

Notes to 'An Overview of CLP-2's M&E System' Presentation

Slide 1 – An Overview of CLP-2's M&E System

This presentation focuses on CLP-2's M&E system. Results are not presented but some headline results are covered during the subsequent Graduation and Women's Empowerment presentations.

CLP-1 had a good M&E system. It therefore made sense to 'take across' the core elements of that system into CLP-2. There have however been notable modifications to the system since the end of CLP-1/ start of CLP-2 e.g. introduction of thematic areas, communications, development of graduation criteria, annual follow-up (sustainability) surveys etc.

The presentation starts by explaining what the M&E system looked like at the end of CLP-1/ start of CLP-2. It explains what changed over time and the reasons for this.

Slide 2 – What was our baseline (organogram)?

At the start of CLP-1, the Innovation, Monitoring,&Learning Division (IML) was one of three Directorates. The other two were Operations and Finance & Administration.

At the start of CLP-1, IML comprised the following staff:

- **IML Director:** one of three Directors with a direct reporting line to the Team Leader. This has been an international position.
- **M&E Unit Manager:** responsible for the day-to-day running of the Unit, managing surveys, managing a verification contractor and data analysis.
- **Database Officer/ Coordinator:** responsible for database management and supporting the Unit Manager with analysis and survey management.
- **Young Professionals (YPs):** normally recruited for one year with the possibility of a one-year extension. At any given point, there were normally two YPs. These were internationals with some international development experience and educated to Masters' level. Their role was normally to support communications activities and conduct research.
- **Data Entry & Monitoring Officers (DEMOS):** One DEMO was located in each of the implementing organisations (IMOs), and were responsible for (some) data collection and data entry.

Slide 3 – What was our baseline (IML's role)?

At the end of CLP-1, IML was essentially responsible for the following areas of work:

- Activity/ output monitoring
- Quality/ leakage control
- Research

- Outcome monitoring

These four pillars were taken over into CLP-2 and formed the basis of CLP-2's M&E system. The four pillars are explained in the following slides.

Slide 4 – What was our baseline (Activity/ Output Monitoring & Quality/ Leakage Control)?

The first two pillars were 1) activity/ output monitoring, and 2) quality/ leakage control. These were related work streams.

Activity/ Output Monitoring

At the end of CLP-1/ start of CLP-2, two reports were generated and disseminated on the 10th of each month; one for Government of Bangladesh (GoB), the other for CLP staff and donors. The two monthly progress reports (MPRs) reported on the same indicators but differed slightly in terms of the period they covered i.e. headings.

The reports presented progress against around 30 key activities/ outputs. The information was generated by the IMOs. They sent their information to their respective District staff who consolidated the information and sent it by email to the relevant Unit Manager who then checked it and passed it on to IML.

The advantage of the MPR was that it allowed senior management to assess progress against milestones and targets at any point in time (the oldest report being less than one month old). The disadvantage of the system was this it was self-reported. Whilst District and HQ staff made frequent field visits, IMO staff could still potentially over-report achievements for the month.

Quality/ leakage control

Because progress information was self-reported by the IMOs and because of the size and scale of CLP (and therefore the high risk of leakage) IML contracted a verification contractor. Their job was to recruit enumerators whose job was to verify the quality, quantity and be on the lookout for leakage. They did this each and every month on a random sample of activities/ outputs and did not notify anyone (apart from IML) they would be coming. These spot checks acted as a deterrent to leakage and over-reporting. The service was however time consuming (in terms of management time) and came at a price in terms of budget (approximately £50,000 per annum).

Slide 5 - What was our baseline (Research)?

At the end of CLP-1/ start CLP-2, IML was responsible for conducting quality research. Drivers of the research agenda included annual review teams, the Operations Division, the demands of the logframe etc. Whilst highly informative, the research tended to be relatively quantitative in nature i.e. questionnaire based surveys.

Slide 6 - What was our baseline (Outcome Monitoring)?

The slide shows the four cohorts (groups) of core participant households, and their sequencing, that were supported during CLP-1.

CLP-1's approach to outcome monitoring provided the framework for CLP-2 outcome monitoring. At the end of CLP-1/ start of CLP-2, there was a relatively heavy focus on monitoring nutrition and livelihood-related indicators including income, expenditure, cash savings and assets.

Data was collected by Community Development Organisers (CDOs), who were technically Operations' staff, on a census basis at baseline. During CLP-1 and the first cohort of CLP-2, outcome data (largely related to income, expenditure, cash savings and assets) was also collected from a sample of households each month throughout the 18-month period of support. One of the advantages of this method was that collecting information on a monthly basis has the potential to be a powerful way of presenting seasonal effects on indicators such as income, expenditure and food security.

To some extent, the framework for the rolling baseline/ pipeline control was in place. A rolling baseline/ pipeline control is a method that uses the baseline status of the incoming cohort as the control group for previous cohorts. For it to work effectively, the rolling baseline requires information to be collected from previous cohorts at the same time as baseline data is collected from the incoming cohort.

Slide 7 - What was our baseline (Rolling baseline)?

At the end of CLP-1, the framework was in place for the rolling baseline. This approach was carried over into CLP-2 because there was support for it from the donors and the Programme team. The approach also had external support, as a recent (at the time) ODI report described the approach as 'best practice'.

The advantage of the rolling baseline:

- It's relatively straightforward to explain and implement.
- There are no real ethical concerns i.e. not intentionally depriving a household of support so they can act as a control.

To work properly it does however require 1) matching e.g. matching baseline status of 1.1 households with baseline status of 1.4 households (households must be similar), 2) follow up surveys on previous cohorts must be done at the same time baseline data is being collected from the incoming cohort. The workload is therefore high: each year the baseline is effectively changing.

Slide 8 – How did the System Evolve?

The M&E system that was in place at the end of CLP-1 essentially became CLP-2's M&E system. The previous slides set out what that system looked like at the start of CLP-2. During the life of CLP-2 the M&E system has however evolved. The following slides explain what changed and the reasons for this.

Slide 9 – Structural Change

An early task during CLP-2 was to establish a Communications' Unit, the objective of which was to improve communications both internally and with external stakeholders.

The Unit comprised a Communications Unit Manager plus approximately 50% of the two Young Professionals' time and approximately 30% of the Innovations, Monitoring, Learning (and now) Communications (IMLC) Director's time.

The types of product generated by the Unit included briefs, attractive reports, the CLP website and social media. It made sense to structure the Communications Unit alongside the M&E Unit, with both Unit Managers reporting to the IMLC Director. Much of the material communicated was sourced from the M&E Unit.

One of the greatest constraints for the Communications Unit was finding a high quality Unit Manager. Part of the problem for this was the fact the position was based in Bogra. In hindsight it might have been better to allow the Unit Manager to work 50% of their time in Dhaka and 50% in Bogra, thereby increasing the chances of hiring an experienced Unit Manager.

The Unit was good at generating materials and disseminating them widely. More effort could however have gone into identifying the key audiences and understanding what information they required, in what format and when.

Slide 10 – Output Monitoring & QC?

Activity/ Output Monitoring:

This slide links to a screenshot of one page of the latest monthly progress report template which is disseminated to GoB, the donors and Programme staff on the 10th of each month. The document is also published on the [CLP website](#).

The report documents progress against targets (monthly, quarterly, annual and overall programme) for approximately 150 indicators.

The key changes from the original monthly progress report(s):

- At the end of CLP-1/ start of CLP-2, there were two monthly progress reports (see slide 4). These were latterly combined into one single report which was sent to GoB, the donors and CLP programme staff alike.
- The new modified (single) MPR documented progress against monthly, quarterly, annual and CLP-2 targets.

- The new modified (single) MPR contains many more indicators (a five-fold increase from around 30 to around 150). This was largely at the request of Operations.

A single MPR made life easier: all stakeholders received the same format.

Headings showing progress against monthly, quarterly, annual and CLP-2 targets made the format easier to interpret (than the format in place at the start of CLP-2 i.e. Slide 18.)

Increasing the number of indicators (from around 30 to around 150) increased the workload and sometime compromised quality but CLP was to track progress against multiple indicators.

Quality Control

Slide 4 mentioned one of the systems managed by IMLC to promote quality control and reduce leakage: verification. One of the downsides with verification however was that the contractor made spot checks on activities/ outputs that were delivered during the previous month. This was fine, but if widespread leakage or quality issues were going on during that month then they would only be discovered (through the verification process) until after the event.

CLP had some high cost activities such as the cash-for-work and asset transfer projects. There was a heightened risk of leakage during these projects and so it was felt appropriate to introduce an additional layer of verification i.e. in addition to the verification contractor. This additional layer of verification took place during implementation on the cash-for work and asset transfer projects in particular rather than one month later. Another contractor was tasked with making spot-checks on a sample of project sites and asking about quality, quantity and leakage issues.

Slide 11 - Outcome Monitoring

Slide 6 explained how at the end of CLP-1 the framework was in place for the rolling baseline/ pipeline control approach. This is where the baseline status of the incoming cohort acts as control to all previous cohorts. It does however require information to be collected on all previous cohorts at the same time as baseline data is being collected from the incoming cohort.

The rolling baseline approach was adopted in CLP-2 due to support from the Programme team, the donors etc. However, some modifications were made:

- Baseline and follow-up data used for analysis was collected from a panel sample of households (rather than on a census basis, as was the case in CLP-1)
- Data used for analysis was collected by a contractor (rather than from CLP Operational staff, the CDOs, which was the case in CLP-1)
- Systematic follow-up surveys were carried out on all previous cohorts at the same time each new cohort came into the programme.

IMLC attempted to introduce an additional control group. This was a control group for Cohort 2.3 and involved identifying households who were extreme-poor, i.e. they met CLP's selection

criteria, but who would not be supported until Cohort 2.6 for logistical reasons. This additional control encountered problems however:

- There were selection errors: many of the additional control group households were poorly selected and did not fully meet the CLP selection criteria
- Due to communication gaps between IMLC and Operations, some of these control households received support in Cohort 2.5 rather than Cohort 2.6.

The so-called additional control group was not a great success but CLP still had the rolling baseline approach in place.

Slide 12 - Monthly Monitoring

Slide 6 explained how, during CLP-1 and the first cohort of CLP-2, outcome data was collected on a sample of households each month throughout the 18 month period of support. Data was collected by CDOs.

Modifications were made to this approach:

- For value for money considerations, the frequency was reduced from monthly to bi-monthly surveys (still on a sample of households);
- Data collection was outsourced, instead of being collected by CDOs. This provided a greater degree of independence of the data.

Collecting monthly or bi-monthly information has the potential to be a powerful way of presenting seasonal effects on indicators such as income, expenditure and food security.

Because of data analysis constraints, IMLC wasn't able to fully analyse the information. Again, for VfM reasons, we could have considered reducing the frequency of data collection further e.g. to quarterly and possibly even skipping data collection from some of the cohorts.

Slide 13 – Increased Scope

This slide explains how the scope of the M&E system increased significantly over time. At the end of CLP-1/ start of CLP-2 there was a particular focus on monitoring indicators related to nutrition and livelihoods. The livelihoods indicators included income, expenditure, cash savings and assets.

The system increased from two to six themes for a number of reasons which are explained below:

- **Livelihoods:** the indicators collected in this theme did not change significantly during CLP-2.
- **Nutrition:** ditto
- **Graduation:** in March 2011, CLP's first annual review recommended developing a set of graduation criteria. Part of the reason for this was that there was such a heavy focus on monitoring livelihoods indicators. A wider spread of (graduation) indicators could provide a better understanding of extreme poverty and how the Programme was influencing

indicators relating to different dimensions of poverty. The approach to developing graduation criteria and some of the headline results are discussed in the next presentation.

- **Women's Empowerment:** At the start of CLP-2, IMLC had an unsatisfactory approach to measuring its effect on women's empowerment. IMLC therefore developed a survey instrument (comprising 200 questions) which despite providing a wealth of information proved to be resource intensive and still did not allow us to understand whether a woman was empowered. In 2012, IMLC therefore conducted a significant piece of research to understand how the community define women's empowerment. The results of this process was the Chars Empowerment Scorecard. CLP-2's approach to monitoring women's empowerment and some of the headline results are further discussed in a later presentation.
- **Food Security:** At around the same time the Chars Empowerment Scorecard was developed, IMLC also examined its current approach to measuring food security. Despite having a 'purpose' level statement that talked about improving food security, it was felt the indicators used to assess food security could be improved upon. The monitoring system was therefore developed to capture information on the three pillars of food security, namely: availability, access and utilisation.
- **WASH:** The third pillar of food security, essentially relates to WASH indicators. IMLC once again realised that the monitoring of its WASH indicators could be improved upon. New indicators were introduced.

The monitoring system increased in its scope from essentially collecting information on two thematic areas to six thematic areas. The advantage was not only that this provided a wider understanding of the Programme's effect on extreme poverty, it also proved useful in packaging and disseminating information. For example, food security experts are particularly interested in food security related information.

Slide 14 – Lessons Learnt

During the final (approximate) 18 months of CLP, a lot of effort went in to drawing out key lessons on a number of themes which varied from measuring women's empowerment, to developing financial systems and risk management strategies to developing graduation criteria. [A total of 12 briefs were developed which summarised the key lessons.](#) An [overview of the briefs](#) has also been developed.

It might have been useful to develop such briefs throughout the lifetime of the Programme. Sharing workshops could have been held and feedback from stakeholders received. Feedback could have potentially improved performance.

Slide 15 – What Would We Do Differently?

Throughout the presentation, there was reference to what changed, and why. This slide presents additional examples of what we would do differently, with the benefit of hindsight. These include:

- **More resources for analysis:** The M&E Unit Manager was largely responsible for data analysis. The problem was that they were often involved in many other activities and had insufficient time for analysis. The result has been that further data mining has not been possible. A dedicated analyst who reported to the M&E Unit Manager would have been a good solution.
- **Give DEMOs greater independence:** The Data Entry & Monitoring Officers were employed by the IMOs. Their office base was within the IMO. Particularly during the final year, DEMOs were tasked with checking on the quality, quantity of activities implemented by the IMO and their peers. They were also tasked with looking for indication of corruption/ leakage. Because they were checking on the work of their colleagues, the DEMOs were reluctant to report problems up to IMLC/ HQ. Locating the DEMOs in the District offices could have potentially overcome this problem. The DEMOs would have had greater independence.
- **Theory of Change (ToC):** CLP-2 had a good logframe at the start of the Programme. It did not however have a ToC. Such a visual presentation of the linkages between activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts would have been useful and could have helped identify the 'themes' earlier on.

Slide 16 – The Key Lessons?

This slide presents some of the key M&E lessons:

- **Track a range of indicators/ graduation:** As indicated earlier, there was a relatively heavy focus on monitoring livelihood (and nutrition) indicators at the start of CLP-2. Whilst important indicators, they captured a fairly narrow definition of extreme poverty on the chars. Increasing the scope of the M&E system to cover different dimensions of extreme poverty, e.g. by introducing graduation criteria and themes, allowed for a wider understanding of poverty.
- **Develop a set of themes:** Ditto
- **Involve community in setting indicators:** The presentation related to women's empowerment goes into this in detail. The point here is that getting the community involved in helping to understand and define complex and context-specific issues, such as women's empowerment, can lead to a defensible methodology.
- **Outsource Quality Control:** The verification contractor proved to be a useful tool for identifying and reducing the risk of corruption/ leakage. The threat of a team enumerators appearing, unannounced on the char to ask questions about quality, quantity and identify potential leakage acted as a deterrent for many IMO staff.
- **Integrate M&E + Comms:** It was useful to have the two Units, M&E and Communications, sitting side by side with both Unit Managers reporting to the same Director. Much of the information disseminated by CLP came from the M&E system.
- **Develop activity/ output monitoring but don't overdo it:** The monthly progress report changed with time. At the start of CLP-2 it comprised two (similar) reports and around 30 indicators. By the end of the Programme, the MPR tracked 150 indicators in a single report. The number of indicators increased at the request of Operations however, quality was to sometimes compromised because of the large number of indicators.

Slide 17 – Thank you!

More information is available on the [CLP website](#). Information includes:

- [Results](#) that have been generated by the M&E system;
- Questionnaires used in the annual surveys are available [here](#);
- Documents that explain approaches such as our approach to monitoring [food security](#) and [women's empowerment](#).

Slide 18 – Monthly Progress Report (CLP-1)

This slide shows one page of the MPR that was developed during CLP-1 and that was used during the initial months of CLP-2.

Two reports were generated and disseminated on the 10th of each month; one for GoB, the other for CLP staff and donors. The two MPRs reported on the same indicators but differed slightly in terms of the period they covered.

Slide 19 - Monthly Progress Report (CLP-2)

This slide shows one page of the latest MPR template which is disseminated to GoB, the donors and Programme staff on the 10th of each month. The document is also published on the [CLP website](#).

The report documents progress against targets (monthly, quarterly, annual and overall programme) for approximately 150 indicators.