# A Guide to Design Good and Smart Indicators for the Response

This section is a list of considerations for Information managers and sector coordinators when designing indicators for the sector logframe – applies to all indicators (Activity, Output, and Outcome level):

Definition and clarity of the indicator

* **Well-designed indicators are self-explanatory and can only be interpreted in one way**.

A way to test this is to try to interpret the indicator in different ways. If you can, it is not a good indicator.

*Example: # counselling sessions.*

*Some might count persons attending a session, or the number of sessions; some might only count one type of counselling session (only birth registration). A better way is to clearly indicate what we are measuring:*

*# Of persons attending counselling sessions (birth registration and civil registration only)*

* **Unit should be well defined in the indicator.**

*Ex: are we measuring households, persons, liters, Schools? A good practice is to include the unit of measurement in the indicator itself. Instead of # of cash beneficiaries, use # of households receiving cash.*

* **Each indicator must have a guideline on harmonized way of reporting**.

*Example*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Indicator* | *# of monitoring activities conducted.* |
| *Guideline* | *This includes:*   1. *Post distribution monitoring visits: visits to households receiving multi-purpose cash to monitor changes in vulnerabilities* 2. *Visits to monitor the accuracy of household profiling data collected:*   *ex: Partner X is Funded by Donor Y - Y is expected to conduct a small number of random visits to check the performance & accuracy of data collected by X* |

Does the indicator have a baseline?

Having a baseline is particularly important for outcome level Indicators when we are trying to measure change. Without a baseline, it is difficult to measure that change.

Example: *% of children out of formal education*

If the outcome objective is to *increase access to formal education*, it is important to have a baseline of how many children are out of formal education at the start of the activities.

Is there a defined reporting frequency?

How frequently do we need an update on a particular indicator and why? IM and sector coordinators need to ask this question when deciding if to collect updates weekly, monthly, quarterly etc. This has to be clear and communicated to partners as soon as possible.

Take into consideration the following when deciding on the frequency:

* Trends: is this indicator being used to monitor a particular trend?
* Relation to other indicators: Is this indicator related to other indicator(s) and the frequency should be the same?

*For example: For Activity “Water Trucking in Camp A”. Do we want to track “Volume of water trucked to camp A” at the same frequency as “# persons benefiting from water trucking in Camp A”? Maybe yes, maybe not; It is something to consider.*

* High visibility Activity Indicator: some donors might want frequent updates on a particular activity. How important and costly it is to report that frequently for donors? It is the role of coordinators and IM to flag the high costs to donors and UN agencies.
* Is it possible or relevant? If updates are coming from a yearly assessment, how relevant is it to ask for a monthly frequency? (particularly for outcome indicators)

For Activity and Output indicators, the frequency of reporting has an impact on the number of data entries required from partners.

Is there a target for this indicator?

Target is the value that an indicator should reach by a specific date in the future. For example, “total literacy rate to reach 85 percent among groups X and Y by the year 2019.” Indicator targets are essential to monitor progress of activities throughout implementation.

Is the user and use of this indicator (can it inform on the issues related to coordination or programmatic)?

Who are the users of the data collected for this indicator and what it is the use of having data on this indicator:

* + Is it for identifying gaps, monitoring distribution or reporting to donors (or all)?
  + Is there a dependency on another indicator in order to measure gaps (if that’s the purpose)? And do we have data on that other indicator.

*Example 1: if the purpose of tracking “Volume of water distributed in Camp A” by partners X is to ensure that all population in the camp have access to water … and partner X is not in charge of counting population in that camp, and no one is, what is the point of tracking that indicator monthly?*

*Example 2: same as example 1 but the camp population is known, however, majority of refugees in that camp are accessing water from nearby wells, or a water network. An assessment of water access could help answering the questions on access to water without the need to track the volume of water trucked.*

* + Is there enough capacity to analyze the data collected for this indicator, with the frequency and geographical disaggregation required?

How will partners collect data for this indicator?

When choosing indicators, it is essential that information managers and sector/cluster coordinators evaluate how partners will collect the primary data to report on the indicator and the effort needed.

Sector data system (Activity Info) requires aggregated indicator data, for example “# schools kits distributed”; however, for partners to report aggregated data, they need a more detailed assistance tracking system for example:

* If “# of school kits distributed” is required by the sector/cluster monthly at a national level, a partner could report on this indicator by counting the kits leaving their warehouses.
* If the indicator is required by school, they would count the kits leaving their warehouses but also collect the destination school.
* If the indicator is required with a gender breakdown, the whole system has to change! a distribution tracking tool at classroom level is needed. Or a requirement for schools to report back on the distribution.

In addition to the above, sectors need to take into consideration reporting requirements from previous years and **assess if the change is as important as the impact**. Going back to the same example above, if in 2017 the requirement was to report on “school kits distributed” nationally, adding a gender disaggregation means changing the whole data collection systems for partners – from being able to report using warehouse tracking .. to the need to do a school distribution reporting system.

**What is the importance of the indicator versus the burden of obtaining the data?**

**When designing an indicator, the below points need to be considered as well:**

* How will the information be collected (eg. Activity Info, RAIS, 4W, Assessment, Survey)?
* What is the required geographical level of reporting for this indicator and why?
* What is the disaggregated data used for?
* What is the importance of the indicator versus the burden of obtaining the data?
* Does it include more than one component? (if yes, potential confusion)
* How will the information from this indicator be published?
* What is the timeframe for this activity, e.g. duration of the project?

**In addition please consider:**

* Is this indicator reported to other sectors? If yes, coordinate with the particular sector and decide on having the indicator in either one of databases
* Is there capacity to analyze all of the indicators?