

7. Link Evaluation Procedures

- 7.1 Evaluation has always been an essential procedure in the management and planning of donor assistance. It is more critical today as aid agencies find their budgets not being increased in line with inflation and governments demanding more accountability.

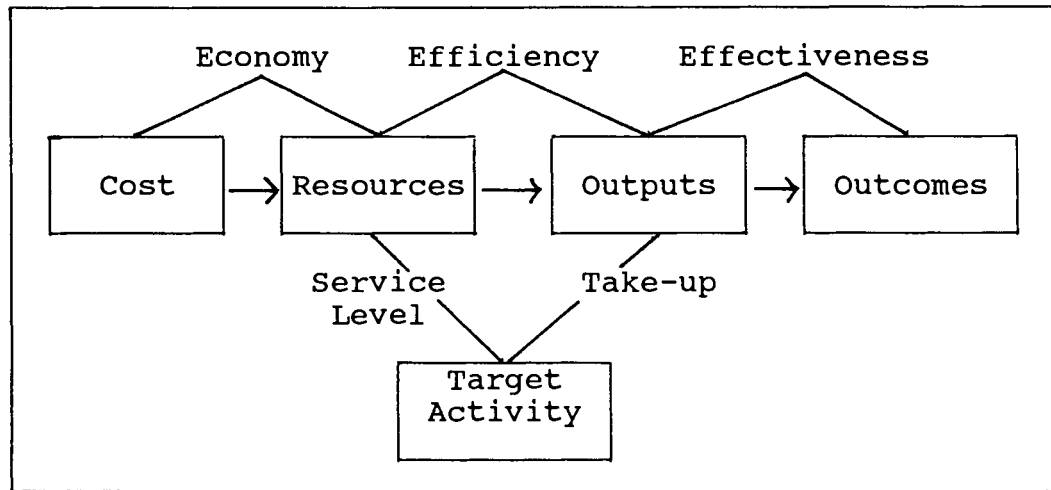
It is often hard to measure the performance of link arrangements, especially in terms of quality and effectiveness, but it is wrong to overstate the difficulties. There is need to be clear from the outset what the link was intended to achieve, and what distinguishes a good link from a poor one [see Section 5]. Quality and effectiveness can be monitored in various ways, for example by tracing those who participated in link training arrangements. What positions do they hold five or ten years later? Have they trained other staff or produced training manuals?

The key step is to decide what are the important indicators that really need to be monitored and to eliminate unnecessary data collection. Second, link directors must assign clear responsibilities: who is responsible for each activity; who will monitor performance; what must be reported on a regular or an exceptional basis. Third, indications of performance should always be accompanied by a yardstick that indicates whether results are good or bad. Finally, there is need for clear and simple reporting.

There must be a commitment by both link partners to the evaluation process. Performance has to be evaluated objectively and there must be freedom to admit when things could be improved and the corrective action needed.

7.2 Measuring Performance

Fig. 1: Measuring Performance at Four Levels



Most activities of links can be measured in four dimensions:

- i) The Cost.
- ii) The Resources Provided.
- iii) The Outputs.
- iv) The Outcomes.

Performance indicators can be developed based on the ratios between them, in particular:

- Economy measures - the cost of acquiring resources such as staff, premises or computers.
- Efficiency measures - the cost of a training course in U.K. compared with one in Tanzania, or the drop out rate in U.K. as compared with a course in Tanzania.
- Effectiveness measures - the final outcome - e.g. the number of course alumni that have been promoted since training, number of training courses run by alumni, publications produced by alumni.

The most obvious difficulty in link arrangements is how to measure the outcome or effectiveness of the link.

Fig. 2 Measuring Performance in a Link Training Scheme

Quantifiable		Not Readily Quantifiable
Resources ↓	Costs of Staff Premises Equipment	
Services Provided ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Lecturers o Support staff o Curriculum o No. of students o No. of classes or courses o Research facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Mastery of new experimental techniques o Quality of teaching o Content & adequacy of curriculum o Facilities o Extra-curricular activities
Output ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Alumni o Journal articles/books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Special needs e.g. language o Background factors, e.g. cultural problem of communication with supervisors. o Commercial contacts for DC
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Attendance rates o Exam results o Placing of alumni on leaving o Placing of alumni after 5/10 years o Training course material o Promotion of further LDC student placement in DC institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Promotion on return o Management changes instituted by alumni o Books, articles etc. produced by alumni o Non-work achievements o Commercial development beneficial to both LDC/DC

Identifying Key Performance Indications

Deciding which performance indicators should be regularly monitored in a link is a matter of judgement and depends to some extent on the donor, the institutions involved, the time period and the circumstances in the LDC.

- Some issues may be critical to one donor, not to another, e.g. participation by women in link training schemes.
- Some LDCs may attach more importance to particular issues e.g. decentralisation of health services and their administration.
- Some indicators, e.g. drop out rate of trainees may be an important local management issue but may be such a small percentage as not to warrant inclusion in a regular reporting procedure.
- some indicators may be worth monitoring at less frequent intervals than others, e.g. publications, journal articles may be reviewed at perhaps 2 year intervals, while others may be reviewed more frequently e.g. number of training courses, number of students attending.

In choosing the critical indicators it is often useful to make a distinction between operational performance that needs to be monitored at regular intervals and underlying performance (for example quality and effectiveness) that may be just as critical but which it is not sensible to debate every month, even if information were available.

Setting Targets or Yardsticks

There is little point in reporting performance indicators without some kind of target or yardstick that indicates whether the figures are good or bad. There are two possible approaches: setting targets, or using comparisons such as last year's figures or averages from other linkages. As links tend to be "one-off" activities the course is usually to set realistic targets related to the unique link activities.

7.3 Producing Reports

A required stage in the link process is the design and production of the required report. The questions that need to be asked are:

- i) Who is the report for, and for what area are the persons responsible?
- ii) What decisions do they have to take or genuinely need to monitor, in the sense that they might intervene if the result were unsatisfactory?
- iii) How frequently do these decisions need to be taken?

The report should then contain the minimum information needed to satisfy these requirements. The exclusion of less critical items from regular reports does not mean that they are not monitored or reported. Any exceptional item could be included on an open page which would be specially reserved for any unprecedented or unusual event.

The most important aspects are economy and brevity. Brevity means eliminating statistics that are of marginal value and devising the most economical means to display indicators that need to be included. Other obvious points are:

- the avoidance of over-crowding on the page.
- the use of clear headings.
- the employment of graphs to illustrate trends and variations.
- the highlighting of key figures.
- the inclusion of text commentary alongside relevant figures for readers who dislike statistics or graphs.