FACT SHEET

MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN SPONSORSHIP AND COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS FOR REFUGEES AND OTHER PEOPLE IN NEED OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

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SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- By providing a systematic approach to tracking a programme's progress, gathering lessons, and fostering peer learning, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can strengthen sponsorship and complementary pathways programmes in several ways. Chief among these, M&E can contribute to refining a programme's design, improving its cost-effectiveness, supporting evidence-based decision-making, and creating a more positive experience for both beneficiaries (whether refugees or other people in need of international protection) and the volunteers or sponsors that support them, whether they be private individuals, universities, or companies.

- The most well-thought-out M&E processes are those that are built into the fabric of a programme's design. Embedding M&E into a programme in this way should involve reflection on the programme's goals at its outset, agreement on specific indicators to track these goals and the data needed to do this, and shared understanding of which stakeholders will be involved in these efforts and their roles.

- Incorporating M&E into programme budgets is key for ensuring that these efforts have the resources and sustained commitment they need to be effective and to go beyond one-off evaluations. At the same time, identifying existing tools, frameworks, and datasets can help a programme avoid unnecessary duplication of work and make the best use of resources.

- Effective multistakeholder coordination is vital at various stages of the M&E process. Developing a theory of change (that is, predictions about how the resources invested and activities designed will lead to the desired results) can help foster a shared understanding of goals and optimize M&E planning. Coordinating input from diverse stakeholders during data collection and analysis can help integrate different perspectives. And close communication among M&E leads, programme coordinators, and decisionmakers is crucial to ensure recommendations are implemented rather than remaining on evaluators' desks.

- Greater engagement of beneficiaries and volunteers or sponsors in M&E is important. Their feedback can help ensure that M&E efforts are asking the right questions, measuring outcomes in a meaningful way, and enhancing programme design. Careful consideration should be paid to how engagement happens to ensure it is accessible and meaningful (for example, in regard to the time commitment and measures to overcome language barriers).

WHAT IS MONITORING AND EVALUATION, AND HOW CAN IT HELP SPONSORSHIP AND COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS PROGRAMMES?

While monitoring and evaluation often overlap in practice, these are two distinct activities:[1]

- *Monitoring* is the ongoing process of tracking project activities' progress as compared to pre-established targets.

- *Evaluation* is the process of assessing the overall results of the project to determine its relevance, impact, efficiency, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness.

When implemented in a well-thought-out and timely manner, M&E can help increase the effectiveness and sustainability of a programme and garner buy-in from policymakers and funders.[2] A formal M&E framework can facilitate the systematic tracking of a programme's progress towards its objectives and compile lessons to support peer learning (within and across programmes, domestically and internationally). Better understanding of the

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1   Jasmijn Slootjes and Maria Belen Zanzuchi, *Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Migrant Integration* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2023); Hanne Beirens and Aliyyah Ahad, *Measuring Up? Using Monitoring and Evaluation to Make Good on the Promise of Refugee Sponsorship* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2023).
2   Slootjes and Zanzuchi, *Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking*.

conditions under which a programme is most effective and why, who it does and does not effectively serve, and what practices are most (and least) promising can help the programme improve its processes, boost costs-effectiveness, and support evidence-informed decision-making in the future.

In the context of sponsorship programmes and complementary pathways for refugees and other people in need of international protection, M&E can help answer questions such as:[3]

- Is the programme working as intended? Are the goals being met?
- What is the programme's overall impact on beneficiaries and/or host communities (for example, in terms of integration outcomes or public attitudes)?
- Is the impact different for different groups of beneficiaries or segments of society? If so, why?
- How do these outcomes compare to those of other programmes with similar goals? Is the programme cost-effective, compared to other interventions?
- How could the programme's design or implementation be improved?
- Do the programme's benefits outweigh implementation costs?
- Are the programme's resources sufficient, and are they being used effectively?
- What resources may be needed to scale a programme or introduce it in a different context?

M&E offers additional benefits in programmes such as community sponsorship and complementary pathways that involve a range of stakeholders, including some new to supporting beneficiaries' settlement and integration. Systematically tracking a programme's performance can enhance accountability and oversight of nontraditional actors (to ensure they are delivering on their responsibilities) and help respond to external scrutiny of how resources are being used (for example, from funders or government authorities).[4] When M&E is effective and its recommendations lead to programme improvements, this can have real value for beneficiaries (by raising the quality of support provided during the programme and as they transition to self-sufficiency), volunteers and sponsors (by ensuring they receive sufficient guidance and have a positive experience), and entire communities (by strengthening social cohesion).

WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE PART OF AN M&E STRATEGY?

A carefully planned M&E strategy is one embedded within a programme's design and that contributes to continuous learning.[5] Five essential steps include:

1. Establish clear programme goals and their anticipated impacts

Whether a programme aims to create more opportunities for refugee protection, address reception challenges, improve integration outcomes, enhance stakeholder coordination, raise local awareness, or a combination of these goals, the programme's designers should articulate their general objectives early on. This involves outlining planned activities and identifying specific goals (for instance, the number of beneficiaries welcomed under a programme; their housing, language learning, or employment outcomes; or changes in local attitudes on refugee-related issues).

2. Clearly define the aims of M&E efforts and how they align with programme objectives and resources

M&E can serve different purposes and, therefore, be implemented in different ways and at different points in the lifespan of programme. For instance, a pilot initiative may seek to understand its impact and identify any issues that should

3   Beirens and Ahad, *Measuring Up?*
4   This is particularly relevant because the support offered by nontraditional stakeholders through these programmes is not subject to government oversight. See Beirens and Ahad, *Measuring Up?*
5   Beirens and Ahad, *Measuring Up?*; Aliyyah Ahad, Camille Le Coz, and Hanne Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement: A Monitoring and Evaluation Road Map* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2020).

be addressed before it becomes a permanent programme, while other programmes may seek to measure their cost-effectiveness. Identifying such M&E goals can support the development of guiding questions, facilitate conversations about what capacity and resources are needed to realistically answer those questions, and plan next steps.

3. Develop short- and long-term indicators and determine what information is needed to track them

This may include process and/or impact indicators (measurements) to capture the programme's performance and progress towards objectives, to assess current processes, or to measure impact on integration, depending on the type of evaluation. The types and number of indicators selected will depend to some extent on the resources available to the monitoring team.

4. Determine which data collection and analysis tools and methods best suit the nature and goals of the evaluation

Before this decision can be made, it is important to understand what data already exist and can be used (such as on government websites) and what new data need to be collected (and how and from whom).[6] Other key considerations include how often data should be collected (monthly, quarterly, biannual, etc.), what methods and tools will yield the desired information, and what other factors may affect data collection (for example, participants' language and time to engage, evaluation resources, political or socioeconomic context).[7]

Data collection for programme evaluations can take a mixed methods approach, leveraging both qualitative and quantitative data.[8] Qualitative data collection typically involves interviews, testimonials, and/or focus groups with a programme's beneficiaries, sponsors and volunteers, and/or key experts, and sometimes also the review of administrative documents from the programme and other sources. To gather quantitative information, many M&E efforts use surveys and/or analyse data from existing databases.

5. Map and clarify the roles of key stakeholders in the M&E process

This requires clearly delineating which stakeholders should be involved in which M&E activities. This may include: sharing existing data, collecting new data, assisting with data analysis, providing feedback on the programme and recommendations on how to improve it, supporting dissemination of M&E findings and results, and ensuring that recommendations are implemented.[9]

GOOD PRACTICES

In the field of sponsorship and complementary pathways, which is itself relatively young and rapidly evolving, M&E efforts have been somewhat limited. Still, M&E efforts to date offer valuable lessons and best practices. These include:

Prioritise M&E in budget planning to secure commitment

M&E efforts are not always included or prioritised in programmes' budgets and built into programmes' design. This situation has often led to one-off or piecemeal M&E initiatives being implemented at a later stage in a programme, rather than from its outset. It has also resulted in programme stakeholders viewing M&E activities as disconnected from or an afterthought to the programme's core operational activities (such as finding housing for beneficiaries, providing integration support, recruiting sponsors). This, in turn, can limit engagement both with the M&E process and its outcomes. Dedicated funds would help programmes take a more structured, systematic approach to M&E, including by covering necessary staff time and resources and helping to create an evidence base and culture for these programmes.

6   Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, *Community Sponsorship Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit Workbook* (N.p.: Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative and Centre for Community Based Research, 2022); Ahad, Le Coz, and Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement.*
7   For more information on how to mitigate the impacts of external factors, see Slootjes with Zanzuchi, *Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking*; Ahad, Le Coz, and Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement.*
8   Ahad, Le Coz, and Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement.*
9   Ahad, Le Coz, and Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement.*

Invest in developing a theory of change

Most programmes have goals of one kind or another. However, not all take the next step by creating a theory of change that outlines how a programme's resources, activities, and the stakeholders involved will lead to the desired impact. Such predictions about the causal relationship between a programme's elements can be a particularly useful tool when seeking to build M&E into a programme's design in a more structured way.[10]

Identify and utilise existing data and M&E tools, where possible

Before collecting data of their own, programme stakeholders should seek to identify existing data that can support their M&E efforts, and thus help them avoid duplication of work and make the most effective use of resources. For example, administrative data collected by other actors (ranging from government ministries to health-care providers to public employment agencies) may include information on services offered to beneficiaries, their socioeconomic and demographic profile, their medical and psychosocial well-being, and language or vocational classes completed.[11] Similarly, civil-society organisations that coordinate the work of volunteers in sponsorship schemes or of universities, employers, and volunteers in education and labour complementary pathways may have data on the characteristics of programme beneficiaries and the motivations of the nontraditional actors involved in these programme.[12]

Similarly, there are some established tools for conducting M&E related to, for example, integration processes and outcomes for resettled refugees, asylees, and immigrants arriving through diverse pathways that could serve as a starting point as sponsorship and complementary pathways programmes develop their own indicator frameworks. One example is the UK Home Office's *Indicators of Integration Framework*.[13]

Take a participatory approach to M&E by involving beneficiaries and sponsors

A participatory approach to M&E entails involving stakeholders who play a part in or are affected by a programme in the design of M&E frameworks and conceptualisation and assessment of impact. In the context of sponsorship and complementary pathways programmes, beneficiaries and sponsors (whether volunteers, universities, or employers) are two notable stakeholder groups. Involving them in M&E efforts can help ensure evaluations learn from their first-hand experience with a programme, ask the right questions, measure outcomes in a way that is meaningful, and use the insights gathered to refine programme operations.[14] Yet to date, these groups are not always or not systematically involved in M&E.

Several practical challenges must be addressed to reap the potential benefits of this approach. For example, sponsors and refugee beneficiaries may be busy with practical settlement tasks, meaning some may not have the time or capacity to participate in M&E, even as interviewees. In addition, recently arrived beneficiaries often do not speak the language of the receiving society well enough to engage in standard M&E activities. Any attempt to include sponsors and beneficiaries in programme M&E would, therefore, need to be realistic in terms of what level of engagement can be expected from these stakeholders and what steps would need to be taken to facilitate their meaningful participation, such as working with intercultural mediators or interpreters.

Streamline coordination of M&E efforts

In a context where many actors are involved in collecting data from diverse sources, and all of this needs to be fed into the M&E process and results, establishing a centralised coordinator for M&E activities is crucial. For one-time evaluations carried out by external researchers, this coordinating function is often fulfilled by that external contractor.[15] However, internal evaluations and those that are part of a long-term M&E system may benefit from the assignment of an in-house coordinator (often, a programme division or unit) that will oversee M&E activities and ensure they are properly executed.[16]

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10   See, for example, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, *Logic Model Development Guide* (Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004); Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, *Community Sponsorship Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit Workbook*.

11   Beirens and Ahad, *Measuring Up?*

12   Beirens and Ahad, *Measuring Up?*

13   UK Home Office, *Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework 2019* (London: UK Home Office, 2019). See also Hanne Beirens and Susan Fratzke, *Taking Stock of Refugee Resettlement: Policy Objectives, Practical Tradeoffs, and the Evidence Base* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2017); Ahad, Le Coz, and Beirens, *Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement*.

14   SHARE Network, *Workshop on Monitoring of Community Sponsorship* (Brussels: SHARE Network, 2021).

15   This is exemplified by the University of Birmingham in the evaluation of the UK sponsorship programme and by the Montbretia consultancy's evaluation of the Irish sponsorship pilot. See Beirens and Ahad, *Measuring Up?*

16   Examples include the Evaluation Division within Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada and the evaluation unit within the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). See Beirens and Ahad, *Measuring Up?*

Allocate resources to the dissemination of evaluation results

The effectiveness of an M&E system extends beyond the collection and analysis of data and the development of recommendations. To be impactful, proper communication between M&E partners, programme implementers, and policymakers is needed to ensure findings and recommendations reach their intended audience and are able to influence future decisions.[17] Disseminating M&E results is also key for building an evidence base and facilitating peer learning across programmes in this field, both domestically and internationally.[18] In order to make evidence accessible and useful to this broader range of stakeholders, M&E findings should be shared and communicated in different formats (such as annual reports, internal briefs, infographics) that speak to stakeholders' varied ambitions and interests (for example, improving certain procedures or designing new trainings).[19]

RESOURCES

- Ahad, Aliyyah, Camille Le Coz, and Hanne Beirens, _Using Evidence to Improve Refugee Resettlement: A Monitoring and Evaluation Road Map_ (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2020).

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- Slootjes, Jasmijn and María Belén Zanzuchi, _Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Migrant Integration_ (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2023).

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17   Slootjes and Zanzuchi, _Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking_.
18   Beirens and Ahad, _Measuring Up?_
19   Beirens and Ahad, _Measuring Up?_