term of government depends on the country).

The appointment of a new administration team is an ideal moment to evaluate how the city-to-city cooperation is doing. During this evaluation, objective reflection will provide a foundation for the future. These future routes can then be presented to the new bench of aldermen and the new municipal council. The new administrators can then make a policy choice that is objectively underpinned by the elements raised by the evaluation.

How to perform such an evaluation depends on the context. It is important that the first three pillars of city-to-city cooperation (politics, administration and civil society) are equally consulted in both municipalities (both the Flemish local government and twin town). In 2012 the municipal elections coincided with the end of a five-year programme.

The city of Ghent saw this as an ideal opportunity to have an external evaluation performed about their city-to-city cooperation with Mangaung in South Africa. The aim was to establish whether the expectations on both sides were still the same, whether the programme had achieved the desired results and whether there was still enough support for the partnership in both municipalities. The municipality of Bornem chose an internal evaluation exercise. A strategic team was put together from Bornem (youth consultant, alderman for development cooperation, secretary, North-South official, etc.) in order to perform the internal evaluation of the city-to-city cooperation in their South African twin town of Nquthu.

Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages (see comparison between internal and external evaluation), but both exercises supported the policy choices of the (possible extension of the) city-to-city cooperation. In some cases, the evaluation may be initiated by the administration. In other cases, a (new) administration team may also request the evaluation before committing to any further commitments.

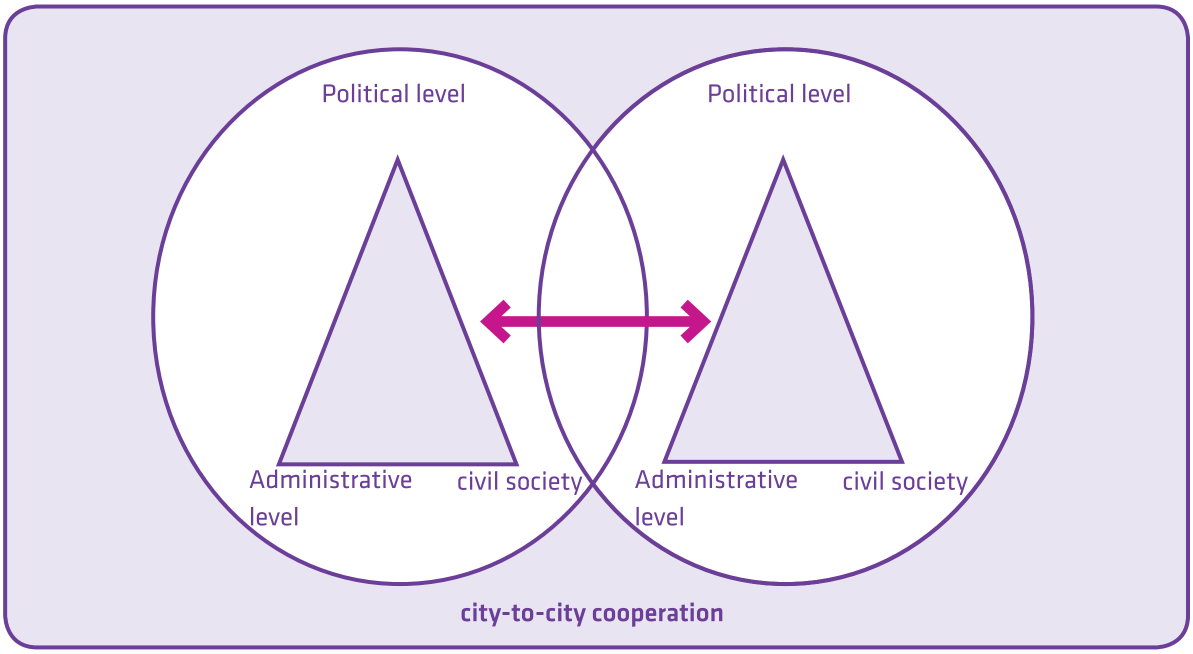
1.3.5. Communication

Monitoring and evaluation contribute to the communication between the different project agents and stakeholders: it invites people to share their thoughts and perception of the project's results. People who are not immediately involved in the projects also benefit from good monitoring and evaluation: they will understand better what is happening in the context of North-South cooperation and may gain a better insight into what is possible through exchanges between North and South. This is essential to gain more support from them for this type of cooperation (strengthening support) and to create a better understanding of the problems and challenges in other parts of the world and of the solutions that were found by people elsewhere.

1.4. THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This chapter clarifies what the rest of the publication has to offer, i.e. the building blocks of M&E. The development of these building blocks is provided in separate chapters. The building blocks are:

- **The subject (Chapter 2)**: the subject of monitoring and evaluation are the activities of the project, its results and the changes that are pursued. The activities and results are the most important subject of M&E. The starting point is the description of the activities and results you defined when planning the project. This description indicates the direction of the project. We take a more in-depth look at two ways of describing projects and results: the logical framework approach and outcome mapping.
- **The agents (Chapter 3)**: city-to-city cooperation and in projects for raising awareness always involve various 'agents'. These can usually be categorised into three groups: politicians, officials and civil society participating in the municipal policy. These three groups interact with each other in order to make the policy and therefore each play their own part in projects. Within city-to-city cooperation, this triangle applies in both twin towns, as represented in the figure below. These agents also have a (major or minor) role to play in monitoring and evaluation. Some of these agents are also already formally involved in the city-to-city cooperation and projects in committees, for example. In addition to politicians, officials and civil society, experts or specialised organisations can also play a part. This publication discusses who can play which part and the mechanisms for participative monitoring and evaluation.



- **Data collection (Chapter 4)**: the success of monitoring and evaluation depends on the collection of information in a systematic way according to the right methods. The project description or cooperation agreement between both cities can both indicate what type of information you need to collect to adequately monitor and evaluate the implementation of the activities and the results and changes. This chapter provides an introduction about the techniques and methods and how to prepare for data collection. The appendix to this basic book describes a number of data collection techniques you can use.

- **Learning from evaluations: analysis and reflection planning (Chapter 5)**: it is essential to analyse the collected data in order to come to conclusions and a report. Here we indicate what is required for good analysis. The focus is on the questions about relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The planning of the times when collected data is analysed and assessed is essential: monitoring and evaluation are part of a process of cooperation between both cities or between agents within a municipality and they have to fit into the planning and policy cycle of both cities. Synchronising all this requires serious effort. The first requirement is clear planning of times for analysis and adjustment.

" In city-to-city cooperation, the politicians, officials and civil society work together to make the policy and therefore each play their own part within projects.

The mayors discuss the role of local authorities in international cooperation at the Winning through Twinning conference in Ghent (2011).

The results of an internal peer evaluation are explained in Nimlaha'kok (Guatemala), the twin town of Herent.

CHAPTER 2
THE SUBJECT OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION: ACTIVITIES, RESULTS AND CHANGES

2.1. M&E STARTS WITH GOOD PLANNING AND DEFINITION

In order to be able to monitor and evaluate a project well, it is essential to understand which issues the project aims to tackle, how the project is structured, which view the 'authors' had about cooperation and partnership, local government, the role of officials and politicians and interaction with citizens and local organisations and how they felt changes can be made. A 'normal' project description does not always provide the necessary information to convey this underlying vision well. This explains why it is sometimes very hard to implement, monitor and evaluate projects you did not develop and write yourself.

That is why it is important to describe a project and the changes you wish to make in the best possible way. There are several ways of doing this. The most methods that are currently the most common are referred to as 'logical framework' and 'outcome mapping'. This chapter goes into further detail about both methods: the advantage and disadvantages, issues to take into account, pitfalls and ... jargon!

Both the logical framework and outcome mapping provide information on the municipality's view of change: how does the municipality think it can contribute to change? Why does the municipality think it is good to work with schools to strengthen support? Why is a world party a good way of attracting attention to the South? What is the foundation for the municipality's conviction that working together with a municipality in the South on recycling can improve people's quality of life there? It is helpful when municipalities clarify this view in a separate document.[6] We will not go into this issue any further.

However, first we will examine a concept that is key for both the logical framework and outcome mapping: attention for results. All interventions are aimed at achieving results and changes: they are result-oriented. A project achieves results on various levels. The full set of results is referred to by the term 'results chain'. This is explained further below.

6 More and more information on the so-called Theory of Change (ToC) is appearing in literature. Theory of Change is about describing the vision for change. The attention paid to this subject is the result of an increasing desire to understand how (social) change is achieved. Because development cooperation is coming under increasing pressure to demonstrate results, it ha become more important to understand how these results come into being or to understand why certain results were not achieve. This challenged organisations to provide a better description of how they think they can achieve change in a so-called Theory of Change. The theory explains the organisation's foundation for stating that the sum of certain number of activities will lead to change.
More information on: www.intrac.org or on the HIVOS ToC portal: http://www.hivos.nl/dut/Hivos-Knowledge-Programme/News/Hivos-launches-Resource-Portal-on-Theory-of-Change.

2.2. CHANGE: A CHAIN OF RESULTS

What are results really? Results are changes you can observe in the agents you work with or in the target group. A project aims to achieve things and wants to change something. It does not just want to do something random. The aim is to work in a focused way that takes into account certain problems and that fits into the municipality's view of change.

For example, the partners in city-to-city cooperation may work together in terms of town and country planning.[7] The municipalities organise various activities: job shadowing by two officials from the South at the planning department in the North, advise on buying a geographic information system (GIS) and financial support for the purchase, the deployment of an official from the North in order to prepare the implementation of the plan in the twin town. The direct result of these activities is that a GIS is installed to be used by some officials at the twin town. The result is not that two officials have been trained when job shadowing for two weeks and that there is a GIS. These are the activities and investments undertaken that are only useful if they lead to a concrete result for the twin town. The two twin towns also organised other activities leading to additional results as shown in the diagram below. Resources and activities therefore lead to concrete results on different levels: the direct results set another process in motion that will change the way the twin town approaches its planning processes in the longer term.

What are the results ?
The result chain: example of town and country planning

INPUTS	+	ACTIVITIES	→	INTERMEDIARY RESULTS (short term)	→	EFFECTS/outcomes (middle term)	→	IMPACT (long term)
Time of civil servants, travel costs, financial resources, external consultants (wages)		Job shadowing, advice, preparation of the plan, implementation of plan with participation of civil society		Result 1: Geographical Information System installed and civil servants use it, Result 2: territorial and town planning developed and resolution accepted by municipal council		Partner municipality's capacity to frequently plan cooperation with civil society is strengthened		Political decisions regarding territorial planning are taken well informed and meet the concrete needs of several groups.

An example of town and country planning on the result chain

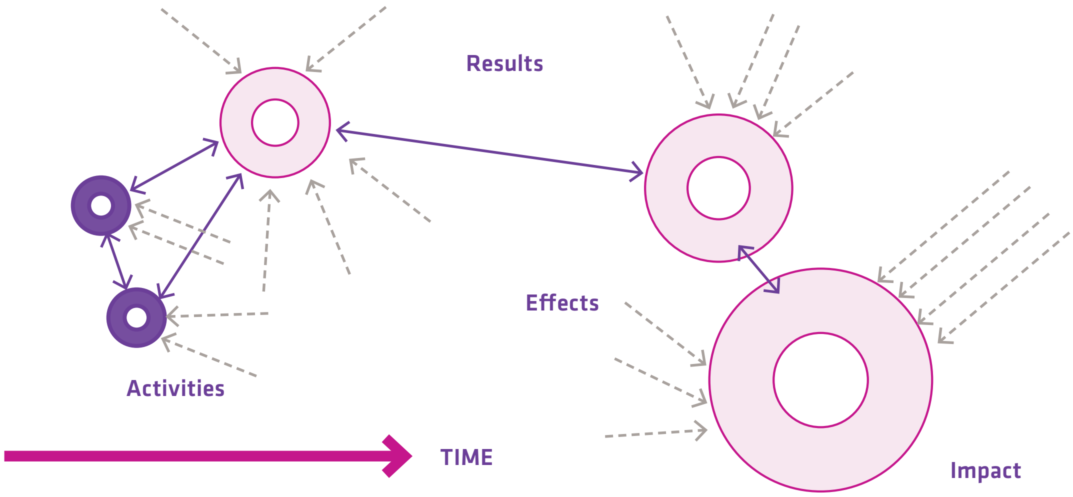
Evaluation and monitoring consider the entire chain: from the use of resources to impact. However, we must remember that this results chain is affected by external factors in a certain context. These external factors can help achieve results, but can also entail risks, which should also be included in monitoring and evaluation.

> *"We must realise that this results chain is affected by external factors, which can help achieve the results, but also entail risks.*

7 The examples are fictitious, but were based on real examples known by VVSG and implemented as part of subsidy programmes.

Let us return to the same example of town and country planning. The twin town may invest in the professionalisation of the planning processes because central government has decided that town and country planning is the municipality's task. It is possible that central government imposes its conditions to ensure good quality town and country planning. If those conditions turn out to be very strict or unclear, so that planning permission is very difficult to obtain and hardly ever given, this project will probably not be able to achieve the expected results (effects and impact). By closely monitoring what the central government does, both municipalities can therefore assess what the chances are of achieving the results and make adjustments if necessary.

Accomplishing results = taking external factors into account



The path from activity to impact is not always directly demonstrable.

The above diagram shows that change in the longer term is most affected by external influences and factors and that making an impact requires a lot more time as well. This clearly shows that monitoring and evaluating the impact is difficult. As a result, evaluation and monitoring is often limited to an examination of the effects. We must realise that monitoring that is limited to activities and results often provide insufficient information about the real changes and may not give any information on any possible negative effects. Better planning ensure that the municipality improves at meeting the requirements of central government, but reduce the access certain groups have to inexpensive residential land. You may also ignore the question whether the municipality's improved response to central government requirements has had any concrete results in those residential areas that are flooded every year because the dam has still not been repaired.

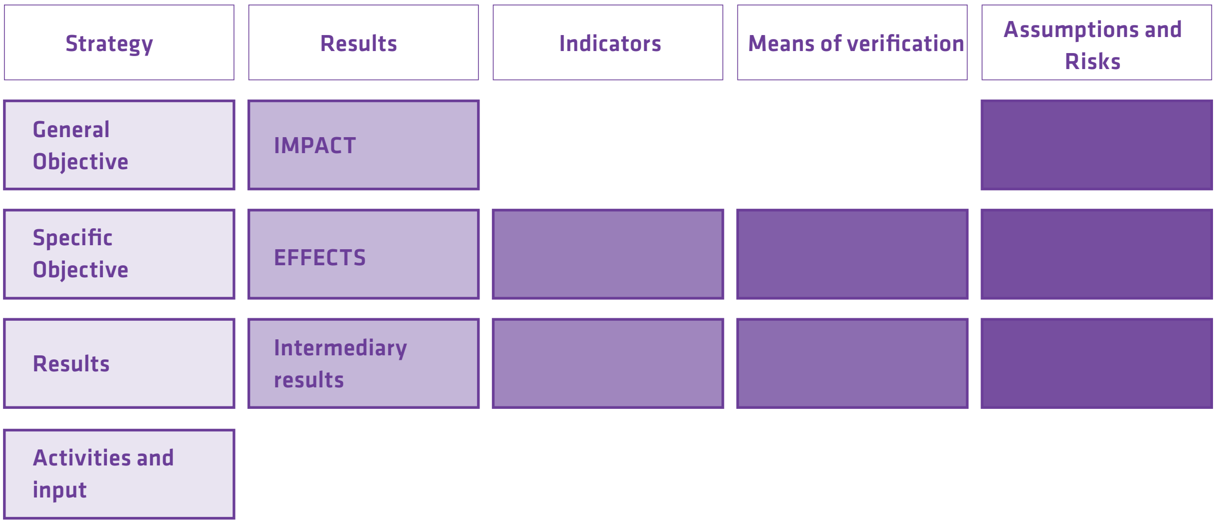
Now that we have clearly explained what is meant by results, we will take a look how you can describe the way in which the results will be achieved. We start with the logical framework.

2.3. THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK APPROACH

2.3.1. What is a logical framework?

Cities and municipalities that received subsidies in the past from other (higher) governments (the regional government of Flanders, the federal government or the European government) and/or implemented programmes of municipal international cooperation have already experienced the requirements of results-based management. Results-based management ensures that projects are defined, planned and budgeted depending on the expected results. The question asked is “What do we want to change and what do we need to do this?” rather than “How much money do we have and what do we want to do with it?” It must also be possible to measure and monitor the consequences of activities. The logical framework helps you to think in terms of results. The logical framework is also very central to the way in which subsidising governments assess project proposals, which is why so much attention is paid to it in this introduction. The logical framework consists of different parts (elements) that together form a coherent whole.

Logical Framework



The building blocks of the logical framework

The logical framework provides a clear summary how you want to achieve change with the project (the so-called intervention logic that starts by setting up resources and activities and leads to results, effects and impact), which results you want to achieve, how you will demonstrate that you achieved the results (by proposing indicators), where the information on the indicators can be found (also referred to as sources of testing) and which assumptions (about external factors and influences) you make in order to conclude that the proposed approach’s success is plausible.

The logical framework is a tool to define a project, but also offers a framework for the planning, administration, monitoring and evaluation of your programme. A good logical framework contains all the essential information on a project and is a reference document, a document that provides continuous guidance for the project’s implementation.

> *“A good logical framework contains all the essential information about a project and is a reference document, a document that provides continuous guidance for the project’s implementation.*

2.3.2. Logical or Log (or lock)? Advantages and disadvantages

Working with a logical framework has different advantages: it represents a project in a transparent, coherent and systematic way to clearly show everyone what the project is about, it forces people to think in terms of results and it offers a framework for project management.

However, in practice it is not always easy to clearly define a good coherent logical framework. A lot depends on the analysis done in advance, how it is written and whether this process is participative. Municipal staff members are often under great time pressure and are usually not trained in this type of techniques and concepts, which is why this publication gives some tips on how to create a good logical framework. We also want to indicate that the logical framework is not the be all and end all of project management, so it certainly can be used creatively.
The limitations of the logical framework as a tool are:

- You cannot draft a logical framework without proper analysis of the issues and the various agents that may/will play a part. This means that first you have to perform a problem analysis, a context analysis describing the issues and their context and an analysis of the various agents (their mutual relationships and the balance of power). A common form of preparation is the problem tree (see box).
- It is not easy to clearly represent the aspect of participation (how you will work together with various agents) and capacity development (how you will support the twin town) in the logical framework.
- The logical framework gives the impression that you can think about development as if it is a technical problem that can be solved with a few (external) interventions: if we do A, B will follow. In other words, critics would say that the model of the logical framework is the product of a linear view of development and change processes.[8]
- The logical framework allows you to focus strongly on the programme/project and less on the change processes in various agents. The risk is that you only pay attention to what is in the logical framework during the project implementation period and you respond less to developing changes or processes that are also important.
- It is often difficult to place the various agents and partners (and the changes you are trying to achieve for them) in the right section of the logical framework, which is why analyses by the partners or certain agents are often added to the project descriptions.
- Many organisation's approach to the logical framework lacks flexibility. The subsidy donors often insist on this in order to avoid too many changes during the project's implementation.

A lot depends on how you approach the logical framework yourself: you have to use it as a flexible tool that allows you to specifically define the results. If necessary, changes can be made to the logical framework. It is not a purpose in itself: if it becomes difficult to use as a guide or compass to achieve changes, it must be looked at again.[9]

8 According to these critics, the logical framework does not correspond to the pluralistic approach of M&E presented in this publication. In our opinion, a lot depends on how the logical framework is used.

9 We must mention here that donors often have a very different opinion about this issue and do not want the logical framework to change in the course of the project.

The problem tree

In order to define a project, it is wise to reflect on the problems the project wishes to address: what is going wrong and for whom? People often have an idea about the things they want to do, but they find it hard to explain why and how the project addresses a specific problem. For example, the municipality wants to have a campaign website that all fourth pillar organisations can join to support the campaign with their activities. However, the need of the fourth-pillar organisations is to be more visible in order to make it easier to raise funds and find volunteers, because that is where their problem lies. A portal website where they can present themselves and their projects would have been more appropriate, or better still, a campaign to motivate potential volunteers for this type of organisations.

A thorough, correct analysis of the problems helps you to gain a better understanding of reality. The beneficiaries and major stakeholders should be involved in this. You can create a problem tree at a workshop (starting with a brainstorming session about problems) or through interviews and discussions.

The problem tree can help you to outline the problems (inventory), to gain an understanding of the connections between these problems (how are they related?) and to visualise the problems' causes (roots) and consequences (branches and leaves). For example, one of the causes of the fourth-pillar organisations' problem of finding volunteers is the negative image people have of development cooperation and the fact that long-term commitment to a single organisation is no longer an option for many people. The problem tree also allows you to check whether different perceptions exist of the issues.

A good understanding of the issues can help all stakeholders to work out together how they can contribute to a possible solution. In that case you can define the problems as a solution. For example, "People have a more positive image of how 'we' in the North can contribute to a world that offers more opportunities for development in the South." This can then become the project's objective. Only then are you ready to work with the target group and the stakeholders to examine whether a website is the most appropriate tool to achieve this.

You need facts and reliable, current information to come to a good problem tree. Try to gather this information before you start a workshop and interviews. Access to information (such as statistical data) is often limited, particularly in the South. Address this by using interviews with other organisations and governments working in the same region. Take into account cultural sensitivities when working on city-to-city cooperation: people and groups may have a problem with the terminology and the association of 'roots' with problems (this is sometimes culturally determined) or with talking in terms of problems in general. People sometimes prefer to think about their future based on dreams or aspirations. Problem-based thinking is in line with a 'technical approach' to development in the sense of: "Let's quickly solve this problem.", which may work for certain technically oriented projects. Such an approach pays less attention to what is required to facilitate and support local development processes. You may therefore choose to combine a session about a problem tree with sessions that allow the participants to dream about a desirable situation.

More information about the problem tree can be found on different internet sites, such as: http://www.handboek-internationalisering.be/nl/probleemanalyse/. Sometimes it is useful to complement the problem tree with a good context analysis or an analysis of the stakeholders and agents, their mutual relations and the balance of power. The latter can also benefit from a number of interesting tools: www.powercube.net and http://www.odi.org.uk/work/programmes/rapid/default.asp.

Introduction to the problem tree

Because of the disadvantages associated with the logical framework, people and organisations began to think about other approaches. One of these other approaches is referred to by the term 'outcome mapping', which we will discuss further in this publication as well.

Below we explain some concepts of the logical framework that are important for monitoring and evaluation: indicators, assumptions and starting points (sometimes referred to as baseline as well). Good monitoring and evaluations require data collection. Indicators and assumptions will tell you which data you should collect. In order to make a statement about the results, you must be able to compare: the description of an initial situation (starting point) makes such comparison possible.

Children's activities instructor in South Africa

2.3.3. The indicators of the logical framework

What is an indicator?

Results convey what the project aims to change, but what will indicate that the results were actually achieved? If you tell donors that a basic development plan for town and country planning was drafted and accepted by the local council, how can you convince them that there is an actual approved plan for town and country planning at the twin town? And what do the partners need to 'measure' to gain some certainty in this regard? In this example, the answer is quite simple: what matters here is the local council's decision on the development plan for town and country planning meeting the national town and country planning regulations. There is only a municipal plan if the politicians have given their opinion on it and if the plan is consistent with local authority legislation. The local council's decision is the indicator here. It is an indication of the fact that the expected result was achieved. (The local council meeting minutes are your source of testing or verification.)

Things become slightly more complicated when you look at the results at a higher level, i.e. the so-called effects. For example, what will you measure to indicate that the twin town's capacity of regular planning in cooperation with the population has increased? You may need a combination of several indicators, such as: (i) the extent to which the twin town works with a multi-annual plan to adjust and update plans, (ii) the number of formal consultations with several population groups, (iii) the number of new plans/adjustments created over the past years.

An indicator therefore shows what you are going to measure/consider in order to say with some certainty that a result has been achieved.

Indicator types

There are different types of indicators. Indicators can be roughly categorised into two groups: qualitative and quantitative indicators. The quantitative indicators refer to numbers, prices, scores, etc. The qualitative indicators provide a narrative description and refer to satisfaction, compliance with standards, attitudes, etc. It is best to find and combine some good qualitative and qualitative indicators.

Indicators must meet certain criteria if they are to be used for monitoring and evaluation: the theory of the logical framework states that an indicator has to be SMART. The indicator must be defined in such a way that it is Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic (and feasible) and Time-bound (SMART). Below we provide a brief explanation and an example of each of the criteria:

Specific	The indicator relates directly to a certain objective (or result) and measures what it is supposed to measure (validity). *Explanatory note: if the result is that youth workers can apply new techniques to work with vulnerable youngsters, you should not use an indicator about the number of youth organisations in the municipality, but an indicator that tells us something about the ability to apply new techniques, such as the extent to which vulnerable youngsters' satisfaction with their interaction with the youth workers has evolved.*
Measurable	The measurement and interpretation must remain the same when performed by different persons (reliability). *Explanatory note: this is easier with quantitative indicators! Here it is important to check whether the proposed indicator is measurable and whether methods exist that allow this. You may have to improve the description of certain terms considerably. It is not easy to measure 'capacity', 'access to services' and 'emancipation', for example.*
Acceptable	All parties involved must accept the indicator. *Explanatory note: it is best to set up indicators together with those directly involved. Who better to define how to observe a change than the people who are involved themselves and know the context. Some indicators may result in some discussion, for example if the result is: 'the management of the local market is more participative and professional'. As a municipality in the North, you may feel it is important that enough women are represented in the consultations with the twin town on the market's management. The local farmers may feel that participation means that the rates for stands are agreed together and the municipality is mainly interested in an indicator for waste collection. It is important to come to a consensus: your indicator determines whether you will assess the project and the cooperation as successful or not.*
Realistic and feasible	Checking a certain condition must correspond to the possibilities of the parties involved and must be achievable within a certain period ... *Explanatory note: if you are working with young people and pupils, you may want to examine the impact of awareness projects in schools. To do this, you want to track down young people who were in the final years of their secondary education five years ago. However, finding young people who have left secondary education requires too much effort and is not feasible within the budget of a municipality for cooperation between North and South.*
Time-bound	The indicator also has to reflect the period for achieving or doing something. *Explanatory note: it is important to define the term for achieving visible results. If the city-to-city cooperation focuses on helping as many families as possible to install ecological toilets, should 100 families have ecological toilets in two years or in four years? If the municipality wishes to involve immigrant organisations more in the North-South policy, are you aiming for greater diversity within the Municipal Council for Development Cooperation in three years or in six years?*

However, SMART indicators do not always tell the whole story. In fact, you should add to the list of criteria that indicators must pay attention to diversity and gender equality. Several groups in society experience the results of projects in a different way. If your indicators allow you to systematically gather information from various groups, you will have a much better understanding of what the project means to the different groups in society.

"An indicator therefore reflects what you are going to measure/examine in order to establish with some certainty that a result has been achieved.»

It is not always easy to find the right SMART indicators, particularly if the results involve issues such as emancipation, capacity building, changes in attitude, better living standards, etc. For example, linking living standards to an indicator such as 'the income in this population group has risen by 10%' does not necessarily make monitoring easy. When looking for this information, you may encounter a lot of opposition, which in turn may render your data unreliable. In these cases, indicators are often used that offer information about the result indirectly[10]: the indicator could be the number of children that enrolled in a school for which fees were paid all year round, for example.

Children's activities in Witzenberg (South Africa), twin town of Essen

10 Sometimes this is referred to by the word 'proxy indicator'.

Below we provide four examples of indicators that are good and less good:

Example: access to basic education and the quality of basic education **Result: children from low-income families have access to basic education** *What are you going to measure?*	
Good	**Less good**
The number of (male and female) children from low-income families that attends classes every semester for the entire duration of the course/schooling.	The number of children who enrol each year.
Explanatory note: the indicator that is 'less good' does show that children enrol, but fails to specify the target group and only looks at the start of the school year. It is important to check to what extent children attend classes and stay in school. The 'good' indicator allows you to follow groups of children (from the year they enrol until they finish their school education). You can gain information from the school registration system. This system may not tell you much about your target group. This means that you will have to organise surveys yourself for (part of) your target group about the school trajectory of the children you consider your final beneficiary.	

Municipal infrastructure **Objective: the management of the municipal infrastructure has improved.** *What are you going to measure?*	
Good	**Less good**
The speed (indicated in weeks) at which infrastructure malfunctions are detected, addressed and solved (compared to the past).	The municipality has an infrastructure inventory and a roadmap for addressing problems.
Explanatory note: The indicator that is less good considers the municipality's efforts in terms of management (and the conditions of good management), but does not say anything about effective improvement. The 'good' indicator is very specific and is related to the objective.	

Policy influence **Objective: the government of country xx is sensitive to positions on indigenous self-government** *What are you going to measure?*	
Good	**Less good**
The number of concrete initiatives that the ministry for local self-government is taking to define implementing orders for existing legislation on indigenous self-government and raise awareness among regional governments.	Frequency and quality of consultation meetings and contact between indigenous groups and the government.
Explanatory note: The 'less good' indicator says something about the efforts made and about activities, but is not a direct indication of any increased sensitivity on the part of the government (and is therefore not specific for this result). 'Quality' is also a concept that is difficult to measure and must be operationalised further. The 'good' indicator encourages you to closely monitor and screen concrete initiatives of one specific ministry in order to use them in further action. You can quantify this further by counting the number of initiatives and by checking which aspects are in the spotlight for raising awareness on the level of the regions. Access to government documents may be a problem, so the feasibility of this indicator must be checked.	

Campaign for carbon neutrality **Result: schools and companies in our municipality show that they are committed to action for carbon neutrality.** *What are you going to measure?*	
Good	**Less good**
The number of schools and companies that sign a declaration of intent specifying concrete targets to be achieved within two years.	The campaign reaches 75% of schools and 50% of local companies.
Explanatory note: the 'less good' indicator is not specific and is more about the efforts of the municipality/project than the result. The 'good' indicator is specific, measurable, acceptable, feasible (it is about schools and companies that have presented some targets themselves) and time-bound. You can obtain the information from the schools and companies themselves.	

When do you define indicators?

Indicators are defined when the project is being described in the logical framework. This way it is clear from the outset what the twin towns and donors will consider in order to assess whether the project is a success and progresses well or not. Two remarks are in order here:

- For projects aimed at capacity building it is not always possible to define clear indicators right from the start: if you want to work on officials' competencies to perform certain tasks, for example, it is a good idea to consult these officials in order to determine how they see their capacity evolving. To do this exercise, you may need some more time to consult the target group. In that case, indicators can be more 'open': you indicate that you are going to measure the evolution of competencies and that this will be based on a number of indicators that you will define with the target group.
- You should take into account that you may have to adjust your indicators during the project: sometimes the indicators result in not enough useful information or sometime the project must be adjusted rendering the indicators no longer relevant.

How many indicators?

Because you have different results and specific objectives, you also need different indicators: at least one for every result and for every objective. Depending on the type of result, you will need several indicators in order to show that the result was achieved. Two to three indicators offer a good compromise to make a conclusive statement about the achievement of the result.

If you define indicators through a participative workshop, there is a considerable risk that you end up with a long list of indicators: everyone is interested in different aspects. Everyone also realises that the indicators will be used to assess the performance and results. Consequently, a discussion about indicators is often challenging. Often it is exactly this discussion that reveals what the actual approach of the project will be and what several stakeholders find important. This often means that you will define your results again in order to ensure that the logical framework remains coherent. However, please note that you have to be able to monitor every indicator separately. This means that you have to know where you can obtain information about the indicators, how you can gather that information, how you will process the information, etc. This suggests that you should have a limited number of indicators and choices have to be made. In the end you are looking for an 'indication', not 100% conclusive evidence for a result.

2.3.4. Assumptions and risks

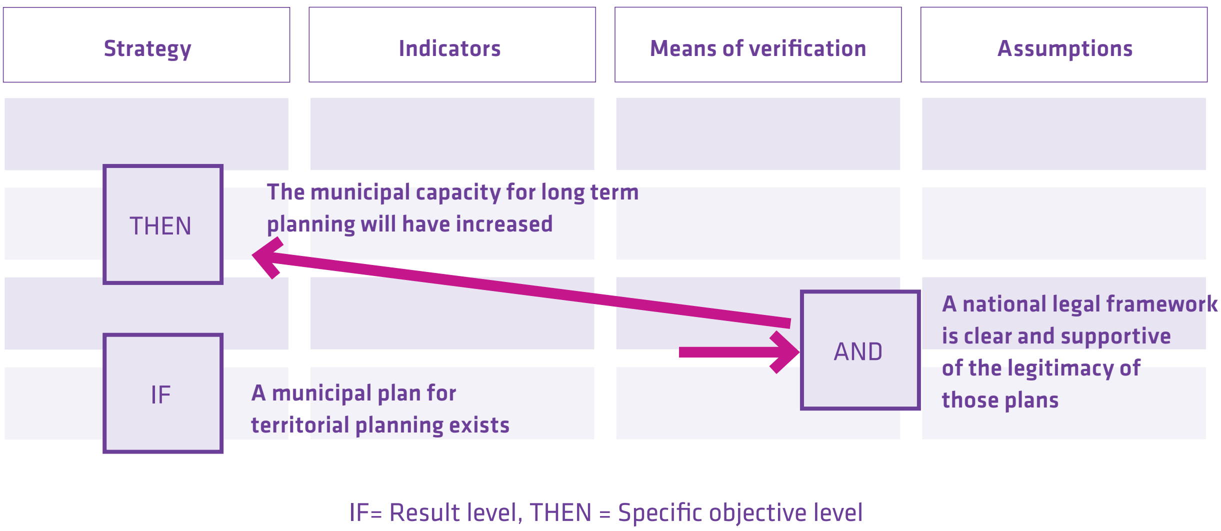
What is an assumption?

As mentioned earlier, monitoring and evaluation follow up different aspects of a project. It is also good to examine external factors that may affect your project. You can place the external factors that matter to the success of the project in the 'assumptions' column of the logical framework. Assumptions show what you assume in order to say that the project will succeed. They are usually external factors or conditions that are important to the success of your project, but over which you have little control. If a city wants to support initiatives for the environment and carbon neutrality, for example, other initiatives for environmentally friendly businesses (supported by other governments or donors) will contribute to the success of the city's own project: it makes it easier for you to urge companies to take action.

If you are not working with a logical framework, it is also preferable to examine which external factors are important to the project. For example, if you want to send students on internships in another country, you should think about coaching for the students during their stay abroad and what you are going to do in the event of a conflict between a student worker and a local organisation.

In addition to external factors that are completely beyond the control of your project, it is also important to take into account factors associated with the partnership (within city-to-city cooperation) and the input of partners/other organisations for the project, such as the quality of communication between partners, the partners' decision-making and the political balance of power and the relationships between the citizens and the officials. These are all factors that may be important for the project's success and should therefore be followed up.

For example, you read the diagram in the figure below as follows: 'if there is a municipal development plan for town and country planning' (the achievement of such a plan was defined as a project result) and 'the legislative framework is clear and supportive of the plans' legitimacy', then 'the municipality's capacity for long-term planning will have increased (bigger planning capacity also offering more legal certainty is a project objective). This way you can define assumptions for different project results.



Where the assumptions fit in with the logical framework

Assumptions or presuppositions, a starting point that you assume is true and that is vital for your project's success, each also entail risks. For example, when you assume that there are other carbon neutrality initiatives, there is a risk that these initiatives come to an end soon. Or if you assume that students will be coached during their work experience abroad, there is a risk that there will be no coaching or the quality will be poor. Another example is that you can assume that the legal framework is clear, but in that case there is a risk that a new government changes the framework completely.

No projects without risks

It is good to know that most projects are not without risk. You should therefore assume that there will be risks and things can go wrong. However, that is no reason to put an idea for a project on hold: risks are part of the process.

Outlining and monitoring the risks

It is important to obtain a good outline of the risks. This will also allow you to monitor the risks. The diagram below may help you to monitor risks[11]: you create a list of risks per result and specific objective or a general list of the risks. It is important to examine this diagram regularly in order to check whether these risks still apply, how they are evolving, whether their management is going according to plan and whether any new risks should be added. You use this approach to clarify to yourself, the partners and the donors how you deal with risks and to guide you in the follow-up of your project.

Risk overview	What is the chance of the risk occurring?	How bad are the consequences for the project?	What action are we going to take? / How are we going to manage the risk?
Risk 1			
Risk 2			

For example, if you are engaged in a city-to-city cooperation project that aims to raise awareness among the population about recycling and waste collection, there is a risk that people and groups whose income is dependent on these sectors will be affected by your project and will try to stop it. If this happens, the project will be badly affected. Raising awareness is a difficult task as it is and if a certain group shows strong resistance, it will be difficult to achieve results. You can manage this risk by setting up a working group in which various groups are represented. With this working group you can test the opinions of the various parties involved on every step of the project. This will allow you to adjust your project at the right time where possible, to inform everyone and to keep the communication lines with various groups open.

"It is good to realise that most projects are not without risk. You have to assume that there are risks and things can go wrong."

11 This diagram is partly based on the diagram offered by the Belgian Federal Government as part of the programme for Municipal International Cooperation.

Another example is a project working with teachers to set up fair trade activities with pupil councils. You assume that the pupil councils of the schools operate appropriately. If it becomes clear that several schools have pupil councils that are hardly doing anything at all (because the new management does not see the need to invest in it or because many of the teachers supporting pupil councils changed schools or retired, etc.), this will have a very negative effect on your project. Teachers will no longer have a 'partner' in the school to take action. So there is a risk that you must be prepared to tackle. At the start you can already think about possible alternatives, such as setting up workgroups with committed pupils instead of working with pupil councils.

Advantages of outlining the risks

Listing the risks allows you to discuss openly and objectively any possible problems you see with the partners. People often find it difficult to discuss their fear of certain risks openly, as these risks are often related to shortcomings they see in one or several partners. For example, you start up a project with a twin town in the South that is costing a considerable amount of money and you are afraid that the financial department of your twin town will not be able to justify the expenditure. It is better to discuss this risk you see openly with the partner, so that you can also get to know the partner's view on the matter. Even if you assess the risk differently – your municipality may think it is a high risk, whereas the twin town may see it as rather a low risk – talking about it allows you to look for ways of managing the risk together. Together you can choose an alternative right away (payments through a local NGO, for example) or you can identify measures together for when things start going wrong.

Be selective when listing assumptions

The aim is not to create a very long list of assumptions. A number of questions can help you to create a relevant list. Does this assumption really contribute to critically reflect on our project and how we want to approach it? Can we word this assumption more precisely or should it stay somewhat vague? Is this assumption about conditions of which we are not certain that they will be achieved? Are these assumptions that are beyond the project's control or are they related to the city-to-city cooperation, the partner's capacity and the relationships with the stakeholders?

2.3.5. The baseline or starting point

At the end of a project, a conclusion is usually expected about the project's results. Did the project go well? Do we see an evolution? Have certain things changed? ... This is important to justify certain resources used in order to achieve the project. In order to make such statements, documenting the situation at the start of the project may help. Some donors ask/demand a very extensive description of the initial situation. In terms of results and objectives, they want a precise description of the situation before the project started, for example using the indicators you presented your project's logical framework. This is because the indicators show which information you wish to gather.

If reliable and accessible information exists, it is usually not too difficult to describe the initial situation. If you are engaged in a follow-up project that is very similar to the previous project, you can use the most recent information on the indicators of that project in order to describe the initial situation of the new project. In that case there is no need for a thorough study. However, if you are setting up something new (new activities, new region, new target group), you will need to invest more time in gathering information. In some cases you really need to set aside time for a study, particularly if this is requested by the donor. This can also mean that your municipality or your partners have to go into the field to gather information. It is important to remain reasonable in this respect. There is no point in dedicating a major part of your budget to the description of the initial situation. Below we provide some possible guidelines:

- Only gather the information that is relevant to your project and do not be tempted to collect information on several other issues. If you have a good description of the expected results of your project and the possible indicators, this is a good guide.
- If you need a study, plan it like you would plan another study:
  (i) Find out what other information exists, where it can be found, whether it is accessible and whether the quality is good.
  (ii) If you still need to gather, supplement or update information, define how you will do so (method).
  (iii) Assess which resources you need.
  (iv) Determine who is responsible for data collection (analysis and use)
  (v) Link this to the monitoring and evaluation system of your project. In other words, decide when you will look at / update the gathered information again as the project progresses.
- Stay realistic: a baseline will never be perfect and will be 'good enough' at best. It is better to have a limited baseline with information that is used than a baseline that is never seen again during the project's implementation. It is also not really necessary to use an external consultant for this study.
- Be creative with methods: the methods of data collection are the same as the methods you use in your monitoring and evaluation system (see below). Ensure that you use methods that can also be used later (and are therefore feasible).
- Pay enough attention to gathering gender-sensitive data: try to be as gender-specific as possible in your data gathering and to collect data that distinguishes between men and women (or boys and girls). Projects often have a different effect on men and women and both groups often behave differently when they participate in group activities. You need to take into account this difference to better understand how your project can contribute to change for everyone.

"It is better to have a limited baseline with information that is used than a baseline that is never seen again during the project's implementation."

Selective waste collection in Guaranda (Ecuador), twin town of Evergem

Baseline study as the start of the programme

The city-to-city cooperation between Essen and Witzenberg (South Africa) focuses on the development and support of the youth policy. In order to ensure a good start for the programme, the university of Stellenbosch was contacted to perform a baseline study about the training and education needs of young people in Tulbagh, Witzenberg, where a youth (advisory) centre would be built at a later stage of the programme.

Instead of having this study performed entirely externally by the university, Witzenberg chose to ask the university to train a number of young people in research techniques. This allows the young people to actively participate in the baseline research and the selection of these research youngsters was also a first step in the search for youth ambassadors to play a part in the youth centre later. This baseline study was conducted at the start of the programme and provided additional information that had not been available at the time of defining the plans. When a lot of time passes between the definition of the plans and the start of their implementation, it may be useful to do the baseline study as the programme's first activity in order to refine and adjust the indicators to ever-changing reality.

Checklist for collecting baseline data	Indicators of the logical framework			
	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3	Etc.
Is there existing information already? Is this the information we need?				
Where is this information? (sources)				
Is this information accessible?				
Is this information reliable and of good quality?				
Is this information complete?				
Do we have to gather additional information ourselves?				
How are we going to do this by using which method?				
Who is responsible?				
Which resources (people and money) do we need?				
When do we look at the data again?				

2.4. OUTCOME MAPPING: ALTERNATIVE AND/OR COMPLEMENT TO THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.4.1. Outcome mapping in a nutshell

Outcome mapping (OM) is a new planning, monitoring and evaluation methodology. Since its launch in 2011 it has gained quite a lot of success in the world of development cooperation and many organisations have started using it. Outcome mapping is primarily an alternative to the logical framework approach. It is a fully developed methodology from the planning phase to the evaluation phase, but it can also be used as a complement to the logical framework. The proposed methods for the planning and definition phase can help make the roles of various stakeholders a lot clearer and more specific, for example. Outcome mapping is very much based on an 'agents approach'. It really clarifies (in a visual way) which effect you can expect from a project. In our opinion this is also where the potential lies of this method for municipal international cooperation.

"The proposed methods for the planning and definition phase can help make the roles of various stakeholders much clearer and more specific."

The basic principles or insights of outcome mapping are the following:

Agents approach

Outcome mapping is an approach that is based on agents aiming for (more, better or different) development. The strong emphasis on those agents means that during the planning phase it must be clearly investigated which agents the programme wants to work with: different departments of the municipality or just one department, an independent agency, groups and associations from civil society (immersion travel group, advisory councils or world party guests), elected representatives (aldermen, councillors, mayors), etc. The agents within the programme are referred to as boundary partners (see box for descriptions) and act as 'agents of change'. Outcome mapping offers tools to visually outline the boundary partners (persons, departments, associations) working together with the programme directly and how they will behave in order to make changes.

Change is seen as a long-term process that can only be partially controlled and influenced.

The development that municipalities are striving towards through municipal international cooperation is always about social change. You want to strengthen these 'agents of change' with (capacity building) programmes in order to achieve the planned change (administrative capacity building or wider public support) through them. However, change is a long-term, complex and fickle process that evolves in a non-linear and sometimes fairly unstable way. It is very unpredictable and many things can happen that are beyond our control. The municipal programmes work on capacity building and aim to change public attitudes. These processes show all the properties mentioned above. During planning, outcome mapping offers useful, visual tools to clarify the extent of the programme's scope. In other words, it defines the extent of the control of your municipality and project and – equally important – what is beyond that (and therefore out of your control).

Behavioural change in the ‘boundary partners’

In your outcome mapping you define results as ‘observable changes in behaviour’ in the actors affected by the programme. You describe a desirable behavioural change in every boundary partner in the programme. This helps you recognise the complexity of the change process and outline this complex change (outcome).

Central location for learning about change

Outcome mapping focuses on learning about and reflecting on the change process. This learning process is social, participative and organisational (institutional). This aspect is important for municipal international cooperation, as it is a structural way of better or different administration.

Below we clarify further the main themes of outcome mapping in a way that is as visual as possible. It is not our objective here to provide an exhaustive list. We simply aim to provide a brief introduction to the methodology.

Outcome mapping terminology

Here we provide a brief description of outcome mapping and the definition of the methodology terms.

Boundary Partners
This refers to the partners within the programme’s immediate sphere of influence. They are the agents (organisations, departments, associations, etc.) the programme directly collaborates with.

Outcome Challenge
This challenge describes how the boundary partner would behave in an ideal world. What should that partner do ideally, but realistically? This is about writing a mini-vision per social agent / boundary partner.

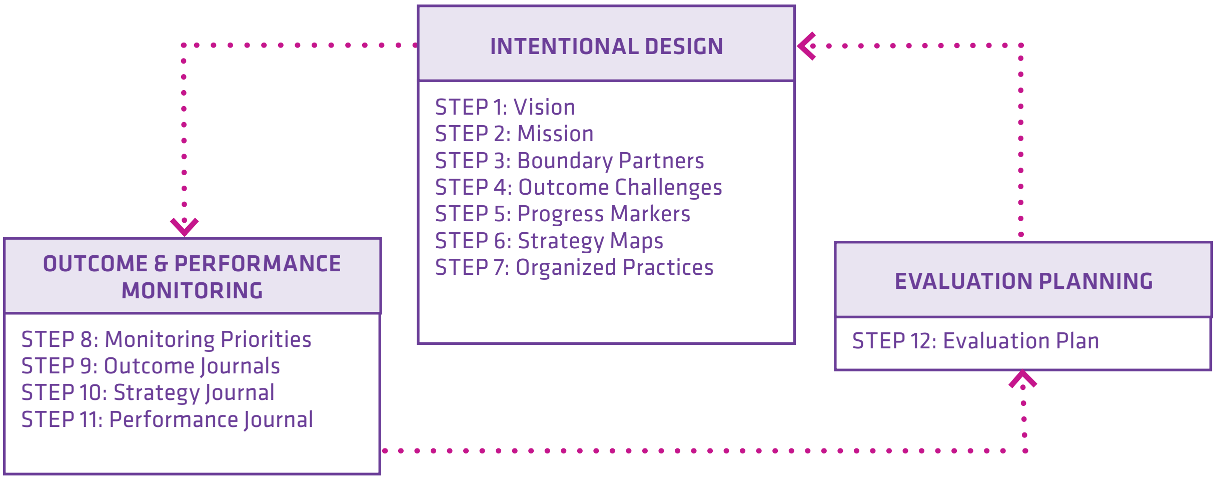
Outcome mapping
Outcome mapping defines the result (outcome) as changes in the boundary partner’s behaviour.

Progress Markers
Progress markers indicate how the behavioural changes / attitudes in the boundary partners are progressing. These milestones in the change process can be categorised gradually as sets of ‘expect to see’, ‘like to see’ and ‘love to see’.

“The aim of these steps is to find an answer to four essential questions, questions you should ask when you prepare any kind of project. They are the questions why, who, what and how.”

2.4.2. Introduction to the planning stage of outcome mapping

Outcome mapping is an integrated method for planning, monitoring and evaluation, as illustrated by the figure below. The method is divided into three major stages or sections: the planning stage (also referred to as 'intentional design'), the monitoring stage (also referred to as 'outcome and performance monitoring') and the evaluation stage. Each of the three stages consists of a number of concrete steps.[12]



The three stages of outcome mapping

Below we only discuss the first stage, that of intentional design, because that is where outcome mapping offers the most innovative insights to development cooperation programmes. This section is about preparation, planning and the writing or definition of the programmes. The section is divided into several consecutive steps. The aim of these steps is to find an answer to four essential questions, questions you should ask when preparing for any kind of project: why, who, what and how?

- **Why?** What is the vision the programme wishes to contribute to? What is the motivation and driving force for launching the programme?
- **Who?** Who are the agents in this programme?
- **What?** Which changes are contemplated?
- **How?** How will the programme contribute to these changes? Below we explain some of these questions in further detail.

Why? What is the motivation and what are the driving forces?

You start by defining the vision and mission. The vision must be seen as the ideal world you have in mind and you wish to contribute to. It is a wish, a dream, a representation of a big ideal. What would reality look like if all the changes you envisioned took place? What does the dream look like? How would the lives of the final beneficiaries have changed?

As soon as the vision is defined together with all the stakeholders, you determine which specific part your organisation wants to contribute to in the mission. Within the context and the limitations of your programme, you ask yourself the question what the project or programme will and can work on. If we see the vision as an apple, the mission is a bite from the apple. The mission is still quite broad, but is already a little more specific.

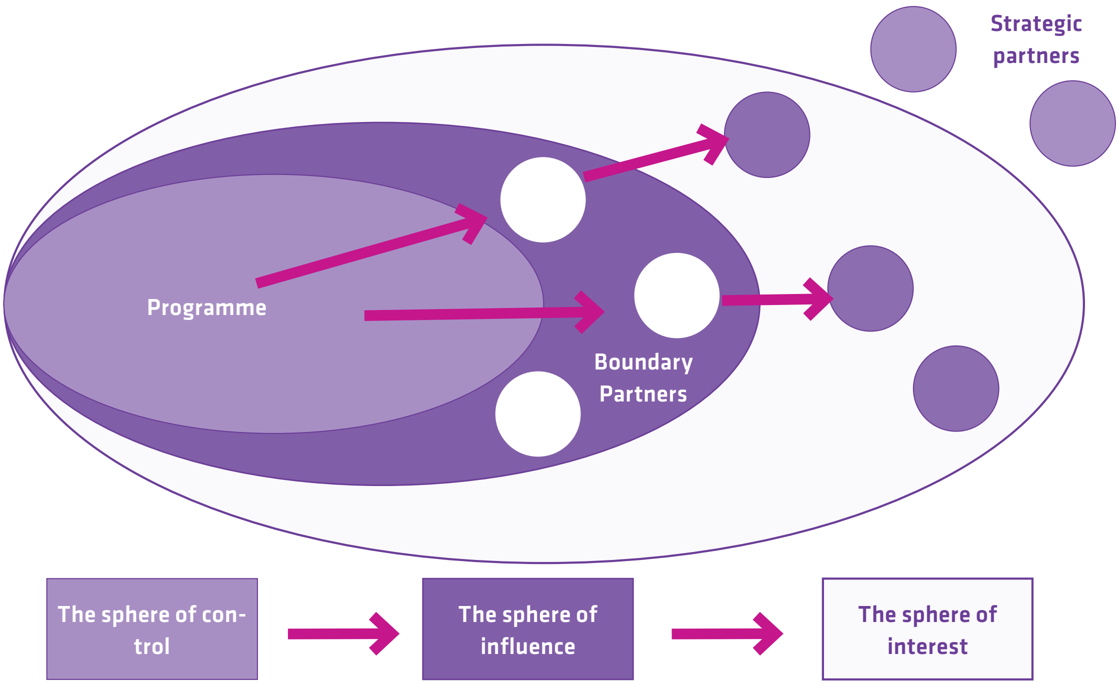
12 It is not necessary to follow all steps within outcome mapping. The methodology can also be used in a modular way according to a programme's specific needs.

After defining the vision and mission, it is time to ask the following questions: What needs to be done? Whom can you work with? What areas will you focus on?

Who? Who are the agents and whom will we work with directly?

The boundary partners are the agents (groups, associations, departments, organisations, etc.) that your programme will be working with directly and will be trying to influence. Of course several agents will play a part in the programme. Outcome mapping offers a visual way of outlining which agents (stakeholder) are playing a part in the programme and the change process. You can and have to work closely and directly with some of these agents. Your relationship with other agents will be more distant. The programme may also have less or a more indirect influence on such agents. A representation of all the agents can be quite complex sometimes. This is not a problem as such. The most important aspect is that this relationship diagram is created together with different agents and that it is a visual representation of how the different agents are related to and within the programme and how they can each contribute to change.

The figure below shows how you can show the agents in relation to the programme. The diagram also shows to what extent your programme can influence these agents (and the changes you wish to achieve).



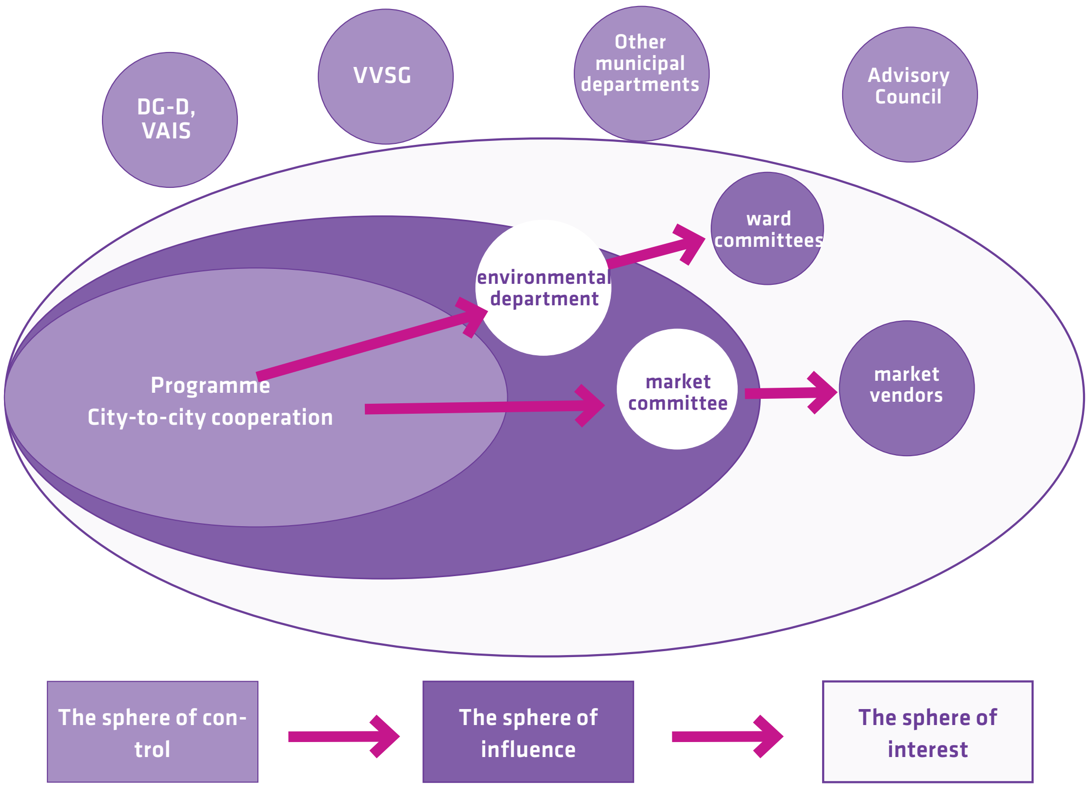
It is important to realise that the influence of the programme is very much limited. Showing the agents in a diagram help you clearly define the (possible) extent of your programme. This is clarified by the three circles that each represents a sphere: a sphere of control, a sphere of influence and a sphere of interest. The first circle is the sphere of control containing the agents implementing the programme (such as the International Cooperation department) and controlling the resources, activities and direct results or outputs. These activities help achieve effects and changes. You can influence them (sphere of influence), but you can no longer control them. It is also in your programme's interest that these effects in turn contribute to a higher defined objective, which your programme can no longer influence (sphere of interest).

The agents the programme is directly working with are in the programme's sphere of influence. They are the boundary partners, the organisations or partners directly supported by the programme. The programme aims to achieve observable changes with these boundary partners: concrete changes in their actions, in their relationships towards others and in the execution of their own tasks.

Below we try to clarify this further with a concrete example from city-to-city cooperation. As part of city-to-city cooperation, local authorities in Flanders want to help improve the living conditions of the population in the twin town in the South (as a general objective). Local authorities support improvements in services in the twin towns. It is important to realise that individual local authorities in Flanders have little influence on improved living conditions in the South. However, the local authority can work directly with specific services from the twin town (boundary partners) and strengthen (influence) the programme through them, so that they in turn do contribute to improved living conditions. The programme will therefore mainly describe the expected changes in the boundary partners. This will also be the main focus of its evaluation and monitoring.

The diagram below is an application of outcome mapping to define boundary partners, final beneficiaries and strategic partners within the city-to-city cooperation between Edegem and San Jeronimo. The municipality of Edegem has been involved in city-to-city cooperation with San Jeronimo in Peru for many years. Many activities take place as part of this city-to-city cooperation, both in San Jeronimo and in Edegem to promote public support for the city-to-city cooperation. For this the city-to-city cooperation can use its own resources and apply for federal and regional subsidies. This example is about the programme for which Edegem and San Jeronimo receive federal subsidies.

This programme focuses on two main themes: the market and the treatment of organic waste into compost (selecting, collection, treatment). Both themes are also connected to each other, because in a pilot project the organic waste is collected on the market and processed into compost. The San Jeronimo environmental department and the market committee are the boundary partners. Through them and through changes on their level, you can also contribute to changes in the final beneficiaries, in this case the neighbourhood committees and market sellers. The city-to-city cooperation programme itself includes the agents that have direct access to the resources and activities. In Edegem these agents are the North-South department, the environmental department and the local economy department. In San Jeronimo they are the city-to-city cooperation coordination department, which is part of the San Jeronimo local economy department. Together these departments provide the programme resources and organise the activities.



The strategic partners are shown outside the circles. They can each play a certain part in the programme using their own specific characteristics. The central and regional governments are obvious strategic partners. They provide subsidies in support and create the legal framework for this municipal policy. Then there are also the departments of the Association of Flemish Cities and Towns (VVSG) supporting the city-to-city cooperation programme between San Jeronimo and Edegem through training, advice and guidance. Within the municipality of Edegem there are also relevant municipal departments in terms of local economy, North-South and the environment. The Edegem advisory council EGRIS, which is composed of civil society, can also play a part here.

The federal city-to-city cooperation programme is not looking to influence these strategic partners directly and it does not expect any specific behavioural changes in these strategic partners either. In other words, the strategic partners are not directly involved in this specific programme, but may become involved in the programme's communication and evaluation.

This diagram can look very different depending on the type of programme. For example, for a programme supported by Flemish subsidies other municipal departments and the advisory council would probably be considered as boundary partners. If you want to raise the population of Edegem's awareness of development cooperation issues, the advisory council should be able to play the part of boundary partner.

The city-to-city cooperation programme chose the environment department as a boundary partner. This seems the most suitable partner to achieve the actual changes to do with waste and it is a partner the programme can influence: the environment department is a section of the twin town that signed a cooperation agreement with Edegem for this programme. The programme would like to see a behavioural change in this environment department: it wants the department to be capable of selecting, gathering and treating organic waste correctly and it wants the department to succeed in raising awareness among the residents of San Jeronimo about the necessity and the use of waste selection and composting. The resources the city-to-city cooperation programme will use include: study visits, colleague-to-colleague approach (Edegem environmental officer teaching the environmental department about composting), investments in a composting installation, training sessions on the aspect of raising awareness, etc. The change in the environmental department should then affect the work the environment department does with the neighbourhood committees in the city centre and the communities.

A similar situation occurs in terms of the work on the market. The local economy department of San Jeronimo is part of the city-to-city cooperation programme and aims to create changes in the market management committee. San Jeronimo has a big market with wholesalers and retailers alike. Every week thousands of residents from the area do their shopping there. The market management committee is responsible for collecting the market money, the location, marketing training and hygiene and product quality inspection and training. The city-to-city cooperation programme aims to make changes on this level to ensure the marketing committee liaises with the market stallholders in a better way and – at a later stage – can offer a better, higher-quality market to the residents of San Jeronimo. The management committee is therefore a boundary partner and the market stallholders have been placed in the sphere of interest circle. Through the programme, the city-to-city cooperation programme can influence the management committee, which will then change. These changes will affect the market stallholders and even the people who shop on the market.

What? Which changes do you want to see and how will you name them?

Once you have identified the boundary partners and you have outlined the social agents your programme will work with directly, you can take a step further: you specify together with the partner the changes you wish to see. You now jointly create an outcome challenge per boundary partner. An outcome challenge describes how the boundary partner would behave in an ideal world. What would the partner do ideally, but realistically? This is actually like writing a mini-vision per boundary partner. An outcome challenge often starts with: "The programme wants to see BOUNDARY PARTNER X act in a way that …", followed by a description of the behaviours and relationships. This statement may include various changes.

In a subsequent step you describe the observable changes in behaviour, relationships and actions in a set of milestones called progress markers. This set consists of three levels of noticeable and concrete changes. Contrary to the indicators of the logical framework, progress markers are not formulated according to the SMART criteria. They describe a path, a change process ranging from a positive response to a fully-fledged transformation. There are three levels:

1. **Expect to see**: this first level of progress markers describes changes that are expected to take place, usually in the short term.
2. **Like to see**: the intermediate level of progress markers represents changes that will be more difficult to achieve.
3. **Love to see**: the 'furthest' level of progress markers is usually about the more fundamental changes the organisation is hoping to achieve in the long term.

A collection of about fifteen progress markers categorised according to these levels can be a good representation of the behavioural change you wish to see in the boundary partner in question. You can consider the full set of progress markers as a type of map. Writing them offers a practical guide later to monitor the behavioural changes in the partners. They are a useful tool to monitor changes in boundary partners.

How? In what way will we contribute to change?

The programme aims to contribute to changes in a boundary partner and you described these changes in a practical sense in the outcome challenge. Certain milestones (progress markers) have been agreed per outcome challenge in order to monitor these changes. However, we still have not defined in what way the programme wants to or can contribute to these changes. That is the next step: a strategy map is created as part of the outcome mapping. The strategy map is used to outline the approach the programme should follow in order to actually contribute to the outcome challenges of the boundary partner(s). This is beyond the scope of this basic book. More information is provided in the bibliography.

The city-to-city cooperation team of Nimlaha'kok (Guatemala), twin town of Herent

CHAPTER 3
AGENTS AND THEIR PART IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation cannot be performed by a single person. It is not just simply impossible, but also undesirable: various agents and stakeholders share responsibility for a project's results and therefore its monitoring and evaluation. This section mainly discusses who can play a part in the supply of information, the gathering and bringing together of information and the assessment of the results based on that information. There is a difference between those who are asked to provide information ('Where is the information?') and those gathering the information. Sometimes it is for the same agent. If you want to know whether the tax income in a twin town has risen as a result of the project, you need to get this information from the Finance department. As this department is part of the twin town you are working with, they can also gather this information themselves every month, for example. However, if you want to know what the local advisory councils think about your activities to raise awareness, you will have to collect this information from them yourself by having conversations or taking a survey.

3.1. PARTICIPATION IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION: SOME PRINCIPLES

In principle all agents involved in a project can play a part in monitoring and evaluation. The more agents are involved, the better your understanding will be of the results and processes of change. There is a distinction between the agents involved in data collection, the agents organising data collection and the agents using the information. It is important to think about this from the start of the project and to put this down on paper in a diagram (see also below under item 4. Preparation for data collection). Take into account the following principles in this respect:

- Get as much information as you can from people/organisations that are directly involved.
- If you ask organisations to take care of their own data collection, as project owner you need to help them perform the task adequately.
- People and organisations don't mind collecting data if the information is interesting to them as well (for example because they want to use the data themselves or because they are required to collect the data).
- Take into consideration how often you have to and want to collect your data (monthly, once during the project, quarterly, etc.) and who will do this. This will help you assess what is feasible.
- Think about the way you are going to gather your data (see the chapter below about techniques).
- Make sure to spread the tasks and responsibilities: in most cases most work ends up being done by the project owner. This can be a pretty tough task. It is therefore important to see which agent can support the project owner in this task. The most efficient way of involving agents in monitoring and evaluation is to organise the main agents in a committee with specific tasks: (i) to help follow up the project, (ii) to help the project owner with data collection, (iii) to urge other agents to supply information (in the required way), (iv) to interpret the first findings together with the project owner, etc. This committee can take different forms: it can be a group of people within the local advisory council (possibly complemented by third parties), the existing city-to-city cooperation committee or another specific working group.[13]

13 In municipalities where similar committees exist, the part they are given often involves the follow-up of projects, but this part rarely results in concrete monitoring and evaluation action and arrangements in this respect.

"In principle all agents involved in a project can play a part in monitoring and evaluation."

City-to-city cooperation working groups, Nicaragua committees, youth groups and advisory councils

The various agents involved in North-South activities at a municipality can all play a part in monitoring and evaluation. Sint-Niklaas is the twin town of Tambacounda in Senegal. The city-to-city cooperation working group includes the alderman for development cooperation and municipality officials (North-South official, sustainability consultant, etc.), but also a number of NGOs active in Senegal, such as Bevrijde Wereld and Dwagulu-Dekkente. In Edegem the young people committed to city-to-city cooperation with the San Jeronimo in Peru have set up the organisation Esperuanza. Mol, Sint-Truiden and Lommel all engage in city-to-city cooperation in Nicaragua and the volunteers of those municipalities (including the politicians) are active in Nica committees. Other municipalities have an official working group in which everyone contributes to the city-to-city cooperation from his or her field. In some municipalities the municipal advisory council for development cooperation plays an active part in the organisation of an annual world party or the Fair Trade movement group promotes better trading conditions. All these groups or organisations are important agents for M&E.

Peer review: the North-South official from Edegem participates in an internal evaluation mission in Nimlaha'kok (Guatemala), twin town of Herent.

3.2. EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPATIVE MONITORING

Below we provide an example to clarify certain issues. In principle, you can apply the same reasoning to other examples without too many problems. This example is about a climate campaign in a municipality. The aim is to urge and help municipal departments (and their infrastructure) and schools to save energy.

Agents

The agents are: the project owner and other officials of the Environment department implementing the campaign, the target groups (which can be other officials and municipal and free schools), partners such as NGOs taking local action in terms of climate change (as part of the local advisory council for North-South cooperation), politicians and the local advisory council for North-South cooperation.

About what should you gather information?

To assess whether the project is yielding results, the project owner wishes to see information about: (i) the extent to which the target groups understand the issues, (ii) the number and type of activities by municipal departments and schools to save energy, (iii) the effects of these activities on energy expenditure (reduction compared to the initial situation or better results compared to schools/departments that are not participating). These are the indicators that were set. The project owner also wants to assess the project's relevance and efficiency in the context of a final evaluation.

How should you organise this?

The table below explains who receives which part of monitoring and evaluation. The 'Who collects the information?' column also indicates the frequency of data collection and the methods/techniques used in this respect.

Information about (indicators)	Who should be asked for the information?	Who collects the information?
The extent to which the target groups understand the issues	The target groups: schools and municipalities, more specifically: • executives • teacher and other teams • technicians • pupils (possibly)	The project owner or the NGO partner **When**: at the start and at the end of the project with a short questionnaire as part of a sample survey (of potential participants)
The number and type of energy-saving activities by municipal departments and schools	The target groups: schools and municipalities, more specifically: the contact for this activity	The target groups, more specifically: the contact **When**: quarterly based on a sheet to be completed by the contact (see below)
The effects of these activities on energy expenditure.	Schools Municipal departments	The target groups, more specifically: the contact **When**: quarterly based on a sheet to be completed by the contact (see above).

Information about (indicators)	Who should be asked for the information?	Who collects the information?
	Third parties who have a good overview of the target groups and are in a position to compare them, such as the management of a school group with an overview of the spending of schools that are participating and not participating	The project owner **When**: halfway through the project and at the end, based on a telephone interview
Relevance and efficiency (evaluation).	Target groups, more specifically: • the contacts • the NGO partner • politicians • possibly external experts	The project owner **When**: at the end of the project at a one-day evaluation workshop with the stakeholders

Data collection by the target group

The diagram above shows that for this project, the target group itself is asked to gather information on the type of activities the target group is undertaking and their effect. This may work because a lot of the information is about issues that interest them, such as the level of their energy bill. If the target groups are given a task to gather information, it is important to consider their capacity to do this. For example, does the school have the time and the people to gather this information? Of course, the project owner can help by offering a data collection tool to make it easier to gather the same information regularly and to examine the evolution in time.

In this example, the project could work with a data sheet for each participating school and municipal department. It is important to ensure that the sheet only asks about information that is really necessary in order to limit the time spent as much as possible. A sheet can be created with the target group, the NGO partner and possibly with some experts to make certain that the necessary information will be gathered. It is important that the data collection expectations and the expected effort in terms of time and people are communicated as much as possible at the start of the project and when the target groups are asked for their assistance.

The above table also shows that you tend to involved more agents in an evaluation (about relevance and efficiency) than in data collection, because there are simply more people who are interested in what the project achieved in general.

The organisation by the project owner with the assistance of a committee

The organisation of data collection and evaluation is clearly the task of the project owner with the assistance of the contacts of the target groups (the schools and municipal departments) and the NGO partner, but mainly of a committee of the most important agents. The project owner has to distribute the tasks, follow up the data collection ('Is the right information supplied within the requested timeframe?') and must ensure that the data is used, but the committee can provide assistance with these tasks. The above table shows that the project owner receives information quarterly.

What should be done with the information?

Monitoring and evaluation is not just about gathering data. Afterwards the information is analysed, findings are discussed and decisions are taken about adjustments. These steps also involve several agents.

Analysis

First the data must be analysed and interpreted. The data can be analysed at specific times, but this should be done at least once a year to make it easier to write reports (to executives, partners, donors, etc.). It is a good idea to write down some questions in advance and at the start of the project in order to help analyse and interpret the collected data. In this example, the following questions are useful:
Is there a difference between schools and municipal departments?
What type of action seems to be having the most effect?
What have the people in the target group remembered most?
Are there any obstacles?
What are the explanatory factors for positive/less positive results?
... It is good when several people help with the analysis and interpretation of data and the answering of questions, for example the committee, the NGO partner and possible some contacts at the target group. The most important findings and conclusions must be brought together in a report: for subsidised projects, the report format indicates which issues must be reported.

Communication

It is important to share and communicate the most important monitoring findings and conclusions. You can do this with brief reports and articles on the website and in the local media. You try to involve an even broader group in this type of communication: schools and departments that are not yet participating, the advisory council for North-South cooperation and the general public. You can also use this communication in order to attract new participants, should that be necessary. That is the task of the project owner, but this task can be shared with both the target group and the NGO partner, which can each use their own communication channels.

Adjustments

What is most important is that the information and the analysis are used to see whether the project needs to be adjusted. Should other activities be organised? Should we work with more/fewer schools? ... The information and analysis can also be used to advise the various participating schools and municipal departments about their approach. For example, this can be done once a year during a half-day workshop. During the workshop the most important findings about the results can be shared and jointly interpreted and plans can be forged on how to continue in the future.

3.3. MONITORING FOR CITY-TO-CITY COOPERATION: SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

Monitoring and evaluating a project in your own municipality is easier than monitoring a project that is being set up at the other side of the world. Even in your own municipality, it is often a challenge to get all the partners and agents in line and to ensure that you can gather good information. Many municipalities in Flanders are in the strange situation of being accountable to a donor about projects they are not implementing themselves. This presents specific challenges:

- For projects implemented in the South, most of the monitoring work is to be done in the South. As a Flemish municipality, you have very little direct control over this. When the project is defined, you need to have an in-depth discussion with the partners what the possibilities and limitations are for good monitoring and any risks must be outlined.
- Every monitoring and evaluation system you create (tools, planning and task distribution) must be tailored to the partner and agents in the South. It is often assumed that the coordinator in the South will be able to

gather all the data in time, which is often not the case: it is often already a challenge to issue a report on the use of the budgets on time.

- When the tools and plan are developed, it is best to have your approach correspond as much as possible to the way the local authority works in the South:
  How are they already gathering information?
  How do they do this and what are the results?
- If the capacity for monitoring and evaluation is really very limited, you can consider possible training or you can examine together with the partner whether a local organisation may be able to provide assistance. Perhaps you can make available extra resources for data collection through the project or the city-to-city cooperation? If the municipalities in the South can help gather good, relevant information about their services, this will not just benefit the monitoring of your project, it will also benefit the twin town's capacity: having reliable data in order to inform the administration is often an issue that requires attention in order to ensure sufficient capacity.

San Felipe de Oña (Ecuador), municipal partner of the Flemish municipality of Bierbeek

Lommel street in Ongwediva (Namibia), municipal partner of the Flemish city of Lommel

Youth work in Stellenbosch (South Africa), municipal partner of the Flemish municipality of Dilbeek

CHAPTER 4
M&E DATA COLLECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In order to monitor and evaluate a project, you need information. You need to collect this information at the start of the project, during the project's implementation and at the end of the project.

4.1. ABOUT WHAT SHOULD YOU GATHER INFORMATION?

If you are working with a logical framework, it clearly indicates what you need to gather information about. The indicators in particular show you which information to collect. The 'testing sources' column of the logical framework also indicates where this information can be found. However, there is no column in the logical framework that helps you or forces you to think about how you are going to collect the information (techniques and methods). A lot of time is often spent on defining the results and indicators without any thought being given about how you can gather information on these.

For (smaller) projects without a logical framework it is obviously also useful to gather information systematically right from the start. In order to do this properly, it is essential to ask yourself from the beginning which questions you would like to see answered at the end of the project. For example, you are launching a new initiative offering officials a lunchtime lecture about North-South issues every first Tuesday of the month. Your municipality will organise this initiative for one year. After that year you (or your department head) would like to be able to answer the following questions:

- How many (different) people have attended the lectures?
- How many people were there on average at every lecture?
- Did the lectures change anything about the participant's perception of the South/North and North/South issues?
- What did the lectures cost in the end?
- What is the average cost per participant?

It is also possible that the subsidy donor has specific questions that you have to take into account. If you really think about these questions at the start, you will notice that it is not always easy to find the information you need in order to answer these questions. This means that you need to take your time to examine how you can gather information. For example, in order to know whether the people's perception has changed, you may have to find out first how your fellow-officials think about the issue at the moment: you need to ask them before you start the project and then again afterwards. This means that you have to think about the type of questions you want to ask them and about who is going to gather this information.

4.2. PREPARATION FOR DATA COLLECTION

Depending on your project's size and nature, you need to invest more time in designing a data collection approach. Thinking about your approach is always useful for both small and big projects. What matters is that you can find ways to gather relevant, reliable information efficiently.

The steps

The necessary steps you can follow to achieve an efficient approach are:

1. **Determine which information you need** (information need), either by using your indicators of the logical framework or by thinking about the questions you (or the subsidy donor) want to be able to answer when the project has finished. You can also immediately determine who can use this information.
2. **Determine where you can obtain this information**. Does the information exist already somewhere (see also above under baseline) or do you have to collect the information yourself from specific agents (see also above under agents)? If you want to collect the information from a larger group of people about a certain subject, you will probably have to think about sampling. You will rarely have the time or the resources to ask everybody at length what their in-depth opinions or perceptions are.
3. **Determine who can gather the information** (see also above under agents) or who can help collect the information.

These steps were already discussed in previous chapters, which have clearly shown that the various steps are intertwined and affect each other if you choose to have the information partially gathered by the activity's target group.

4. **Make decisions about the way you can gather information**. You should think about this before or when you start the project, so that you gain a quick overview of what needs to be done in the course of the project and you can assess the feasibility of this. If you design different ad hoc evaluation forms for each activity in your project, it will be impossible to monitor your project efficiently. The following paragraph examines how different methods are chosen.

Some guidelines

Here we summarise some guidelines that can help you think about a system for data collection and methods:

- **Ensure that you have various sources**: get your information from as many different people/organisations. Even if the subject is the same, try to obtain information from several groups. This is a form of triangulation: you obtain your information about the same subject from different sources. This helps you verify the reliability of this information.
- **Ensure that you also receive information from external or neutral sources**. Do not only use sources provided from within the project or by stakeholders benefiting from the project.
- **Ensure that the information is collected by different people**. Particularly when doing interviews or other qualitative methods, the personality of those taking the interviews can have strong influence on data collection. Using different people is also a way of distributing the work and making monitoring and evaluation a shared responsibility.
- **Keep an open mind in terms of information that presents itself unexpectedly**. Such information always comes in handy to check, verify or support other information. Sometimes the information reveals results that you had not expected (both in a positive and in a negative sense).

- **Generally, the following applies: there is no use in gathering information if you do not use and process it**. For example, individual discussions or surveys that are not processed, consolidated (such as results per respondent type) or analysed are unhelpful and not cost effective! If you know in advance that the organisation has not analysis competence and no budget to attract such competence, you should keep your approach as simple as possible.
- **Use and combine different methods** (see below).

4.3. CHOOSING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

To ensure good monitoring and evaluation, you should gather your information in a structured, systematic way. This allows you to verify whether you are on the right track and/or to assess the quality and results of the project. Certain methods and techniques can help you do this. This paragraph discusses some of these methods and techniques and also explains some of the techniques in more detail. We make no distinction between monitoring and evaluation: the techniques tend to be used for both monitoring and evaluating a project.

" Generally, the following applies: there is no use in gathering information if you do not use and process it."

Factors that are decisive in the choice of technique

Of course how you collect your data and the techniques and methods you choose is highly dependent on the type of project you are implementing. You will probably use different methods for monitoring a project that mainly creates development plans for town and country planning and aims to strengthen the capacity of the municipal departments than for monitoring a project that aims to raise awareness of North-South cooperation amongst the children of the municipality.
Other factors that affect the choice of methodology are:

- **the size of the project/activity**: does the activity cost a lot of money and concern a lot of people or not?
- **the presence or absence of resources for monitoring and evaluation**
- **the objective of monitoring and evaluation**: what is the information for? Monitoring and evaluation that only focuses on the justification of subsidies are approached differently than monitoring and evaluation aiming to contribute to learning by project owners, partners and other agents. If the emphasis is on learning, you will want to use a lot more participative methods focusing on the input of the target group and various agents. Participative methods allow various agents and target groups to affect the way you gather information and the subject of your information. They invite agents and target groups to help analyse projects and project results and identify any explanatory factors. Participative methodologies can also ensure that you receive information about unexpected and unintentional results (more quickly). Examples of participative methodologies are: SWOT analyses, the Most Significant Change technique, focus group discussions, Community Score Cards, etc. (for a description of these techniques, see also below and appendix).

How do I make a choice?

Here are some tips that can help you choose the most appropriate methods of data collection:

- Choose a method depending on the type of information you need. If you need figures on the number of participants in activities, you can work with registration or attendance lists. If you want to fully understand why certain changes took place, work with interviews or methods supporting discussion and exchange.

- Combine various methods and techniques: lists of participants and numbers become more interesting if you also understand why someone is (not) participating. You can only achieve that by combining registration lists with a survey of the target group.

- If possible, combine qualitative methods (such as guided self-assessments with the project group or partners) and quantitative information (hard data you collect with physical measurements of soil quality, rising income through local taxes or with surveys).

- If you want to use surveys and questionnaires in a wider group or a large part of the municipality's population, think about the following:
  Who do you wish to focus on? (Why these people?)
  How big should your sample be? (Do you want it to be representative for the entire group or do you want it to illustrate the findings?)
  How will you determine the sample survey?

- Check what already exists with the partners. How is information gathered at the moment? Perhaps you can use existing methods. You may be able to collect information for your own project easily by making a small adjustment.

- Try some simple things, which you then refine further. If the resources and experience are limited, it is best to start with one thing that you systematically expand with new methods and techniques. Doing something is better than doing nothing at all.

- Ask yourself the question whether the investment in a certain method can be justified. Some methods are easier and less expensive than others. It can be fairly easy to gather 'administrative' information (number of people participating in an activity) or technical information (cost price per activity/participant/intervention, number of physical achievements such as infrastructure). Using secondary information is also relatively easy and cheap. These are evaluations of other programmes and existing (statistical) information. Reliability and accessibility can be a problem here, though. If you choose to organise discussions and interviews with a limited group of people, you need more time and specific skills. You can ask the target group to provide you with information using simple sheets, but then you have to invest time in follow-up and possibly support. We conclude by saying that you can create surveys for specific target groups, but surveys are complex. You need to think about the sample survey, method of sending it, the quality of the questionnaire, processing methods, etc. Surveys require many competencies, which you may not have available.

An overview of techniques and methods

Here you will find an overview of various techniques and methods. This overview is not exhaustive: we are certain that other methods and techniques can be devised.[14] There are also specific techniques for each area/

14 Information about the various techniques is readily available on the internet. Some works and sites we have used are: IFAD (http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm), Bakewell (op. cit.), XXX, Civicus (http://www.civicus.org/news-and-resources-127/toolkits).

sector: officials focusing on the installation and maintenance of the water infrastructure or the monitoring of primary education probably use methods that are specific for their sector. The following section provides more details on certain techniques.

Monitoring and evaluation: how complicated should they be?

The organisation of monitoring and evaluation, task distribution, data collection and data analysis are the building blocks of an M&E system that allows you to manage and learn from projects in a good way. However, not every project requires a sophisticated system. Small and/or one-off projects often only need you to find a good technique to evaluate a certain activity without any type of 'system' at all.

It is important that you assess what is important for each project. For larger projects lasting several years it makes sense to examine first which systems and methods exist already in your own municipality (or with the other twin towns) and what is meaningful or can be used for monitoring and evaluating the specific project. It is better to use an existing system and introduce a certain data collection technique, an analysis method or a way of sharing information here and there. The alternative is to develop your own system. This may be structured better (on paper and in theory), but in practice, this may not work because your colleagues or the stakeholders cannot or will not work with it or because you do not have the time to put a lot of energy into it yourself.

4.4. SOME EXAMPLES OF DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

We will develop some techniques below. We have mainly chosen some participative methodologies. This does not mean that other methodologies and techniques are not useful. There are interesting sources of information you can consult for more information on other techniques.

When we develop certain techniques, we systematically discuss the following:
- Objective
- When do you use it?
- What do you need?
- How do you implement it?
- Remarks
- Want to read more?

4.4.1. Community score cards

The community score card is a tool that is often used in projects focusing on public services provided by municipalities, for example. It is a fairly simple monitoring tool that allows citizens to talk about public services and that invites governments to account for those services. The tool shows what citizens find important and encourages governments to respond to this. This is done in a direct way: by having the citizens and government talk to each other during consultation meetings.

Objective

You can use this tool to involve citizens in public services and to monitor the access to and quality of those services. The services may involve health care centres, education, public transport, drinkable water, waste collection and treatment, etc. The tool helps to inform citizens about (new) services and to know their opinions on access and quality. The objective is to encourage dialogue between local government and its citizens and to strengthen the capacity of the citizens (in order to ask for good services) and local government (in order to offer good services or improve the services). It also helps to show the citizens what is involved in the development, organisation and offering of services.

When do you use it?

You can use it in projects focusing on the development, organisation or improvement of a certain public service and aiming to monitor whether the access to that service and its quality is good or evolving in a positive way. For example, twin towns work together as part of their city-to-city cooperation to improve the organisation of local markets, waste collection and treatment, local transport, etc. This is a suitable method if you are looking for regular feedback from citizens. This method is not suitable for services local government has very little influence over (and are the responsibility of the provinces or central public departments, for example).

> *" The tool helps to inform citizens about (new) services and know their opinions on access and quality."*

What do you need?

You have to have the manpower to support groups of citizens and facilitate meetings between groups of citizens and local government departments. The application and implementation of the technique mainly occurs in the twin town in the South. It is therefore important to ensure that the local government has the capacity to apply this method. If the capacity is not there internally, external partners (such as NGOs or universities) must be found. These external partners can then (temporarily) support the application of the method.

How do you implement it?

We distinguish the following steps: selection of participants, definition of indicators and scores, organisation and follow-up of consultation meetings, communication of results and repetition of the exercise.

- **Selection**: groups of citizens or families are selected in the municipality who are or will be using the service directly. For example, you select families in the neighbourhoods where waste collection is (re)organised or you select market stallholders near places where the government wants to organise local markets.[15] If there are too many citizens, perhaps several groups should be made. These citizens will have to be informed of the method's importance, objective and limitations. In many cases this will be a contained effort. On the side of the government the participants are the departments involved in the services.
- **Definition of indicators and scores**: you organise focus group discussions with these groups. Participants are invited to indicate what they feel is important (based on which indicators do they want to assess the service: cost price, quality, attitude of officials and municipal staff, ...). Based on this the participants are asked to score the service. The same is done with the responsible municipal department. Indicators may be scored in order of importance.
- **Organisation of consultation meetings**: a joint consultation meeting is organised after the first scoring in order to put together the indicators and scores. Both parties are given the opportunity to explain why they

15 You can define criteria for this selection to ensure that the selected group is as representative as possible (in terms of age and gender, for example).

chose these indicators and why they allocated a certain score. After this both parties can request clarification. Then both parties enter into a discussion during which they examine to what extent they can achieve a joint list of indicators. In areas where this is not possible, every party continues to follow-up its own indicators. A simple monitoring system can be created for each party to help follow up indicators where necessary and possible. For example, families may find it important that waste is collected twice a week and the municipality agreed to follow up this indicator. In that case, both parties should follow up whether this is actually done every week. The meeting can be closed by examining what action can be taken to remediate any poor scores.

- **Communication**: the objective is that the local government communicates about the scores and the outcome of meetings. It is therefore essential that there is communication about the outcome of meetings within the municipality and between the municipality and governments at a higher level. Municipalities often do not have the capacity to take action that affects the quality of services. It is important that the groups of citizens are aware of these limitations and have realistic expectations.
- **Repetition and follow-up**: then the process is repeated. Depending on the service type and frequency, the meetings with families, municipal departments and consultation meetings must be organised every month, every six months…

Remarks

Of course this presupposes that local government is open to this method and can work constructively with the input from citizens. A preparatory awareness process may contribute to more understanding of the method. If there is little experience with this methodology, you should assume that it can take a long time before the mechanism works well and runs smoothly.

Want to read more?

Pekkonen, A. (s.d.) Community score cards (on Civicus website and Google).

4.4.2. Peer review

In a 'peer review' a peer or colleague examines your project and its results. For example, you ask the equal opportunities official in your municipality to look at a project to raise awareness or a project to support markets as part of city-to-city cooperation and to share her analysis with you. Or you ask someone at the environment department with a lot of experience in citizens' awareness campaigns to help you examine how awareness campaigns are approached at both departments and what works well or does not work well in this respect. Two (or more) municipalities in the North can also arrange to have a similar project analysed. In the context of projects to broaden public support and raise awareness, fellow-officials from both municipalities can visit each other to see how the work is progressing.[16] In the context of city-to-city cooperation, municipalities in the South can examine each other's projects in South-South peer reviews. North-South peer reviews are less obvious (due to the travel costs), but very interesting as well. For example, if a colleague from the South can ask whether he can critically assess awareness and perception in the North during a working visit. The peer review can be developed as a traditional evaluation, but it can also be a more limited exercise. It is essential that people commit voluntarily (and receive enough time and freedom from the municipality) and that they are prepared to examine the projects of colleagues and their results in a structured way.

16 You can even ask a colleague from another department with similar experience, for example someone at the environment department who does a lot of citizens' awareness work. The aim is that you visit each other to see how awareness campaigns are approached and what works well and what does not.

Objective

The objective is not to judge, but to understand how results were achieved , to identify what worked and what did not and to examine what can be learned for other projects and the future. The emphasis is very much on asking questions to each other, exchanging experiences, providing constructive feedback to each other and learning from these experiences together. The aim is not to arrive at concrete recommendations for project owners, coordinators and policymakers, but to draw some 'lessons' that may be interesting for the departments and municipalities involved and possibly also for other municipalities operating in the same field.

Peer reviews during internal evaluations

An external view of a programme is an important touchstone. It is even more valuable if the external party looking at the programme is sufficiently informed of the processes and specific nature of local authorities.

Like OECD, which puts the development policy of a country under the microscope with peer reviews, VVSG has already organised two internal evaluations with peers (fellow North-South officials) as part of the evaluation group. The person who was the North-South official in Genk at the time participated in the internal evaluation in South Africa. His participation added real value in southern Africa thanks to his knowledge and experience in the activities of a local authority in Flanders. Genk is engaged in its own city-to-city cooperation with Francistown, Botswana. Although external consultants (and external parties in general) cannot always empathise with the reality of day-to-day municipal work (and are therefore sometimes tempted to make unrealistic conclusions or recommendations), this is much less the case with peer reviews. VVSG also organised a peer evaluation in Nicaragua at the end of the programme. This peer review mechanism offers a lot of potential opportunities, not just as part of city-to-city cooperation, but also for mutual peer evaluation within the Flemish municipalities (or municipalities in the South). It does not only add value for the evaluated municipality, but also for the peer evaluators involved, who learn a lot from this experience for their own activities.

When do you use it?

Peer reviews are a good tool if you are looking for a way to learn from your own experiences and to take a critical, open look at your own practices. Using peer reviewers is a cost-effective way of monitoring and evaluation: you do not have to pay for an external evaluator and you develop the expertise of your own personnel. Peer reviewers are also people from the field who are often quicker and better at assessing what the possibilities and opportunities are for setting up and implementing projects within a local authority. You can also use the method if you want to learn about a certain subject together with other municipalities. For example, as part of city-to-city cooperation you worked with local radios and local press to inform people of the day-to-day lives of people in the twin town. Now you want to better understand the results of this and how you could optimise the cooperation with the local press. To do this, you look for one or several peer reviewers from other municipalities who have experience with this type of project.

> *"The emphasis is very much on asking each other questions, exchanging experiences, providing constructive feedback to each other and learning from those experiences together."*

What do you need?

Several forms are possible. A peer review can be very simple (inviting a colleague from another department of your municipality) or quite complex (making arrangements with several municipalities in order to visit each other with regard to a certain project each year). The more complicated forms of peer review need some coordination: you need to know which municipalities are interested in this methodology and which peers are available. The coordination can be provided by an umbrella organisation, such as VVSG, or by the municipalities that are active in the same country or region. It is also important to develop a common foundation in terms of methodology and techniques through a training course and a handbook. Whatever you choose, it is important to be clear right from the start about the questions you are trying to answer.[17] This methodology depends entirely with the availability of the peers in the participating municipalities.

How do you implement it?

We distinguish five steps: the scope and definition of the learning objectives, the selection and preparation of the peer reviewer, the implementation and exchange between peer reviewers (if there is more than one), the organisation of a learning workshop or meeting and the documentation of the lessons learned. Depending on the peer review's form and complexity, these steps can be modified and the preparation and lead times will differ.

(i) **The scope and definition of learning objectives**: what would you like to find out? If you are working together with several municipalities, you need to clearly define the scope together based on the available project descriptions, discuss the approach to and methodology for data collection and list some criteria to identify the persons doing the peer review and to determine the time and resources required.

(ii) **The selection and preparation of the peer reviewer**: choose the right person for a view of constructive criticism. If you are working with several municipalities, every municipality involved has to present a peer reviewer based on the criteria. The peers must receive similar information about the project: the project background, the stakeholders and the other municipality's methods (procedures, task distribution, who's who), the questions that have to be asked, approach tips and a format for documenting experiences. If the peer reviewer is from outside the municipality, the municipality must be prepared for the peer reviewer's visit (information about the objective and approach). During the reviews, the emphasis is mainly on asking questions to the other municipality and documenting the experiences.

(iii) **Implementation and exchange between peer reviewers** (if there are several working on the project): the implementation can be very simple or more complex. If you invite a colleague from your own municipality, having a few discussions and interviews may be enough. In a bigger setup with several municipalities, some more time is necessary and the peer review can be spread over several years (one municipality per year, for example). If several municipalities and peers are involved, the objective is that they bring together their findings to see which themes/questions/issues are clearly surfacing and which conclusions they can draw about 'what is working and what is not'. They then have to further develop these themes in order to organise a 'learning workshop' to better understand why certain things do or do not work.

(iv) **Organisation of a workshop to discuss the findings**: this is a particularly important step if you are working with different municipalities. In other cases organising a work meeting to discuss the learning points may be sufficient. You organise a learning workshop in every municipality that was the subject of a peer review,

17 If resources are very limited and it is impossible to physically exchange peer reviewers, you can also consider a review based on a study of documents. However, this requires a lot of discipline to set aside time specifically for this exercise and it assumes that good documents exist or can be created.

if possible in the presence of other municipalities[18]. This workshop is very important, because it is during the workshop that the learning takes place. Ideally the learning workshop is attended not just by the peer reviewers, but by other stakeholders from the municipalities involved as well.

(v) **Support of the process to adequately document the findings and lessons learned**: no matter how simple the setup of the peer review, it is important to write down and document the conclusions accurately. This helps with the creation of reports, but also offers support during the further implementation of the reflection process.

Remarks

It is conceivable to apply the peer review technique in the form of a workshop with several municipalities. This assumes that the participating municipalities document their own project (process, practice, output, results), analyse it (what was difficult, what went well and why) and present it at a workshop. The participants can then compare those practical experiences with the guidance of a facilitator and together come up with explanatory factors and lessons learned. If this is chosen, it is important to support municipalities in the documentation of their own practical experiences and to develop a joint approach in this respect.

Want to read more?

Little suitable information is available about peer reviews. The description of this methodology is based on experiences of the NGO Action Aid, which used peer reviews as a monitoring and evaluation tool of its various programmes, often as a complement to external evaluations.

4.4.3. SWOT analysis

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A SWOT-based analysis allows you to understand how an organisation or group regards itself and the environment it works in. You can apply this to your own municipality/department or a department of a twin town or you can apply it to city-to-city cooperation.

Objective

A SWOT analysis looks at both the internal aspects of an organisation or partnership (strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and the external factors affecting the organisation or partnership (opportunities and threats). It helps to gain a better understanding of the organisation and to understand how an organisation is doing at a certain time. You can then work with this in various ways. You can use the analysis to develop a certain strategy: shall we develop our strengths further and address the threats from there or do we mainly want to use our strengths to seize opportunities? You can also use the analysis as reference material (baseline) and repeat the exercise after a few years to see whether the organisation or the partnership has evolved and then determine which action is required.

When do you use it?

SWOT analysis is a relatively easy way to brainstorm with several participants at a meeting and quickly create an inventory of how an organisation or partnership is doing. It is mainly useful to receive input from different people and promote their participation in the discussion (on the condition that various people can participate). The method can also be used as a starting point for a discussion, self-assessment or as a guide for summarising

18 If resources allow it, you can also consider a larger workshop attended by various municipalities at the same time.

gathered information (based on the study of documents and interviews, for example) and sharing it with the stakeholders.

“The SWOT analysis helps gain a better view of the organisation and a better understanding of how an organisation is doing at a certain time.”

What do you need?

The method is relatively simple. If you use a workshop, it may be useful to provide large flip-charts, markers, cards and an external facilitator. An external facilitator is particularly important if you are focusing on the partnership or if you sense that the discussion will be difficult.

How do you implement it?

You can implement this in the form of a workshop of about half a day or you can just use it as a way of summarising information. We mainly consider the example of a workshop. It is advisable to agree in advance who can participate. Ideally, various levels of the organisation’s hierarchy are represented. You want to gain a realistic view and know whether there are any different perceptions. Before you start brainstorming, it is best to provide a good definition of the assignment or task of the organisation/department/partnership (what does this organisation have to do and what is the purpose of this?). The question is to find out what is assessed as strong or weak in terms of this assignment or task. You need to take this into account, particularly if you are focusing on municipal departments. This start is also important if you want to use the SWOT as a baseline or reference. If you want to apply the SWOT to an organisation that wants to reposition itself or is looking for a new future, you should use mainly open questions. In that case the steps are:

(i) Define the assignment and task of the organisation (the partnership).

(ii) Work with the group to gather as many elements as possible for each part of the SWOT. You can divide the group into sub-groups and have them do a section each or you can ask each group to do everything. This can be a way to encourage discussion, gather many different elements and clarify them together. You can ask the following questions to set off the brainstorming:

- **Strengths**
  What are we good at? What do others feel we are good at? In what areas are we unique (our resources, our people, our methods and tools, etc.)? How well are we organised? Which relationships do we have? How good are we at achieving our task?
- **Weaknesses**
  What do we do badly? What do others feel we do badly? What is weak about our organisation, the resources we use, our approach, our relationships? In what areas are we unsuccessful in achieving our assignment?
- **Opportunities**
  Which trends do we see in our environment that offer opportunities for us (our objective, our task, our target group)? How are the policy and politics evolving? Which opportunities can we create ourselves? Are there any stakeholders active in the field we can work with more or in a better way? Are there any financial opportunities?

- **Threats**
  Which trends do we see in our environment that can have a negative impact on our organisation (our objective, our task, our target group). How are the policy and politics evolving? Are there any stakeholders active in the field who do not appreciate or share our approach? How are the finances evolving?

(iii) In the end we reach a conclusion. What does this information tell us about which action we should take? Does everyone have the same opinion? What do we want to focus on with our work in the future?

	Positive	Negative
Internal	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
	• geographical location, 'crossroads' for neighbouring countries • existence of district councils with a structure that promotes the population's participation in development activities • dynamics of the civil society associations that contributes to the development of the citizens' awareness • several partnerships (and their financial support) • existence of two consultative bodies that enable the participative management of the partnerships	• insufficient equipment and infrastructure in terms of reorganisation • insufficient socio-economic infrastructure • low municipal budget • low tax income for the city • capacity shortage on an organisational and institutional level
External	**Opportunités**	**Threats**
	• The decentralisation policy and integration of Tambacounda on a regional level give the city a future. • Citizens who have left the city are showing an increasing interest in investments and the development of their region. • Large projects in the fight against poverty make Tambacounda a privileged intervention area. • The Mamacounda valley offers major opportunities for operations and economic revaluation. • A strategic plan for reorganisation is developed.	• There is poor local government. • The local government has no effective communication policy towards the residents. • A city that acts as a hub for several countries also has perverse effects (endemic illnesses, drugs, prostitution, etc.). • Insufficient infrastructure for reorganisation is a real threat to public health and the environment. • The population is frustrated with the region's poverty.

Example of a SWOT brainstorm, federal programme of Sint-Niklaas-Tambacounda (Senegal).

Remarks

Information from a SWOT analysis and more specifically the threats section can also be used to consider the possible risks you see for projects. If you organise a workshop and you think that people are finding it hard to express themselves in the presence of a manager, you can organise the SWOT independently (staff and management separately) or you can ask people to write down their ideas on a card (one idea per card), which you then put up with the relevant flip chart.

Want to read more?

Readers in Flanders may find it useful to take a look at the Politeia publication on SWOT: Simonne Vermeylen, Werken met de SWOT-analyse. This publication provides a lot of information on how you can use SWOT in strategic planning processes.

4.4.4. Most Significant Change

The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) technique assesses the most significant change in the lives of individual people and as it is experienced by them. With this method you gather stories from individual people whom you select and present the same question to. The method is suitable to identify changes in the lives of people in the target group of your project. This technique can be applied in different ways and at various stages of a project. For example, you can use it at the end of a project, but you can also do the exercise each year to see how the project is progressing and whether it is going in the right direction. We develop this technique in a fairly detailed way in this publication, because in recent months VVSG invested a lot in its examination of the application possibilities for municipalities and their North-South policy.

Objective

The objective is to understand what type of change is possible because of your project. You do not want to know the common denominator, but you do want to understand what is possible and how your project contributes to change. You want to go beyond the direct results of your activities in the short term. You are more interested in the long-term change. You also want to gain an understanding of what the target group feels is important and what it considers meaningful change. You also want to get a good overview of both positive and negative changes and the extent to which the planned results were achieved and whether there are any unintentional results. Finally, the objective is also to bring together people of the target group to reflect on this change. This is an essential part of the method. This exchange increases the involvement in the project and the learning opportunities for participants. The method therefore helps to account for results (although a combination with other, more quantitative methodologies is advisable) to the donors and the community and to learn from experience.

When should I use it?

This method is mainly useful if you are working with complex projects that run over a longer period, involve many different people and agents and has an effect all the way to the level of people's daily (professional and/or private) lives. For example, this methodology is not very useful in a project aimed at raising citizens' awareness about buying sustainable products. However, if you are working in a project with youngsters that aims to give about 750 young people from five neighbourhoods a place to gather, asks them to develop activities together and offers them training and advice to set up their own business, you may consider using this technique. You can use it if you have been able to define a certain domain of development to do with your project and you are able to present a concrete question to people. In the case of the youngsters, the question could be: "What has changed in your life and in the neighbourhood over the last six months? You may want to specify the domain further: "What has changed in the way you are trying to earn an income over the past six months?" Perhaps 'earning an income' was pushed forward as an important indicator to measure success within the project and you want to gather precise information in this respect. You may also define a second domain, such as relationships with parents or peers. If you want to know unexpected or unintentional results, it is better to ask the question in a wider sense.

"You also want to gain an overview of both positive and negative changes and the extent to which the planned results were achieved and whether there are any unintentional results."

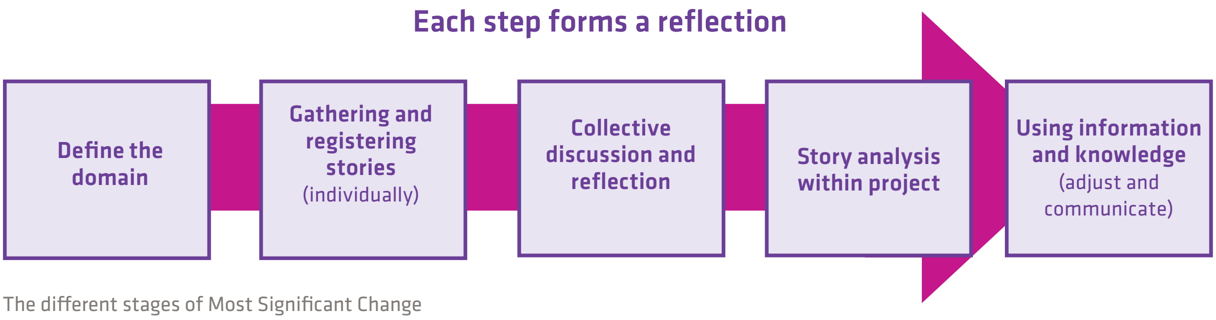
What do you need?

In order to apply this method, you need expertise, time and money. How much you need of each depends on the size of your sample survey:

- **Expertise**
  You have to be able to determine a good sample survey. You need people who can gather stories. If the respondents are unable to read or write, these people need to write down the stories themselves or record them in a different way (audio/video). The 'interviewers' also need to receive a basic introduction to interviewing techniques. These people can receive a short training session and the support of a type of handbook. For the discussion and reflection section it is important to have expertise in organising and facilitating group discussions and in systematically analysing stories. These skills are fairly easy to teach as such.
- **Time**
  Gathering a single story (including setting up the appointment, travelling, capturing the story) can easily take up five hours of your time. You need to be able to give the process time. The method includes several steps that each requires time. Respondents, partners and project owners need to be able to make time to sit together for exchange and reflection.
- **Money**
  Deploying people to gather stories will always cost money. Resources are also required for transport, the organisation of meetings, the use of technical equipment and the (possible) payment of external persons to facilitate discussions.

How do you implement it?[19]

The method consists of several stages, which we have summarised below.



The different stages of Most Significant Change

- **Proper definition of the project**
  Both the domain (what will you ask questions about) and the respondents must be well defined by the project owner and the other stakeholders of the project. As soon as the respondents are known, they must be informed of the objective and the time they will need to devote to the project and they must approve the project. "How many stories do you need?" is an important question. Because the method works in a rather illustrative way, less attention should be spent on the requirements of representativeness. However, it is advisable to consider whom you will ask questions, how many stories you wish to gather and whether you want to ask questions to very different types of people or very similar ones. In the example of the youth activities, you could focus on 70 youngsters of the same age and background in terms of education and family circumstances evenly distributed over the five neighbourhoods and in terms of gender as well (35 girls and

19 The handbook provides a detailed explanation of the various steps.

35 boys). Perhaps you already have distinguished types of young people yourself and you want to monitor a few young people of each type? Finally you also need to determine how often you will ask questions to the respondents: every six months, every year or only at the start, in the middle and at the end of the project? The available resources will probably have a considerable effect on this.

- **Gathering and registering stories**
  The respondents are asked one question and then the interviewer continues with some questions that were planned in advance. These questions allow you to ensure that all stories have the same structure, which will make analysis easier afterwards. The questions are:
  (i) Which changes did you see (in the domain specified by the interviewer)?
  (ii) Why is that in your opinion?
  (iii) What do you think is the most meaningful change?
  (iv) Why is this the most important change for you at this time?
  You determine how the stories will be recorded in advance and you ensure that every story is given a number, name and date. This makes them easier to process later.

- **Discussion and reflection**
  The aim is that you bring together the people who told the stories in order to listen to each other's story and possibly ask each other to explain things. You really need to think about whom you are going to put in which group. In the youth activities example, you can bring together the 70 young people in five groups (one per neighbourhood) or six groups (three with boys and three with girls), etc. The MSC procedure states that afterwards you ask people to choose an 'ultimate' story in the group (or in smaller groups first), a story that everybody feels reflects the most meaningful change. This assumes that all participants can get some distance and think about the issue in a more abstract way. In practice this is often quite difficult: people do not want to choose an ultimate story, mainly because they feel that this would do the other stories an injustice and all stories are equally valuable. This stage can be adjusted. You may not want to select just one story, but instead ask the participants which story in particular touched them and why. If this question is answered by everyone, this also provides an indirect indication of what is seen as the most significant by the group. Make sure that you document the discussion and the answers to the why question really well. This is important for the next stage: analysis. You can also add another question here: "What do you think project staff should remember about the change that is possible?" This is also an opportunity to gain a good overview of the elements that are important to most respondents.

- **Story analysis**
  This analysis is important in order to move from an individual story to possible mechanisms of change or lessons learned. The aim is to dig deeper into the collected stories and to ask questions about the material that was gathered. What stands out in the answers (per domain)? What king of change is mentioned most? Which negative changes are there? Do men provide different answers than women? Do the stories offer answers to other questions we have? Can we explain certain findings? It is advisable to test the conclusions of the analysis with other material you gathered. You can perform this analysis with the respondents (in a group) or just with the project owners and partners/agents. The analysis should allow you to assess the project's contribution to change. What is going well? What is not going well? what do we have to remember for the further implementation of the project? Do we need to adjust things or do things differently?

- **Using information and knowledge**
  Then you need to use the information in order to take action. It is important to share insights with others and to use the main conclusions of internal communication about the project with the broader target group (not just the selected respondents) and the donors and partners. The main objective is to examine which action is required in order to improve the project.

Most Significant Change: "As women we have become part of society."

During the internal final evaluation in Nicaragua, VVSG put together a multidisciplinary group consisting of a representative of the federal government (as a donor), the VVSG programme manager and two other North-South officials (peers participating in the federal programme with their own municipalities without any direct involvement in the activities in Nicaragua).

This evaluation used the Most Significant Change technique. In Santo Tomas Chontales, the twin town of Mol, a group of 26 people participated in this exercise. The participants were the final beneficiaries of the programme. Initially they were divided into groups of four. In each of those small groups everyone told his or her story, which answered the question: "What has been the most important change in your daily life over the past four years (= the term of the programme)?" Within these small groups, the four participants chose which story illustrated the most significant change. Two groups were then brought together to form a sub-group in which each group told the other group their chosen story.

This sub-group then chose the most significant from both presented stories. All sub-groups attended the plenary meeting to share the chosen stories from the sub-groups and to choose a final story.

Methodologically it was a dynamic exercise, very participative and with a great deal of involvement. The beneficiaries contributed by actively participating in the evaluation. After a first exercise at another twin town, we introduced an additional element in Santo Tomas: we placed a title above each story in order to remember more easily what everyone's story was about during the selection. No matter how participative you make the exercise, it is often very difficult to arrive at a final selection, a single final story. Often people tended to build a new (perhaps more ideal) story together consisting of the various elements everyone had contributed. The aim of this exercise is not so much to arrive at a single story. The objective is to have a discussion about the stories. The discussion is more important than the selection, because the discussion provides a lot of information about the programme's progress and the intentional and unintentional effects, which can be positive or negative. The discussion complemented the information gathered previously during the annual monitoring.

One of the stories told showed that women were able to play an enhanced role in society. The programme focuses on strengthening initiatives for the local economy. One initiative includes the organisation of a farmers' market, which shortens the production chain between producer and consumer. The stories showed that it was mainly the women who got organised and sold their products at the farmers' market. They also improved the quality of the products, so that their income increased. The story was about the recognition the women gained and how they generated and managed their own income. The women experienced that they could exchange their traditional place in the kitchen for a full place in society. This gender result was not described in the logical framework, but it was a clear effect of the programme. In addition to monitoring the planned results, identifying the Most Significant Change helps to reveal unplanned results and more process-oriented evolutions.

Remarks

The first experiences with the method show that it is not easy to apply the MSC very systematically with all the steps. The method includes a number of specific challenges:

- **Reliability**
  The stories that are told are not necessarily 'true'. This means that you need to check the outcome and analysis of the stories by testing them using the other data you collected to account for the results.
- **Anecdotal information**
  You are collecting individual stories that paint a fragmented picture of reality. It is therefore essential to follow the stages of discussion and analysis.

- **Stories about various subjects**
  People who get to tell their stories may not necessarily restrict themselves to the interviewer's planned questions. It is important to pay sufficient attention to defining the scope of a good question and the interviewer's capacity to build a good relationship with the respondent.
- **Fear of public speaking**
  Some respondents may not be used to being given the opportunity to tell their story and may hold back information. If you are working with audio and/or video equipment, respondents may feel awkward or exaggerate when they tell their story. It is important to realise that using this method takes time and must be given the chance to grow.
- **Time-consuming**
  Because the method is quite demanding, you should consider using it as standard practice in order to create more of a routine and gathering stories becomes a standard part of officials' task. If this is not possible, a 'light' version of the method can be used and questions can be integrated in semi-structured interviews or focus groups, for example.

Want to read more?

See bibliography.

Indian Q'eqchi' women take the floor during a community meeting in Nimlaha'kok, Guatemala.

Measuring the process of organic waste composting in San Jeronimo (Peru), municipal partner of the Flemish municipality of Edegem

CHAPTER 5
LEARNING FROM MONITORING AND EVALUATION: ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION PLANNING

So far we have discussed the organisation of monitoring and evaluation, the distribution of tasks and data collection. Data collection is always ongoing and is very much related to the things you want to measure (indicators of change). We have also briefly talked about the ways in which you can share information with the various parties involved. Now we want to take one step further and investigate how you can make sense of all the collected data and information together with other people (sense-making). The objective is not to gather information as such. You also need to know what you want to do with this information and how you want to use the information to draw conclusions about the results and effects of your project. You need these conclusions to learn, take steps forward and ensure accountability. This aspect of sense-making is often not included in project descriptions, not even if they are based on the logical framework.

Still it is good to think about this and consider your monitoring and evaluation at the design stage of your project. Often project coordinators only start to think about the past months when they need to write a report for a donor, but at that moment it has become difficult to oversee all aspects clearly, particularly if you see that there is a considerable discrepancy between what was planned and what happened in practice.

You have to make a conscious effort to organise and plan analysis and learning well. To learn lessons, it may be useful to contemplate specific themes that matter as part of municipal international cooperation outside the framework of a certain programme or project. These issues are developed further in this final chapter.

Organising analysis and reflection

The objective is to plan in advance certain times when you and others look at the collected data and consider them critically. What does this information tell us? Are we well on our way to achieve the planned results? Are we handling the risks appropriately? At the moment do we feel that our approach is working? Are we really working on actual problems? It is also important to plan certain moments in time when you want to reach conclusions, perform possible adjustments or corrective action and draw specific lessons. This is the only way you can guarantee that you and the various stakeholders will achieve the critical reflection that is important for monitoring and evaluation.

It is useful to base these moments on the report requirements of the donor. Does the donor expect interim reports (quarterly, six-monthly, yearly) and a final report? In that case, you should plan moments to achieve critical reflection and conclusions every six or twelve months, for example. This will also provide you with the information you need to write the reports. Even if you do not have a donor or if the donor has no specific requirements, planning these moments is a good idea. It ensures that you mange the project well and you are ready for a possible new phase or a different project.

These moments can be informal or formal, part of an existing meeting or organised specifically for the purpose of critical reflection. There are infinite ways to organise a reflection exercise with the stakeholders in order to learn together.

A monitoring and evaluation diagram

In order to clarify to everyone when the data is collected and analysed, it is useful to create a schedule showing when, with whom and in what form you wish to take a critical look at the gathered information. Below we present an example of such a monitoring and evaluation diagram for a multi-annual project (six years, for example).

It is important here to remind ourselves of the distinction between monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring is about following activities and implementation, the management (and change) of risks and an estimate of the chances that the achieved results are achieved. Evaluation is about making a statement about what has been actually achieved (in the interim, at the end or after a project). You assess the project and you try to understand what contributed to any change. Both monitoring and evaluation can be a cause for project adjustments and corrective action. The logical framework or project description and the baseline if it was created) remains an essential reference and working document in this process. It allows us to compare our plans with what actually happened in practice.

"There are infinite ways to organise a reflection exercise with the stakeholders in order to learn together."

The diagram indicates quarterly monitoring meetings for monitoring the implementation of the plans (activities and budget), six-monthly meetings for monitoring the effects of those activities (which concrete results has this achieved), an interim evaluation halfway through the programme and a final evaluation. Each of these steps involves other people, focus on different subjects and ask different questions.

M&E frequency

Below we explain each of these monitoring and evaluation moments further. Each of these moments offers the chance to reflect and supports the learning process in terms of the programme. In order to ensure that learning actually takes place, it is important to specify 'learning questions' at the start of the project. It is a good idea to ensure that all agents know which questions are important and that they can help with the good follow-up and management of the project. The questions introduce the 'analysis' and 'reflection' aspect right from the start of the project implementation and serve as a guide for exchange and discussion between agents. They ensure that you use the collected information well and that your material is relevant for reporting purposes.20 The diagram below is a first step with some minimum options for larger projects lasting several years. Of course it depends on the project what you are going to add or adjust.

Monitoring at activities and budget level		
When?	**With whom?**	**Which form and which data?**
Every three months[21]	• Project coordinator(s) • In cooperation with committee if one exists	Based on the activities calendar, activity reports, collected data, budget, identified risks **Form:** Record findings in a concise report or monitoring report (summary overview)per activity in the project description and discuss this (in a meeting/by Skype or e-mail)

Which questions can be asked quarterly?

- Were the activities executed as planned? Were the activities on time? Did the activities take place or not?
- Was the budget used as planned? Was too little used? Did the activities go over budget?
- Are there any remarks on the working method we chose? What did not go well and what did go well?
- Are we receiving any signs of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, have there been any changes in the context and what about the risks?
- How is the data collection going? Is the method usable? Is any data missing? Have certain indicators turned out too difficult in the end?
- How is the cooperation with the partners going? How is the exchange of information, the distribution of tasks, the follow up of arrangements, the intercultural side of things?
- Are any urgent adjustments required?

Monitoring at results level		
When?	**With whom?**	**Which form and which data?**
Annually	• Project coordinator(s). • In cooperation with committee, if one exists. • And with executives and with agents playing an important part in the projects.	Based on the quarterly monitoring reports and the values of the indicators22. • Record findings in a concise report or monitoring report (summary overview), per expected result for example and discuss this (in a meeting/by Skype or e-mail).

20 Of course there are many ways of analysing information. We mainly introduce a qualitative method here. If you gather a lot of quantitative data, through questionnaires for example, it is also useful to perform data analysis. This usually requires specific competencies that the project coordinators do not necessarily have. For every domain (such as the infrastructure for sewage system or water infrastructure, training programmes) has specific analysis methods, which we will not go into in this introduction.

21 Some regularity is important to ensure that the coordinators gain a good understanding of how the project is being implemented and how the change process is going.

Quelles questions pouvez-vous poser chaque année ?

- Which questions can you ask annually?
- What is the chance of achieving the results?
- What can we conclude from the collected data and the indicator values?
- Are there any contradictory data?
- What are the obstacles/things that help?
- Do any adjustments have to be made to ensure that results are being achieved? Do we have to add/drop certain activities? Do we need to reorganise the budget? Do we have to adjust the indicators or the expected results? Does anything need to change in the project administration (management, monitoring and evaluation, cooperation of three parties, etc.).
- Have any questions emerged that we can/have to include in an evaluation?

Interim evaluation		
When?	With whom?	Which form and which data?
Halfway, after three years	• Project coordinator(s) • Committee members • Key agents • Beneficiaries • Partners • Donors It is important that the analysis is as participative as possible. You can choose an internal evaluator or someone from outside the project/area (depending on the resources or the sensitivity of the subjects).	The emphasis is much more on: • Analysis with a view to making statements about certain criteria (see the DAC criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability) • Checking whether there are any results that allow you to achieve the project's specific objectives • Answering questions that emerged from monitoring • Analysing results/indicators that require a lot of time and therefore cannot always be found in monitoring reports **Form:** • Discussing monitoring and report information with stakeholders • Adding questions for analysis • Performing typical evaluation activities, such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, joint evaluation workshops • Presenting main conclusions to the group of stakeholders • Processing conclusions and recommendations in a report

Which questions can you ask halfway through the project?

- What are the conclusions in terms of the traditional evaluation criteria, more specifically relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. You can move the analysis of sustainability and indications of impact to a final evaluation, but often they are also included in an interim evaluation.
- What does the comparison of the evaluation and the baseline show (if there is a baseline)?
- Are there any unexpected results?
- What are our answers to any additional questions?
- Do we now have a realistic picture and is this picture shared by all the different stakeholders? Are there different perceptions and what can we learn from them?
- Are there any recommendations for adjusting the approach?

22 Some projects work with traffic lights: the project coordinator takes the logical framework and indicators (what needs to be measured) and the values of the indicators and marks every indicator as being on the right track (green light), giving cause for concern (orange light) or not achieving the required results or being unsuitable (and therefore immeasurable) (red light).

Final evaluation[23]		
When?	**With whom?**	**Which form and which data?**
In the sixth year of the project or shortly after its completion[24]	• Project coordinator and members of working group • Key agents • Beneficiaries • Partners (possibly future partners) • Donors (possibly future donors) It is important that the analysis is as participative as possible. You can choose an internal evaluator or someone from outside the project/area (depending on the resources or the sensitivity of the subjects).	See above. There is specific attention for analysing the achievement of the specific objectives. A more strategic approach is also important: analysis with a view to change and adjust the policy and practice in the future. **Form** : See above. It is useful to ensures that the report very clearly includes the conclusions regarding the results and specific objectives. For every result and objective you can summarise what the change is you have found (even if there is none), where the proof is of this finding and what the factors are that can explain the change. Also make sure to create an overview of unexpected results.

Which questions can you ask at the end of the project?

- See also the interim evaluation questions.
- Specific attention for a statement about the project's success in terms of the achievement of the specific objectives and the contribution to sustainable change with appreciation of the project's design (Was it well put together? Where the risks assessed adequately?)
- What are the main lessons: To what extent was the project approach the right one? Is this type of projects useful/relevant? Which methodologies worked well? What may new projects have to take into account in the future? Are we going to repeat the project in other neighbourhoods/with other target groups and in what way? Which aspects are we going to integrate in the future policy or in programmes? ...
- Are there any recommendations regarding specific subjects/aspects and specific agents (partners, governments on a higher level, etc.) bearing co-responsibility for the achievement of change (or possibly contributing to it)?

How should we draw lessons?

Some questions or concerns may arise during the implementation of a project or programme that transcend the project or the programme, such as:

What should we remember about the past few years about our relationships with partners, about communication, about the part officials play in capacity building, about the possibilities of capacity building, about the

23 We do not discuss impact evaluations further here. These evaluations are performed quite some time after a project has been completed (one year or more, for example). They examine how the results of the project have continued and have made a real difference in people's lives. Impact evaluations are quite complex to set up and usually require considerable resources.

24 If you wish to continue the project or if you want to set up a new project, it can be useful to take this into account in the planning of the final evaluation and organise this a little sooner. This will allow you to use lessons and conclusions as a reference study or baseline of the new report.

importance of international relationships for the professional and personal development of officials, about the conditions of good awareness campaigns in schools, etc. It is useful to ask these specific questions. If there was not enough time for them during monitoring and evaluation, you can make this time. There are various instruments to do this:

- Organise a workshop or seminar (conference).
- Ask the stakeholders (the officials, for example) to provide a testimony about what they have learned (as an individual or on a professional level).
- Document and analyse good practices. What went well? Why? Can we repeat this and in what way? What does this mean for the future? What should we stop doing? What should we do differently?
- ...

Monitoring and evaluation activities can offer a lot of information in order to answer this type of questions.

The policy and management cycle and the multiannual plan in the Flemish municipalities

The approval of a planning workload decree by the Flemish parliament has substantially changed Flanders' relationship with its local authorities. From 1 January 2014, all municipalities have to submit a municipal multiannual plan to the Flemish government according to the policy and management cycle. This municipal multiannual plan should also indicate which subsidies they are applying for to the Flemish government. The plan is created and submitted in an integrated way so that it replaces the specific sector subsidy plans and applications.

Because the policy and management cycle and the creation of the municipal multiannual programme will have a big effect on the methods of planning, monitoring and evaluation used in municipal international cooperation, we would like to explain it a little more here. The multiannual programme is a six-year plan that is created in the first year of the legislature. Within this multiannual programme, the objectives and results correspond to the budget, preferably in an integrated way. This also means that the local authorities can only submit one (integrated) (multiannual) plan to the supervising government (Flanders).

Until recently a separate plan and separate reporting was expected for all sector subsidies. This requirement no longer applies now. One plan, one report is submitted to the Flanders authorities. The Flemish government communicates its policy priorities for which it wants to provide subsidies to its local authorities. These subsidies have codes that are entered into the multiannual plan and the local authority uses to indicate that it is applying for subsidies for this priority.

The municipalities have to draft the multiannual plan according to the rules and principles of the policy and management cycle. This involves several things. The programme is a policy plan that should include at least a strategic note, an explanatory note and a financial note. These three items are mandatory and are therefore briefly explained below.

First, the strategic note: every municipality determines some policy objectives during which the local council will choose which of policy objectives will be priorities and which will be included in the regular policy. These priority objectives (and their expected results and underlying actions) will be explained in the strategic note. Comprehensive monthly reports are submitted to the local council about these priority objectives.

Second, the explanatory note: it is mandatory to explain the entire policy (and therefore also the non-priority or regular objectives) in the explanatory note, which also includes an explanation of the environment analysis and financial risks.

We conclude with the financial note. This note includes the relationship between the policy and the resources. The financial note uses a classification of policy domains, policy fields and policy items. Flanders defined about 140 policy fields. Every municipality chooses freely in which policy domains it groups a number of policy fields and in how many policy items a policy field can be split. Sports are a policy field (defined by Flanders), for example. The municipal swimming pool can be a policy item under the policy field of sports. In turn sports can be part of a higher-level policy domain such as leisure activities.

This means that municipal international cooperation should also be categorised within this multiannual plan and within these policy objectives and that the follow-up of the finances and content will also have to be done according to the policy and management cycle principles.

Weighing vegetables on the Vinocanchon market in San Jeronimo (Peru), municipal partner of the Flemish municipality of Edegem

CHAPTER 6
EPILOGUE: COME DOWN FROM THAT CLOUD!

The monitoring and evaluation principles are generally valid in all types of projects. What is typical about projects that arise in a municipal context is that you need to take into account three types of agents: politicians, officials and civil society. These three agent types have similar, but also unique interests in projects. They often have different views of what is important and emphasise different aspects. Tensions between these three groups may mean that the objectives of projects are not supported and that the results are very much contested internally. Also, projects do not only have to take into account the municipal policy cycle. They also have to consider political changes, which are sometimes very abrupt and may slow down and even stop projects.

If municipalities from North and South decide to work together in city-to-city cooperation, you need to take into account those dynamics in the North and in the South in addition to the partnership requirements. Project owners have to deal with the complexity of several processes (visible/invisible, formal/informal) that are intertwined and the effects of politics – which should not be underestimated – and the pulling forces between local administration and the role of civil society. This creates specific challenges in terms of project management, the organisation of monitoring and evaluation and the sharing of information about the management and the results of projects.

Depending on the type of project, other challenges will emerge. Projects that focus on raising citizens' awareness, it is often difficult to measure the effects of the efforts made accurately: how can you observe changes in the target group's opinion and attitude? Projects that focus on capacity building and the peer-to-peer approach experience problems with showing that exchange visits contribute to more administrative power and how they contribute to this. Assessing or predicting which changes will occur in the administrative power is also very difficult. Measuring the effect of stronger administrative capacity on better services and living conditions for citizens is one of the major challenges in M&E for all projects about services and good governance:[25] There are often few reliable figures about the initial situation, the effects tend to manifest themselves long after the project finished, change has to be measured with population sample surveys, etc.

These challenges should not stop anyone from thinking about monitoring and evaluation! Let us go back to the image of the cloud in the introduction. Working in the cloud is trendy, modern and can make considerable contributions to a more efficient way of working. Similarly, M&E can help us improve our projects' follow-up, accountability and lessons… However, if you want to take further steps in this learning process about monitoring and evaluation as a local authority, it is important to get down from the cloud. The actions of the man on the cloud are completely useless and in no way contribute to the further growth of the plants. A descent to earth is necessary in the figurative sense of being down to earth. We suggest taking a pragmatic, simple approach to monitoring and evaluation.

The best way of improving the municipal activities in terms of planning, monitoring and evaluation is in the field: by putting the principles of this basic book into practice and by looking at the specific things that can be done for municipal international cooperation. Perhaps a combination of some of these methodologies can be a first attempt to achieve an effective tool that can be used for municipal monitoring.

25 See the exceptionally interesting website of the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre: http://www.gsdrc.org/go/topic-guides/measuring-results/applying-mande-tools.

In that context, VVSG invites municipalities to start a learning process in which we receive expert guidance to experiment together with the formula P, M & E (MIC) = LF + OM + MSC + (PMC + …). Written in full, the formula states that Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Municipal International Cooperation equals the Logical Framework approach plus elements from Outcome Mapping and complemented by the Most Significant change technique (and possible some other techniques or methods). This can also provide enough information to be in line with the policy and management cycle in Flanders.

Perhaps it works and perhaps it does not, but it is worth a try. Municipal international cooperation refers to all aspects of the municipal policy on international cooperation: increasing public support, administrative capacity building, raising awareness, affecting the policy, etc. both in Flanders and in the partner countries.

"A descent to earth is necessary in the figurative sense of being down to earth. We suggest taking a pragmatic, simple approach to monitoring and evaluation."

The local authorities in Flanders and in the partner countries are invited to work with this information together. The objective of this guided learning process is to develop a planning and monitoring tool that is tailor-made for the municipalities. We envisage a flexible, but comprehensive toolbox that can be used within the context of local authorities. Then we can write a sequel to this basic book about this developed tool: an invitation to tackle the challenges of municipal monitoring and evaluation. That will be the next step with a view to M&Eting the need for results.

A meeting of the community council of the region Nimlaha'kok (Guatemala), municipal partner of the Flemish municipality of Herent

CHAPTER 7
BIBLIOGRAPHY

⊙ Link that will lead you to the internet document.

General links about M&E:

- Homepage of Wageningen University about participative methodology (also provides a short introduction to logical frameworks, etc.) ⊙
- Wageningen University has also written a good handbook in Dutch providing an overview of a number of new methods and methodologies: Methoden voor monitoring and evaluation van innovatieprojecten ⊙
- A good guide on M&E: IFAD, Managing for Impact in Rural Development, A guide for Project M&E ⊙
- UNDP handbook about planning, monitoring and evaluation. Is quite complete and provides many examples ⊙
- Good basic introduction about the how, why and what of M&E by inProgress, Integrated Monitoring ⊙
- Adams, J. and Pratt, B (2009) *Sharpening the development process. A practical guide to monitoring and evaluation*.

Logical Framework Approach (LFA)

- The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation published an interesting handbook about LFA a few years ago ⊙
- How logical frameworks are integrated into result-oriented project management is described in an extensive handbook by EuropAid ⊙

Further reading about Outcome Mapping (available on www.outcomemapping.ca)

- Earl, S., Carden, F. & Smutylo, T., *Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*, IDRC, 2001.
- Hearn, S., OM Community Webinar: *Introduction to Outcome Mapping*, 2011.
- Twagilimana, U., Van Ongevalle, J. & Van Durme, P., *Towards a Learning Centred Planning and Monitoring system for capacity development. The Case of World Solidarity's Social Movement Programme*, November 2012.
- Van Ongevalle, J., Huyse, H., Temmink, C., Boutylkova, E. & Maarse, A., *Dealing with complexity through 'agent-focused' Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME): From result-based management towards result-based learning*. HIVA & PSO, November 2012.

Most Significant Change (MSC)

- The MSC Quick Start Guide ⊙
- The Most Significant Change Guide, written by the creators of the technique (Rick Davies and Jessica Dart, The Most significant Change Technique) ⊙
- Yahoo group about MSC, where the most recent findings in the field are published ⊙
- Translated versions of The Most Significant Change ⊙

MSC and VIDEO

- Insight has a lot of experience with using participative video ⊙
- Insight wrote a handbook on the subject ⊙
- One of the authors of that handbook wrote a short article about the combination of participative video techniques and the use of the MSC technique ⊙

CHAPTER 8
APPENDIX: DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Below we chose to categorise some techniques based on the type of activity they generate. There are techniques that are primarily designed for an exchange of ideas, techniques with one person asking questions and other answering, techniques allowing you to collect administrative or technical data, techniques that visualise situations and changes in a certain geographic area (neighbourhood, village, etc.), techniques that mainly focus on observation, etc. Some methodologies combine various techniques, such as Most Significant Change and Community Score Cards.

Techniques focusing on exchanging ideas and supporting discussion		
Explanatory note: a lot of information on these participative techniques can be found on the internet. The number of participants is limited for all these exercises: the ideal maximum is seven to ten people (including the coach). Working with cards or post-its allows everyone to provide his or her input. These techniques are very suitable for the evaluation (halfway or at the end of a project) of projects in one's own municipality or as part of city-to-city cooperation. The challenge tends to be to find a good facilitator who masters the method.		
Examples	**Why should we choose this?**	**Remarks**
Self-assessment workshop based on a SWOT analysis (see SWOT development in this publication)	• As part of an evaluation (halfway through the project, for example) with partners/agents. • May help to examine the strengths and weaknesses in the management and the achieved results together with the partners. • Subsequently: by listing the opportunities and threats, participants can work together to think about what action needs to be taken to keep the project on the right track and achieve relevant results.	• It is important to have this type of exchange managed by a person who is more 'neutral' or less involved. • This requires good planning and preparation: participants must be very aware what this exercise means and how the results are going to be used. • This is not useful for individual and smaller activities. • A lot of information about the application of this method is available on the internet.
Self-assessment workshop with partners/agents/ target groups about the five DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and durability	• As part of evaluation (possibly also in the interim). • Thinking about the project and results together strengthens the learning capacity of the agents involved and the ownership over the project. • It is a good way of reflecting on results and systematically going over different criteria (offers a framework).	• Sometimes it is important to have an external 'leader' (facilitator) for the discussions (if there is any tension, for example). • You have to ensure that time is set aside for this with various people (this must be planned).
Timeline	• Provides insight into change and the achievement of progress in a certain domain, such as health, the operation of a service, etc. • Helps to understand which external and internal factors affect certain change processes. • Provides insight into how the members of a certain group think about important events and what the differences are between groups. • Can be a good start to a discussion about how certain interventions do or do not lead to changes. Can generate insight into what works and does not work.	• You can work with a horizontal timeline showing the 'interventions' at the top and the 'milestones' and changes at the bottom. Then you can organise a discussion about the link between the interventions and the milestones: which interventions contributed (a little or a great deal) to change? • You may choose to restrict the subject matter by only considering the changes in a certain domain, for example the operation of one department, access to a specific service in a certain neighbourhood, etc.). • You can do the exercise with different groups and compare the outcome.

Examples	Why should we choose this?	Remarks
		• Simple exercise inviting participants to identify milestones. The exercise is not sufficient as such: it is best to combine it with other methodologies or to use it as part of an evaluation workshop.
Diagrams and charts	• It may be useful to look at reality and visualise things in a structured way: outlining relationships between different agents (Venn diagram), positioning agents in relation to the project objectives (who is a supporter and who is active and takes initiatives themselves), cause and effect relationships. • Can be used to visualise changes over time by comparison with previous diagrams.	• Exercises that can be planned during an evaluation meeting.
Problem tree and objectives tree (see development in this publication)	• This can help clarify the project's relevance and critically assess the logical framework: does this project sufficiently/ still respond to the problems we can identify? • Can also be used to define a new programme.	• Requires a lot of effort from participants. • Assumes guidance is provided by a more 'neutral' or external facilitator. • Many problem tree handbooks are available on the internet. • Is an exercise that must be planned specifically and takes quite a lot of time (at least a day).

Techniques for asking questions to agents and target groups

Explanatory note: these techniques allow you to you use previously defined questions to gain information about views, opinions and changes in target groups and agents. You can use the techniques for both monitoring and evaluation. Here the challenges are: (i) to define good (clear and simple) questions, (ii) to choose the appropriate group of respondents: how many people, which people, which sample survey is the best, (iii) to apply the right interviewing techniques. You can apply the techniques individually or for conversations with smaller groups (up to a maximum of ten people chances are that everyone gets to have his or her say). If you work with several interviewers, it is important that they attend a work or training session together so that they use a similar approach. Semi-structured interviews are still highly participative, but standardised questionnaires are not.

Examples	Why should we choose this?	Remarks
Semi-structured interviews: interviews based on an interview guide with questions, which gives the interviewees the freedom to contribute something themselves.	• You gather appreciations and perceptions (qualitative material) from different people. • You gain insight into how change mechanisms work. • You gain an overview of any unexpected results.	• Skills as an 'interviewer' are important. • This is a very flexible tool and still more efficient (both in taking and processing the interview) than a completely open interview. • It is important to check information with several types of interviewees • ('triangulation' or cross-checking information). • Can be done with several persons at the same time (group interview). • Interviews last between 40 minutes and one and a half hours. • Can be easily combined with other methods (such as methods visualising changes in a geographically defined area).
Focus group discussions or discussion based on a limited number of predefined subjects	• Collecting perceptions and ideas in a (homogenous) group of no more than ten people who have something in common in terms of the project/issues: the discussion is free and there are no wrong answers. • Can be used to discuss sensitive topics. • Is a good tool for testing certain paths for the future and collecting arguments. • Is a good tool for identifying explanatory factors for results that were achieved or not achieved. • Creates a dynamic between the participants as well rather than just between the interviewer and the interviewee and therefore also offers learning opportunities.	• It is best to organise several discussions with several groups to verify information. For example, you can continue until nothing new arises to make certain that you have heard all the different perceptions and opinions. • You can compare the conclusions of the focus groups each with a different member type in order to examine whether there are any major differences between the various types of stakeholders. • You put people together of a similar level who can have an open discussion with each other. • This does require an understanding of the group dynamics in order to create an atmosphere of trust, to lead the discussion appropriately and to ensure that nobody dominates the discussions. • Try to limit the discussions to two and a half hours.

Examples	Why should we choose this?	Remarks
Standardised questionnaires	• You collect (anonymous) information from a large group of people, which you can convert into qualitative data suitable for statistical analysis. • Different options are possible. • Is very useful for monitoring possible changes in a certain target group: recurring questionnaires offered to the same sample group twice a year, for example. • A typical example is the satisfaction survey after an activity (also referred to as 'happy sheets' because they provide little information about the activity's relevance and added value for the respondent).	• The definition of the questions must be very precise. This requires a certain expertise The emphasis is usually on closed questions (with predefined answer options), but open questions are also possible, although they require more time to process. Questions about the association of word and image are also possible. • Questionnaire testing is usually essential. • Requires the capacity to process, analyse and interpret quantitative data. • You nearly always have to determine a sample group if the group is too large. This requires specific knowledge. • You need to make a choice between a system in which people complete forms themselves and a system in which interviewers go on the road (or make telephone calls). If you work with interviewers, you need to plan a training course. • There are few requirements in terms of the interaction between the person asking the questions and the person answering the questions.

Techniques for visualising changes in a geographic area		
Explanatory note: these techniques are interesting for gathering information about indicators that are in some way geographically defined. These can be about town and country planning in a municipality, mobility analysis, an overview of the number of informal markets, an outline of where children tend to play or the distribution of social groups in several neighbourhoods. The methods are varied. They can range from drawing a map with a stick in the sand or on a board to creating maps based on GPS coordinates. The techniques are relatively simple, not expensive and useful to involve people who may not be able to express themselves very well verbally or in writing. The techniques can be used in a participative way or not.		
Examples	**Why should I choose this?**	**Remarks**
Outlining predefined topics/ subjects	• In order to find out what is happening in a neighbourhood /municipality and how different neighbourhoods are if you compare them: Where do the children play in our village/municipality? Where do boys and girls play and what do they play? Where is waste illegally dumped? Where are the biggest problems with flooding? • The techniques are also interesting to outline access to services and changes over time. • You can use the techniques to visualise certain aspects and use this as a clarification and foundation for discussions between different groups. • It is an interesting way to involve people who may not be very good at expressing themselves verbally or in writing.	• Best in combination with focus group discussions and/or semi-structured interviews. • Cards can range from being very simple to very complex. • Participants can make additions to a first sketch on the cards. • It is important to define the number of themes very well. If not, the card quickly becomes cluttered and the added value of clarification is lost. • Offers opportunities to compare cards obtained from different groups. • It is interesting to complement this information with photos. • To be combined with other methods, such as interviews, focus groups, etc.
A transect (a path along which one counts and records occurrences of a phenomenon) based on predefined topics or indicators	• You observe certain issues you notice during the walk: condition of the houses, illegal dumping, informal economy, community initiatives, access to services, etc. • Together with your partner in the South/ North, you learn about what can be observed and how this may be interpreted. • This is particularly interesting if the exercise is repeated and changes over time can be observed (along the same route).	• This is a relatively simple method that can result in both quantitative and qualitative data. • The walk can also be made in a group, a group of officials and politicians, for example. • This can be combined with other methods, such as interviews, focus groups, etc. • The information is processed on a card with an explanatory note. • You should define a line yourself or pick a random line (a line crossing the city on a map or alternate left and right turns (depending on the time). • Doing this exercise regularly is interesting for project owners and those directly involved. • Think about doing this walk at several times of the year.

Other techniques		
Examples	**Why should I choose this?**	**Remarks**
Observation of activities (based on an observation guide determining what you will consider), such as the conduct of meetings, educational workshops, exhibitions, etc.	• To analyse group dynamics (understand how things play out and work) • To analyse new techniques/ methods/activities that are tested with an existing or a new targets group. • Outlining processes of interaction between officials and citizens (services), during meetings for example. • Understanding the operation of local councils.	• This is one of the simplest techniques, but the development of a guide is essential. • Takes a lot of time if you develop it as a separate methodology: it is easier to determine a set of parameters for certain activities, which you then follow up. • Regardless of whether you actively participate or not, your presence has an impact on the progress, particularly if the stakeholders know that you are there to 'observe'. • Is used to complement interviews and focus group discussions. • Can be expanded to peer reviews in which one colleague examines, analyses and discusses the practice of another colleague in a structured way (for example during exchange visits with a partner or learning paths with officials). See also development in this publication.
Narrative method (through video and/or photo report telling a story, writing down people's stories or asking people to write their stories down, asking people to keep a diary.	• Collecting appreciations and perceptions (qualitative material) on an individual level in a certain group. • Observing unexpected results and picking up details. • Understanding/outlining change mechanisms • (and process factors). • Involving the target group and giving them the freedom to tell their story (recognition of experiences). • Seeing changes over time by regularly asking the same group to provide stories. • Stories 'stick' better: very suitable for motivation, attracting workers and communication. • Can be a way of involving people you would find very difficult to reach with any other technique. • Monitoring learning process.	• Particularly adds value if the stories are exchanged and discussed in a group. • It is best to combine this with other techniques to ensure you do not get bogged down in anecdotal or special issues. • Start in the beginning of a project as a equally incremental process. • Stories can be collected in various ways: sound and images (photo and video), drawings, written stories. • Most Significant Change is a thorough, systematic approach using this and other techniques (see below). • May be expanded into very detailed case studies (in-depth investigation of a certain section of the project).

Examples	Why should I choose this?	Remarks
Quantities and measurements: tally of participants, soil and water quality, evolution in income, Fair Trade production share in the purchasing policy, etc.	• If relevant, to be used to say something about the indicators of your project. • Easy as an assignment given to various agents (based on a sheet indicating which data is required).	• Is insufficient in itself as a tool, works best in combination with other (qualitative) tools. • Works based on spreadsheets that make it easy to store data fast (and possibly process or use it later). • Restrict the number of parameters you want to measure. • Think long and hard about how and from whom you request the information and whether you need to provide support.
Desk study: structured reading of secondary source material.	• Sometimes there is a lot of interesting material with information on certain regions, domains, themes, results of existing and completed programmes, lessons learned… • This is important in order to make a good assessment of the results of your own project and understand them better.	• It is important to determine in advance which questions you want to answer by reading the material (development of a reading window). This allows you to work through a lot of material quickly and systematically. • Do not read everything. • Give priority to sources that are reliable. • Keep an eye out for differences in vision and experience. • This could be a replacement for a baseline if you do not have a lot of time or resources.
Financial analyses: audit, cost output calculation	• It provides hard figures. • It allows you to gain a good overview of the use of resources.	• Sometimes financial expertise is required.

26 Plus d'informations sur le Most Significant Change : Davies, R. & Dart, J (2005). The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique. A guide to its use.

Combinations of various techniques		
Explanatory note: there are many evaluation and monitoring models using different techniques and include a whole package of monitoring and evaluation activities already. We mention a few here that are useful in a context of municipal North-South policy.		
Examples	**Why should I choose this?**	**Remarks**
MSC26 (see development below): *Most Significant Change*	• Participative monitoring and evaluation. • To gain insight into what the target group finds important and experiences as positive and negative change. • When change is difficult to measure with surveys. • Can be used as a tool for monitoring (regularly ask for stories) and evaluation (halfway through the project and at the end, for example). • To gain an overview of the long-term changes. • In case of more complex projects with many different sub-projects. • In order to understand what type of change is possible (not in order to define the common denominator or a representative example).	• The narrative and qualitative method assesses change in the target group. • An extensive description of the methodology is provided: define respondents and topics, collect stories, discuss and reflect on stories, analyse the stories, use knowledge and information for adjustments and communication. • Best in combination with another form of data collection. • For small and simple project only a 'light' version is useful: introduce questions about the most significant change in semi-structured interviews or focus groups.
Analysis of a group's capacity/ organisation/ service to complete their assignment / mission based on the analysis of five key competencies.	• In order to understand how a partner and/or group assesses their own capacity and which competencies they find important. • To gain an overview of the competencies and the extent to which they are already present in the group/organisation. • To collect material to have a relevant discussion about capacity and capacity building. • To allow delicate issues to be identified and discussed. • To gain insight into changes: it is therefore suitable for monitoring and evaluation. • It is a good alternative to the traditional organisation analyses that only consider what is missing.	• There is now quite a lot of experience with the application of this method. • It is very suitable for developing capacity with municipal partners.
For more information: Keijzer, N., Spierings, E., Phlix, G. and Fowler, A., 2011, *Bringing the invisible into perspective: Reference paper for using the 5Cs framework to plan, monitor and evaluate capacity and results of capacity development processes*, European Centre for development Policy Management, Maastricht. http:/ /www.ecdpm.org/ 5Cs		

27 More information about Most Significant Change: Davies, R. and Dart, J (2005). The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique. A guide to its use.

Examples	Why should I choose this?	Remarks
Community score cards (see development in this publication)	• To monitor the quality of service and to encourage accountability for services by the local authority. • You can use it to find out the opinion of the residents about the services provided in the municipality. This helps monitor the quality of service. • The tool also involves citizens more in the development, organisation and provision of services. • The tool also helps the municipal departments themselves (to support their self-assessment). • The tool helps municipalities to be more accountable for their services to the citizens.	• You have to be able to deploy people in order to support citizen groups and facilitate meetings between citizen groups (training can be organised in this respect). • Citizen groups are selected to participate in focus group discussions and score a certain service based on some indicators (which the citizens themselves find important). This initiative is regularly repeated. • Municipal departments do the same based on their indicators and self-assessment. • After each scoring exercise, consultation meetings are held between citizens and service providers. • The municipality then communicates the outcome of these meetings. • Assumes that municipal departments are open to this and that there is the freedom to work constructively with input provided by citizens. If this is not the case, the method will not work. • Long-term process: all stakeholders need time to use the methodology well.