Glossary of Key Monitoring, Learning & Evaluation (MEL) Terms

Activities	The main tasks that need to be completed for project outputs and outcomes to be achieved. These include trainings, hosting events or meetings, counselling and even coordination.
E.G. Hold 12 community meetings with parents' groups, per village.	
Assumptions	These are the reasonable beliefs or expectations that must be in place to allow activities and outputs to lead to outcomes. It is often mentioned together with 'Risks' in MEL tools.
E.G. Records of attendance are accurate and complete, parents are interested and available to attend meetings with project staff.	
Baseline	This is data collected for some or all of a project's indicators before a project begins. Baselines are important because they provide the information that allows you to compare progress at later stages. This allows you to better understand the particular effects of your efforts. Multiple forms of data can be collected when establishing a baseline.
Endline	This is a collection of data for some or all of a project's indicators at the end of a project. The same methods that were used at baseline are reapplied, and the endline data is then compared to the baseline data to understand how much change has happened as a result of your project activities.
Goal	The long-term positive change your programme wishes to create; it is the high level reason that you are doing that particular programme and is sometimes called the aim or impact.
E.G. Reduce child trafficking in 3 target districts in Bihar, India.	
Impact	the long term effects of your work and interventions, on the target populations and the wider community and society. It is not always possible to measure impact within the lifetime of a project, particularly for interventions that are shorter than 5

	years as it takes time for the long term effects to be identifiable.
E.G. A sustainable reduction in human trafficking amongst children in our target regions.	
Indicators	An observable, measurable characteristic (which can be qualitative or quantitative) that tells you what to look out for to know that an activity is producing its desired results. Indicators can apply to different levels of your work, e.g. output indicators, outcome indicators, impact indicators, etc. The most commonly asked are outcome indicators. Indicators are usually neutral statements and do not include the direction of the change you want to see, e.g., increase or decrease. Instead, they should tell you by 'how much' your desired changes are happening.
E.G. For the outcome "Parents are better informed about children's rights and the risks of trafficking"; a suitable indicator could be the "number and percentage of parents who demonstrate improved understanding about their children's rights".	
Indicator - Qualitative	These are indicators that are not numerical and provide detailed information on the nature and scope of changes taking place. They are useful to learn about the complex changes happening as a result of your activities, such as changing relationships or patterns of behaviour amongst target groups.
Indicator - Quantative	These are indicators that are measuring very specific results that can be measured numerically. They do not provide information about the context or scale of the change. These are measured as units (percentages, numbers, ratios).
It is not the way in which an indicator is defined that makes it quantitative or qualitative, but the way in which it is reported. If an indicator is reported using a number then it is a quantitative indicator. If it is reported using words then it is qualitative. A widespread misconception is that a qualitative indicator measures the quality of an activity or change. This is not always true. To understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative indicators better, please [click here](#).	

Inputs	The resources necessary to carry out your programmes. This is sometimes asked in log frames or monitoring tools by donors.
E.G. Staff and volunteers, funding, materials, facilities, and partners.	
Logical framework	Sometimes called a Logframe, a common planning tool for social development projects and programmes (*see Logframes*).
Means of Verification (MOV)	The tools that are used to gather the information or the data needed to verify some/all indicators. These are also referred to as 'sources' which refers to where, and sometimes how, the information was gathered.
E.G. Pre- and post-tests, surveys, interviews, meeting minutes, school attendance records.	
Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)	A set of processes by which organisations projects and programmes can be designed, evidenced and understood (*see Introduction to MEL*).
Objectives	The high-level aims of your project or what you want the situation to look like if your project is successful. Objectives sit between longer-term outcomes and the overall goal, and the specific level of detail will depend on the length and complexity of your project.
E.G. Children in target communities attend schools and progress through to the next year.	
Outputs	The observable, measurable, and tangible results of your programme activities that contribute toward the overall goal and outcomes. They can be framed as the activities that have just happened (activities stated in the past tense). Outputs are within your control and occur within the lifetime of the project.
E.G. 5 Prevention workshops held in relation to the risks of trafficking, 2 Street plays performed, Community meetings held, Campaigns held to raise awareness of human trafficking.	
Outcomes	The changes that occur as a result of your project's activities. These can be short, medium and long term, and can include changes at the individual or community level in knowledge, attitude, or behaviours, as well as new or revised laws, policies, etc. You will usually have some control over producing desired outcomes, but sometimes it requires changes to happen that

	are beyond your direct control, such as community members doing something differently as a result of learning something new through the project.
E.G. Increased rate of children's attendance to the school. This requires parents to be motivated to save funds to pay for school fees and allow their children to attend school rather than working with them as labourers.	
Risks	Internal or external factors that may affect the planned timeline, performance, budget, and ultimately success of the project. The organisation will have varying levels of control over different types of risk; such as staff leaving or flooding.
S.M.A.R.T	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound - these are the characteristics that should apply to your indicators.
Target	The specific and quantifiable number or result that you aim for with a given indicator or number of beneficiaries you would like to reach for an activity. This describes the direction and extent of change you want to achieve with your project and you should also aim for them to be SMART. Targets can be set for different periods throughout the project and/or by the end.
E.G. For the indicator, "number and percentage of parents who demonstrate improved understanding about their children's rights", the target could be 100 out of 200, or 50%, parents demonstrate improved understanding about their children's rights.	
Theory of Change (TOC)	A description of why a particular strategy or way of working will be effective in a particular context. It shows how change is expected to happen, and how the organisation's work is expected to contribute, in the short, medium and long term to achieve the intended impact. It can be represented in a visual diagram, as a 'narrative' (a written description), or both. A theory of change can be created both for an entire organisation's operations or for a specific project - it will have varying levels of details on the basis of what it covers.
For examples of ToC, please *click here*.	