MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING IN EMERGENCIES

A resource pack for simple and strong MEAL

Dominique Morel and Clara Hagens

Founded in 1943, Catholic Relief Services supports relief and development activities in more than 100 countries. Without regard to race, creed or nationality, CRS provides emergency relief in the wake of natural and man-made disasters. Through development projects in education, peace and justice, agriculture, microfinance, health, HIV and AIDS, CRS works to uphold human dignity and promote better standards of living for the poor and disadvantaged overseas.

In Asia, CRS works with several thousand partner organizations, focusing on improving community resilience to disasters, including HIV and AIDS, promoting the dignity and empowerment of women, as well as strengthening agricultural livelihoods, community water management, health and education systems.

CRS also works throughout the Unites States to expand the knowledge and action of Catholics and others interested in issues of international peace and justice. Our programs and resources respond to the U.S. Bishops' call to live in solidarity — as one human family — across borders, over oceans and through differences in language, culture and economic conditions.

The idea for this resource pack was originally inspired by *M&E in Emergencies: Tips and Tools* by Loretta Ishida and others at CRS. The authors would like to thank the CRS Indonesia team and Karina (Caritas Indonesia) for their contribution to these resources.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
FGD	focus group discussion
IR	intermediate result
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MEAL	monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
NFI	nonfood item
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
SO	strategic objective
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene

Standards for Monitoring and Evaluation in Emergencies

> Standards for monitoring and evaluation in emergencies:
>
> 1. Early monitoring systems are simple, use-oriented and flexible to accommodate change in context and activities.
> 2. Monitor the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the response to increase accountability to the people we serve.
> 3. Create a formal M&E system for the overall response as soon as the situation stabilizes.

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for an emergency response should remain light and dynamic to avoid placing a heavy burden on staff or detracting from the response itself and to stay responsive to the changing context and the evolving needs of targeted populations. Monitoring during the first phase of an emergency response is often characterized by systematic output-level data collection to strengthen accountability and management quality, and light and purposeful monitoring at the intermediate-results level to check on the quality of the response. Most emergency M&E systems include a real-time evaluation approximately six to eight weeks after a response begins, which provides a more rigorous check of the appropriateness and relevance, effectiveness, connectedness, sustainability, coverage and coordination of the response.

1. Early monitoring systems are simple, use-oriented and flexible to accommodate change in context and activities

The process for establishing a simple, use-oriented and flexible monitoring system during the first phase of a response can be summarized with four steps:

1. Count progress toward outputs;
2. Check the appropriateness and effectiveness of the response;
3. Change the response as needed based on findings; and
4. Communicate progress and results to stakeholders.

These *Four Cs*, when implemented efficiently, provide timely information that is immediately relevant for maintaining a high-quality emergency response. Each step is described below.

Count

Project teams can use simple monitoring forms to count progress toward activities and output-level indicators and determine if targets are being met in a timely manner. These counts should begin when the first outputs are delivered and finish when the output-level components of the project are complete. Accurate and complete output-level data are essential for strong management quality, internal compliance and reporting to donors. The project team should create a simple Excel database to house output-level data. Ideally, all field locations use the same output-level tracking and reporting templates to allow for easy and timely compilation of results. In addition, the data should be made highly accessible (both within each field location and centrally) for easy verification and use by all project staff.

➔ *Record output- and activity-level data (depending on the intervention) into a matrix or table on a flipchart or a whiteboard on the office wall. Enter data daily into these tables or matrices to show progress by location and for important comparison groups. The results are then readily available during daily debrief meetings and for reporting.*

To provide accurate results, the project team should ensure that all outputs (e.g., goods and services) are counted by the monitoring system. It is not appropriate to extrapolate output-level results from a sample. Complete and accurate records are necessary for strong management quality, reporting and project accountability.

➔ *Put counting systems in place from the very beginning of the response as it becomes much more complicated to reconcile records and information later on.*

Check

The M&E system should enable staff to check on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the response with light monitoring of IR–level indicators, and through collection of data on satisfaction and feedback from the people we serve. IR-level indicators generally focus on the use of the goods and services provided and, together with feedback mechanisms, can provide a clear picture of what has been most and least useful about the response so far.

These checks require a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and generally utilize postdistribution satisfaction surveys, simple checklists, semistructured key informant interviews, and direct observation. The monitoring tools should ask specific closed-ended questions and include observation to verify knowledge acquisition and the level and type of change in behavior, as well as open-ended questions to generate in-depth feedback that could explain why use or satisfaction is low, for example, and how to improve the response. Project staff can ask these questions in focus group discussions (FGDs) and household interviews separately to different subgroups, particularly males and females, where relevant, to capture their perspectives. The focus should be on the perspectives of the most vulnerable groups and households, as they are often the most relevant for project decision-making.

Direct observation plays an important role in verifying behavior change and the quality of the response, such as the adoption of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices or the quality of shelter materials distributed. Interviewers can collect direct observation data through simple checklists; they can also ask field staff to share any other informal observations or anecdotal information during project team debrief meetings that might indicate changes in the situation and conditions to which the project needs to adapt.

Staff should collect the intermediate results–level monitoring and feedback data soon after outputs are delivered so they can address any problems and make improvements quickly before many resources have been spent. These checks can begin immediately after the pilot distribution of NFI kits or a hygiene promotion activity to determine the quality and appropriateness of the kit's content or the relevance of the hygiene messaging. These checks will be fairly intensive initially (e.g., daily or weekly) until the desired level of quality or effectiveness is obtained; afterward, lighter and less frequent checking is sufficient to verify that the situation has not changed. Refer to Standard 2 on accountability for information on establishing effective feedback mechanisms.

➔ *Continue monitoring satisfaction levels and feedback and use of goods and services through the first phase of the response as needs and priorities may change with the evolving context. Adapt monitoring tools as new questions about appropriateness and effectiveness arise, and as the original questions related to quality or initial use may be answered by early monitoring results.*

Whenever appropriate, the project team should consider whether more participatory methods can be used to collect this information. This is particularly useful to solicit participation of less literate or less vocal community members, such as women, and to generate discussion among respondents.

➔ *Use pile-ranking as a participatory method to determine which NFIs were most and least useful and whether any priority item was missed. Working with actual samples or photos of the NFIs provided can help respondents to quickly recall the quality and utility of items received. A postdistribution pile-ranking exercise tool is included at the end of this resource pack.*

Consider how to triangulate between data sources to minimize data collection while ensuring the data provides an adequately accurate picture of satisfaction and use. Use purposeful sampling to collect data from the most relevant subgroups (e.g., young girls immediately expected to apply water handling messages, skilled labor involved in shelter reconstruction, and male and female members of the poorest households most in need of the assistance provided).[1] A light sample of two to three

---

[1] Purposeful sampling refers to the intentional selection of respondents based on key characteristics. For more information, refer to the section on purposeful sampling in *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation* (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2012).

FGDs or household interviews may be enough if they capture diverse perspectives and yield the same answers. If the initial interviews or FGDs yield different results, additional data collection is needed to verify the data or to understand how and why answers or feedback vary between different subgroups.

> ➔ *If, through purposeful sampling, you determine a high level of use and satisfaction among the most vulnerable groups, it is likely that use and satisfaction is high throughout the target population.*

Change

Response teams should adjust specific activities in the response if the monitoring data indicate that the support provided is not meeting quality standards or is not as effective as it could be in responding to priority community needs, or that new unmet needs have emerged. During daily project debrief meetings, the team should discuss how to address any gaps or areas needing improvement. For example, monitoring data may show that some items in the NFI package are not being used or are being used incorrectly. The project team should determine whether and how the content of the NFI package should be adjusted (e.g., replacing these items with more locally appropriate models or removing them altogether) or whether greater sensitization is needed for more appropriate use of NFIs. It is important to make these decisions in a timely manner to avoid spending resources on support that might not be useful or no longer correspond to priority unmet needs.

In one case, the project team discovered the jerry cans they had distributed were not being used as intended. Upon further inquiry, respondents shared that this was because the community did not understand the purpose of the cans and they thought the cans had a bad smell. In response, the project staff changed to a different jerry can supplier and further reinforced water treatment and storage messages.

Communicate

Good communication about successes and challenges is required for strong community and donor accountability. Monitoring results (e.g., counts and checks) and any changes to the response should be communicated regularly to stakeholders, including community members, local government and donors. For example, situation reports can be adapted to share with donors and other stakeholders as appropriate. The frequency of these updates varies over time depending on the fluidity of the response; daily situation reports and updates are not unusual in the first few weeks of a response, and weekly updates are common practice for most of the acute emergency phase. These updates should document output counts, initial IR-level checks (whether positive or negative), any change made in response to these and upcoming plans.

Teams should also communicate these results verbally, especially in the case of significant adjustments in the response that may require some form of preapproval from donors or the government. Response teams should justify and document any

change to project activities in brief regular updates or reports to donors and other stakeholders. Clearly communicating monitoring results and any required changes can demonstrate flexibility and the ability to meet community needs and implement a high-quality project within a shifting emergency context.

➔ *Communicate any significant changes in the response to donors immediately. They are more likely to support flexibility and changes if the reasons have been explained in advance – make sure donors do not hear of proposed changes only after reading the next project report! Whether these changes require a formal project amendment or not, make sure to inform the donor and solicit their concurrence in a timely manner.*

In addition to the *Four Cs*, Table 1 provides an overview of key characteristics of a strong, light monitoring system during the first phase of an emergency response.

Table 1. *Dos* and *Don'ts* of monitoring during the first phase of the response.

Sampling	• <u>Do</u> determine what type and amount of data are good enough to make decisions. This will require triangulation of a small number of interviews and observations that capture perspectives of the most vulnerable. Return at reasonable intervals to verify that the situation has not changed. • <u>Don't</u> use a representative random sample for monitoring data. It is possible to make informed and timely decisions with small amounts of the right type of data in an emergency response.
Data collection	• <u>Do</u> include open-ended questions asking community members about their ideas and for general feedback and level of satisfaction. Consider using creative approaches for collecting honest feedback, such as pile-sorting. • <u>Don't</u> limit the tools to closed-ended questions as they can easily miss important feedback and unanticipated results.
Data entry	• <u>Do</u> create a large visual table on a whiteboard or flipchart paper where all staff can enter and view activity- and output-level data during debrief meetings. • <u>Do</u> create a simple Excel database to ensure that activity- and output-level monitoring results are immediately available for decision-making and to keep complete records for good management quality and accountability.
Analysis and interpretation	• <u>Do</u> analyze data as soon as it is collected. During daily debrief meetings, analyze and interpret the data with the whole team, as needed. Ask field staff to share their observations beyond what they record on monitoring forms, and their experiences and ideas. • <u>Do</u> regularly reflect on any critical assumptions made in designing the response to make sure they are still true. • <u>Do</u> look for changes in context that will influence current needs or project success. • <u>Don't</u> limit the interpretation and discussion to the questions included in the data collection forms, as this may prevent the team from identifying unexpected results.
Use of data	• <u>Do</u> analyze and use all available data to make project adjustments as needed during daily project meetings. • <u>Do</u> field-test any changes to confirm that the new activity is an improvement over the previous approach. • <u>Do</u> document any changes made to activities or implementation plans in regular updates to donors.

2. Monitor the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the response to increase accountability to the people we serve

CRS Asia has developed a working definition of accountability:

> An organization is accountable when it systematically balances and responds to the needs of all stakeholders when making decisions and ensures that these stakeholders, including the most marginalized and vulnerable people, play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them. Accountability is reflected in an organization's systems and practices related to leadership and governance, two-way, transparent communication and feedback mechanisms with stakeholders and communities, and participatory program design, monitoring and evaluation.[2]

M&E plays a key role in maintaining two-way communication and feedback between project staff and community members, both those who participate in the project and those who do not. In addition to monitoring satisfaction with the quality of the services or goods provided during the early response (see Check section under Standard 1), the M&E system for an emergency response should:

1. Assess satisfaction with the response in all evaluative processes; and
2. Establish a formal feedback mechanism to capture both positive and negative feedback and suggestions from community members.

Evaluative processes are generally useful in identifying recommendations for improving the next phase of the response or future responses, whereas feedback mechanisms allow project staff to address immediately any issues raised by the community during the ongoing response, such as cases of inappropriate targeting and selection or staff behavior. Feedback mechanisms often include hotline numbers, help desks, community forums and complaints boxes. A mixture of these methods is usually appropriate given that community members may have different preferences about how to give feedback. It is important that those who do not receive support or participate in the response have access to these methods because these community members are an important source of information about the transparency and effectiveness of a project's targeting criteria and selection process.

➔ *During ongoing monitoring, ask community members if they know how to give feedback. If some do not know how to give feedback, provide information to them directly and consider community-level measures to increase awareness about the feedback process. Check with community members who did not participate in the response after establishing feedback mechanisms to ensure that they are also aware of how to give feedback when needed.*

---

[2] CRS Asia Regional Strategy 2011-2014. *Adapted from ECB, "Accountability – Key Elements / Core Understanding", November 2010.*

In sensitizing community members to the feedback mechanisms, be sure to include specific instructions for providing feedback, assurance that feedback will remain anonymous, the importance of providing both positive and negative feedback, and the process and timeline by which the project team will respond to the feedback.

➔ *Respond to community feedback promptly to show that you value it. Discuss the feedback received and possible actions to address problems or complaints during regular community meetings. Responsiveness to community feedback is key to maintaining accountability and will help to sustain use of feedback mechanisms in the future.*

Questions related to accountability should be included in monitoring tools (see tool example in this resource pack), all learning events (e.g., after-action reviews) and evaluations (midterm, final, and real-time evaluations). Each question presents an opportunity to ask the community, both those that participate in the project and those that do not, about the appropriateness of the project's targeting and coverage, the relevance and effectiveness of the response, the level and type of community participation, and to collect additional overall feedback.

Real-time evaluations

A real-time evaluation provides an opportunity to gather more in-depth information on the appropriateness, relevance, effectiveness, connectedness, sustainability, coverage and coordination of the response. The project team conducts a real-time evaluation six to eight weeks after an emergency response begins to provide an early check once implementation is well under way and systems are generally in place. They then incorporate findings into the current and subsequent phases of the response. Staff collects data for these evaluations primarily through FGDs, which allow the community, as appropriate, to provide feedback on the response to date. Acting on the recommendations resulting from the evaluation is another way to enhance beneficiary accountability. Refer to the CRS *Guidance on Conducting Real-Time Evaluations in Emergencies*[3] for more information.

---

[3] Loretta Ishida and Pauline Wilson, *Guidance on Conducting Real-Time Evaluations in Emergencies* (Baltimore: CRS, 2010). https://global.crs.org/communities/EmergencyResponse/Emergency%20Community%20Documents/crs_rte_guidance_april2010.docx.

3. Create a formal M&E system for the overall response as soon as the situation stabilizes

As the emergency situation stabilizes, the M&E system should become more formal and structured. We refer to a formal M&E system as a system complete with an overarching emergency response results framework and ProFrame,[4] M&E plan, and an M&E binder that includes all tools and templates required for data collection, analysis and use throughout the response.[5] If you developed the results framework and an initial draft of the overall emergency response program during the early stages of the response, you may need to revise and adjust them at this stage.

> ➔ *Develop a results framework and ProFrame for the overall emergency response strategy from the earliest stages of the response, and use them to inform all donor submissions to ensure consistency in indicators and monitoring requirements.*

The strategic objectives should reflect a high level of change (to be achieved by the end of the overall response program—often one to two years) to remain relevant throughout the initial response and early recovery phase. IRs often reflect specific intervention strategies and will be more time-bound. It is often the case that one or more SOs or IRs may need to be added over time, and others may become irrelevant (i.e., completed). Having a single overarching response strategy will allow the project team to refer to the same results framework and M&E system throughout the response and avoid the confusion associated with having separate M&E systems for different projects and donors.

In addition, tips for developing a strong emergency response results framework include:
➢ Consult *The Sphere Handbook*[6] to identify relevant wording for the SOs and IRs and refer to Sphere indicators and guidance sheets when developing the specific indicators for your M&E system. The inclusion of relevant Sphere standards and indicators will help to define key elements of quality in the results framework;

---

[4] The ProFrame© (**Proj**ect **Frame**work) combines the results framework with an older tool known as the Logical Framework or Logframe, which is used by most international development organizations worldwide. The results framework is a snapshot of the higher-level objectives; the ProFrame provides information about outputs and activities, the performance indicators and critical assumptions that have been made about project performance and plans. For more information, refer to *ProPack: The CRS Project Package. Project Design and Proposal Guidance for CRS Project and Program Managers* (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2004).
http://www.crsprogramquality.org/publications/2011/1/14/propack-i-english.html.
[5] For more information on creating a complete M&E binder, refer to *ProPack III: The CRS Project Package. A Guide to Creating a SMILER M&E System* (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2010), http://www.crsprogramquality.org/publications/2011/1/17/propack-iii-english.html and *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation*.
[6] The Sphere Project, *The Sphere Handbook* (Rugby, United Kingdom: Practical Action Publishing, 2011). http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook.

➢ Create one SO per intervention area or sector, focusing on medium-term change that reflects a return to the preemergency situation or a situation that meets Sphere standards for that sector. Focus the IRs on proposed intervention strategies in each sector or subsectors to create a results framework with clear logic. Because intervention strategies are often different in the emergency relief and early recovery phases, it may be appropriate to have different IRs for different phases of the response;

➢ Reflect accountability in the results framework with a crosscutting IR for accountability, an IR dedicated to accountability or the integration of accountability-related indicators at the output- and IR-levels; and

➢ Include all donor-required indicators and any others that are necessary for determining the quality and impact of the response. Given the importance of the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) emergency response funding, consider using relevant OFDA-mandated indicators in your emergency response ProFrame if OFDA funding is being sought or may become available in the future. Refer to the latest OFDA guidance to make sure that any updated indicators are used. Note that the OFDA indicators would be in addition to, and not instead of, higher-level impact indicators identified by the project team.

For more information on M&E in emergencies, refer to:

- CRS *Guidance on Conducting Real-Time Evaluations in Emergencies*[7]
- CRS *M&E in Emergencies: Tips and Tools*[8]
- *The Sphere Handbook*[9]
- *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide*[10]
- *OFDA Guidelines and Indicators*[11]

---

[7] Ishida and Wilson, *Guidance on Conducting Real-Time Evaluations in Emergencies*.

[8] Loretta Ishida and Pauline Wilson, *M&E in Emergencies: Tips and Tools* (Baltimore: CRS, 2010). https://global.crs.org/worldwide/ESA/PQ/Regional%20Project%20Review%20Guidance%20and%20tools/MandE%20in%20Emergencies%20Resource%20Pack.pdf.

[9] The Sphere Project, *The Sphere Handbook* (Rugby, United Kingdom: Practical Action Publishing, 2011). http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook.

[10] Emergency Capacity Building Project, *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxfam GB, 2007). http://www.ecbproject.org/download-pdf/download-pdf.

[11] "OFDA Guidelines and Indicators 2008," US Agency for International Development website. http://quest.usaid.gov/node/1973.

Progression of Monitoring in an Emergency Response

Situation	Immediate response Limited staff, too little time, and too much to do Priority focus on response Fluid context	Situation stabilizes Often more staff Less pressure for immediate response
Information needs ***Common monitoring methods and sampling method***	Changing emergency context *Informal discussions with a few respondents, field observations and secondary information from coordination meetings* All goods and services delivered *Actual counts documented in activity records* Actual use of inputs by project participants Community feedback on early response *Observation, pile-ranking exercises, FGDs and closed-ended surveys, using purposeful or very small random samples* More in-depth, IR-level monitoring (use, quality, satisfaction), comparing results between subgroups, probing with "why" questions *Observation, FGDs (purposeful sampling) and closed-ended surveys (small random samples)*	SO-level changes *Observation, FGDs (purposive sampling) and household surveys (light random sampling)* Final evaluation

Informal and Formal Monitoring of an Emergency Response

There are two types of monitoring necessary during an emergency response: (1) informal monitoring of the changing context and (2) formal monitoring of the activities included in the response and project indicators. The table below provides further descriptions of each.

	Informal monitoring	Formal monitoring
Why?	To identify any changes in context or unanticipated changes resulting from assistance provided that will affect the continued emergency response.	To count progress toward outputs and check on the *relevance* and *effectiveness* of the support provided. To provide measurable data against our project indicators.
When?	Ongoing, during each visit to the field site.	Ongoing with different tools, sample size and frequency as appropriate over time. The timing of monitoring events is based on the activities schedule and aims to provide timely feedback for needed adjustments in the response. Keep the frequency to the minimum needed for problem-solving or reporting purposes.
Who?	All staff who visit the field should conduct informal monitoring.	Usually, field staff are responsible for monitoring their project component, though M&E staff may also be assigned for field monitoring.
How?	Mix of direct observation and informal conversations with a range of stakeholders and community members (those who did and did not participate in the project), based on opportunities. "Informal" monitoring is not intentional or structured; it happens as part of normal community interactions.	Mix of direct observation (see how people are using the items or if new practices are adopted), structured household or individual interviews and focus group discussions. Examples of useful methods are observations, postdistribution surveys, individual interviews, pile-ranking exercises and FGDs. Activity and output monitoring (counting) is usually based on activity records (e.g., distribution reports).
What to ask? What to look for?	This is an unstructured process which requires that staff have the right mindset and healthy curiosity to look for unanticipated changes resulting from assistance or changes in the context. Look for signs that displaced people are starting to return home to their villages, additional support is being	The questions included in the monitoring tools should focus on IR-level indicators that are likely to cover key information needs such as: • Right items in the right quantities and quality? • Right timing? • Level of participation in the response? • Level of satisfaction with assistance

	provided by other organizations or actors, or that affected families are starting to rebuild shelters using recovered materials. Create time for debrief meetings and encourage field staff to share what they hear and see in the community.	provided? • New needs emerging? • Sufficient access to key services?
Who to ask?	Ask everyone as opportunities for interaction arise. This process is unstructured, unplanned and spontaneous.	Ask small, purposeful samples of community members (men and women separately). Possibly focus on some subgroups only or disaggregate further for comparative analysis.
Analysis	Discuss and interpret informal observations during the daily or weekly debrief meetings.	Conduct participatory analysis for qualitative data. Track quantitative data in a simple Excel database and interpret results during debrief meetings.
Use	Take appropriate action immediately to adjust the response as needed.	Take appropriate action immediately to adjust the response as needed.

Sampling during Monitoring and Evaluation of an Emergency Response

What is sampling?

Sampling refers to the selection of some, but not all members of a target group as respondents to create a general picture of progress or impact. There are two types of sampling methods. (1) Random sampling refers to the purely arbitrary selection of respondents regardless of location, gender or any other key characteristics. (2) Purposeful sampling refers to the selection of individuals or groups based on key individual or household characteristics (e.g., whether they are male or female, practice certain livelihood activities or have key vulnerability characteristics).

When should you *not* sample during an emergency response?

When you need to count and document the actual number of goods or services delivered (activity or output-level indicators), you should not sample. At the activity- and output-level, you are accountable to donors to demonstrate actual use of resources received and delivery of goods or services in a timely manner. This requires accurate and complete numbers, which means counting each input delivered or individual served. Start counting as soon as the activity starts and continue until you achieve the target result and complete the activity. Note that when an indicator refers to a number, this is a sign to count and not sample. This is usually the case for activity- and output-level indicators.

When should you sample during an emergency response?

To check the relevance and effectiveness of assistance as part of project monitoring

If input from a small number of respondents is good enough to confirm that the community is satisfied with the assistance provided, sample to check that intermediate results–level and strategic objective–level changes are starting to occur, to detect any problems that arise and to inform ongoing management decisions.

In an emergency response, you can use a purposeful sample to select a small number of community members to understand more about the perspective of a given subgroup or about why a change is or is not happening. Or you may purposefully talk to different subgroups to triangulate responses and understand the situation from multiple perspectives. With purposeful sampling, you need to include only a small number of respondents from each subgroup. The number may be as few as two or three groups or as many as eight or ten individuals or households depending on the method used and the context.

You can sometimes use a light random sample to monitor satisfaction or behavior uptake at output levels and intermediate results levels. A light random sample does not require a specific number of respondents—the number sampled is based on what can be easily incorporated into the work plan of field staff given their many other responsibilities. Staff should try to minimize bias by selecting the respondents as randomly as possible. This sample will not give statistically valid data, but it may be good enough to help identify and address problems in a timely manner.

To determine and document impact against IR- and SO-level indicators during evaluations

Use a representative random sample to demonstrate project impact among the overall target population. A random sample of respondents is representative of the target population and statistically significant when the number of respondents is determined by an internationally recognized sampling equation. Surveying a statistically significant random sample is, however, time-consuming and thus generally only required at the final evaluation to measure impact and report to donors. Note that when an indicator refers to a percentage, this is a sign to use a random sample. This is usually the case for IR- and SO-level indicators.

See Table 1 for illustrative examples. For further information, consult the CRS *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation* sections on random sampling and purposeful sampling[12].

Table 1. Examples of sampling during an emergency response.

Indicators	Monitoring	Evaluation
Output level: Number of hygiene kits distributed within a certain timeframe.	Count all kits distributed and document this in your distribution records. A complete count (no sampling) should begin as soon as the kit distribution begins and end only when it finishes.	No evaluation needed.
IR level: Percentage of the target population demonstrating correct water usage and storage.	Check by using a purposeful sample of women (who are generally responsible for water handling in the household). Every month, select two or three of the worst-affected villages and in each: 1) Organize one FGD with women and 2) observe water handling practices in 10 households selected as randomly as possible within target villages.	At midterm or the end, use a random sample of all target women intended to provide a reliable picture of the level of appropriate use.
IR level: Percentage of targeted households rebuilding	Check by using a shelter-construction quality checklist. Purposefully sample the most vulnerable households (those least likely to meet the indicator). Determine what coverage and frequency is feasible	At the end of the project, conduct a random sample survey of all targeted households.

[12] Hagens et al., *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation*.

shelters that meet Sphere standards for risk reduction, comfort and durability.	based on human resources and accessibility.	
IR level: Percentage of targeted individuals fully satisfied with the NFI kits provided.	Check by conducting exit interviews with a light random sample of targeted community members (e.g., 1 in 10) at a handful of distribution sites. Determine a good enough number of sites based on human resources available. Consider also including an observation of use of NFIs at the household level in approximately 10 households in two to three of the worst-affected villages. *Note: you may want to complement this light monitoring with a feedback mechanism to detect problems that are not captured in the small sample.*	At midterm or the end, conduct a satisfaction survey using a random sample to provide a representative picture of the overall level of satisfaction with the response.

How to Conduct a Debrief Meeting

Why? What for?

Early in a response, daily meetings are helpful to keep the emergency response team's activities coordinated. As activities become more routine and planned over longer periods, such meetings can be progressively reduced to once a week.

In the early stages of an emergency, the daily team debrief meetings are used to:
- Share, discuss and resolve challenges faced in the response;
- Communicate progress made;
- Coordinate the next days' plans; and
- Monitor the changing emergency context and discuss any possible changes needed in the response.

When based in the field, team leaders need to communicate key points from these debrief meetings with the overall emergency response coordinator on a daily basis. When decisions require approval or concurrence, discuss by phone whenever possible, then confirm by e-mail. Share other information (results achieved, challenges faced, solutions proposed and plans for next days) in a brief situation report or in the body of an e-mail for communication and reporting purposes.

When teams are deployed at various field locations, you may need to organize more in-depth reflection or learning events at key points in the response to share and compare the emergency situation context, needs, results achieved and challenges in the various locations. This is to ensure common understanding of the emergency response approaches and review key emergency response decisions, including targeting/coverage, level and modalities of support, etc. (See Annex A: Conducting a Reflection Event.)

Who (leads)?

Emergency team leaders in each emergency response location.

Who (participates)?

Field team members or field team leaders in case of large responses (i.e., staff who are conducting the actual response) and field M&E staff, if any. Partner staff

should also attend the meetings when they participate in the response alongside CRS staff.

When?

At the end of each day or field activity (e.g., distribution).

Where?

Either in the office upon return from the field, or in the field if this allows greater participation by staff and partners and the location is safe.

How?

Adapt the following questions to suit your context and the frequency of your meetings. Have the group discuss the questions and have one team member record the major points discussed and any decision made. Send your notes to the emergency coordinator/country representative and other relevant staff (e.g., team leaders in other field locations) as appropriate. Keep your notes easily accessible for use in reporting.

Daily Assessment Team Debrief Meeting Notes
(To be done together with the entire team from the same geographic area)

Date:

Attendees:

Field location:

1. **What activities did you do today?**

    Make this discussion as specific as possible so that the information can be used for reporting purposes (e.g., conducted rapid assessment in villages X and Y, registered 200 families for food distribution in camp A, distributed emergency shelter kits to 50 households in village Z, etc.). This is about actual results, not plans.

2. **What went particularly well today?**

3. **What difficulties did you have today?**

    Probe whether others in the team faced similar difficulties in other locations.

4. **How did you address these difficulties? How do you suggest doing so next time you conduct this activity?**

5. **What else did you learn from talking with community members or from direct observations while in the field?**

    Probe on changes in the emergency context (e.g., affected people are arriving, moving, talking about returning home, starting to rebuild; other humanitarian actors have visited the community or delivered assistance; people raise new concerns or needs, etc.).

6. **Plan for tomorrow (or next two to three days):**

    This should be as specific as possible for coordination purposes (e.g., A will lead rapid assessment in villages W and X; B will register families in camp Y; C will oversee emergency shelter kits distributions to 250 households in village Z, etc.).

Learning Events in an Emergency Response

In the hectic pace of an emergency response, it is important to set aside time at regular intervals for learning events. A learning event refers to an opportunity taken by the entire response team to reflect together on successes and challenges, identify preliminary lessons and make any necessary decisions. Learning events vary in scope and scale from one-day reflection events to light after-action reviews or to more in-depth, real-time or final evaluations. Despite these differences, each learning event should help improve the current response or contribute to future responses through participatory analysis and interpretation with the project team and partners.

Multiple learning events should occur during each emergency response to maximize the contribution of M&E data and participatory analysis to improve the quality of the response. For example, in a given response the emergency team may conduct quarterly reflection events during which staff from various locations gather to share tips and good practice, jointly solve challenges, make decisions about priorities and next steps, and hold a final evaluation upon completion of the response. In another response, the team may organize a real-time evaluation eight weeks after the response begins, a reflection event at project midterm, and an after-action review upon project completion. Each emergency response team should determine the number and scope of learning events appropriate for their response. Below are descriptions of several learning events, with accompanying guidance to assist teams in determining which should be conducted and when. Annex A provides additional guidance on conducting a reflection event.

The learning events described here are in addition to ongoing daily or weekly debrief meetings. Daily or weekly debrief meetings present a similar opportunity to reflect on successes and challenges, but they focus largely on immediate problem solving, planning and communication and are conducted separately by each field team at their location. (For additional guidance, refer to the section on How to Conduct a Debrief Meeting.)

> **Remember to take a "good enough" approach to learning.**
> Work within your limitations related to access to community members, time and other resources available. Focus on whether the response has provided the appropriate assistance to the right people when they most needed it and how management processes have helped or hindered. Keep the focus on improving the response in a way that will have immediate consequences.

Early response   Recovery   Project conclusion

Daily or weekly debrief meeting

Purpose: To document and communicate the day's or week's activities; to review what went well and what did not and why; to decide what are the next actions for the following day or week. Debrief meetings use monitoring data related to indicators and include staff observations. They are required by all projects. Field teams hold debrief meetings on location and communicate results immediately to project management. Daily debrief meetings are appropriate for the early stage of the response with the frequency gradually decreasing to weekly as the situation stabilizes.

Learning events

Reflection event

All field teams and management come together at various times during an emergency response to reflect on results and potential changes in the environment in order to refine or revise the strategy for the overall response.

Reflection events utilize existing monitoring data and staff observations and do not require any additional data collection.

Real-time evaluation

To review the emergency response according to standard evaluation criteria in order to recommend immediate actions to improve the ongoing response.

In addition to a review of monitoring data and staff observations, RTEs require additional qualitative data collection from community members, both those who did and who did not participate in the repsonse, on their overall satisfaction.

Refer to CRS guidance on RTEs for more information.

After-action review

To reflect on the process and impact once an activity or response is completed. The AAR focuses on what actually happened (vs. what was planned), what went well (and why), and how it can be improved in a future response.

An AAR generally utilizes existing monitoring data and staff observations and does not require additional data collection.

AARs *think back* on a completed component or response to identify learning.

Final evaluation

To determine if a project has accomplished what it set out to do (or not) and why. The final evaluation determines the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the response.

To contribute to learning and identification of good practices within CRS and with its partners to apply to future emergencies.

For more information, refer to the section on designing and conducting an evaluation in CRS' *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation*.

GOOD PRACTICE: One or more in each response

Reflection events are particularly important in a transition between phases or when signficiant changes in context occur. It is good practice to include multiple reflection events, of different scopes and scales, in responses longer than 6 months.

REQUIRED: If longer than 6 months and more than $1 million in value

RTEs are often held 6 to 8 weeks after a response begins but the timing is flexible. Similar to reflection events, they are often most useful during the transition between phases of a response or when unexpected program changes occur and can replace reflection events as appropriate.

GOOD PRACTICE: Following the completion of a phase or activity

After-action reviews should be conducted when an activity or phase is completed. They can replace a final evaluation for smaller responses.

GOOD PRACTICE: If more than $1 million in value

It is important to verify first if a final evaluation is required by a donor. If not, final evaluations should be conducted *if* the type of emergency and response are likely to happen again so that lessons learned can be applied.

Annex A: Conducting a Reflection Event

Guiding questions

The questions below can help start the analysis. You can select those that are most useful or add others.

1. What have we achieved thus far? (review activities)
    a. How do our results compare to our plan?
    b. Are we behind on some targets? If so, why and how can we address it?
    c. What is going particularly well? Are some results better than we had expected? If so, what can we learn from it?
    a. Does the level of progress vary for different types of communities or households and for males and females? If so, why? What can we do about it?

2. What does the monitoring data tell us? (review output- and IR-level data)
    a. Does the data suggest we are on the right track to achieving higher-level impact?
    b. Are we not achieving some indicators? If so, why and how can we address it?
    c. Are there differences between types of communities and households or between men and women? What do these differences tell us and how can we address the gaps?

3. How well are we performing? (review community feedback)
    a. What types of feedback or complaints have we received? Are these isolated issues or do we see any trend? Are some types of individuals (e.g., men or women), households, groups or communities more likely to raise these issues than others? Why could this be?
    b. What have we done about the feedback received? Have the issues been resolved? If not, what else should we do about it?

4. What else are we observing or learning on possible changes in the context?
    a. What are the main changes in the situation of those affected by the disaster, compared to when we started the response? What have we learned from the government and other agencies? What have we observed in the field? What are people telling us about their situation, their concerns and their plans?
    b. What does this tell us about people's ability to cope and resume their lives, and about priority unmet needs?

5. Given what we discussed, should we make any changes to the response?
    a. Are there significant new emergency needs that we need to address? Which ones? What will it take to do so?

---

b. Are some of the interventions not needed anymore? How fast should we phase out these activities?
c. If some activities are not achieving desired results, what changes are we proposing to improve our response?

Ask how the M&E system is working

It is also helpful to check in periodically about how well the M&E system is meeting your information needs. Both staff responsible for M&E and those who use the data should be involved. You may simply ask:

1. Do we have all the information we need when we need it to make project decisions, to track results and report to key stakeholders? If not, what can be done about it?
2. Are we currently collecting data that we are not using for decision-making, communication or reporting? Why is this so? What can we remove or simplify so that no data is collected that is not used?

Tool Example: Postdistribution Pile-Ranking Exercise

Why:	To determine the usefulness of nonfood items provided during an emergency response and to collect any suggestions for improving nonfood items provided.	
When:	Conduct this pile-ranking exercise ideally two to three days following distribution of nonfood items.	
Who:	Field staff should use this monitoring tool.	
How:	This pile-ranking exercise requires stones or other small items. Conduct it in a group setting, ideally with men and women separately. Following each distribution, include a total of two to three groups of men and two to three groups of women, each in different locations.	
Use:	Enter the data into a simple spreadsheet and post it visibly in the office for use during daily debrief meetings.	

A1	Location	
A2	Respondent sex	Both Male and Female
A3	Are you neutral, satisfied or dissatisfied with the package you received? (Circle only one.)	Neutral
	Please explain your answer. Why are you Satisfied or Neutral or Dissatisfied? According to community (both male and female) most of the thing they have used and still are using which they think is the basic needs and full filling their requirements but some of the items they are not using due to below mentioned concerns (against each item)	

A4	Pile 1 List items most useful: **Females** Towel Soap ORS Nail Clipper Laundry Soap Plastic sheet **Male** All the material was OK and usable and the good things was that we received the material on time	Pile 2 List items less useful: **Females** Equates Woven mat **Male** Nil	Pile 3 List items not used yet: **Females** Plastic Buckets Jerry Canes Mosquito nets **Male** Nil
A5	Please explain why you identified items in pile 3 as "not used yet."	**Females** Bucket and Jerry cane: The water become hot and smelly in Plastic bucket and jerry canes due to extreme hot weather in the area. Mosquito net: The community is not use too for this item as most of the communities have local mechanism to save themselves from mosquito (using local handmade fan which is running through donkey to fly the mosquito and give them air throughout the night. **Male** No comments	
A6	If you were going to replace any item in the kit received with another item of equivalent value, which item would you remove? Which would you add?	Remove: • Bucket • Jerry cane • Mosquito net Add: • Kitchen utensils • Sleeper/Shoes • Cloth/dress • Increase the # of laundry soap	

Source: Adapted from a 2010 Catholic Relief Services Pakistan flood monitoring tool with mock data provided.

Tool Example: Distribution Monitoring Form with Accountability Questions

Why:	To collect feedback from beneficiaries on the distribution process and the items provided, and to determine the level of accountability in the overall response.
When:	Conduct during each distribution.
Who:	Field staff should use this monitoring form.
How:	Use this form to interview 10 beneficiaries during each distribution. Starting one hour after the distribution begins, interview every tenth person until you have completed 10 interviews.
Use:	Enter the data into simple a spreadsheet and post it visibly in the office for use during daily debrief meetings.

Instructions: Tell the respondent who you are, and that you would like to ask them some questions for their feedback about the distribution process. Try to identify a semiprivate space to talk to avoid crowding during the ongoing distribution. If the respondent does not want to participate, ask the next person who exits. At the end of the interview, thank them for their time.

A. General information		
A1	Date:	
A2	Name of interviewer:	
A3	Distribution Site Name:	
A4	Name of Village:	
A5	Name of UC:	
A6	The person interviewed is:	___ elder Male ___ young Male ___Female

B. Distribution process

B.1   Do you think this is an appropriate location for distribution? Why or why not? (Probe to see if distance from home is appropriate, safety of area, and other information as relevant.)

B.2   Has everyone who needed assistance from the place where you are staying been able to access this location today? (e.g., elders, young boys, or other intended participants). Please explain.

B.3   Was the distribution scheduled at a convenient time? Please explain why or why not.

B.4   When you were called for the distribution, what information were you provided? (Ask open question then probe as needed)
    - the number and types of items you would receive?
    - the day, time, and location to pick up the items?
    - any other information?   (What?)

B.5   Did you need any other information that we didn't tell you when we called you for the distribution?

B.6   How long did you wait today before receiving your items? Do you feel this was an appropriate time?

B.7   How will you carry your materials that you received today? Did you plan for this in advance?

C. Content of distribution

C.1   Did you receive everything you expected today? If no, please explain.

C.2   Have you received any of these materials before? (If yes, what and from whom?)

C.3   From the items you received today, which one do you think will be most useful for you? Why?

C.4   Do you know how to use all the items? If not, which items don't you know how to use?

C.5 Was there anything you need very badly that we didn't provide? If yes, what?

D. Accountability

D1.	Were you aware of the selection criteria? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, did the selection criteria help us reach the right people? If no, is assistance reaching the right people?	Yes No (explain) Explain: _____
D2.	On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not happy at all to 5 being extremely happy, how happy are you with the information we provided to you and the way we involved you in this project?	1 not happy at all 2 partly okay 3 okay 4 happy 5 extremely happy
D3.	What one improvement do you want us to make on informing and involving you in this project?	
D4	On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not happy at all to 5 being extremely happy, how happy are you with how you were treated by CRS staff?	1 not happy at all 2 partly okay 3 okay 4 happy 5 extremely happy
D5	On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not happy at all to 5 being extremely happy, how happy are you with how you were treated by partner staff?	1 not happy at all 2 partly okay 3 okay 4 happy 5 extremely happy

Source: Adapted from a 2010 Catholic Relief Services Pakistan flood monitoring tool.

Tool Example: Field Officer Shelter Monitoring Form

Why:	To check that houses are built according to the technical standards, to obtain feedback from targeted communities and to identify any problems related to the shelter component.
When:	Monthly for each targeted community.
Who:	Field staff should use this monitoring form.
How:	This tool requires observation and interviews with different individuals and groups. Randomly select three completed houses, interview a shelter committee member, cash-for-work laborers, female participants and other beneficiaries.
Use:	Summarize and share the data collected during regular project meetings (e.g., weekly or monthly). Encourage field staff to share other observations and explain action points they suggested while discussing these data.

Date:	Name of supervisor:
Upazila:	Union:
# households registered:	# houses complete:
# landless:	# latrines distributed:

Shelter progress overview *(to be completed in discussion with shelter committee member)*	
1. How many shelters have been completed?	
2. How many landless households have obtained documents?	
3. How many shelters are still under construction?	
4. How many houses are not started construction yet?	___Yes ___No

Comments:

Checklist for shelter(s) *(to be completed by visiting at least three randomly selected complete houses)*

☐☐☐   Is a safe location selected?

☐☐☐   Is the ground clear of debris and level?

☐☐☐   Is the plinth raised at least 1 foot 6 inches above the ground?

☐☐☐   Are pillars sufficiently grounded (at least 2 feet)?

☐☐☐   Have ditches been dug around the house to ensure drainage?

☐☐☐   Is there horizontal bracing between each pillar?

☐☐☐   Is diagonal bracing fixed properly?

☐☐☐   Are the rafters secured with iron bolts?

☐☐☐   Are iron bolts set in concrete?

☐☐☐   Is the fixing of the roof strong enough?

☐☐☐   Is there internal partition?

☐☐☐   Is there sufficient ventilation in the shelter?

If you find that people are **not** following one or more of the guidelines, discuss this with them and the supervisor. The laborers should also know how to build using risk reduction techniques.

Action points:

Qualitative component: enter notes on discussion in space provided.

1. Meet with shelter committee member to discuss their responsibilities, progress of construction, any problems. Ask about households who may be facing more difficulties.

2. Verify first three completed shelters: Are they finished and inhabited? Do they incorporate the risk-reduction aspects? Can respondents identify these aspects?

3. Check respondent perceptions*: Are they satisfied? Do they feel safe and protected

from wind, rain and heat? Are there possessions secure? Were they involved in the construction process? Is the space sufficient? *Interview two to three targeted community members you encounter during the field visit.*
4. Meet with small group of women: Are the shelters sufficiently private? Do they feel safe? (why or why not?)
5. Check cash-for-work laborers: Are they building according to the standards? Do they understand the risk-reduction techniques?

Source: Adapted from the Catholic Relief Services/Caritas Bangladesh Cyclone Sidr response monitoring tool.

Tool Example: Focus Group Discussion Guide to Evaluate Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Response

Why:	To collect qualitative data about the appropriateness of targeting, the effectiveness of the behavior change strategy and the overall impact, both positive and negative, of the WASH component.
When:	Use as part of a final evaluation or to inform a learning event for the WASH component of an emergency response.
Who:	A trained facilitator and notetaker should conduct each focus group discussion.
How:	Hold two to three FGDs with female project participants (or the individuals directly targeted by WASH activities) to represent the overall project area. To compare between geographic areas or types of communities or households, hold two to three FGDs with each relevant comparison group. Each FGD should include 8 to 12 participants.
Use:	Analyze and interpret the qualitative data collected during the FGDs during a learning event or evaluation workshop with partner and CRS staff. The findings will contribute to the identification of good practices or lessons learned and will answer specific evaluation or learning questions.

Instructions: Explain objectives of survey and that any information collected will remain anonymous. Explain that participation in the survey is totally voluntary and will not provide them with any special benefit. The FGD should take 1.5 hours.

1. Are some households in your community more vulnerable to floods than others? If yes, who is more vulnerable and why? Who is more safe and why?

2. What are the main sources of drinking water for your community? What is the quality of the water at these sources? Is it safe? Please describe.

3. Did this situation change as a result of the project? If so, explain what changed.

4. What did you learn from the hygiene sessions? Please state the messages and promoted practices that you recall.

5. Which of these practices do you practice regularly? Why these practices in particular?

6. Have you seen any changes in your household since you started with these practices? Please describe these changes. Why do you think they occurred?

7. Which of these practices don't you practice regularly? Why not?

    Explain: This flood response was a new approach for Caritas and we would like to learn from you.

8. Looking at all that Caritas did in this flood response, what do you think had the greatest effect on your community? Please be specific.

9. Were there any negative outcomes due to this project? Please be specific. Were some people more negatively affected than others? If yes, who? And why?

10. Are there any households that should have received support but did not? If so, why not?

11. Are there any households that should not have received support but did? If so, why?

12. What would you recommend that we do differently next time there is a flood? Please be specific

Source: Catholic Relief Services/Caritas Bangladesh Taras Final Evaluation.