ProPack II

The CRS Project Package

Project Management and Implementation
Guidance for CRS Project and Program Managers

Valerie Stetson, Susan Hahn, David Leege, Debbie Reynolds and Guy Sharrock

www.crs.org

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CRS
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

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Since 1943, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has held the privilege of serving the poor and disadvantaged overseas. Without regard to race, creed or nationality, CRS provides emergency relief in the wake of natural and man-made disasters. Through development projects in fields such as education, peace and justice, agriculture, microfinance, health and HIV & AIDS, CRS works to uphold human dignity and promote better standards of living. CRS also works throughout the United 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 condition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

ProPack II, *Project Management and Implementation Guidance*, was written to respond to field requests for more support on project management. It follows directly from the widespread, successful adoption of ProPack I, *Project Design and Proposal Guidance* throughout the CRS world, and builds on the simple concepts and methodologies introduced in that volume. Together these two manuals provide CRS staff with basic project information and tools from the early design stage through the close of the project.

Good program quality is not possible without management quality. ProPack II includes both program and management information so staff can understand each other's role and work closely together in project implementation. Strong partnerships are another key to good project design and management. As in ProPack I, there is great emphasis on using this manual in work with partners. ProPack II will serve as a reference guide for CRS and partner staff in mutual capacity strengthening efforts, in support of the recently updated agency strategy on partnership.

ProPack II also includes detailed sections on monitoring and evaluation. These sections build on the tools introduced in ProPack I. Good M&E is key to becoming a learning organization, and these ProPack manuals provide some of the basic methods and tools to support CRS and partner staff in promoting monitoring and learning.
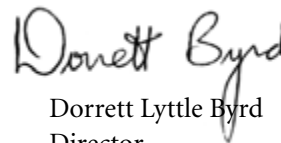
ProPack II includes hyperlinks to key reference documents on the CD ROM. This will facilitate access to further information, agency policies and guidance in one location without having to go online and search for it.

These manuals contain the basics of our project work. All staff should have copies and know what is in them. New staff should get them as part of their orientation. Regional and Country senior managers and advisors are responsible for creating a supportive environment so that project managers can use these manuals in their day-to-day work. With these resources and on-going support from the PQ and MQ staff, we look forward to continued improvements in our stewardship of CRS resources.

With best wishes,

Sean L. Callahan
Executive Vice President
Overseas Operations

Dorrett Lyttle Byrd
Director
Program Quality &
Support Department

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AER	Annual Estimate of Requirements
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
APP	Annual Program Plan
BCR	Budget Comparison Report
BMF	Budget Maintenance Form
BRF	Budget Reconciliation Form
CARO	Central Africa Regional Office (CRS)
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CI	Caritas Internationalis
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
C-SAFE	Consortium for Southern Africa Food Security Emergency
CSR4	Consolidated Results Report and Resource Request
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
DAP	Development Assistance Program
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
DRD/MQ	Deputy Regional Director for Management Quality
DRD/PQ	Deputy Regional Director for Program Quality
EARO	East Africa Regional Office (CRS)
ECHO	The Humanitarian Aid Organization of the European Commission
FARES	Commodity Credit Corporation's Food Aid Request Entry System
EME	Europe and Middle East Regional Office (CRS)
FFA	Food for Assets
FFP	Food for Peace
GDA	Global Development Alliance
GEM	Global Excellence in Management
GPS	Global Positioning System
HIV & AIDS	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus & Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HCS	Hararghe Catholic Secretariat
ICB	Institutional Capacity Building
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IHD	Integral Human Development
I-LIFE	Improving Livelihoods through Increasing Food Security Project (Malawi)
IR	Intermediate Result
IT	Information Technology
KPC	Knowledge, Practice and Coverage
LACRO	Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (CRS)
LINKS	Learning Innovations and Knowledge Systems Microfinance Center
MAGI	Microfinance Alliance for Global Impact
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Management Policy and Information (CRS)
MQAT	Management Quality Assessment Tool
MS	Microsoft
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
MYAP	Multi-year Activity Plan
NDS/P	New Donor Source/Project Form
NGO	Non-governmental Organization

OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
OFDA	U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OSD	Overseas Support Department (CRS)
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PITT	Performance Indicator Tracking Table
PPG	Project Proposal Guidance
PQA	Program Quality Assessment
PQSD	Program Quality Support Department
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTS	Project Tracking System
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
RFA	Request for Applications
RISA/MIT	Regional Information System Analyst/Management Information Technology (CRS)
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RTE	Real-time Evaluation
SARO	Southern Africa Regional Office (CRS)
SASIA	South Asia Regional Office (CRS)
SEAPRO	Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Regional Office (CRS)
SF	Standard Form
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound
SOA	Special Operations Appeal
SO	Strategic Objective
SOW	Scope of Work
SPMR	Sub-Project Monitoring Report
SPP	Strategic Program Plan
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TA	Transfer Authorization
TAP	Transitional Assistance Program
TB	Tuberculosis
ToC	Table of Contents
UFE	Utilization-focused Evaluation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	U.S. Dollar
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USG	U.S. Government
VOIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol
WARO	West Africa Regional Office (CRS)
WFP	United Nations World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

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ProPack II includes seven chapters and a Further Resources section. The manual has been arranged to follow the cycle of an approved and funded project.

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- CRS Performance Management System Guidance
- The Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue
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Related Reading

CD ROM Resources

- CRS Partnership Programming Guidance
- CRS Values-Based Behaviors
- Emergency Telecommunications: A Manual for the
  Management of Emergency Telecommunications
- Gold Star
- Management Quality Assessment Tool
- The Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue
- Program Quality Assessment
- ProPack I
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- M&E Calendar
- Master Performance Indicator Sheet
- Measurement Methods/Data Sources Worksheet
- Monitoring Responsibilities Worksheet
- Performance Indicator Tracking Tables template
- ProPack I
- Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA):
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- Sample Completed Performance Indicator Tracking Table

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CD ROM

- AIDSRelief Point of Service Management Guide
- Budget Maintenance Form (BMF)
- Budget Reconciliation Form (BRF)
- Budget Template
- Capacity Building Guidance: Guidelines and Tools for Getting the Most from your Technical Assistance
- Cash Forecast form
- Consultant Requisition form
- CRS Cost Application Guidance
- CRS/Nigeria Partner Reference Manual
- CRS Performance Management System Guidance
- CRS Policy on Consultants (Independent Contractors)
- CRS Policy on Travel
- CRS Purchasing Manual
- Donor Source Worksheet
- Facilitator's Guide and Manager's Guide to Essential Finance
- Finance Effort Reporting policy
- Finance In-kind Contributions policy
- Frequently Used CRS Account Codes
- Guidelines: Consultants vs. Employees
- Guidelines for the Development of Small-scale Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Projects in East Africa
- How to Complete a Job Description
- MAGI Planning and Assessment User's Guide
- MoU template
- New Donor Source/Project form (NDS/P)
- Overseas Operations Agreement Policy
- The Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue
- Performance Planning and Assessment form
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- Capacity Building Guidance: Guidelines and Tools for Getting the Most from your Technical Assistance
- CRS Cost Application Guidance
- CRS Guidelines for Effective Training
- Detailed Transaction Report
- Field Guide 1.2 Learning Conversations
- Field Trip Report Template
- Financial Projection
- Guidelines for the Preparation and Use of Performance Indicator Tracking Tables (PITT)
- Kenya Budget Status and Advance Request form
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- C-SAFE Scope of Work
- Field Office Records Management Manual Procedures and Guidelines (Revised 2002)
- Human Interest Stories: Guidelines and Tools for Effective Report Writing
- One Hand Can't Clap By Itself
- Preparing for the Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Pre-evaluation Planning
- ProPack I
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO PROPACK II

The *Project Management and Implementation Guidance* is the second volume of *ProPack: the CRS Project Package*. The first volume of ProPack is entitled *Project Design and Proposal Guidance for CRS Project and Program Managers.*[1] ProPack I focuses on the initial stages of the project cycle: concept note creation, project design, and proposal development. ProPack II focuses on projects that have been approved, funded, and are to be implemented, and includes management information relevant to all stages of the project cycle.

This manual is a resource to help Catholic Relief Services (CRS) staff increase the quality and standardization of their project management and implementation. It was **written to support the agency's work with partners and communities and is intended for use in all CRS projects regardless of sector or donor.** Some donors may have specific formats or tools (evaluation guidelines, etc.) that must be used in conjunction with ProPack II.

In Chapter I, you will do the following:
- further examine the purpose and scope of this manual;
- review CRS' key Guiding Principles for project management and implementation; and
- learn how to use and promote the manual.

PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

ProPack II is designed to help CRS staff increase the quality and standardization of their project management and implementation.

What is meant by management and implementation? The underlying idea of **management is a commitment to performance or achievement**. Within project management, performance may refer to the project's impact (positive changes in people's lives) as well as implementation effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. **Implementation refers** more specifically to **translating plans into action**, such as carrying out a detailed implementation plan (DIP).

Old-fashioned definitions of management and implementation categorized managers as "thinkers" and implementers as "doers." This made implementation seem like nothing more difficult than following a recipe when, in fact, moving a design or plan from concept to reality is complex and requires discipline, judgment, and creativity.

Within CRS, most projects are implemented by partners with agency support. CRS staff members who accompany partners in project management are called project managers or, sometimes, program managers or heads of programming. This is because CRS staff often manage a portfolio of linked projects that form a larger program. This program effort contributes to achievement of long-term Strategic Program Plans (SPPs). For the purpose of this manual, CRS program and project managers will all be referred to as project managers with the understanding that actual titles within CRS vary.

CRS project managers are accountable for the performance results of their projects. As such, they accompany partners (in a variety of ways depending on the context) during all stages of the project cycle, including project design, planning, implementation, evaluation, and close-out. Skillful accompaniment of partners requires an essential set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will be described in *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 31-59*. A more detailed discussion of management and implementation is also forthcoming in *Chapter II, Section 1, pp. 14-16*.

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[1] The first volume of ProPack will be referred to as "ProPack I" for ease of reference throughout this manual.

Why Is the Manual Necessary?

CRS places special emphasis on relationships with its unique and worldwide partner network. With such a diverse range of partners, CRS has a broad base of knowledge and skills from which to draw.

At the same time, many areas of project management and implementation present challenges for CRS staff and their partners, and differences in organizational culture may contribute to misunderstandings and strained relationships. CRS staff often have difficulty balancing donor and partner interests and expectations for project performance. In addition, project management is a broad and demanding job: CRS project managers must possess a range of technical, coaching and mentoring skills; must ensure that monitoring and evaluation systems generate valid information that is analyzed and used for project decision-making and improvements; and are responsible for providing programmatic and financial support to their partners.

These challenges are amplified as project environments become more complex. Today, CRS projects are implemented not only within but across countries and regions. Other projects are centrally managed in headquarters. Increasingly, projects involve multi-agency consortia, especially those funded by the U.S. Government (USG). As these projects are highly competitive with very large budgets, consortia arrangements allow CRS and other aid organizations to leverage their respective capacities and achieve wide geographic and sector coverage. The need for strong project management and implementation knowledge, skills and attitudes is even more important under these circumstances.
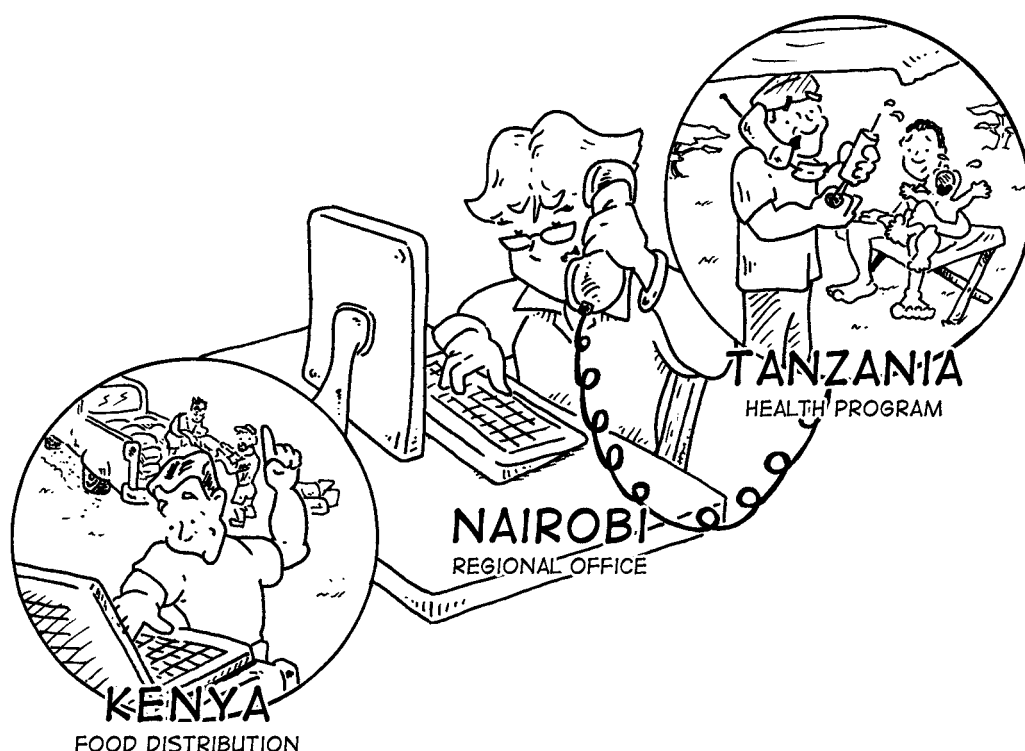
ProPack II provides a resource that builds on agency strengths and addresses challenges in project management and implementation. It consolidates existing CRS-generated materials, and is enriched by references from the large body of literature on its subject matter.

What Is the Scope of the Manual?

While ProPack II focuses on management and implementation, **staff need skills from a wide variety of management disciplines to manage projects and programs.** CRS' identity as a faith-based, non-profit organization emphasizing mutual capacity strengthening and relationships with partners requires a distinct set of management skills. CRS staff hired for project management positions are typically required to have experience and a mix of skills that draw from the following:

- **partner accompaniment,** which includes working with partners on planning, scheduling, monitoring and evaluation within a specific project;
- **general management** for tasks that include planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, monitoring and evaluation but that may go beyond the scope of one specific project;
- **leadership qualities and skills,** such as aligning people and organizations with goals and visions, team-building, performance management, negotiation, decision-making, etc.; and
- **facilitation, coaching, and mentoring** skills such as active listening, communicating, motivating, problem-solving, consensus-building, managing conflict and providing effective feedback.

Table 1.1: The Difference between a Project and a Program

Project	A **project** is a set of planned, interrelated actions that achieve defined objectives within a given budget and a specified period of time.
Program	A **program** is a group of projects managed in a coordinated way that provides benefits or achieves objectives that would not be possible with an individual project.

Figure 1.1: CRS Project Management

ProPack II and the Project Cycle
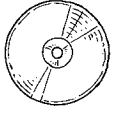
[ProPack I](#) introduced the CRS Project Cycle, but ideas were added as ProPack II was researched and written. An updated CRS Project Cycle is shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2: CRS Project Cycle
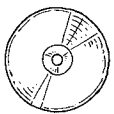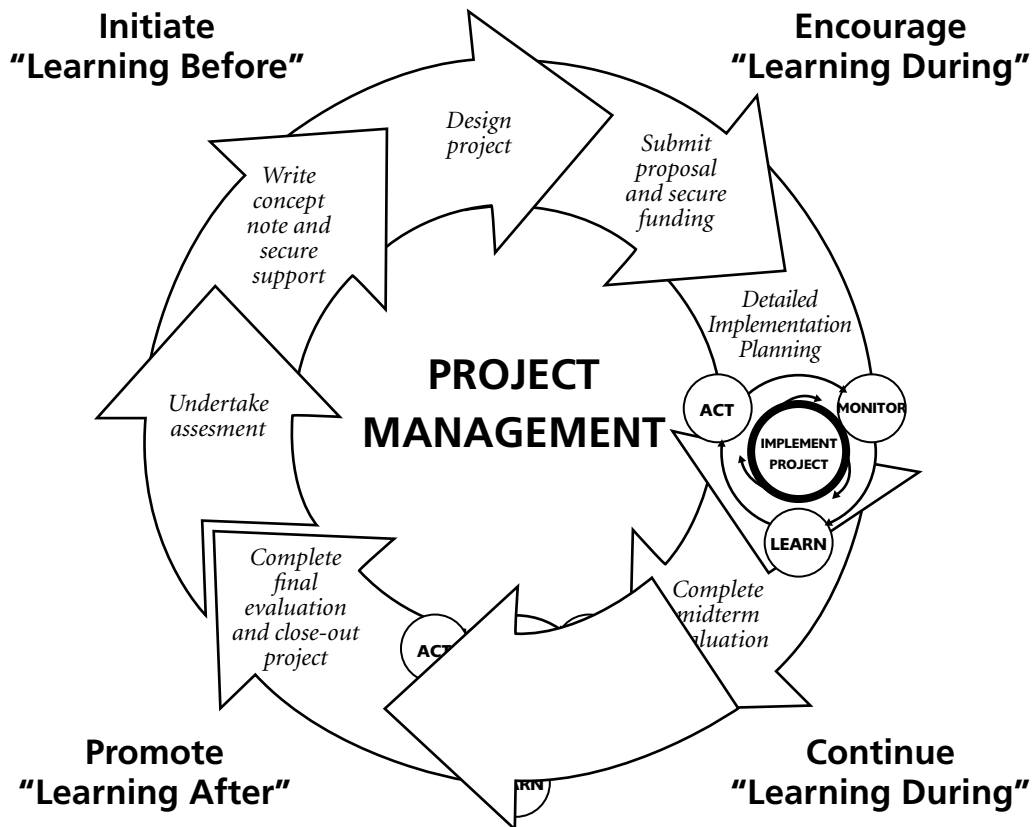
[ProPack I](#) covered the project design and proposal development stages of the project cycle. ProPack II picks up where the first manual left off and provides guidance for the next stages of an approved and funded project. It is composed of seven chapters and a further resources section as follows: *Chapter I,* an introduction to the manual; *Chapter II,* which contains information on project management useful for any stage of the project cycle; *Chapters III–V,* which provide in-depth guidance on detailed implementation planning; *Chapter VI,* which deals with project implementation and monitoring; *Chapter VII,* which walks you through the final stage of evaluating and closing-out your project; and a *Further Resources* section with helpful items like a Section Index, a Reference List, Definitions of Key Terms, and lists of items within the manual (CD ROM resources, checklists, figures and tables).

As portrayed by the CRS Project Cycle, references to organizational learning are woven throughout both [ProPack I](#) and II. In ProPack II, topics, concepts, and ideas are presented in a way that **promotes three cross-cutting themes: (1) organizational learning, (2) deepening of partner relationships and (3) mutual capacity strengthening.**

Reflection Opportunity

1. How does the CRS Project Cycle diagram in Figure 1.2 reflect the reality of how you manage and implement projects?
2. What is the same? What would you change, and why?

What ProPack II is Not

The manual does not include an exhaustive, in-depth set of topics on management. Some CRS staff have attended leadership training workshops that include the full set of these topics. Selected materials from these workshops are included in *Chapter II, Section 3 pp. 31-59.*

While monitoring and evaluation (as they relate to project management and implementation) are addressed, the manual should not be seen as comprehensive guidance in all aspects of this area. For example, ProPack II does not include detailed guidance on baseline survey sampling or other data gathering techniques. Reference Lists of other resources and guidance on these more technical monitoring and evaluation topics are provided in relevant Chapters.
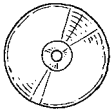
ProPack II does not replace other CRS finance or administrative materials, such as agency policies in the areas of human resources and procurement, or guidelines for specific areas, such as the CRS Performance Management System and Cost Application Guidance. Staff should regularly consult Overseas Support Department (OSD), and Management Policy and Information Unit (MPI) portions of the CRS Intranet for current policy, guidance and examples of best practices.
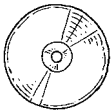
Lastly, ProPack II is not a detailed how-to manual on capacity strengthening. While capacity affects all aspects of the project cycle, the breadth and importance of this topic requires separate guidance. The Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue is an excellent resource for more information; others are listed in relevant Chapters.

ProPack II will direct you to additional information relevant to the subjects at hand through a *Related Reading* section found at the end of most Chapters. Many of these items are hyperlinked to the ProPack II CD ROM (See the *User Guide* section in this chapter on *pp. 9-10* for more information on hyperlinks to the CD ROM) or the CRS Intranet. A complete Reference List is included in the Further Resources section at the end of the manual.

Who Are the Intended Users?

The **primary users of this manual are CRS project managers who work with partners** to manage and implement projects. However, it may also be used by partner project managers who have training, experience, and skill with using similar manuals. Again, to avoid confusion, this manual will refer to generic project managers with the understanding that actual titles within CRS and its partner organizations vary.

Secondary users are CRS staff who provide support to project managers. These include Country Representatives, senior managers, regional and headquarters technical advisors, and finance and administration managers. Other secondary users include staff from international, donor, academic, non-governmental or other organizations who find the manual relevant to their work or teaching.

While the manual is for CRS project managers, it reflects the special value the agency places on its partnerships. CRS' partners have key roles and responsibilities in project implementation. ProPack II supports the agency's project managers to strengthen their relationships with partners in project implementation activities.

PROPACK II AND THE CRS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
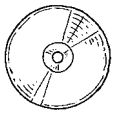
As stated in [ProPack I](#), projects can be seen as the building blocks for CRS' long-term vision, mission, and goals that are described in the Strategic Framework. Projects are guided by the agency's core purpose—the realization of human dignity—and by the special value it places on engaging in relationships that achieve the following:

- alleviate human suffering;
- promote integral human development;
- change structures that undermine justice and peace locally, nationally and internationally; and
- create the realization and expression of solidarity.

CRS project managers must keep one eye on the long-term vision, mission, and goals while managing achievement of shorter-term project objectives. Why is this so important? According to management guru Peter Drucker (1992), achieving an organization's long-term mission requires short-term efforts and, very often, short-term results. At the same time, project managers continually have to ask if their actions are leading them closer to or further away from long-term goals. One of the key tasks of a CRS project manager is to balance the longer-range, big picture with the day-to-day details of management and implementation.

CRS' Guiding Principles provide the basic values that shape the agency's work, relationships, management decisions and actions, and workplace culture. They are as follows: Dignity and Equality of the Human Person, Rights and Responsibilities, Social Nature of Humanity, The Common Good, Subsidiarity, Solidarity, Option for the Poor and Stewardship. Of particular importance to this manual are the two Guiding Principles defined in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Guiding Principles for CRS Project Management and Implementation

Subsidiarity	A higher level of government—or organization—should not perform any function or duty that can be handled more effectively at a lower level by people who are closer to the problem and have a better understanding of the issue.
Stewardship	There is inherent integrity to all of creation, and it requires careful stewardship of all of our resources, ensuring that we use and distribute them justly and equitably, as well as planning for future generations.

Subsidiarity is expressed in the way CRS operates and in how it manages and implements projects. Through its partners, CRS is assured of working close to the poor and marginalized. Project management skills and attitudes such as effective delegation, partnership and establishing trust are practical manifestations of this principle.

Stewardship is reflected through CRS' and its partners' accountability to the people they serve and to donors for achieving results through the projects. Tasks such as detailed planning, careful budgeting, partner accompaniment and continual monitoring are concrete examples of stewardship.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

CRS project types vary widely, as can be seen in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Variety of Project Types in One CRS Country Program

Simple ⟶	Complex ⟶	More Complex
Private funds to support construction of a school in a diocese.	A USG-funded, five-year, integrated food aid program reaching 500,000 people.	Member of a multi-country Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV & AIDS) consortia program providing anti-retroviral therapy that is centrally managed in headquarters.

Telescoping Project Management
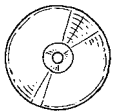
How can one project management and implementation manual apply to all of these situations? Telescoping, a concept introduced in ProPack I, can help.
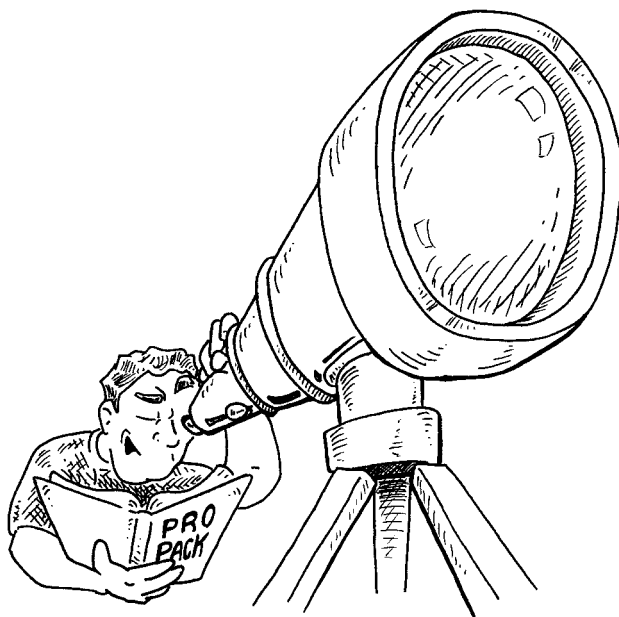
A telescope can be adjusted in length, yet all the useful features of the instrument, such as the lenses, remain. **It is the responsibility of the person using the telescope to decide how to shorten, lengthen, or otherwise adjust it to get the best results.** Table 1.4 shows how selected project stages and steps are telescoped in different contexts.

Table 1.4: Telescoping Project Management and Implementation

Stages/Steps	Contrasting Illustrations of Telescoping	
	Simpler ⟶	More Complex
Detailed Implementation Planning	A six-month project supported by CRS trains clinic workers and distributes bed-nets. In this project, **detailed implementation planning is completed in a two-day workshop** attended by clinic staff, CRS, and the donor representative.	A five-year, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Child Survival project proposal **requires a year-long detailed implementation planning process** that includes a stakeholder launch workshop, hiring of key project staff, finalizing agreements, conducting a further assessment and a baseline survey, refining project strategies, and developing a monitoring and evaluation system. USAID provides specific guidelines for the DIP document.
Mid-term Evaluation	A partner implementing a two-year, CRS-supported, privately funded girls' education project conducts a mid-term evaluation. **Planning the evaluation scope of work (SOW) is done in a few meetings** held **within a week's time**. The evaluation team includes partner and CRS staff; the regional technical advisor for education is invited to provide an outside perspective. This team **conducts field visits using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods. They review monitoring data during a brief working meeting.** After analysis, the team jointly agrees on recommendations to improve project implementation and makes an action plan.	An integrated, five-year, food-aid-supported program is required to have a mid-term evaluation by the donor as per the Award Agreement. CRS staff and partners **begin planning for the evaluation six months before it is conducted**. An outside evaluator is hired, and the evaluation SOW includes plans to update a baseline survey requiring short-term data collectors and supervisors. **The survey, field visits, and interviews for the evaluation take a month to conduct. Afterwards, the team works for a full week to refine and analyze findings,** consult with stakeholders and write-up recommendations in an evaluation report. Report findings and recommendations are presented to a wider group of project stakeholders in a formal lessons learned workshop.

The Art and Science of Project Management

The project managers described above applied good practices of project management and implementation. They prepared Detailed Implementation Plans (DIPs) to ensure smooth implementation and conducted mid-term evaluations to improve project performance and achieve Strategic Objectives (SOs). These practices are the science of project management and implementation.

Yet, the resources invested, tools and methods applied, and support required of CRS project managers are quite different in each situation. There are no simple formulae for the most appropriate ways to conduct each stage of the project cycle. You must continually use your best judgment, past experience and the advice of others to determine how best to support partners during various phases of the project. This is the art of project management and implementation.

Navigating ProPack II

It is a challenge to capture the dynamic, iterative, or back-and-forth aspects of real-life project implementation in a manual that presents chapters, sections, and steps in a linear way. You should view the chapters and sections as a way of providing new information and material in bite-size units.

User Guide

ProPack II contains a vast amount of educational resources in addition to its main content. Following is a guide to help you better understand and use the manual's selection of unique learning tools.

Checklists, Tables and Figures
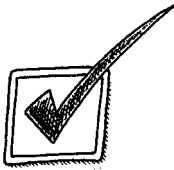
Important information is included in checklists, tables and figures. The **checklists and tables** contain tips, questions, guidelines, further details, and other information that can help you understand a certain point or complete a certain task. This information is also immediately useful to help program managers handle their wide-ranging day-to-day responsibilities. **Figures** are designed to give you a visual representation of some particular concept.

Checklists include items such as: Managing a Difficult Team Member, Tips on Managing a Baseline Survey, How to Schedule Your Time, and What to Include in an Evaluation SOW. Tables include a wide variety of topics such as: Five major causes of Poor Meetings, The Difference between an MOU and a Project Agreement, and Quarterly Progress Report Format. Examples of figures are CRS' Management Quality Pyramid and the CRS Project Cycle.

All of the topics captured in the checklists, figures and tables are listed by chapter in the Detailed Table of Contents at the beginning of ProPack II. The Further Resources section at the end of the manual has the complete list of checklists, figures and tables. See Further Resources, Sections 5, 6 and 7.

CD ROM Resources
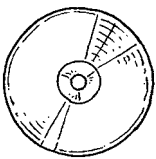
One of the highlights of ProPack II is its release on CD ROM. In addition to providing the complete contents of the manual electronically, text references to selected CRS forms, documents, manuals, and other information will also "link" to copies of the material on the ProPack II CD ROM. This will make it easier for partners and staff residing in locations with limited or sporadic internet access to review the numerous documents often cited in the text as resources for further research.

Text references to documents available on the ProPack II CD ROM will be identified by the graphic above. The appropriate text (e.g., the document's name) will also appear in blue, underlined typeface on the electronic copy. These documents are occasionally updated so you might make sure you have the final version. (See the Further Resources section at the end of the manual for a complete list of the materials included on the CD ROM. Individual chapter lists are presented in the Detailed Table of Contents.)

Reflection Opportunity

Critically reflecting on your own project management and implementation experience is as important as learning the topics presented in this manual: Your experiences are rich and reflect many cultural contexts. Throughout the manual, you will find Reflection Opportunity questions to help you explore how the content relates to your own knowledge and experiences, and to help you build the skills needed to apply the concepts, tools and techniques you are learning.

> **From Theory to Practice:**
> The majority of the text boxes in ProPack II are devoted to using CRS and partner staff experiences to illustrate the manual's content. They provide real-life examples of the successes and challenges of managing and implementing projects in a dynamic, global environment, and are sometimes paired with Reflection Opportunity questions for deeper analysis.

> **Think About It…**
> These text boxes contain additional information that you should consider as you move forward with project planning and implementation.

> **Don't Forget!**
> These text boxes contain references to other ProPack I or II content as a supplement to the information currently being covered. They serve as quick, visual reminders of important material previously discussed.

In addition to the tools described above, ProPack II includes a number of **Illustrations** to help further describe the information in the manual.

Using ProPack II

Good project design, management, and implementation guidance and materials alone do not improve projects: They are simply tools that can help staff increase knowledge and skills. Other factors are important in helping CRS staff use ProPack II effectively and appropriately, and for fostering positive attitudes and practices around project management.

Given the links between project management, general management, and leadership, it is clear that senior managers influence the practices and behaviors of those they supervise in the way they model knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Experience shows that employees usually draw from their experience of being managed in their own management practice, even when that contradicts the practices and behaviors promoted in state-of-the-art management training.

Rolling Out the Manual: ProPack II as a Reference Guide
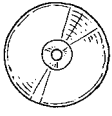
Staff should be coached and encouraged to use ProPack II in their daily work. Given the practical nature of the manual, it is best seen as a reference guide. First, like ProPack I, all project managers should have their own copy. Second, as part of their orientation, all project managers should review its contents. Third, various sections can be studied and discussed in detail when needed.

The best way to learn ProPack II is to use it during project implementation. For example, well in advance of a meeting with partners to develop the DIP, read that part of the manual and discuss it with your colleagues first; then, refer back to it to guide your activities through the detailed implementation planning process.

From Theory to Practice: Using ProPack II with Partners

Vinaya regularly consults ProPack II in her work with partners. She observed that one was having difficulty submitting progress reports on time, and that they lacked strong analysis. Vinaya planned a working visit to the partner just before the next progress report was due. She and the partner reviewed selected pages from ProPack II on progress reports and answered some of the Reflection Opportunity questions together. She then accompanied the partner on a project site visit to consult with community members. Afterwards, they studied monitoring and evaluation information from the project and jointly produced a progress report. As a result of this visit, the partner's next report was on time and contained more useful analytical information.

In addition to using the manual with partners, there are other ways to learn from ProPack II, including the following: on-line training using Breeze; use of CD ROMs; piggy-backing on other training events; studying the manual together with colleagues in monthly reading and reflection sessions; and using it to coach and mentor project managers. Training workshops may also be appropriate, but they are expensive.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Write down ways you have used ProPack I or other CRS manuals outside of a formal training workshop.
2. Using this list and what is described above, list the most appropriate ways you can be trained, coached, or encouraged to use ProPack II in your work. Pick one and try it out on a project management and implementation topic that interests you.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER II

Chapter II of ProPack II focuses on **Project Management**. It includes three sections.

Section 1	Foundations of Project Management
Section 2	Project Management and Partnerships
Section 3	Essential Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for Project Managers

Section 1 provides an overview of project management theory, models and principles as they relate to CRS practices.

Section 2 reviews CRS partnership principles in the context of project management and implementation.

Section 3 contains information about essential knowledge, skills and attitudes required of CRS project managers during any stage of the project cycle, but especially important during project implementation.

You will see that these three sections contain more **general guidance useful for every stage of the project cycle**, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They refer to selected management theories, models and principles considered important to project management and implementation.

CHAPTER II
PROJECT MANAGEMENT: THEORIES, MODELS AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR MANAGERS

SECTION 1
FOUNDATIONS OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

SECTION OVERVIEW

ProPack II aims to be a practical manual. So why include this section on management theory? First, most CRS and partner project managers learn management on the job. This practical experience can be considerably enriched if underpinned by management theory, models, and principles. Kurt Lewin (whose research has influenced organizational development) said, "Nothing is so practical as a good theory (Vella 2002)!"

Second, this section intends to help project managers wade through the flood of available information and books on management theory and models. Magretta (2002) wrote that despite the sea of words on management, most people are more confused than ever about what management means.

Third, this section will relate management theories and models to the unique CRS multi-cultural context. One CRS project manager who attempted to study management was discouraged that much of what he read did not seem relevant—it pertained mostly to North American business settings.

To summarize, this section will show how CRS' management quality standards, industry management theories, models, and practices converge with CRS' work across countries and cultures. These ideas will help CRS project managers to examine more critically their own management practices. These ideas also provide a foundation for Sections 2 and 3 in this chapter, which discuss the unique skills needed for project management when working across cultures and with partners.

In Section 1, you will do the following:

- review definitions and key ideas of management and leadership, and learn how they relate to implementation;
- examine CRS' management quality standards;
- review relevant theories and models from the literature on management and leadership;
- reflect on these theories in light of CRS' cross-cultural management practices; and
- critically compare your project management and implementation experience to management theories, models and practices.

DEFINITIONS: MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

Magretta (2002) states that none of the important innovations of the past century ranging from antibiotics to computers could have taken hold so rapidly or spread so widely without the discipline of management, the accumulating body of thought and practice that makes organizations work. While the human ability to manage (to organize purposefully) is old, the discipline of management is new.

The underlying idea of the discipline of management is optimizing performance. Performance has to do with defining success. Depending on the nature of an organization, this may be defined by profitability (for a corporation) or by transformed societies (for a non-profit) (Magretta 2002). Within project management, performance usually refers to quality in terms of impact (positive changes in people's lives) and implementation effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability (Guijt and Woodhill 2002).

Management is the messy business of mobilizing organizations and people to perform. It involves understanding and building on strengths of staff and organizations. Correctly interpreted, management is a liberal art—meaning that it draws freely from all the disciplines that help us make sense of ourselves and our world. That may be why it is so worthwhile but also so hard to do well (Magretta 2002).

In addition, managers in international development and relief organizations face special challenges; they must also manage relationships with diverse stakeholders from multiple cultures under sometimes extreme environmental uncertainty and constraints (Bryant and White 1982).

Buckingham and Coffin's (1999) research on "what great managers do" showed that great managers are catalysts with primary responsibility for managing people. **Great managers must do the following four tasks well:**

1. select people for their talents and because they are the right fit for a particular job;
2. clearly define expectations and outcomes (but let people figure out how to achieve these);
3. give people the tools and resources to do their job; and
4. focus on strengths rather than on fixing weaknesses.

Leadership

Obviously, CRS project managers manage projects! But a review of CRS project manager job descriptions shows they do more: Project managers are also called to lead. What do these terms mean and how are they related?

Some writers view leadership and management as two distinct and complementary systems of action. **Leaders cope with change,** while managers cope with organizational complexity. **Leaders innovate, develop, and motivate people; they inspire trust, establish broad directions, and maintain a long-term view,** while managers plan, budget, organize, staff, administer, put in place systems and controls, monitor and problem-solve, and focus on short-term objectives. Both leadership and management are necessary for success (Bennis 1998; Kotter 1990).

Reflection Opportunity

1. Which of the above definitions and ideas of management and leadership are most relevant to you as a project manager, and why?

Implementation

Translating plans into performance is called implementation. Some use the term execution. While implementation may seem like nothing more than following a recipe or carrying out a set of orders, in fact it requires much discipline, judgment and creativity. Moving a project design or DIP from concept to reality is complex (Magretta 2002).

It may seem that management and implementation are linked rather than separate ideas. This is because people who implement are, in fact, managing a process and a number of important resources. Bossidy and Charan (2002) define implementation as a systematic process of rigorously discussing who, what, how and when; constantly questioning; actively following up; and ensuring accountability.

Effective implementation requires that the project design is linked to organizational systems, structures and the people who are going to implement it. These organizational structures may facilitate project implementation effectiveness and efficiency—or create frictions that sap the energy of project implementers!

Bossidy and Charan assert that managers cannot remain removed from implementation but must be deeply engaged in the process. This is not micro-managing; instead the **manager plays a role as a coach**. A coach is effective because she is constantly observing players individually and collectively. Successful implementation requires a manager to (1) promote dialogue, (2) find realistic solutions to emerging problems, (3) focus on constant improvement and (4) pay attention to selecting, developing and appraising people, which is the foundation of excellent implementation (Bossidy and Charan 2002).

Reflection Opportunity

1. CRS supports partners to design, implement, monitor and evaluate projects. In your situation, how engaged should CRS project managers be in project implementation, and when?

CRS AND MANAGEMENT QUALITY

The fundamental importance of management within CRS is illustrated by the agency's management quality vision statement: **Management Quality creates the environment of excellence to achieve CRS' mission.** CRS' management values and beliefs are listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: CRS Management Values and Beliefs

- All staff are recruited, oriented, and coached based on the need for excellence, diversity, and commitment to the CRS mission and vision.
- Management actions and decisions uphold the agency's values.
- CRS recognizes and values leaders who anticipate and manage change, promote innovation, take responsibility, involve and motivate others, and communicate a clear vision of the future.
- CRS is committed to promoting and retaining women in positions of authority and an enabling environment where they, as well as all staff, can succeed.
- CRS recognizes that high-quality management requires a distinct set of competencies and invests the necessary resources to create and sustain them.

Within CRS, Management Quality and Program Quality are interrelated. Program Quality Standards exist that help define best practices for project strategies. These are summarized by statements of programmatic excellence in CRS' core competencies and cross-cutting themes. CRS' Management Quality Standards are summarized by the Internal Control Framework, or Management Quality Pyramid, shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: CRS' Management Quality Pyramid

Monitoring Learning and Managing Change

Information

Resources

Control Activities

Evaluation

Setting Team Objectives

Policies and Procedures

Planning and Risk Assesment

Systems

Communication

Values and Beliefs

Goals and Obstacles

Rewards and Recognition

Culture and Context

Team Environment and Responsibilities

Communications and Relationships

Skills and Knowledge

Adapted from the American Audit Association, the pyramid portrays the need to think deeply about underlying and related factors that influence management practice. In the past, audits typically focused on the more obvious compliance issues found at the top levels of the pyramid. These include "Evaluation" (how internal control systems are monitored and evaluated) and "Policies and Procedures" (which help ensure management direction is carried out).

Experience has shown, however, **that problems uncovered at these top levels often relate to root causes or issues portrayed by the lower levels of the pyramid**. "Goals and Obstacles" refers to the identification, assessment, and management of risks from external and internal sources that may affect how objectives are—or are not—achieved. The base of the pyramid, "Culture and Context," reflects organizational culture. Broadly defined, this concept encompasses the following:

- ethical values and competence of the organization's people;
- management philosophy and operating style;
- the manner in which management assigns authority and responsibility; and
- the manner in which management organizes and develops people.

Management and program quality concerns are also interrelated at the project level. For example, CRS' Financial Management Strategy calls for financial staff to be fully integrated within program and project planning, implementation, and management. All staff, including project managers, are accountable for strong financial management, including financial reporting, budget management, strengthening partners' financial management capacities, and other financial performance areas.

Measuring and Assessing Management Quality

How does CRS measure and monitor management quality? How do we know if CRS' performance meets management standards? The agency measures management and program quality in many ways.
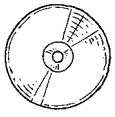
Country Programs self-assess their management strengths and weaknesses through regular use of the **Management Quality Assessment Tool** (MQAT). MQAT results are often used alongside **Program Quality Assessment** (PQA) results to reveal strengths and weaknesses when Country Programs develop new SPPs. CRS' Internal Audit Department conducts audits every two to three years within Country Programs and headquarters departments. This process ensures that they have the following:

- effective and efficient operations;
- reliable financial reporting; and
- compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
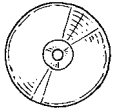
A combination Program and Management Quality self-assessment tool developed within CRS is highlighted in the "From Theory to Practice" story box on Gold Star.

From Theory to Practice: Gold Star—A CRS Joint Program and Management Quality Assessment Tool

Gold Star is an adapted version of a program and management quality assessment tool that was developed by CRS/South Asia for use in India and elsewhere. It is a five-day process that uses "ideal scenarios" or standards to measure performance strengths and areas for improvement, and to learn important lessons. The assessment information is triangulated through observations, document review, and interviews done by a team.

Program and management areas are studied, including partnership quality and stakeholder management; strategic planning processes and the plan itself; program design, proposal development, and implementation quality; program evaluation and monitoring; and program staffing. Program and management areas that need strengthening are identified and an action plan is developed to follow-up on recommendations.

CRS uses other organizational assessment tools for project-specific partner and community capacity strengthening in both management and programming. These are described in *Chapter V, Section 2, pp. 141-145.*

Country Program self-assessments (such as the MQAT and Gold Star) and external reviews, such as audits, are important monitoring functions. They help managers ensure performance.

THEORIES, MODELS AND PRACTICES OF MANAGEMENT

For many people, management is something to be tolerated! For some, the word itself is synonymous with control and bureaucracy.

Where do your project management practices, philosophy, and operating style come from? And those of your partner? A brief history of the evolution of management and a review of contemporary management models will help illuminate practices and perceptions around management and what constitutes best practices in management.

Evolution of Management Theories and Models

In the early 1900s, Frederick Taylor, an engineer in the U.S. steel industry, undertook time and motion studies to increase worker efficiency. He dramatically increased productivity (as well as repetitive and monotonous tasks) in factory settings. Taylor's **scientific management created a new level of middle managers, separating "thinkers" from "doers."** Although the excesses of scientific management are infamous, this model has been very influential in past and current management practices.

During this era, a French engineer, Henri Fayol, focused on authority and how it is exercised. His "five functions of management" (plan and look ahead, organize, command, coordinate, and control) still form the basis of much modern management. **Central to this command and control logic is the separation of decision-making from work.** The early car manufacturer, Henry Ford, took command and control to a pathological extreme and reportedly complained, "Why is it that whenever I ask for a pair of hands, a brain comes attached (Magretta 2002)?"

Around 1930, the field of **industrial social psychology** emerged from research done by Elton Mayo, a clinical psychologist, in a U.S. electric company plant. Mayo's studies aimed at testing the effect of work conditions on productivity, but the results were most surprising. When lights were turned up, productivity went up; and when lights were turned down, productivity went up again. What happened? It turns out that **the simple act of paying positive attention to people** (in this case, the workers who participated in the experiments) **has a great impact on productivity** (Peters and Waterman 1984). Other studies conducted at this time by psychologist Kurt Lewin in motivation, learning, and performance also found that people learn more and perform better when they are actively involved (Vella 1995).

Post-World War II saw a major contribution to management thought by psychologist Douglas McGregor with his concept of **Theory "X"** and **Theory "Y"** (1960). **Theory "X" presumes that the average person has an inherent dislike of work**; will avoid it if he or she can; prefers to be directed; wants to avoid responsibility; has little ambition; and wants security above all. The management corollary is that people must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened with punishment to get them to put forth an effort towards the organization's end.

Theory "Y," by contrast, **assumes the opposite**: that people find the same satisfaction in work as in play or rest; are personally satisfied from achievement of an organization's objectives; seek responsibility; and are capable of a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems.

Studies on leadership conducted by U.S. universities after World War II provided a basis for the **contingency theory of leadership: Leadership style should vary according to context**. A managerial grid model developed by Blake and Mouton (1964) identified five leadership styles representing different combinations of concern for people and organizing and getting tasks done.

Hersey and Blanchard's **situational leadership** (1999) is a related model showing how **leadership styles vary considerably depending on the situation and the needs of subordinates**. This model shows different combinations of **directive behavior** (the extent to which a leader spells out what, where, when, and how to do things and then closely supervises performance) and **supportive behavior** (the extent to which a leader listens, provides support and encouragement, facilitates interaction, and involves people in decision-making). **The art of leadership involves sizing up each situation and then crafting the appropriate strategy.**

Reflection Opportunity

Remember, nothing is so practical as a good theory! As a CRS project manager, you work with a number of partners who have different and unique levels of experience, maturity, and ability.

1. Write down some examples of how you have appropriately been more supportive or more directive with any of these partners in the course of project management.
2. Write down some examples of when your management style was inappropriate (e.g., not providing enough support for a partner who was having problems or being too directive with a mature partner who resented it).
3. What opportunities do you have now to experiment with a different management style that is more effective?

(Source: Adapted from Bob Jud Training Materials 2005)

Servant-leadership is another approach that challenges autocratic or hierarchical leadership models. To become a servant-leader, a manager needs to build a relationship of trust, set up win-win performance agreements, and then provide support to people so that they can achieve desired performance results. Servant-leadership **requires humility, focuses on building interdependent teams, and emphasizes meeting people's priorities and needs.** Covey (1989) describes some of these ideas in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.*

The **concept of project management as a discipline was developed** to manage the U.S. space program **in the early 1960s**. Project management emphasizes careful planning, and focuses on optimizing resources (i.e., skills, talents, and the cooperative efforts of a team of people, as well as facilities, tools and equipment, information, systems, techniques and money) to achieve objectives successfully and complete a project. According to Lewis (2001), successful projects are:

- good (of high quality, attain desired objectives or performance level);
- cheap (within cost or budget parameters); and
- fast (on time).

The evolution in thinking of work as a means to an end to that of work as having value in its own right has led to the idea of learning organizations. **Learning organizations discover how to tap people's interests, commitment, and capacity to learn at all levels in the organization** (Senge 1990) **and build on experiences and results.** A related idea is David Korten's **learning process approach** (1990). Recognizing that development projects nearly always operate with limited knowledge in environments that are constantly changing, Korten worked with others to develop new strategies for bureaucratic transformation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) committed to working with the poor. **A true learning organization embraces error rather than denying its existence, covering it up or blaming others.** It looks to failure as a vital source of knowledge and lessons for making adjustments to achieve better performance.

Cross-cultural Issues in Management

You may have noticed something: Many of the above management models and theories come from Western and largely North American settings. How do these models fit with existing cultural norms in other settings? You may have felt this personally as someone from one culture being managed by someone from another culture. A study done in Cambodia and summarized in the "From Theory to Practice" story box illustrates some of the potential issues and challenges.

From Theory to Practice: Cambodia—A Case Study in Divergent Management Styles Across Cultures

An action-research study of local NGOs in Cambodia revealed deep-seated attitudes, educational practices and cultural values, as well as historical circumstances all working **against** international NGOs' capacity-strengthening efforts in project and program management practices.

One topic studied was the organizational culture of Cambodian NGOs—the reality of how things happen in day-to-day work and interactions among staff, not the organizations' official visions, missions and policies. One factor affecting project performance was an apparent disconnect between a stated desire of NGO directors that their staff "take more responsibility" and the existing organizational structure and culture.

The social order of Cambodian society, reinforced by the practice of Buddhism, depends upon everyone respecting the social hierarchy and keeping her or his place in it. From childhood on, people are taught to obey and respect those with authority. Challenging, questioning and holding dissenting views is discouraged; conflict is seen as bad, and loss of face is to be avoided at all costs. During periods of conflict within the country, authoritarian leaders oppressed people who learned that silence and not drawing attention to oneself was a way to stay alive.

Consistent with cultural values and beliefs, many Cambodian NGOs have a very hierarchical structure with much decision-making power resting with the director. Directors hold all the power, go to outside meetings alone, make decisions, and do not communicate often with the staff. Staff are extremely reluctant to speak up or reveal the problems they experience in their work. NGO founders may be seen as the patron of the staff responsible for their jobs and livelihoods.

The study ultimately found that NGO field workers were struggling to accommodate what was culturally and socially acceptable and expected with the demands of their job.

(Source: Adapted from O'Leary and Nee 2001)

This study shows how organizational culture can be influenced by cultural and contextual issues. **Organizational culture is a pattern of shared beliefs that reflect assumptions people make about work.** These beliefs govern how people relate to each other in the workplace, how decisions are made, how others are treated, how authority is exercised, etc. Organizational culture might be thought of as "the way we do things around here." Some of these assumptions underlying management practices and workplace behaviors may not be fully obvious—indeed they may be hidden and may even run counter to an organization's formal mission statements (Kelleher and McLaren 1996).

The CRS Management Quality Pyramid describes organizational culture as the following:

- an organization's management philosophy and operating style;
- the way management assigns authority and responsibility; and
- the way it organizes and develops people.

Management is practiced in all countries. Insights from history, culture and study of local conditions contribute to understanding how best to interpret and apply it in each setting. Your difficult job as a project manager is to translate CRS' management values, beliefs and principles into the unique situations in which you and other project stakeholders operate.

Geert Hofstede (1993) has researched organizational culture and written on the influence of culture on organizational settings. He promotes the use of **five dimensions to help analyze cultural influences on management styles and organizational culture**. These dimensions have been interpreted by management consultant Bob Jud (2005) in his training materials and are summarized in Table 2.2.

Please note that these dimensions are intended to provoke critical reflection—not to stereotype people, societies, or organizations into boxes or columns! Culture is not frozen in time: It changes constantly. Culture can both influence and be influenced by outside forces. Groups and organizations might fall into very different places in each of these dimensions. Think of them as a spectrum to promote understanding.

Table 2.2: Five Dimensions to Help Analyze Cultural Influences on Management

People from societies with a **hierarchy orientation** tend to respect authority; prefer top managers with seniority; are comfortable with hierarchical structures; expect leaders to be directive and paternalistic; and may accept privileges and status symbols for managers.	**Power Distance** Hierarchy ←→ Equality	People from societies with an **equality orientation** tend to respect authority only if it proves competent and effective; prefer flat organizational structures; consult subordinates; and frown upon privileges and status symbols.
People with **low tolerance of uncertainty** expect clear work instructions and requirements; have a strong need for rules; resist change; and seek the truth.	**Tolerance of Uncertainty** Low ←→ High	People who **tolerate ambiguity** accept risk; welcome change; expect to have flexible guidelines for their work; and seek understanding.
People from **individualistic societies** tend to be self-reliant; act spontaneously; make decisions readily; show interest in challenging tasks; take pride in innovation; and think of others as equals.	**Social Integration** Individualism ←→ Collectivism	People from **collectivist societies** tend to be loyal and committed to groups; willingly accept direction; understand how to build consensus; are capable of genuine teamwork; and stress relationships.
People from societies with an **achievement orientation** tend to "live to work;" are results-based; accept high job stress; have competitive and assertive work relationships; and may resist teamwork.	**Output** Achievement ←→ Relationships	People from societies with a **relationship orientation** "work to live;" focus on relationships; have low job stress; emphasize cooperative and open work relationships; and accept teamwork.
Intense time-use people expect punctuality and react negatively to long waits; set deadlines and agendas and are guided by them; avoid changing plans at the last minute; and have a sense of urgency to complete tasks.	**Time-Use** Intense ←→ Casual	**Casual time-use people** tend to remain calm in the face of last-minute changes in plan; treat agendas and deadlines flexibly; expect waits; and have a flexible attitude towards task completion.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Have you ever been managed by someone from another culture with different values regarding time, achievement, or other dimensions listed in Table 2.2?
2. What cross-cultural management issues arose?
3. In your experience, what has happened when the dominant management culture in your Country Program clashed with the organizational culture of your partner?
4. How did you address these issues constructively? What worked well, and why?

SECTION 2
PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

SECTION OVERVIEW

In Section 2, you will do the following:

- review CRS' partnership principles, which guide the agency's approach to project management and implementation; and
- examine definitions, approaches and issues surrounding partner accompaniment during project implementation.

The story from Ghana in the "From Theory to Practice" box provides a real-life description of how partnership looks and feels from a CRS project manager's perspective.

From Theory to Practice: Partnership Challenges in Ghana

Kwame Amoah is a CRS project officer managing a food security project in Ghana with a diocesan partner. In the past, CRS supported partners in undertaking food distributions. Kwame's orientation training coincided with a new focus on partnerships and accompaniment, and a new food security strategy. Kwame was trained to provide technical and managerial support to partners and to ensure joint decision-making was accomplished through regular visits and meetings.

Before meeting with his assigned partner, Kwame was warned by his supervisor that things were not going well; the partner seemed impossible to deal with. The supervisor told Kwame that CRS might have to ease out of their engagement. Kwame's first visits with the partner were more than uncomfortable. On several occasions, he was even ordered to leave the development coordinator's office! Kwame never obeyed these orders. Not once. He stuck it out.

What is the status today? The project was successfully closed, a second phase completed, and they are currently working on a third phase. "We may not exactly be in love with each other," says Kwame, "but we are still partners."

What Happened?

Kwame explained his apparent success in the face of challenges as follows: "I learned that we are dealing with people, who have real hopes and commitment on the one hand, and genuine fears and frustrations on the other regarding our work. We must approach them not only on the basis of negotiated rules and clauses in project agreements: We must meet them and deal with them as people first.

"My breakthrough came when I learned to meet the person and not the institution. After the quarrels of the day, I would arrange to meet the Diocesan Development officer for tea. Through these informal chats, I learned how deeply committed he was and how much he cared about the issues. I learned of his constraints, and that he did not have the support of some of his colleagues. I learned to respect and value the skills, resources, knowledge, capacities and limitations he had. I learned that our actions had created a perception that we were more interested in protecting our resources than meeting human needs. Accountability was less focused on stewardship than on distrust and policing! This was because we had not established that common philosophical ground for relationship; we over focused on project agreements. At the end of the day, we became co-strategists, working together to deal with common problems. When we won, it was a joint victory. When we lost, it was a joint challenge to re-strategize.

> "At the same time, the Country Representative began meeting with the Bishop of the diocese. Issues ranging from development philosophies to organizational practices were discussed. Once we established genuine dialogue, it was possible to work on agreements to address difficulties. The lasting fruit of these meetings is that the Bishop is now one of the staunchest defenders of CRS in Ghana!
>
> "In general, I've learned that partnership is always a work in progress. It often starts with euphoria, dips into suspicion and, when properly picked up, can be groomed into a mature marriage. The difficulties we have exist because we turn away as soon as euphoria dips."

Reflection Opportunity

1. Share an example from your own experience of the ups and downs of a relationship with a specific partner during project implementation.
2. What did you learn from this?
3. How might strategies to manage relationships differ depending on the partner you are working with?

DEFINITION AND TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS

CRS defines partnership as **"a relationship of mutual commitment built upon a shared vision, spirit of solidarity and making a difference in the lives of the people we serve."** Working in partnership honors the vision, mission and values of CRS. There are many compelling reasons to work with partners.

- Working in partnership has greater potential to reach the poor and vulnerable because of partners' knowledge of the local situation and their vast networks.
- Changing unjust structures requires an active civil society, and partners are key local organizations.
- Learning with partners allows for deeper understanding of solidarity.
- Working with partners validates and builds on local assets (human, political, social, and financial) for development.

CRS believes that **authentic partnerships are built on three pillars: shared vision, solidarity and impact.** Table 2.3 describes these pillars in greater detail.

Table 2.3: Three Pillars of Authentic Partnerships

Shared Vision	Partnerships require that organizations are headed in the right direction. It is important to explore visions for the future and root causes of injustice early on and not assume they are shared.
Solidarity	Solidarity cannot be achieved through short-term projects alone. It builds through trust and a commitment to work together for long-term change, sharing resources and risks, and appreciating the gifts that each partner brings to the relationship.
Impact	Partnerships must bear fruit and achieve verifiable, beneficial impact on the lives of the people served. Accountability, stewardship and quality are important at all levels and in all directions–CRS, partner, communities, donors and others.

Figure 2.2 from the Strategic Framework shows CRS' desired range of relationships with its partners.

Figure 2.2: Desired Range of Partner Relationships

| We develop our strategies irrespective of the local Church | We develop our strategies and inform them | We develop our strategies and ensure they don't conflict with the local Church's strategies | We develop our strategies and get local Church agreement, as part of process | We develop our strategies based on theirs | Their strategy is our strategy | Their strategy (including pastoral work) is our strategy |

CRS seeks to situate itself as far to the right-hand side of the desired range as the local situation allows, though the agency does not have a mandate to support purely pastoral work. Organizations other than CRS have been established within the Catholic Church to address and respond to pastoral activities. Note that this diagram does not exclude partnership with other organizations of similar vision from all faiths (CRS SPP Guidance for Country Programs, September 2006).

This diagram helps you to understand how agency values underlie partnership strategies and approaches. These ideas profoundly shape how CRS' projects work and affects how they are designed, planned, implemented, evaluated, and, in general, managed within a partnership framework.

CRS' role within partnership has evolved into one of accompaniment rather than leadership or direction. To accompany means to move forward together and implies an equality of status. CRS defines accompaniment as **a close relationship that is flexible and responsive in both institutional and personal forms**. Accompaniment is not a one-way, automatic resource transfer. Rather, it implies **mutual appreciation** of what each partner has to offer, and partners' own assets are valued. As CRS and its partners strive towards their vision of transformation, their relationship is complementary and characterized by support, flexibility and responsiveness.

Within partnerships, CRS focuses on **capacity strengthening**, rather than dwelling on what is missing or going wrong. Many organizations use the term capacity building, but this term may be mistakenly interpreted to mean that no capacity exists and that it must be built from scratch. Capacity strengthening means that **both partners have a set of resources, insights and skills that can benefit from capacity assessments and relevant skill-building.** Capacity strengthening goes beyond a specific project as it is based on a shared vision and a long-term commitment to a mutually agreed upon process of organizational development. This process of organizational development contributes to project-specific organizational capacity assessments. Project-specific capacity assessment tools are described in *Chapter V, Section 2, pp. 141-145*.
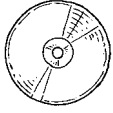
Church partners have a special relationship with CRS that exists outside and beyond the scope of projects. Thus, CRS project managers must know the **difference between the phases of partnerships and the stages of a project cycle**. Work with most CRS partners operates under both. For example, projects have a distinct timeframe, but this is different from the timeframe involved in a long-term partnership relationship. Partnerships are dynamic and change and evolve continually. Some common phases of partnerships described in CRS Partnership Programming Guidance (2002) are listed in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Common Phases of Partnership

Preparation	• building personal relationships • developing a partnership strategy • strengthening CRS' and its partners' capacity to partner
Exploration	• locating organizations with shared visions and values • initiating Appreciative Inquiry[1] • getting to know each other while exploring potential shared vision • building personal relationships
Negotiation	• initiating or continuing Appreciative Inquiry • addressing issues of power and risk • setting a culture of mutuality, transparency and accountability • planning for overall mechanisms and norms for cooperation, such as communication, reporting and procedures • designing projects and developing proposals Note that a partnership **Memorandum of Understanding** (**MOU**) is often developed at this stage. These MOUs usually state the expectations, resources, and commitments that each partner brings to the table.
Implementation	• undertaking joint work, and coordinating resources and contributions • learning from each other

This partnership approach applies to CRS' work in general. All of the agency's partnerships, however, are not the same. They achieve different purposes and, thus, naturally have different forms and qualities, and this can shift as new funding calls for new partnership types. CRS works with a variety of organizations. In addition to Church partners, the agency may work with or implement projects with other international private voluntary organizations (PVOs), international educational or research institutes, universities, government agencies and for-profit companies.

Distinguishing partnership-types helps one consider more carefully the selection of partners, the appropriate capacity strengthening strategy and how CRS works with each particular partner in project implementation. The following are just a **few examples of the types of CRS partnerships**—and even these can evolve over time.

- **CRS may be a prime or a sub-awardee on large grants.**
  Example: Improving Livelihoods through Increasing Food Security (I-LIFE) project in Malawi where CRS is the primary recipient of a cooperative agreement with USAID/Food for Peace (FFP) and has signed a sub-agreement with CARE.
- **Partners may be contracted to provide services** under conditions and objectives defined largely by CRS or a donor. These partners are selected for their capacity to achieve impact.
  Examples: AIDSRelief or other multi-agency consortia.

---

[1] Appreciative Inquiry is both an approach and a methodology for working in partnership. It involves discovering and valuing factors that give life to an organization or partnership and then building on those factors. For more information, see the CRS Partnership Programming Guide and The Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Dialogue.

- **Partners may be civil society actors and have a long-term relationship with CRS** to transform unjust structures. Both partners jointly define objectives and undertake design, implementation, and evaluation. Roles and responsibilities are shared in decision-making and problem-solving. Capacity strengthening here may include leadership and networking.
  Example: Diocesan partner.
- **Collaborative partners describe groups or organizations with which CRS works towards a specific purpose** such as advocacy, learning, or innovation. Each partner brings specific capacities and resources to the table. Involvement may be intense or intermittent, and joint activities may cross borders.
  Examples: Learning Alliances; the Global Development Alliance (GDA), a USAID-funding mechanism that promotes non-traditional types of partnerships in development projects such as private sector organizations or for-profits.

PARTNER ACCOMPANIMENT DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The nature of a CRS project manager's involvement in implementation depends on many factors: the strength of the partner, the type and nature of the partnership, and the skills of the manager. No matter how much or how little CRS project managers are involved in project implementation, they are nonetheless accountable for the outcomes of the projects for which they have responsibility. Project managers, in most cases, work closely with partners to accomplish the following:

- develop a DIP;
- ensure that everyone keeps the project's SOs in sight;
- monitor the project in order to maintain progress towards objectives and keep budgets on track;
- enable them to comply with donor and CRS regulations and conditions;
- ensure high-quality, relevant capacity strengthening occurs via technical assistance, peer support, training, etc.;
- provide ongoing coaching and feedback;
- submit regular narrative and financial reports;
- ensure that evaluations are carried out; and
- share findings with others.

How CRS project managers work with partners requires some reflection. **Accompaniment is based upon listening, consultation, mutual learning and support—not prescriptive advice from above.** Fowler (1997) describes accompaniment as "a process of moving along side by side in dialogue and experimentation which creates organizational improvement and yields knowledge about change."

From Theory to Practice: Views on Accompaniment from a Partner in India

> We work well together because of CRS' partnership model, which draws on our comparative capacity strengths and resources. CRS provides technical guidance, strengthens our monitoring and evaluation capacity, and provides resources. We match these resources with our own funds and assign staff members experienced in community mobilization to oversee the project. Together, we are able to form ideas on how to further the leadership capabilities of communities.

Some CRS project managers do not have a clear idea of what accompaniment involves. They worry that playing too active a role in project implementation means CRS is becoming operational. Yet, when monitoring shows that the project is off-track, these same managers spring into action and may even take over implementation from partners because, after all, they are accountable for the project outcomes!

Accompaniment needs to be adjusted to the situation at hand. It may look very different from one project to the next depending largely on the project context and situation, the skills of CRS project managers themselves, and the experience and skills of the partner. The Burundi seed vouchers and fairs story in the "From Theory to Practice" box below illustrates this idea.

Don't Forget!
Remember situational leadership from Section 1, pg. 19!

From Theory to Practice: Growing from Novice Partner to Mentor in Burundi

CRS/Burundi piloted seed vouchers and fairs in 2001 through direct operations. Staff refined the strategy and then jointly planned and implemented the program with a partner in one diocese in 2002. In 2003, CRS' partners implemented the program by themselves with CRS staff acting in an advisory role. By 2005, CRS and partner staff members were traveling to CRS offices throughout West Africa to train other staff and partners on the seed vouchers and fairs methodology.

Even when working with a skilled and experienced partner, launching a new project strategy or responding to an emergency situation may require more upfront technical support and time working together. CRS project managers may not have these skills and need to know when and how to hire consultants or other experts to provide this support to partners.

To summarize, there is no one recipe for appropriate accompaniment!

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think of a time when you believe you provided inappropriate accompaniment to a partner during project implementation. What happened?
2. How could you have done things differently during project implementation to have made the accompaniment more appropriate and successful?

Pathways and Obstacles to Partnership Success

Factors contributing to the **success of managing partnerships** include the following:

- providing ongoing **evidence of success**, defining and achieving a series of short-term objectives that lead to a larger goal;
- recognizing and **managing power dynamics**, clarifying decision-making processes from the start;
- having **shared goals and vision**. Problems addressed are clearly defined; aims of collaboration are clear and shared;
- possessing strong **communication skills and cultural awareness**. These help to bridge differences;
- **respect and trust** are key ingredients. Partnerships are seen as equitable. Trust is built from visible, incremental successes over time and from fulfilled commitments;
- developing **clear roles and policy guidelines**, setting up accountability mechanisms, establishing decision-making processes; and
- **linking at multiple levels of organizational hierarchy**. Collaboration occurs among senior managers (for overall vision, strategies, and priorities), as well as among operational staff (planning and implementation). (Merill-Sands and Sheridan 1996)

One obstacle to a healthy partnership may be **differences in organizational cultures**. Recall the definition of organizational culture in *Section 1, pg. 21* and Table 2.2 on the five cultural dimensions. While a vision may be shared, there may be different preferences for how things are done. Partners may prefer consensus decision-making, for example, rather than assertive and direct decision-making.

Other partnership obstacles may include the following:

- differences in power;
- hidden and conflicting agendas;
- lack of endorsement by the organizational head;
- lack of confidence in staff or partners;
- lengthy consultation process with a loss of focus;
- lack of trust; and
- generally low commitment from those involved.
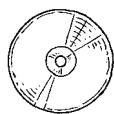
The CRS Partnership Programming Guidance and many CRS project manager job descriptions call for staff who can manage projects and healthy partnerships and who possess the skills required for accompaniment and capacity strengthening. This distinct set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes are described in the next section.

SECTION 3
ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

SECTION OVERVIEW

A review of CRS **project manager job descriptions shows that they are accountable for project results and impact** through managing or overseeing project design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In addition to these program duties, project managers are also responsible for managing and monitoring budgets and other project resources in compliance with agency and donor agreements and regulations.

Project managers are **also expected to provide leadership.** They analyze changing environments and create opportunities for innovation; negotiate with project stakeholders; identify staff development needs; practice sound decision-making and good judgment; and build teams. Their job descriptions call for strong qualifications in cross-cultural awareness, facilitation, coaching, and mentoring skills. Project managers develop and maintain good partner relationships; communicate well; supervise and work well with people; manage conflicts; practice strategic and analytical thinking; and are able to be team players.

This section summarizes selected management and leadership training topics that CRS has offered to staff. These topics are also found in numerous management training resources. This type of training has proven very useful and popular among CRS' project managers. This section does not replace such training but provides (1) a review for staff who have participated in such management and leadership workshops or (2) an introduction to those who are reading about these ideas and concepts for the first time.

In Section 3, you will do the following:

- review key knowledge, skills, and attitudes important to successful project management and implementation; and
- examine practical ways to apply these to your project management work.

Note that this set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important for managing all stages of the project cycle: design, detailed implementation planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and project close-out. Many topics are particularly helpful in managing partner relationships throughout the course of project work.
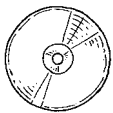
You will notice that most topics in this chapter relate directly to the CRS Values-Based Behaviors.

THE MODEL PROJECT MANAGER

The Battery Charger "From Theory to Practice" story describes a real CRS project manager from the observations of a senior technical advisor who worked with her.

From Theory to Practice: Are You a Battery Charger or Drainer?

> The best project manager I know works for CRS. Sabine is a "battery charger;" she keeps people motivated. Other managers I know are "battery drainers!" Sabine is a battery charger because she sets a good example. She is hard working, diligent, and well-organized in her work and thinking. While she never hesitates to give her honest opinion, she always does it constructively and never with a hint of arrogance. She's very modest in fact. Sabine leads from the front; she's not afraid to get "muddy with the troops" and work in difficult conditions. I observed this recently in a country affected by the Tsunami. During meetings and interactions with staff and partners, she lets people have their say; she listens to them and then tries to distill what she's heard into something meaningful.
>
> Sabine is also willing to learn new approaches and is enthusiastic about trying them out. She follows guidance from ProPack I, but she's not slavish about it. She amends and tweaks tools as appropriate. For example, she took Proframe, worked with her staff on it, and turned the chart "sideways" as that made more sense to them—this didn't, however, change the underlying logic of the tool.
>
> Sabine plans for the future but also focuses on day-to-day project implementation. She encourages participation but doesn't let it overwhelm the need to move ahead. She's very balanced between reaching for the stars and being pragmatic.
>
> Sabine attended a few management trainings provided by CRS, but she is also someone who has learned much from her years of experience—and she has a very large dose of common sense!

Sabine displays important attitudes, as well as knowledge and skills essential to project management and implementation. While you may think she was blessed with these virtues, Peter Drucker (1992) argues that there are no such things as leadership genes. While some people may be better leaders or managers than others, all people can work to improve their leadership and management style and skills.

So, how do staff learn to be good project managers? Management skills tend to be acquired through experience and mentoring. This may be the best way to learn, but it depends very much on the breadth of experience and quality of your mentors. For some people, the experience of being managed has not been the high point of their working lives! Yet people tend to understand management through the behavior of their bosses. According to one management expert, unlike most other professions you don't need a license to practice management. In fact, it's one of the only fields where practice precedes formal training (Magretta 2002).

INCREASING YOUR SELF-AWARENESS

Behaves in ways that are consistent with self-awareness, self-regulation.

—CRS Values-Based Behaviors

Being aware of your own personality, behaviors, and style, and how this affects your management practices can help improve your success in project management. "Know thyself" may seem like a tired truism, but it is a key principle for managers and leaders (Drucker 1992). With good self-knowledge, you can build deeper trust within organizational teams, communicate better, provide feedback more effectively, and better understand how approaching work in different ways can be healthy and productive.

How do you do this? Management training courses typically include a session to increase self-awareness by using behavioral inventories or role plays. Self-awareness may be promoted through situational leadership exercises; use of a personality assessment instrument such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator; or by assessing your skills related to emotional intelligence such as self-control, zeal, persistence etc. (Goleman 1995).

Johari's Window is a tool used both in community development and the business world to help managers increase self-awareness and see the benefit of giving and receiving information. **The window is composed of four (window) panes.** The top left pane (the **public self**) can be expanded through sharing your **hidden self,** through feedback from others that may reveal **blind spots,** and through revelation and insight from discovering your **unknown or dark** self.

Table 2.5: Johari's Window

	Known to Self	**Unknown To Self**
Known to Others	*Public Self* That part of yourself known to you and to others. It is characterized by free and open exchanges of information between you and the group. It increases in size the longer the group is together.	*Blind Spot* That part of you known to others, but unknown to you. The tone of your voice, a conflict in which you are involved, a good trait of which you are not aware—all may be in this area. You may use expressions or mannerisms that have a big impact on others. This square can be especially large if you are in a cross-cultural situation and you fail to ask for feedback about how you are coming across.
Unknown to Others	*Hidden Self* That part of yourself known to you but not shared with others. It may remain best hidden, but it also might clear the air and build trust if it were known and shared.	*Unknown or Dark Self* That part of yourself unknown to others and also unknown to you. Here are talents and abilities which you do not know you have and others have never seen but are part of you nevertheless and may one day come to the surface.

(Source: Adapted from Luft and Ingham 1955)

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think back on your experiences managing projects: the challenges you faced, the decisions you took, the relations you had with other project stakeholders. What did you learn that revealed elements of the blind spot panel and the unknown or dark panel?

2. **What insights did you gain about yourself as a manager that you applied to your next project management experience?**

FOSTERING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

Organizational learning involves the systems and processes that enable an organization to capture, share, and act upon its experiences. Within projects, learning involves continuous testing of experience—reflecting on mistakes or how to do better what is already being done well and transforming that experience into knowledge that is accessible to other project stakeholders.

Organizational learning is to a large extent determined by two factors:

1. how well people practice critical and analytical thinking; and
2. how well the organizational culture supports learning (i.e., how well it tolerates errors).

Project managers play an important role in promoting these factors. Project managers help CRS staff, partners, and other project stakeholders reflect on project experiences and then analyze what could have been done differently. They promote honest sharing because failure tolerance is a powerful tool for innovation and the sign of a true learning organization.

The Importance of Critical and Systems Thinking

Paulo Freire (1970) promoted the idea of **praxis: a cycle of action and reflection that underlies critical thinking.** Praxis involves both identifying and celebrating success and critically analyzing causes of mistakes and failures. Strong skills in this area make project stakeholders more capable of transforming and strengthening their work. Use Checklist 2.1 to see if you and others display the behaviors of a critical thinker.

Checklist 2.1: Are You a Critical Thinker?

- ✓ Do you ask pertinent questions and display a sense of curiosity?
- ✓ Are you able to admit what you do not know?
- ✓ Can you uncover and examine your beliefs, assumptions, and opinions, and weigh them against facts, evidence, and proof?
- ✓ Do you listen carefully to others?
- ✓ Are you able to adjust opinions when new facts are found?
- ✓ Do you examine successes and problems closely and deeply?

From Theory to Practice: "The Vehicles are Never Available!"

> People often complain about a problem affecting project management, but the problem will persist if no one uncovers its root causes. In the MQAT Facilitator's Manual, sessions encourage trainees to practice cause and effect analysis with common management and administrative problems. A cause and effect analysis of "the vehicles are never available" in one Country Program did not reveal a vehicle shortage. Instead, using a problem tree analysis tool, trainees found that vehicle requisition procedures were not clearly documented and that employees were not properly trained to coordinate vehicle use among departments."
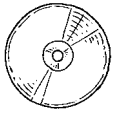
More information on problem trees as a tool for cause and effect analysis is contained in *ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 4, pp. 73–83*.
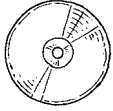
Systems thinking is learning to recognize the potential interaction and interdependence of actions. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace or War* (Anderson 1999) is an analytical tool that draws from systems thinking. Actions you or partners take in the course of project management—such as a hiring decision—may reinforce or lessen existing divisions and tensions in a particular project setting. Note that the Integral Human Development (IHD) framework promoted by CRS is based on systems or holistic thinking. For more information on the IHD framework and how it is used in project design, see *ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 3, pp. 51–56*.

Tools to Assess Organizational Learning

Project managers are often called upon to function as the leader or guide for learning from the project. This assumes there are structured times for learning that draws from monitoring and evaluation systems. Answer the questions in Checklist 2.2 to see if you as a manager and the organizational culture you operate in help to promote a learning environment. If you can honestly answer yes to each question, you are on the road to fostering a strong learning environment within your project.

Checklist 2.2: Questions to Foster a Learning Environment

✓ Do individuals in the project you manage feel that their ideas and suggestions are valued?
✓ Are mistakes and failures considered important by everyone for learning and not shameful?
✓ Are there opportunities (regular review meetings, after action reviews, etc.) for project implementers to discuss regularly and informally project progress, partner relationships, and how to improve actions?
✓ During regular meetings and workshops, is time set aside for discussing mistakes, and identifying and sharing lessons learned?
✓ Do people involved in the project regularly ask "Why is this happening? What are the implications for the project? How will it be better next time?" during meetings or field visits?

(Source: Adapted from IFAD 2002)

The CRS/Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Regional Office (SEAPRO) operates a microfinance learning center, Learning Innovations and Knowledge Systems (LINKS), that aims to strengthen partners' organizational learning capacities. The work of LINKS is based on a model that describes **seven key elements** of a true learning organization. **Creating a supportive organizational culture** surrounds all elements in this model.

Figure 2.3: Key Elements of a Learning Organization

Gathering Internal Experience
(monitoring, project reviews, evaluations, etc.)

Integrating Learning into Strategy and Policy
(continuous improvements and changes in practice, strategy, or politics.)

Accessing External Learning
(examining best practices from other agencies, etc.)

Applying the Learning
(capacity strengthening, scaling up, advocacy, etc.)

Developing an Organizational Memory
(accessing experiences and analyses via reports, resource centers, guidelines, sharing, etc.)

Establishing Communication Systems
(meetings, worshops, emails, newsletters, etc.)

Drawing Conclusions
(how information is converted to knowledge, skills in identifying lessons learned, etc.)

Creating a Supportive Organizational Culture

(Source: Slim 1993)

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: THE FOUNDATION

The CRS Strategic Framework states that the agency's value is based in relationships and emphasizes the establishment of right relationships. These ideals and values are translated into reality when project managers, partners, and participants demonstrate respect, trust, and humility. This requires setting personal examples through your own behavior.

- **Treats people with dignity and respect.**
- **Demonstrates honesty in behavior and actions.**
- **Keeps commitments and promises, is reliable.**

—CRS Values-Based Behaviors

Developing Respect and Trust

A professional relationship among project partners is one based on respect and trust—not necessarily friendship. What do these terms mean? Strong partnerships are respectful of the constraints and constituents of each partner. Respect also involves valuing the local knowledge systems that partners possess. Another word for respect is courtesy. When people feel respected, they do not hesitate to speak their heart. Trust is exemplified by predictability, reliability, honesty, integrity and consistency.

- **Is on time to work and with work assignments.**
- **Expects honesty from partners, suppliers and others that CRS works with.**

—CRS Values-Based Behaviors

When something happens to destroy trust and respect (a commitment not met, a confidentiality betrayed, or dishonesty), they are very difficult to rebuild.

Reflection Opportunity

1. One CRS project manager suggests that your level of trust and respect can be evaluated and then strengthened by reflecting on how partners interact with you. For example, do partners frankly discuss and share their frustrations or problems? Do they regularly seek your advice for both project-related and other issues? If not, why not? What might you do to encourage this?
2. What other questions would you ask to assess trust and respect?

Having Humility

While you need to "know thyself," also know that the manager who focuses solely on himself is going to mismanage. According to Drucker (1992), **managers who work most effectively never think "I," they think "we."** They think "team." They understand their job is to make a team function. Many managers want the world to know that the person behind a great project idea or success was really "me." Resist this temptation. As a manager, your job is to work with and through other people to get work done. Their success is your success. Direct attention away from yourself and don't take all the credit!

Has an orientation of service to staff, partners, the Church and the people CRS serves.

—CRS Values-Based Behaviors

A strong project manager doesn't personally identify with the project tasks but sees herself as a servant to the task. Remember the concept of servant-leadership presented in *Section 1, pg. 20.* In this approach, managers build relationships of trust, set up win-win performance agreements, and then provide support so that other project stakeholders can more easily do their work and achieve results (Covey 1989).

Humble people do not fear the strengths in the people they supervise or work with. Drucker (1992) advises that there is little risk of able people pushing you out; there is greater risk of poor performance by mediocre staff.

Setting the Example

Actions are consistent with the CRS Guiding Principles.
> —*CRS Values-Based Behaviors*

A well-known dictum is "do what you say." Managers set examples and provide models. The way you conduct yourself in managing a project and how you relate to partners and colleagues will in turn affect how they themselves work on project tasks and how they relate to people in the community served by the project.

Spending Time with People

Fully utilizes knowledge and expertise of national staff.
> —*CRS Values-Based Behaviors*

Providing appropriate situational leadership requires knowing the motivations, attitudes, knowledge and skills of the people you supervise or the partners you work with. Remember Kwame's story in *Section 2, pp. 24-25*. Kwame learned that CRS must meet and deal with partners as people first.

BUILDING TEAMS

Works well in a team.
> —*CRS Values-Based Behaviors*

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Katzenbach and Smith 1993). Teams contribute to excellent performance. This is because teams can access a greater knowledge and experience base; are more willing to take risks; solve problems well; promote innovation; and in general create synergy. In other words, the team whole is greater than its parts added together.

Engaged and high-performing teams thrive in learning organizations. There are practical ways to encourage successful teams. Checklist 2.3 comes from the work of experienced practitioners who carefully observed a large number of successful teams. As a project manager, you can review this list to apply ideas to your own work or to help coach partners to build strong teams.

Checklist 2.3: Characteristics of Authentic Teams

Authentic teams:
✓ are usually composed of 2 to 25 members;
✓ establish urgency, demanding performance standards and direction;
✓ select members for skill and skill potential;
✓ include members with three key skill areas: technical expertise, problem solving and decision-making;
✓ pay particular attention to first meetings and actions—initial impressions mean a great deal;
✓ set some clear rules of behavior: for example, no interruptions to take phone calls, or everyone does real work;
✓ set upon a few immediate performance-oriented tasks and goals;
✓ challenge the group regularly with fresh facts and information;
✓ spend a lot of time together—both scheduled and unscheduled; and
✓ exploit the power of positive feedback, recognition and reward.

The "From Theory to Practice" story box on the AgroEnterprise Learning Alliance of which CRS was a team member illustrates the discipline and characteristics of an authentic team.

From Theory to Practice: The Agroenterprise Learning Alliance

The Agroenterprise Learning Alliance was involved in the content and direction of CRS/Ethiopia's food-based multi-year program. It involved the head of agroenterprise within the Hararghe Catholic Secretariat (HCS); CRS/Ethiopia's program manager; the regional CRS senior technical advisor for agriculture; and scientists from the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

This team had a clear, agreed-upon purpose: to shift the emphasis from production of food for family consumption to production for sale in the market while still maintaining the ability to meet family consumption needs.

The team's work and products did not arise overnight. The team worked together on a series of workshops and action plans, which were repeated in four cycles over two years. These workshops and meetings were characterized by open discussions and active problem-solving. A popular exercise was "river crossing," which taught participants the value of teamwork. It was not a matter of discussing and delegating; the team did real work together. For example, the team described specific value chains and met with farmer groups to discuss problems and opportunities.

Leadership roles within the team have evolved. HCS now possesses great agroenterprise capacity, and its staff are important contributors to the learning alliance within the East Africa region. Recently, the HCS agroenterprise team leader spent three weeks in northern Uganda reviewing and evaluating CRS' agroenterprise program—a somewhat unique example of a CRS partner advising CRS. CIAT provided an exceptionally gifted trainer/facilitator whose dedication helped create a strong team spirit and learning attitude.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think of a project you've managed or been involved in where there was an authentic team in evidence.
2. What made this a team and not simply a working group?
3. How did this affect the project's performance?

Managing Multi-cultural Teams

Working within multi-national or multi-cultural teams may present additional challenges. Not understanding cultural factors (language fluency, status around educational levels, age, power, caste, beliefs, courtesies, gender roles, etc.) and differences in organizational culture may lead to problems in team management.

From Theory to Practice: A Culturally Inappropriate Team Exercise

In one project team meeting in India, a participant volunteered to lead an energizer. He asked everyone to stand up, get in a circle, and massage the shoulders of the person in front of them. This fell totally flat; most people either giggled, milled about, or simply refused to participate. It was clear that most of the women did not want to be touched by other team members. Note that the participant who proposed the activity was himself from India! He gracefully made a joke that helped everyone overcome their embarrassment, and then the group returned to their work.

Although many CRS project managers arrive with considerable cross-cultural experience, the "From Theory to Practice" story from India shows that everyone—even people within their own country or community—can benefit from learning more about the culture and people they work with. There are different sub-cultures within seemingly homogenous settings. Be very careful about assuming that you know how to manage multi-cultural teams. Simple things, such as what you wear or how you address people, can show respect—or inadvertently show disrespect. **Learn about locally appropriate ways to show respect and effectively communicate by carefully observing, asking national staff and reading.** For example, if you notice that you are the only one wearing blue jeans in the office, consider more appropriate formal clothes. You might have to spend more time establishing team norms and helping staff to practice them (e.g., ensuring that women and younger staff members have an equal opportunity to speak up and be heard).

CRS' partners of preference are Church organizations and their social service networks. CRS and these partners are linked together through the values of the Catholic Church and a shared vision of peace and justice. Be aware of and sensitive to the cultural and organizational culture issues specific to these partners. Checklist 2.4 contains suggestions made by Church partners.

Checklist 2.4: Suggestions for CRS Staff on Working with Church Partners

✓ Understand the Church hierarchy and how things work.
✓ Learn the appropriate titles for Church officials.
✓ Understand the role and place of pastoral work in the mission of the local Caritas or Church organization.
✓ Respect that they never intend to leave the area where they work.
✓ Maintain a relationship even if there are no projects jointly implemented. Aim for a long-term, strategic relationship.

A review of the five dimensions of how culture affects organizational behavior in *Section 1, pp. 20-23* can also help you to understand better the behavior of colleagues and partners.

Reflection Opportunity

1. What cultural mistakes have you made in the course of belonging to or managing a project team within CRS?
2. What did you learn?
3. How did you apply this knowledge afterwards in other project management situations?

Managing Cross-sectoral and Cross-departmental Teams

Many projects involve staff from multiple sectors who may view problems and work differently. Clear coordination and clearly-defined roles and responsibilities will help focus team members on common interests.

From Theory to Practice: Promoting the Common Interest

> In one high-profile emergency response project, CRS was under pressure to rebuild community infrastructure. In their work with local community organizations, the shelter team had a short-term perspective: They were interested in getting shelter built as fast as possible. The civil society team, on the other hand, wanted a broader and longer-term relationship with local communities; they wanted more time to hold community meetings and understand community dynamics before project work began. It was a significant challenge for the project manager to bring these sectoral teams together.

The CRS Financial Management Strategy states that successful financial management calls for inclusion, communication, and active participation of finance staff in project management and implementation. In some CRS Country Programs, there is little communication, sharing, and interaction among program and finance staff in project planning and implementation.

Reflection Opportunity

1. How well did finance staff participate in various stages of the project cycle for the project you currently manage?
2. Where and how might this be strengthened to promote authentic cross-departmental teams?

Managing Virtual Teams

Virtual teams are composed of members who work in different and sometimes distant geographic locations. According to CRS/Europe and Middle East (EME), the usual difficulties of managing teams in terms of communication, working together, and producing results may be amplified in virtual situations where informal meetings in the hallway are not possible. Effective virtual team management includes all the usual fundamentals with increased emphasis on organization, communication and interpersonal skills. EME has produced a Virtual Team Toolkit that includes advice and tips (e.g., how to come to virtual consensus via e-mail). This toolkit can help strengthen project management when the team stretches across different locations.
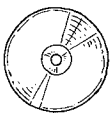
Checklist 2.5: Tips from the Virtual Team Toolkit

✓ Ensure that work plans are accurate, up-to-date, and accessible to all team members.
✓ Respond quickly to phone and e-mail messages. If you cannot provide a quick response, acknowledge receipt of the request and let the person know when a response can be expected.
✓ Commit to regular phone check-ins to see how things are going and what support is needed from you.

Managing Difficulties within Teams

A **difficult team member** displays behavior that **negatively affects the team's productivity or cohesiveness** in terms of openness, trust, commitment, and participation. Don't become alarmed too early—initial interactions may be quite different than later ones. But, if the behavior does not subside or becomes severe, think about doing something. Your goal is to reduce, alter, or eliminate the undesirable behaviors without hurting self-esteem. Never verbally scold or embarrass the individual either in front of the group or privately. The actions listed in Checklist 2.6 can help.

Checklist 2.6: Managing a Difficult Team Member
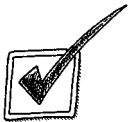
✓ Seek to find out what is behind the behavior by talking to the person in private. This team member's behavior may reflect a legitimate problem with how the team is functioning or how it is being facilitated.

✓ Correct dominating behavior during meetings by being direct but tactful. Say, "You have made several contributions; I want to hear how others see this issue."

✓ Use informal, respected leaders to intervene tactfully.

✓ Ask the team to self-analyze group dynamics and bring negative behaviors to the surface for discussion.

(Source: Hackett and Martin 1993)

Tools and Technologies for Teams

A staple tool for team work is a flip chart or whiteboard. Both are used to record ideas, possible solutions, comparisons, and decisions. They help focus a team on the discussion, record progress, and encourage participation and involvement by recording people's ideas and remarks. Other tools are laptops and projectors, which can be used to keep records that can be displayed and visible to all team members.

New technologies that facilitate the work of teams across geographic borders include Sharepoint, Breeze, Voice Over Internet Protocols (VOIP), and WebLogs (Blogs). These can be especially useful for CRS projects that span borders and involve large numbers of partners as illustrated in the "From Theory to Practice" box describing the AIDSRelief project.

From Theory to Practice: AIDSRelief and New Technologies

CRS is the lead agency of a five-member consortium that implements the AIDSRelief Project. This five-year project's objective is to provide people in nine countries living with HIV & AIDS access to high-quality antiretroviral therapy and medical care. Given the project's complexity (five members, nine countries), AIDSRelief is using SharePoint and Breeze to work together.

The SharePoint website allows staff to post rough drafts of documents, such as progress reports and assessment tools, and to create discussion boards for staff in member agencies and across countries to provide feedback. Everyone can find the latest version, and this eliminated concerns about people not getting copied on e-mails, or large documents clogging in-boxes. Workspaces were also created for each country that include calendars, work plans, and shared documents. This helps staff across countries to plan and work better together.

Breeze technology has especially helped to improve communication. For example, a budget issue arose during detailed implementation planning. E-mails were flying between CRS headquarters and a CRS Country Program in Africa. CRS headquarters staff even thought they would have to travel to the country to resolve the problem. Instead, they tried Breeze. Breeze allowed them to post a PowerPoint presentation on the issue. Both parties were able to see, discuss, and work on the budget together at the same time. This allowed them to clear up the miscommunication and finalize the DIP without having to hold a face-to-face meeting.

FACILITATING, COACHING AND MENTORING

Facilitators are responsible for structuring teams, groups, or task forces and their activities to attain a particular objective. They help transform groups of individuals into effective teams by organizing, communicating, and paying attention to group dynamics. They begin by creating an environment of respect and safety. They emphasize active listening and encourage a team to plan, organize, and monitor. They are patient and must have a special sense of timing (i.e., they know when to push and when not to). Facilitation skills are vital for project managers.

Checklist 2.7 contains examples of the types of actions a strong facilitator would demonstrate. Place a check next to the ones you excel at, and note the ones you need to work on.

Checklist 2.7: Actions of Strong Facilitators

- ✓ planning for a team meeting
- ✓ knowing how to ask questions
- ✓ being an active listener
- ✓ encouraging open communication
- ✓ encouraging team problem-solving
- ✓ encouraging team decision-making
- ✓ sharing information through progress review meetings
- ✓ giving feedback
- ✓ communicating expectations clearly
- ✓ striving for consensus decision-making
- ✓ tolerating and managing conflict
- ✓ motivating through praise and achievement

(Source: Hackett and Martin 1993)

Coaching is an overall management approach that focuses on increasing capabilities of people. As a project manager, you will probably be called upon to coach colleagues and partner staff. Coaching is not giving orders or teaching people how to get things done. Instead, coaching provides a support system.

Coaches **may also be mentors** depending on their expertise and experience. A mentor performs the role of a counselor, offering helpful problem-solving advice. A mentor's advice must be backed up with past achievement and rich and diverse real-life work experiences. They must also understand how to pass on their experience to others. People or partners being mentored must be receptive to the ideas being offered. Good mentors offer up suggestions and pose alternatives but refrain, as much as possible, from telling others what to do.

The most effective way to coach is to observe the partner or person in action and then provide specific, useful feedback. Feedback can include examples of behaviors or performance that are good or that should be changed.

Skilled coaches ask incisive questions that help people to think more critically and analytically (Bossidy and Charan 2002). For example, meet with high-achieving partners to dissect success. How did their preparation, skills, and attitudes contribute to the success? Recognize these partners for their ingenuity and creativity. Negative performance results, mistakes or lapses should also be examined and analyzed for lessons learned. In your coaching role, discuss how these lessons apply to the next steps of the project.

Capable partners need coaching and support too. CRS can work with strong partners to seek ways that both organizations can grow and improve.

Reflection Opportunity

Instead of playing the role of a coach, some CRS project managers take on the role of a referee—communicating with partners only when there is a problem.

1. Identify when you have observed a CRS project manager playing the role of a referee and compare that to the role of a coach as described above.
2. What happened? How did this affect both the project and the partner relationship?

COMMUNICATING

- **Communicates honestly and respectfully.**
- **Shares information on a timely and directed basis.**
- **Communicates openly with individuals and communities on issues that affect them.**
- **Provides constructive feedback to others to improve individual and team performance.**
- **Seeks and appreciates constructive feedback from others.**
- **Demonstrates careful attention to what information others need to do their jobs.**

—CRS Values-Based Behaviors

Effective communication is one of the keys to strong partnerships and to successful projects. This requires a commitment to regular dialogue and not just isolated conversations. Regular project review meetings to share experiences, document lessons learned, and develop specific, actionable recommendations can be quarterly events linked to project planning. (See *Chapter VI, Section 3, pp. 197-200* for more information on project review meetings.) Country Programs that have been holding such meetings for several years now see the fruits of their efforts, including increased involvement in detailed implementation planning, effective M&E systems, and smoother project implementation.

Learning to Listen

According to Drucker (1992), one of the most basic competencies of a manager is the willingness, ability, and self-discipline to listen. As he puts it, "Anyone can do it. All you have to do is keep your mouth shut!" That said, listening requires effort. It is very easy to let your mind drift while listening to someone. What a person says and what we hear can be amazingly different. One solution is active listening. **Active listening involves encouraging, summarizing and paraphrasing.** Table 2.6 summarizes ways to listen actively.

Table 2.6: Ways to Improve Active Listening

Encouraging	Use facial expressions, body language and comments to encourage speakers to say more. Be mindful, however, of cultural differences when using non-verbal cues.
Summarizing	When appropriate, verbalize the key elements of the conversation up to that point.
Paraphrasing	Using your own words, reflect what the speaker is saying and feeling. This is not "putting words in people's mouths" but rather respectfully ensuring that you have really understood what the person is trying to get across or experiencing. The speaker can then acknowledge your understanding or correct it. Paraphrasing can be very useful when clarifying a problem.

Highly skilled facilitators know how to ask questions. This ability is very relevant to project managers in their role as coaches. Facilitators know and use categories of questions that promote greater participation by others. These are listed in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7: Questions Facilitators Ask

Question Categories	Examples
Open-ended questions are those that cannot be answered with a single word or phrase, such as yes or no. Open questions are very powerful because they stimulate thinking, encourage greater discussions, and discourage people from prematurely taking definitive positions on issues not yet thoroughly discussed. They typically start with how, what or why.	• How do the rest of you feel about this? • How will this solution affect you? • What are your observations? • What might happen if we don't solve the problem? • Our monitoring data show a slowdown in attendance. Why do you think this is happening?
Greater Response Questions are an adaptation of an open-ended question. They help draw out greater information. They use words such as describe, tell and explain.	• Could you tell us more about the women's responses to the training?
Redirection Questions help involve other team members. If a team member asks you a question, you might respond by appropriately redirecting the question.	• This relates to what Helen suggested earlier. Helen, what are your thoughts?
Feedback and Clarification Questions. At certain times, facilitators need to bring closure or clarification to a topic.	• Where are we? Will someone summarize our position?
Close-ended Questions are typically answered in a yes, no or short response. Closed questions are legitimate and serve a clear purpose (e.g., clarification) but may be asked too frequently by inexperienced facilitators.	• What was the rate? • Is the task clear? • Would you like to stop now or continue tomorrow morning?

(Source: Hackett and Martin 1993)

Reflection Opportunity

1. Consider this question: "Isn't the Proframe helpful to you in project design and monitoring?" Why is this a leading question?
2. How would you transform it into an open question following the guidance in Table 2.7?

Get Out, Walk Around and Socialize

Where do you actively listen? If it occurs only in your office, think about how this affects your management of projects. Project managers are most likely out of touch with the realities of the project's implementation if they do not make the effort to know what is happening or only interact when they have to. **Frequent and direct communication** allows you to find out what is

and is not working; how people feel about the project; and how staff and project participants are approaching implementation. It helps to identify problems before they occur or get worse. You can do this informally by following the actions in Checklist 2.8.

Checklist 2.8: How to Increase Listening and Communication Opportunities

✓ Walk around your office once a day.
✓ Get out to the field to talk with partners and project participants.
✓ Have an occasional lunch with staff or partners to get to know them and discuss mutual concerns.
✓ Don't limit yourself to talks with high-level colleagues or partner staff. Talk to drivers and project participants, for example, and get their views and opinions.
✓ Take part in social events with staff, such as weddings, funerals, child-naming ceremonies, etc. This breaks down status barriers within the office.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think about a project that you are currently managing. How do you actively listen and learn about what is happening? List all the ways, and be specific.
2. Now review your list. Can you add to the "get out, walk around and socialize" checklist? What might you start doing that is feasible?

Communicating Clearly and Promoting Dialogue

In addition to listening, **a second key competency for communication is the willingness to make yourself understood**. Drucker (1992) writes that far too many managers believe that what they do and why they do it must be obvious to everyone involved in the project. It never is. Far too many believe that when they announce things, everyone understands. No one does, as a rule. Effective managers spend time making themselves understood and clearly communicating their expectations to staff or partners. Clear communication enables people to be self-directed, provides a context for feedback and evaluation, and promotes confidence and trust.

Communication mechanisms within project management include telephone, e-mail, face-to-face meetings, meeting minutes, presentations, meeting or evaluation reports, progress reports and other items. There are many web-based resources that provide information to improve skills in developing and making presentations or using PowerPoint slides. See the *Related Reading* list at the end of this section for more resources.

Face-to-Face Communication

In face-to-face communication, only a very small percent of emotional meaning is conveyed by words—the rest is communicated by gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, and other non-verbal cues.

What is the project manager in the workshop illustration really saying? People will more often believe non-verbal communication even when it contradicts what is being communicated verbally.
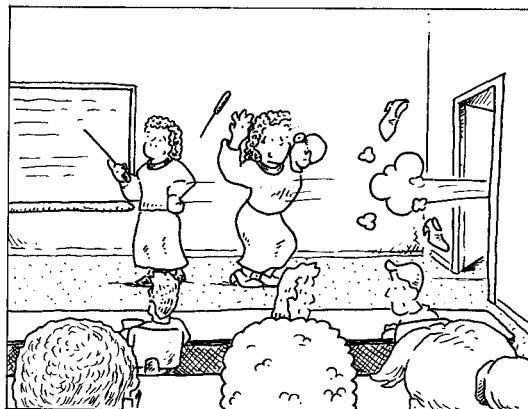
E-mail Communication

E-mails do not have non-verbal communication to supplement or clarify what is written. It is easy to offend or hurt someone via e-mail, so it is important to be as clear, concise and polite as possible. Checklist 2.9 offers suggestions for e-mail etiquette.

Checklist 2.9: E-mail Etiquette

✓ Keep the e-mail brief so that readers do not have to scroll.
✓ Write a specific subject title so that the recipient knows what to expect. Write "May 2 HIV/AIDS project review meeting" not "meeting."
✓ Label attached files with appropriate details. Write "Progress Report Peacebuilding in Mindanao January – December 2004" not "donor report."
✓ Create a mailing group to avoid scrolling through names and to respect anonymity.
✓ Do not send large attachments unless you are sure the recipient's system can handle them.
✓ Watch out for venting emotions online. Before sending an e-mail ask: Would I say this to the person's face? How would I feel if I got this e-mail message?
✓ Avoid sending e-mails about sensitive topics when misinterpretation could have serious consequences. Examples are: disciplinary action, concerns about colleagues, or complaints.

Emergency Program Telecommunications
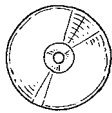
In emergency programs where CRS operates in remote areas, access to telephone networks may not exist or may be unreliable. Emergency Telecommunications: A Manual for the Management of Emergency Telecommunications by the CRS Emergency Response Team provides guidelines for CRS staff on setting up appropriate autonomous telecommunications networks. The manual is also available on the CRS Intranet.

Dialogue versus Discussion

Dialogue is a key skill of people who seek to foster a genuine learning environment or organization. Dialogue is more than two-way communication: **it involves sharing experiences, appreciating others' perspectives, listening carefully and learning from others.** One difference between a simple discussion and dialogue is the degree to which people speaking in the group are engaged. Project managers can encourage dialogue among project staff, partners, participants and other stakeholders as a part of organizational learning.

Giving Effective Feedback

Feedback is when you tell someone (a colleague, someone you supervise or a partner staff member) **your perceptions about how they are performing on a timely and ongoing basis.** It includes both positive and corrective observations and is given outside of any formal performance review process.

One of the CRS Management Quality Principles is that all CRS staff give and receive feedback constructively. **Clear and direct feedback** provided to CRS colleagues or subordinates **reduces uncertainty, solves problems, builds trust, strengthens relationships and improves work quality.** Positive feedback, when authentic, is a superb, simple, and no-cost tool to motivate staff members.

With all of these advantages, feedback must be used frequently, right? Wrong. It is surprising how little feedback is actually practiced. This may happen because most people perceive any kind of feedback as criticism and make it hard for even well-intentioned project managers to want to give it again. Another reason is that when things go well, we often forget to affirm good work through feedback. Breaking this cycle means learning how to do it well and learning to be less defensive (Magretta 2002).

Reflection Opportunity

1. Do you regularly provide positive or constructive feedback to colleagues or staff members you supervise?
2. If so, what benefits, if any, have you observed?
3. If you don't provide feedback, why not?

If you have never provided feedback to colleagues, staff members you supervise, or partners, see the specific guidelines on giving and receiving feedback included in *Chapter VI, Section 5, pp. 209-212.*

DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Not having enough time to design, plan or monitor projects is a frequent complaint. Time management issues may relate to overambitious proposals or DIPs; continually developing unreasonable workloads; spending too much time on details and trivia; holding poorly run meetings; failing to delegate; hiring the wrong person for the job; not investing enough in relationship-building from the beginning; or any number of other reasons.

Doing a DIP to tame an overly ambitious proposal and carefully hiring the talent needed for project management and implementation can help. These topics are covered in *Chapters III, IV,* and *V*. If any of the time management issues are related to difficulties prioritizing day-to-day tasks, holding poorly-run meetings, or failing to delegate, the guidelines below can help improve efficiency.

Learning How to Manage Time

Keep an activity log to analyze where your time goes. Activity logs help analyze how you actually spend your time; memory alone is a very poor guide. Decide on a time unit, such as 30-minute intervals. Throughout the day, jot down what you are doing during each interval, and be honest. If you are daydreaming or drinking tea, write it down—no one will know but you! At the end of the day, summarize your activities into categories. You may be alarmed to see the length of time you spend on low-value jobs. You may also see that you are energetic during some parts of the day but flat during others.

Now, use your log to identify what's keeping you from getting things done. Reviewing Checklist 2.10 may help you reduce some of these time wasters.

Checklist 2.10: Time Management Tips

✓ Minimize time wasters like unnecessary phone calls, desk clutter, unscheduled meetings, and constant checking of e-mail.
✓ Say "no" firmly but gracefully to requests when you feel overwhelmed.
✓ Schedule your time each day with room for the unexpected.
✓ Block out some time to do your most important tasks at the time of day when you work best.
✓ Better estimate the time it takes to do things.
✓ Take the time to do it right the first time; you won't waste time doing it over.
✓ Finish what you start. Don't jump from one thing to another, leaving a string of unfinished tasks behind.
✓ Don't keep paper on your desk or office just in case. File it, and when in doubt, throw it out.
✓ Have a plan for how you spend your time and follow it. If it doesn't work, change it.
✓ Set aside a magic hour each week and do five things you've been putting off.

(Source: Jud 2005; www.mindtools.com)

Prioritizing

One key to time management is the ability to **set the right priorities and get them done**. According to Drucker (1992), the largest time waster in the world is to become absolutely efficient in doing something that shouldn't be done at all! Simply writing and prioritizing a daily or weekly to-do list can help improve time management.

Checklist 2.11: How to Prepare a To-Do List

✓ Review (for example) the DIP Activity Schedule, and mark the activities you are responsible for or the work objectives that you've set.

✓ List the things you need to do over the course of the day or week to accomplish these objectives in any order that they occur to you.

✓ When you complete the list, immediately assign priorities.

✓ Decide if there are any items you can delegate or re-direct to others.

✓ Once you've prioritized, start with the items at the top of your list.

How do you prioritize to-do items? Most people's priorities depend on deadlines, the source of the request (partners, project participants, your supervisor or others), the possibility of incurring costs, the politics of the situation, and other such factors. When it seems you have too many priorities, ask yourself the following questions to identify those few things that need to get done today.

• Which respond most to the needs of an important project stakeholder (a donor, partner, project participants or others)?

• What is the gravity of the consequences of not doing this?

• Which will provide the biggest payoff for the effort?

Think About It ... **Are You a Prisoner of E-mail?**

Don't let yourself become a prisoner of e-mail traffic or other office busy-ness. This prisoner status often results in constantly postponed field visits, trip reports that just never get written or detailed implementation planning that just can not get done. Focus on your project's IRs and SOs, and partner relationships. This will help you to prioritize activities central to your project's success.

Scheduling

Scheduling is the process of looking at the time available to you and planning how to use it to achieve objectives and the prioritized activities you've identified. Diaries, desk calendars, personal digital assistants (PDAs) or other organizers are helpful scheduling tools. Checklist 2.12 provides guidance on how to schedule time.

Checklist 2.12: How to Schedule Your Time

✓ Make time for scheduling at the start of each day, week or month.

✓ Block time out on your calendar for your work, not just for meetings.

✓ Block in the actions you absolutely must do so that your project stays on track (meetings, planning, etc.).

✓ Review your to-do list and schedule in the high-priority, urgent activities.

✓ Block in contingency time based on your experience.

✓ Whatever time left is your discretionary time (i.e., time available to accomplish other priorities).

If your discretionary time is too limited, review your to-do list and project work priorities. Are your work priorities too ambitious? Can you delegate something? If not, you may need to renegotiate your workload.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Which of the time management ideas, tips, or guidance above is MOST relevant and culturally appropriate in your project management situation?
2. Which would be easy for you to implement, and why?
3. Which would be more difficult to implement, and why?

Learning How to Run Effective Meetings

Meetings are a key mechanism to communicate with partners and other project stakeholders. In CRS project management work, the costs of holding meetings can be very high: It may mean flying to remote areas of a country or making a big investment in time and logistics to gather a variety of project stakeholders together. Improving your skills in running meetings will make these costs well worth it.
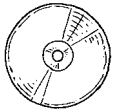
If your meetings tend to be virtual, consult the <u>Virtual Team Toolkit</u> manual for guidance. Also consider Breeze or other technologies mentioned earlier in this section.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think of the best-run project meeting you ever attended. Note what made it so good.
2. Think of the worst-run project meeting you ever attended. Note what made it so bad.
3. After you read the next section, compare your answers to the information presented. What do you agree with based on your own experience? What would you add?

Organizing and Hosting a Meeting

First, decide if you need a meeting at all! Groups are not good for organizing large amounts of data or for writing reports. Individuals do those things better. Meetings are also not appropriate for confidential issues that can't be shared. Meetings are good for brainstorming, exchanging opinions and information, identifying problems, discussing issues and making final decisions. If you need a meeting, prepare it well using the guidelines in Checklist 2.13.

Checklist 2.13: Meeting Preparation Tips

✓ Clearly define the purpose of the meeting and why this group of people is involved.
✓ Prepare an agenda of topics to be covered with enough time scheduled for each topic
✓ Clarify procedures (brainstorming, other) that will be used.
✓ Choose a meeting time that is convenient and appropriate.
✓ Share the agenda with meeting participants well in advance.
✓ Gather all necessary materials (documents, audiovisual support) before the meeting starts.
✓ Clarify roles (who is facilitating, recording, etc.).
✓ Set ground rules or norms.

(Source: Vella 1995)

You can also help ensure that the five major causes of poor meetings are eliminated by following the solutions in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8: Five Major Causes of Poor Meetings

Causes	Solutions
Late-starting meetings	Arrive early, and get organized. Be assertive, and start on time. If meetings begin late, you are rewarding tardy participants and penalizing on-time participants!
Wandering from the Agenda and a Tendency to Gripe	Set the purpose, agenda, and schedule of the meeting, checking that people agree. Tactfully refocus the group back on the agenda purpose and current item.
Failure to End Meetings on Time	Always indicate the ending time on the meeting notification, and end meetings at the designated time.
Lack of Summary	Summarize the action or decision after each agenda item and at the end of the meeting. Indicate timeframes and responsibilities for each action item.
Lack of Minutes	Use flip chart sheets as minutes. Take five minutes to record selective major actions, decisions, and assignments. Make it the norm to distribute this the next day or earlier!

(Source: Hackett and Martin 1993)

Preparing the Meeting Room

If team members are not comfortable, they will not focus on the objective. Irritations may include temperature, noise, lighting, seating, or ventilation. Dirty or untidy rooms, insufficient supplies, and missing or broken equipment also affect the quality of a meeting. The room's arrangement is essential to group effectiveness. Seating people in rows can unknowingly promote hierarchical relationships. Consider using a circle or small table arrangement. Teams with lots of documents need tables, and people should be able to see each other easily.
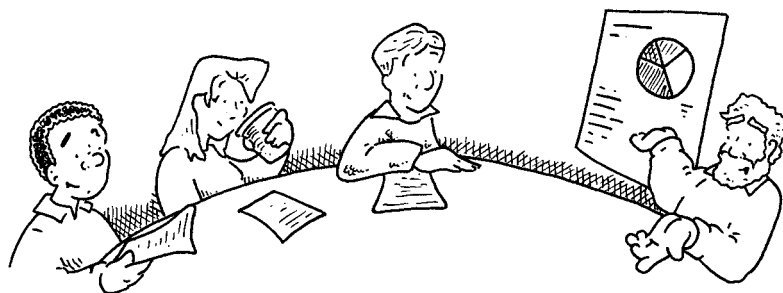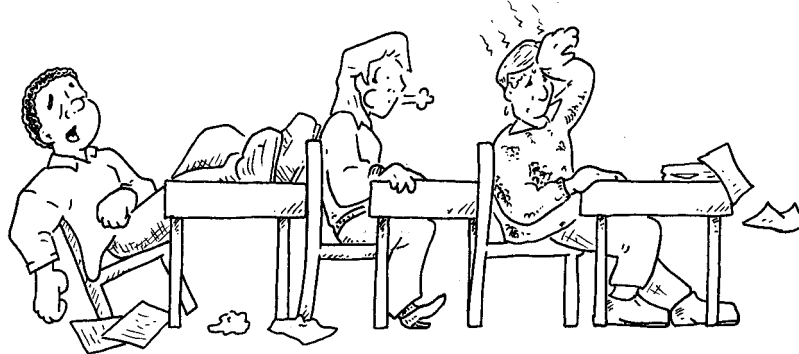
Learning How to Delegate

Empower staff through opportunities for growth, development, leadership and delegation of appropriate authority and responsibility.

—CRS Values-Based Behaviors

The CRS Guiding Principle of Subsidiarity, discussed in *Chapter I, pp. 6-7,* guides the agency strategy of working with partners. The following information applies to the CRS value-based behavior of appropriately delegating to project staff you supervise as a project manager.

It is not true that, "If you want something done right, do it yourself!" Failure to delegate may be caused by problematic attitudes or fears, such as "If the person I delegate to messes up, I'll be blamed! When I delegate I lose control. What I delegate never seems to get done the way I want (Jud 2005)!"

Delegating can improve your own efficiency in project management because it allows you to concentrate on other tasks. In addition, by delegating the right task to the right project stakeholder, you are giving that person or group an opportunity to show off their skills, develop initiative and handle responsibility.

Checklist 2.14 includes helpful guidelines on delegating.

Checklist 2.14: How to Delegate Productively

✓ Select the right person for the job and then allow that person enough room to do it. Talented staff should have opportunities to come up with their own ideas to address problems or implement solutions.
✓ Agree on the results you want the person to produce. These can be set as part of performance expectations.
✓ Ensure that the person has all the materials, equipment, and other resources to complete the task and achieve the result.
✓ Specify the authority that that person has to make decisions and ensure that this is clearly and mutually understood.
✓ Identify how progress or results will be measured.
✓ Don't relinquish all control and hope the job gets done somehow. Set mutually agreed upon timelines and deadlines and periodically follow-up to make sure the task gets done and done right.
✓ Develop an appropriate agreement about the above decisions.

(Source: Adapted from Jud training materials 2005)

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think about the last job responsibility or task you delegated to a subordinate.
2. How did you apply the above guidelines? Which did you follow-up on? Which did you tend to ignore?
3. What were the consequences?

DECISION-MAKING

- **CRS entrusts decision-making to those who have the best understanding of the issue.**
- **CRS staff build the shortest path to good decisions.**

—CRS Values-Based Behaviors

Throughout the project cycle, you and other project stakeholders take decisions. Which problem or opportunity should be addressed? Which project strategy is best? Which project staff should be hired? If monitoring reveals problems, what project activities need rethinking? Avoiding tough decisions means problems will fester and become even more difficult to resolve.

Decision-making isn't a matter of arriving at a right or wrong answer—it's a matter of selecting the most effective course of action from among less effective courses of action. Your role as a CRS project manager is to **facilitate a process to make well-justified decisions**, not to impose them! If you and project partners are well prepared, have a clear grasp of the issue, the options, and the consequences; then act and take a decision. **Use data and common sense**. For most decisions, consult appropriate project stakeholders so that collective knowledge, experience. and judgment of the group are pooled.

On the other hand, don't analyze a problem to death. It is cowardice to postpone a decision until another unnecessary study is completed. **All decisions involve some degree of risk,** and managers are paid to make decisions where the rules aren't clear (Reynolds et al. 1993).

There is no best way to make a decision. Considerations linked to the appropriate decision-making approach are in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9: Choosing an Appropriate Decision-making Approach

Decision-making Approach	Rationale
Team leader makes a decision and communicates it to the group.	• Little time to make the decision without adverse impact. • Group is likely to support and implement the decision.
Gather input from individuals, and then team leader makes the decision.	• Need expert opinion to make informed decisions. • Team interests are represented by selected individuals.
Gather input from group meeting, and then team leader uses input to make decision.	• Very important decision to many people. • Synergy may provide good options. • Opportunity to build common understanding of situation and groundwork for implementation.
Entire group reaches a decision that everyone understands, can support, and is willing to implement. If agreement cannot be reached within the time allowed, a fall-back decision-making option is used (consensus).	• Change requires complete understanding and buy-in. • Need expertise of entire team to design effective change. • Team is experienced in consensus process.

(Source: Adapted from Training Resources Group, undated)

Reaching Consensus

Making decisions by consensus has many advantages in strengthening partner relations over the course of project management. It can encourage teamwork and create equity and ownership.

Consensus building is a process that does the following:

- provides true agreement about a plan, approach, or steps to be taken;
- actively engages people in the process; and
- results in people saying, "My view has been accurately heard," and "I will support the decision even though it may not be my first preference."

Consensus is the voluntary giving of consent—a win/win situation. It's different from voting, which is a win/lose situation. Again, as per Table 2.9, know when to use consensus and when not to. **Judiciously use consensus for decision-making, and ensure it is well done.** Don't use consensus as a smoke-screen to avoid making tough decisions! Applying it blindly to any project decision that needs to be made will result in paralysis and contribute to wasting time in meetings. Table 2.10 includes guidelines for coming to consensus in a meeting.

Table 2.10: How to Reach Consensus in a Meeting

In general the meeting should:	• Provide a climate and structure that views conflict as inevitable on the way to consensus. • Emphasize fact over opinion. • Encourage negotiation and collaboration. • Use structured exercises to work through the process.
Before the group meets:	• Ensure that the right people are going to be at the meeting. Involve those who are affected by the decision, those implementing it, and those whose support is necessary for implementation. • Ensure that everyone is prepared to achieve the purpose of the meeting. • Communicate a clear idea why this group is coming together and what will be done.
During the meeting:	• Be clear about "what it is we're trying to get done." Keep this common purpose clearly in front of the group. Verify agreement that "this is what we are trying to get done." • Ask for ideas about how the issue or problem could be addressed. Use open-ended questions. Track ideas on flip chart or whiteboard. Use summarizing skills to review different ideas. • Provide opportunities for clarification. This is NOT debate on the question, but clarifying the proposed ideas to be discussed. • Check for agreement on any of the proposed ideas. If all agree at this point, summarize the agreement and adjourn the meeting. • Identify and discuss concerns with each proposed idea. Summarize points and clarify differences. List concerns on flip chart or whiteboard. • Combine parts of ideas or develop new ideas to meet concerns. • Test for agreement/work to resolve disagreements. Summarize what you see as the "evolving" decision. When it seems tough, ask: "Do you agree that this is the best solution that we can develop together?" or "Based on this discussion and our need to take action, can you agree to this as a practical solution, perhaps not ideal but achievable?" • Resolve disagreement by going around and asking each person to state what decision they would recommend or asking people to review the main reason that's keeping them from agreement. • Gauge when the group has talked about something enough. Too much discussion causes a group to lose interest. Signs that you've reached this point include that points or arguments begin to get repeated without any new knowledge or ideas and that individuals have had a reasonable amount of input.

Consensus is achieved when each individual involved can nod yes to these questions:	• Will you agree this is the next step? • Can you live with this position? • Are you comfortable with this course of action? • Can you support this alternative?

NEGOTIATING AND MANAGING CONFLICT

In the course of project management, there are inevitable disagreements and conflicts that arise given the number and diversity of stakeholders involved. Returning to the idea of "know thyself" as a manager, you might begin by studying how you respond to conflict. The Caritas Peacebuilding manual (2002) includes a Personal Conflict Style Inventory on pages 131–35. Answering the questions in this inventory allows you to find out more about your preferred style of conflict management. There is no right or wrong style; particular situations may make different styles more or less appropriate. The Peacebuilding manual defines these five styles as shown in Table 2.11.

Table 2.11: Five Styles of Conflict Management

Collaborating/Cooperating	Conflict seen as natural and neutral, so you tend to affirm differences, prize each person's uniqueness, and recognize contrasts in viewpoints. You assert your views while inviting others; welcome differences; identify concerns and search for mutual agreement.
Compromising	Conflict seen as a mutual difference best resolved by cooperation and compromise. If each comes halfway, progress can be made. You tend to urge moderation, bargain, and find a little something for everyone.
Accommodating	Conflict seen as disastrous, so important to yield, put relationships first, keep the peace at any price. You tend to let the other view prevail, give in, acknowledge error.
Avoiding	You see conflict as hopeless, so you avoid it. You tend to delay or avoid responses, withdraw, be inaccessible, or divert attention.
Forcing	You see conflict as obvious, and the central issue is finding out who is right. You tend to control the outcome, discourage disagreement, and insist that your view prevail.

Behave in an emotionally intelligent manner (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills).
     —*CRS Values-Based Behaviors*

There are other models and theories to increase awareness of how one manages conflict, such as Transactional Analysis described in *I'm OK, You're OK* by Thomas A. Harris (1976).

Some disagreements can disintegrate into a situation where each of the project stakeholders tries to prevail through a win/lose confrontation. In such confrontations, there is always a winner and a loser. In long-term relationships, these kinds of win/lose confrontations can jeopardize the relationship itself (Jud 2005).

Negotiating agreement is a way of managing conflicts and resolving differences that promotes a win/win outcome. It uses a step-by-step process described in Table 2.12.

Table 2.12: Four Steps to Negotiating Agreement

Step One: Separate people from the problem.	Acknowledge feelings and emotions as legitimate and allow people to express their anger. Use active listening skills. Encourage people to see differences as a problem to be solved, rather than a battle to be won. It means that the sides join forces and collectively beat up on the problem!
Step Two: Focus on interests, not positions.	Interests are underlying needs, desires, concerns, values or fears. Positions are categorical statements that close down negotiation. Consider two people quarreling in a doctor's waiting room. One wants the window open and the other wants it closed. They bicker back and forth about this for some time. Enter the receptionist who asks one patient why she wants the window open? "To get some fresh air," she replies. And why does the other want it closed? "To avoid the draft." After thinking it over, the receptionist opens a window in the next room, bringing in fresh air without a draft. These two people were bickering over their *positions*. The receptionist focused on their underlying *interests* (i.e., fresh air and no draft)—she focused on defining the actual problem. Identify interests by asking, "Why?" Uncovering interests makes it possible to find solutions. When conflicting parties are encouraged to explore the underlying interests that caused them to settle on their positions in the first place, they are freed to explore a whole variety of mutually satisfying solutions.
Step Three: Work together to create options that will satisfy both parties.	Brainstorming is a very useful technique here as it involves idea generation (not evaluation). Look for shared interests, and help parties explore a wide number of optional solutions rather than defending one's own ideas to the death.
Step Four: Insist on using objective or mutually acceptable criteria.	The more you bring standards of fairness, efficiency, mutually agreed upon objective criteria, or scientific merit to bear, the more likely you are to find a solution that is wise and fair.

(Source: Fisher and Ury 1981; Caritas 2002)

MOTIVATING STAFF AND PARTNERS

Empower staff through opportunities for growth, development, leadership and delegation of appropriate authority and responsibility.
—*CRS Values-Based Behaviors*

Do you think that financial compensation or access to donor funds are key factors that motivate staff and partners? Studies have shown otherwise. Within organizations, no matter how generous the pay, **the key to attracting and retaining talented people depends on how well managers recognize and praise employees for good work** and how much they show interest and care for employees.

Motivating and inspiring project staff and partners energizes them and helps them to overcome major obstacles they may be facing in project implementation. Most people will work hard if you take an interest in them and their work and help them to do well. **Achievement motivates people.** It allows them to gain confidence and become better. People need to have a sense of progression and growth. Practicing delegation will foster this (Reynolds et al. 1993).

You can also shape a project environment that taps into a natural human desire called self-interest. Self-interest is not the same as selfishness. It's a vital part of humanity and what drives all of us to some extent. You can inspire commitment by synchronizing project stakeholders' personal goals or interests with those of the projects they are involved in (Nigro 2003).

Drucker (1992) suggests using **star project performers** to raise the sights, vision, expectations, and the performance capacity of others. **These staff members or partners can function as teachers of their colleagues and peers** by sharing how they achieve their outstanding results.

From Theory to Practice: Positive Deviance as a Motivational Tool

> Positive deviance involves first identifying individuals or groups who follow optimum practices, strategies, or behaviors, enabling them to find better solutions to problems than others who have access to the same resources. These individuals or groups are then enlisted to model their approaches to colleagues or peers. First used in community nutrition programs, the approach is being expanded to other capacity strengthening or behavior change settings.

To summarize, you can motivate staff and partners by doing the following:

- providing challenging and interesting assignments;
- involving people in decision-making;
- supporting people through feedback, coaching, modeling and sheer enthusiasm; and
- recognizing and rewarding all successes via feedback, public recognition, etc.

Reflection Opportunity

1. In your project management experience, what was the most effective way to motivate and energize project staff, partners and community members?
2. Why did this work so well?

RELATED READING

Following is a list of traditional and online resources available if you would like to read more about the information presented in Chapter II. Please see the Reference List located at the end of the manual for a complete list of all the resources used in ProPack II.

Section 1—Foundations of Project Management

- Drucker, P. F. 1992. *Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Principles and Practices.* New York: HarperCollins Publications. Peter Drucker is considered a management guru, and ideas from this classic book are often referred to by other management writers.

- Check in your region to see if colleagues have attended a management or leadership workshop by consultant Bob Jud. CRS has produced a set of videos and DVDs from Bob Jud's training that you may view for more information on topics in this chapter.

Websites

- http://www.acfid.asn.au/pubs/beyond_the_horizon/b_t_hprojmmt.htm
  This website (from the Australian Council for International Development) includes an excellent prioritized reading list for project managers related to management and implementation.

- http://www.ngomanager.org/index.htm
  The NGO Manager website includes management tools and research for non-profits worldwide.

- http://www.onepine.info
  The Onepine website has information on works by major management theorists along with excellent short summaries.

Section 2—Project Management and Partnerships
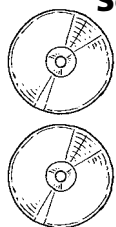
- More information on partnership phases can be found in CRS Partnership Programming Guidance (2002).

- The Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue is also an excellent resource for strengthening partnerships.

Websites

Below are useful websites for more information on Appreciative Inquiry.

- http://www.iisd.org/ai/default.htm
  This website provides information on Appreciative Inquiry and Community Development. Hosted by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), it includes information on how Appreciative Inquiry is applied in IISD's work in India and northern Canada.

- http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/nonprofit.cfm
  This website (sponsored by the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University) includes an archive of the Global Excellence in Management (GEM) initiative's website, as well as other resources and tools related to working with non-profits and NGOs.

Section 3—Essential Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for Project Managers
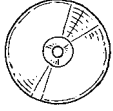
- The full list of <u>CRS Values-Based Behaviors</u> (part of CRS' Performance Management System) are included on ProPack II's CD ROM.

- As noted in Section 1, check with your Country Program or regional office to see if training materials, videos or DVDs by consultant Bob Jud are available. These materials include excellent information on delegation, time management, and other relevant skills.
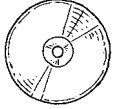
- The <u>Virtual Team Toolkit</u> by CRS/Europe/Middle East includes a reference list of other resources on virtual team management.

- The *Caritas Peacebuilding Manual* (2002) is available in most CRS Country Program and regional offices. Check with CRS' Program Quality Support Department (PQSD) for a copy if none is available in your office.

- *"Organisational Learning in NGOs: Creating the Motive, Means and Opportunity,"* by Bruce Britton (May 2005) has a comprehensive overview of organizational learning in NGOs. http://www.intrac.org/pages/PraxisPaper3.html

- A classic book on writing skills is *The Elements of Style,* William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White's *4th edition, 1999.*

Websites

- http://www.mindtools.com, http://trg-inc.com
  These practical websites have more information on topics in this chapter, although it is tailored to private sector settings.

- Useful websites include http://owl.english.purdue.edu/index.htm for writing style and grammar and http://www.bartleby.com/64/ for style, grammar, word formation, and diction.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS III-VII
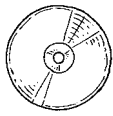
We switch gears with Chapter III. The previous chapter included overviews of theories and models of management that applied to all stages of the project cycle. Now, **we pick up where ProPack I ended.**

Much was decided, accomplished, and planned during the design and proposal development stages. The following chapters will refer back to ProPack I and your project proposal in order to link that information to the next stages of the project cycle. They will also refer to CRS policy guidelines, which will help you to ensure that relevant, existing policies inform how your projects are managed and implemented.

Chapters III–VII contain practical tools, tips and guidance for specific stages of the project cycle. Tables, checklists, sample formats and steps are extensively used.

Figure 3.1: CRS Project Cycle
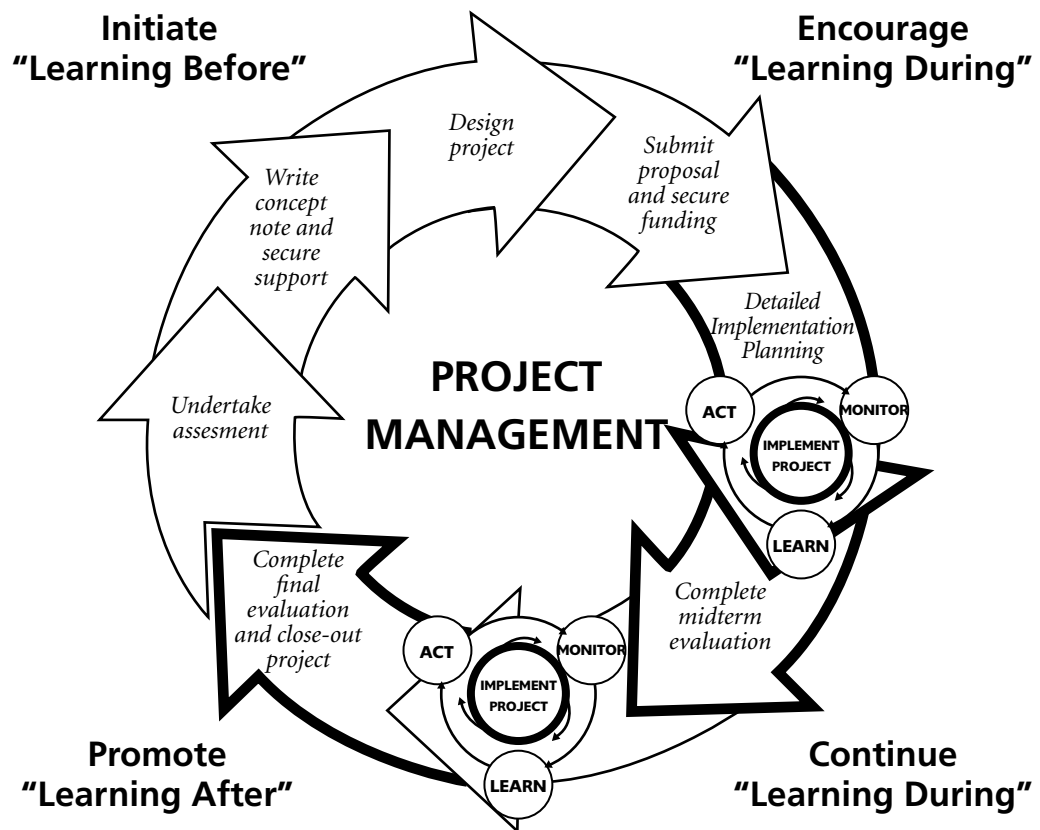
Chapter III, DIP Part A: Getting Started and Activity Scheduling provides practical tools and ideas to launch detailed implementation planning. Imagine that your project proposal was approved on Thursday. What are the first steps you need to take the following Monday morning to get your project started? Chapter III answers this question. This chapter includes three sections.

Section 1	**Introduction**
Section 2	**Initial Tasks**
Section 3	**Activity Scheduling**

Chapter IV, DIP Part B: Setting Up the M&E System is a central piece of detailed implementation planning. This chapter includes a six-step process to turn the M&E plan in your proposal into an operational M&E system that can be implemented. This chapter includes three sections**.**

Section 1	**Introduction**
Section 2	**Six Components of an M&E System**
Section 3	**Compiling the M&E Operating Manual**

Chapter V, DIP Part C: Project Resources and DIP Documentation addresses the remaining sections of a strong DIP. This chapter focuses on the planning required to manage project resources (human, financial, and material) during project implementation. It ends with a section on how to document the detailed implementation planning process, which concludes the DIP portion of the manual. This chapter includes four sections.

Section 1	**Recruiting Staff and Conducting Performance Planning**
Section 2	**Conducting Capacity Strengthening Assessments**
Section 3	**Managing Project Resources**
Section 4	**Documenting the DIP**

Chapter VI Project Implementation and Monitoring moves into the stage of the project cycle where activities are carried out in the field with partners. This chapter covers the important topic of monitoring—knowing what is happening within a project. With good monitoring information, you can respond appropriately to ensure the project is achieving its objectives on time and within cost. This chapter includes five sections.

Section 1	**Introduction**
Section 2	**Guidance for Capacity Strengthening**
Section 3	**Project Monitoring and Reporting**
Section 4	**Financial Monitoring and Reporting**
Section 5	**Performance Management**

Chapter VII Project Evaluation and Close-out includes an overview, tools and tips for planning and conducting high-quality project evaluations. It also discusses what needs to be done to close out a project. This chapter includes three sections.

Section 1	**Evaluation—Definitions and Types**
Section 2	**Guidance on Utilization-focused Evaluations**
Section 3	**Project Close-out**

CHAPTER III
DIP PART A:
GETTING STARTED AND ACTIVITY SCHEDULING

SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

Figure 3.2: DIP within the CRS Project Cycle
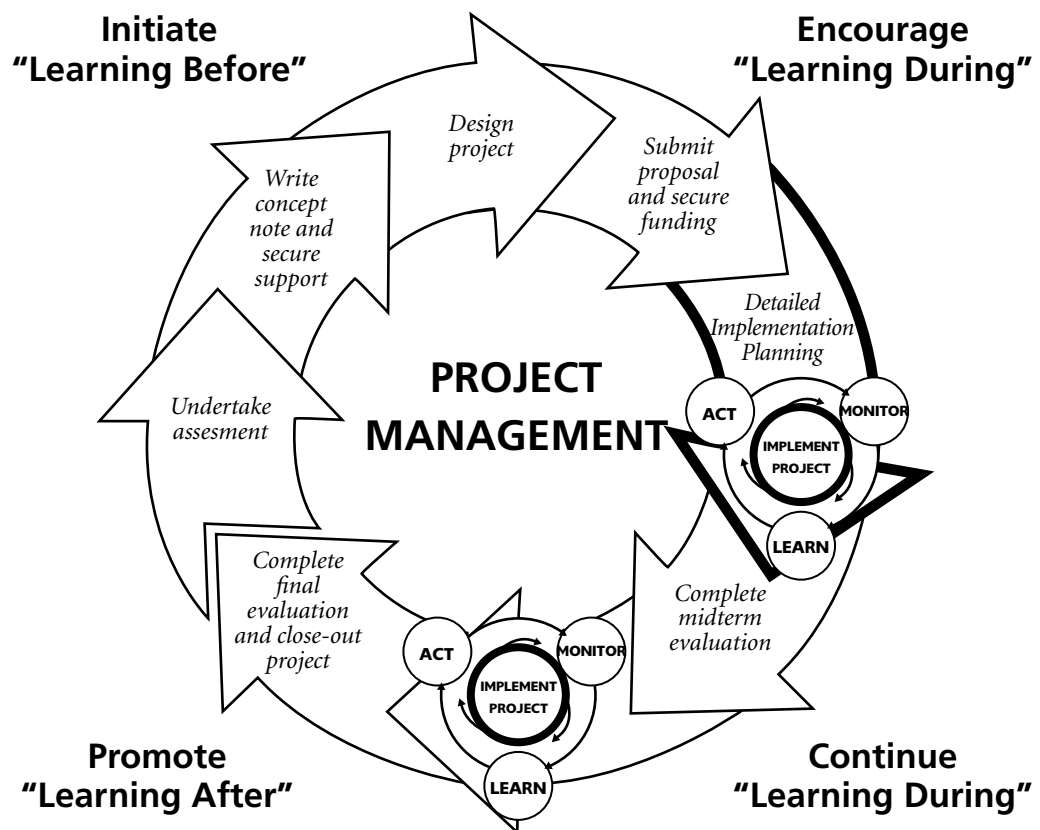
SECTION OVERVIEW

Once your project proposal is approved, it is time to verify what exactly will be done, who will do it and when, what resources are needed, and how implementation progress will be monitored.

In Section 1, you will do the following:

- consider the importance of detailed implementation planning;
- examine the link between project proposals and DIPs; and
- consider the importance of engaging a variety of stakeholders in detailed planning.

Read the "From Theory to Practice" story on Failing to Plan, and then answer the questions in the Reflection Opportunity.

From Theory to Practice: Failing to Plan = Planning to Fail?

Sara is a project manager who was recently reassigned to manage a large peacebuilding project, which is six months into implementation. She reviewed the project proposal and was impressed at the assessment and analysis done. The project involves strengthening the capacity of 10 partners in the country, and Sara has heard very positive things about the success of this strategy elsewhere. The proposal also included a Proframe, so she is confident that a monitoring and evaluation system is in place.

When Sara began talking to others in the Country Program about the project, however, she was disappointed to learn that the technical advisor, responsible for developing the project's capacity strengthening curriculum, had not even been hired. The head of programming, in charge of overall management of CRS projects, had spent the last six months working on several new, urgent proposals. The peacebuilding proposal, it turns out, was mostly written by an outside consultant who was technically skilled but spent little time working with CRS staff and its partners on any of the project design decisions.

Sara visited the field to learn more. She met with one partner and was heartened to find their peacebuilding project officer in place. This person, however, had not started any activities because her motorcycle had not been purchased, and she had not yet been trained—something the technical advisor was responsible for. A visit to another project site confirmed her fears. This partner's capacity was quite low, and the CRS project liaison officer was implementing the project himself in an attempt to meet the activity objectives listed in the Proframe. A third visit resulted in frustration and some anger; this partner was unaware that the preliminary peacebuilding project ideas discussed with CRS had actually been funded and started!

Once back in the office, Sara checked with the financial manager and found that the project was considerably underspent. Sara wondered how she was going to get project implementation—and partner relationships—back on track.

Reflection Opportunity

1. What might explain what happened with this peacebuilding project?
2. Have you ever experienced a similar situation in your work? What happened? What problems or challenges did it cause?

WHAT IS DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING?
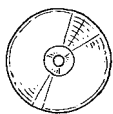
It is frequently observed across CRS that managers implement the project proposal—they forget that more detail is required for executing the plan! ProPack I makes a clear distinction between the purpose and function of a proposal and a DIP.

- The **purpose of a proposal is to obtain approval and funding for a proposed project intervention.** It does not contain the level of detail needed by project managers for implementation.
- **Once funding is obtained, detailed implementation planning takes place to produce updated schedules, plans, targets and systems that have sufficient detail to permit effective project implementation.** Some organizations call this start-up planning.

Figure 3.3: Three Elements of Detailed Implementation Planning
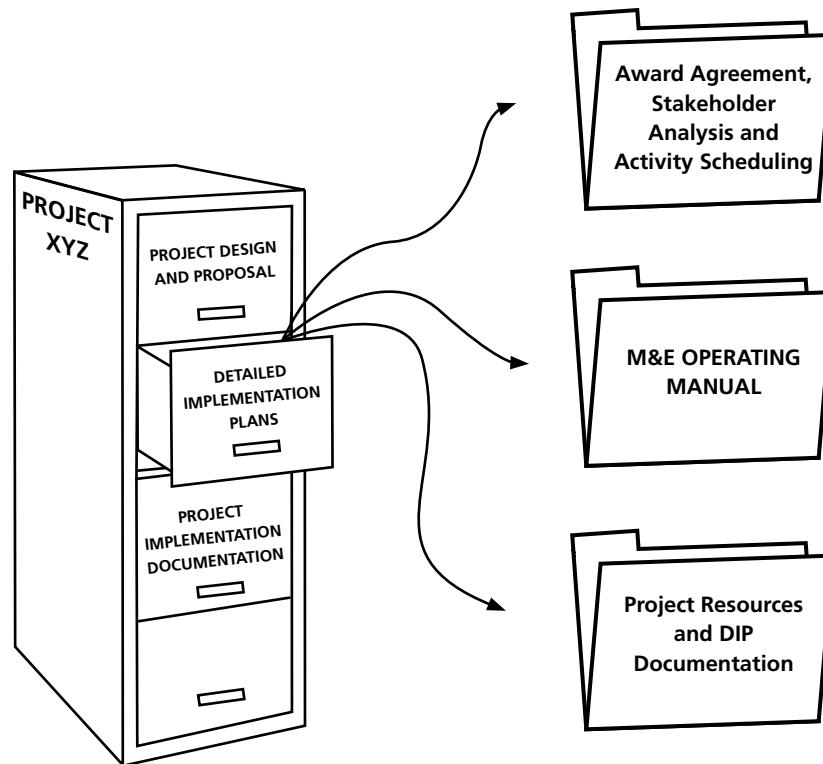
Detailed implementation planning helps ensure that the contractual obligations of a project are accomplished. These include the following:

- conducting project activities that lead to the delivery of outputs that meet quality standards, are on time and within budget;
- using and managing project resources in conformity with budgets and accounting standards and rules; and
- complying with any relevant conditions of the Award Agreement.

DIPs are usually prepared after a proposal is approved and funded but before implementation begins. DIPs may be undertaken on an annual basis or for the life of the project, or both. If completed for the life of the project, the DIP is still revised and updated annually. DIPs are also called annual work plans.

Think About It … **My Proposal Already Includes a DIP!**

Note that some donors require a DIP in the proposal with more details than a typical Activity Schedule. Even if your proposal includes a DIP, it is still important to update it prior to project implementation. If this is the case with your proposal, check the Award Agreement to see if donor approval is required for adjustments in the DIP.

WHY IS DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING IMPORTANT?

Although a number of factors might explain Sara's situation above, failure to do detailed implementation planning is largely responsible. Investing time in this important step saves time and money over the long run and reduces the risk of project failure.

Many donors recognize the need for detailed implementation planning and make it a requirement. USAID not only requires that detailed plans be completed for its Child Survival grants but provides for a one-year DIP planning period after the proposal is funded. This reflects the importance they attach to detailed planning. When donors require a DIP, they often provide a format.

Detailed implementation planning undertaken collaboratively with partners and other stakeholders is an excellent way to launch a project. A series of meetings or project launch workshops are usually held to review key project information, make joint decisions, and harmonize existing systems. The initial meeting will also be the basis for subsequent meetings for project monitoring. **This kind of team-building and mutual learning strengthens partner relationships and project buy-in and commitment. It helps ensure that important project decisions are fully understood, agreed to, and owned by project stakeholders.** Understandably, all stakeholders are likely to be more interested in planning when they know that the funding is in hand and that implementation is starting. The stakeholder analysis (see *Chapter III, Section 2, pp. 72-73*) captures a more complete picture of who should be involved, when and how.

> The purpose of planning is not to produce a plan as such, but rather a shared understanding of what is to be done among the key stakeholders!
>
> Lewis 2001

From Theory to Practice: DIP'ing Together
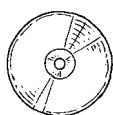
CRS/Nigeria promotes partner collaboration to prepare DIPs and asks that administrative and financial staff participate along with program staff.

In the Program Manager Orientation Guidelines for SARO (CRS/Southern Africa Regional Office), the region stresses the importance of holding project start-up workshops with partners. These workshops always include an orientation to financial procedures, which are especially important within projects where donors have strict guidelines.

CRS/Europe and Middle East has found that DIP workshops allow CRS finance staff to meet and work with partner staff, laying the groundwork for positive relationships throughout project implementation. It also helps CRS project managers to understand better their responsibilities for management of both programmatic and financial issues.

Detailed implementation planning is particularly important if there is a delay between the original design and project start-up. New CRS or partner staff can be oriented through detailed planning even if they did not participate in the original project design work. This helps ensure a common understanding of the IRs and SOs. DIPs help to **double-check that the proposal's Activity Schedule, staffing and budget are properly aligned** (e.g., there are enough staff for the proposed activities and sufficient funds to pay them). DIPs help produce a realistic, unambiguous, and clear Activity Schedule that is funded and can be undertaken by trained staff. Any changes in external circumstances that affect the project can more readily be addressed (e.g., the impact of changing currency rates on project implementation).
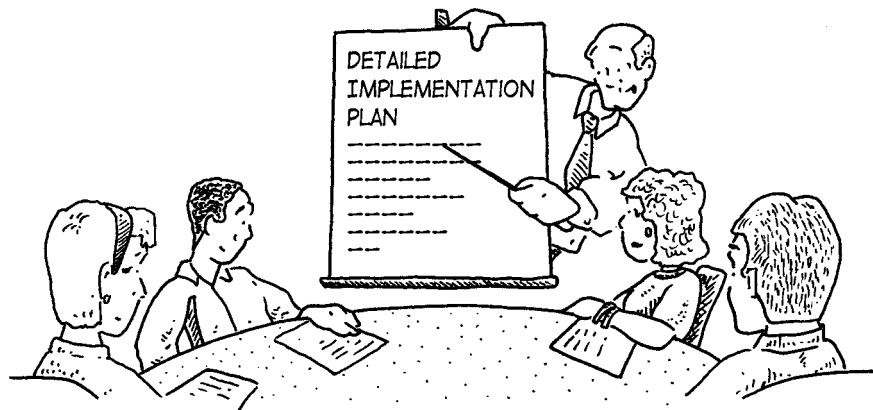
Lastly, some project proposals (e.g., some Requests for Applications [RFAs]) have to be developed very quickly. In this situation, many important project activities and details for project management such as M&E, human resources, and accurate budgeting simply cannot be given full consideration during the design and proposal development stage. **Project stakeholders can fill in these gaps during detailed implementation planning.**

Reflection Opportunity

1. Imagine that detailed implementation planning is not considered important by your colleagues and partners. They claim that the proposal provides enough information for implementation to begin and insist that there is no time to waste on more planning.
2. Given these attitudes, how would you help them to discover the importance of detailed implementation planning?

CAN YOU USE THE PROJECT PROPOSAL TO PREPARE THE DIP?

As written earlier, **a project proposal is not a DIP, because it does not have the required level of detail to use as a plan for implementation.** Even the best M&E plan in a well-done proposal needs to be operationalized during detailed implementation planning. **Operationalizing means making the plan operational (i.e., providing enough detail so that someone can actually implement it).**

However, DIPs do not start with a blank page. A proposal provides the basis for a strong DIP through its Proframe, M&E plan, Activity Schedule, organizational structure and staffing plans, budget, and other elements. Project stakeholders involved in DIP meetings, however, usually require an orientation to the project proposal and Award Agreement conditions at the start. Many of the steps in detailed implementation planning involve reviewing, updating, correcting, and further specifying elements already contained in the proposal. Specific guidance on how to use each part of your proposal in detailed implementation planning is provided later in this chapter, as well as in *Chapters IV* and *V*.

WHO LEADS DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING?

In general, detailed implementation planning tends to be led by CRS. In larger projects or awards, CRS will lead the DIP process only if it is the prime or lead agency. Leading does not mean lone decision-making in a closed room! See *Chapter II, Section 3 pp. 52-55.* As noted earlier, **DIPs are excellent opportunities to build relationships, develop teams, and mutually learn and strengthen skills.**

From Theory to Practice: Using Detailed Planning to Build Bonds

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In Benin
During detailed implementation planning for a microfinance project in Benin, CRS and its partners were discussing a project activity in which individual staff members transferred money to village groups. CRS learned from partners that it was imperative for staff to travel in teams to ensure their safety. This had implications for the transport budget that were addressed in the DIP.

In Kenya
From the outset, the DIP process for the child survival project in Kenya was very participatory. As far as possible, all the important stakeholders dealing with child-related activities were involved in some way during the development and finalization of the DIP. Critically, members of the community were invited to meetings to discuss how the proposed activities—which the community had already helped identify—could best be implemented. Implementing partner staff were recruited prior to writing the DIP so that they could immerse themselves in its development. Ministry of Health staff at headquarters, province and district levels helped review and modify specific objectives and indicators, which increased their ownership of the plans. Government provincial administrators were kept informed of progress and what was being discussed. Organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), University of Nairobi, USAID, and other stakeholders were also shown the DIP, so that their ideas could be incorporated into the final document. The CRS child survival program manager indicated that later project successes were, in part, due to this rich and well-informed DIP process.

Steps for undertaking detailed implementation planning are presented in *Section* 3 of this chapter, as well as in *Chapters IV* and *V.* While these are presented in rough chronological order, in reality, you will go back and forth between them. This is normal and shows that you are truly aligning these elements of the project.

SECTION 2
INITIAL TASKS

SECTION OVERVIEW

In Section 2, you will do the following:

- consider how to document a DIP;
- examine the function and importance of Award Agreements; and
- analyze your stakeholders.

DOCUMENT THE DIP
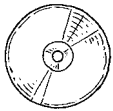
A project filing cabinet—real or virtual—is likely to have already been set up to store all the documents relating to your project design and proposal writing work based on the instructions in ProPack I. As shown in Figure 3.3, the first virtual drawer of the project filing cabinet should contain master copies of all important project design and proposal documents. Now, you will start to fill the second drawer with documentation associated with detailed implementation planning.

Figure 3.4: Document the DIP
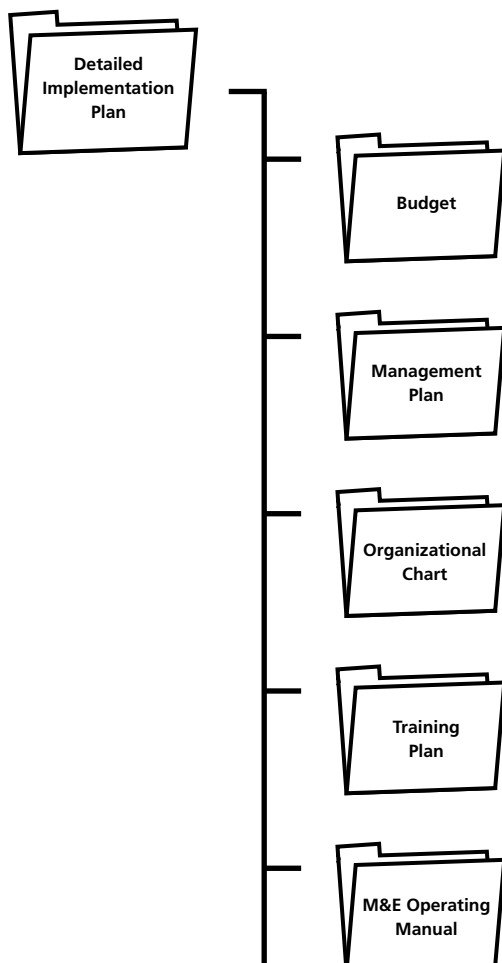
Some donors require DIPs that resemble long, detailed project proposals (i.e., everything is summarized and contained in one document). USAID requires a lenghty DIP for Child Survival projects. Guidelines change annually and can be found at: http://www.childsurvival.com. For most projects, however, documentation involves ensuring that key information resulting from detailed implementation planning is in the project filing cabinet, such as the following:

- the yearly Activity Schedule;
- the M&E Operating Manual (which documents the M&E System);
- project resources documentation, including any budget revisions;
- the management plan and organizational chart;
- a training plan; and
- any other important documents.

REVIEW THE AWARD AGREEMENT[1]
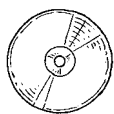
Pull out your project's Award Agreement and review it now! **Award Agreements are made between CRS and the project donor.** They may also be called grant agreements, cooperative award agreements, or a Transfer Authorization (for Title II projects). (See the standard USAID Award Agreement for more information.)

Once your proposal is funded, an Award Agreement is signed with donors. For public donors, like the USG or European governments, the Country Representative will sign for locally contracted awards, and headquarters will sign for centrally contracted awards. The Award Agreement is a legal document; its purpose is to protect CRS from potential liability. The agreement specifies requirements and arrangements for implementation among organizations involved in the project, which may include those listed in Checklist 3.1.

Checklist 3.1: Possible Award Agreement Details

- ✓ Project goals and objectives
- ✓ Information about project funds and resources, including usage and accountability, management, reimbursement, and property ownership
- ✓ Performance assessment and reporting
- ✓ Responsibilities of the organization
- ✓ Disposition of project assets
- ✓ Period of agreement
- ✓ Renewal terms
- ✓ Termination terms
- ❖ Resolution of conflicts

Each donor has its own set of requirements. As a project manager, you should be familiar with donor regulations governing the use of and accounting for project resources. **CRS policy requires that Country Programs negotiate and obtain concise, signed agreements to establish operating protocol and protect the agency from potential liability.** CRS project managers must review the agreement before it is signed and also ensure that it is reviewed by other key people, such as a local attorney, the Deputy Regional Director for Management Quality (DRD/MQ), a public resource specialist, and headquarters finance staff. (See the USG Agreement Review Checklist for more information.)
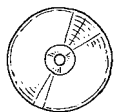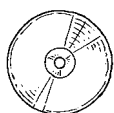
For USG awards, CRS has developed Training Materials on USG Regulatory Compliance, including cash, monetization, and commodity resource management, which are also available on the agency's Intranet.

Now, as part of detailed implementation planning, you and other key stakeholders need to review the Award Agreement to ensure that project resources will be managed according to the agreed operating protocol. Table 3.1 lists key issues that usually require particular attention.

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[1] ProPack II uses the term Award Agreement to refer to agreements signed with the donor. Project agreements, by contrast, refer to agreements made with project partners and are reviewed and discussed in *Chapter V, Section 3, pp. 159-160.*

Table 3.1: Key Issues in Award Agreements Requiring Project Manager Review
Prior to Detailed Implementation Planning

Budget Flexibility	The donor may restrict the amount of money that can be moved between budget lines. Check the Award Agreement for the specific approval process.
Approval of Specific Costs	The Award Agreement may require approval from the donor before contracting out certain services, such as auditing; hiring key staff; or incurring costs like capital purchases or international travel. For example, USG awards have a Fly America provision, which may increase project costs significantly if least-cost routing is not allowable.
Timing of Expenditures	The USG often approves the total award amount for a multi-year period but only obligates a much lower amount that must be spent by a certain date or within the first year. Do not confuse the two amounts. Also remember that unspent obligated funds do not necessarily carry over: You must check! Funds must be spent within the award period. Services and goods may NOT be delivered prior to or after the award dates and charged to the grant.
Cost Share	Reviewing this part of the agreement will help you to plan carefully how to budget and monitor project spending. CRS' cost share to USG awards is usually defined as a percentage of the Total Activity Cost (e.g., "the recipient agrees to expend not less than 25% of the Total Activity Cost"). If the cost share appears in the Award Agreement, CRS is legally bound to provide this funding to the project. When the USG is obligating funds annually, it is wise to spend the CRS cost share at a similar "burn rate," or spending rate. This ensures that CRS does not have to spend a lot of money in the final year of the award if there was under-spending in prior years. Refer to the CRS Cost Share Policy included in the Overseas Operations (OverOps) manual for more information.
Reporting Schedule	The reporting schedule prepared for the DIP must reflect the donor's reporting deadlines and specifies who is responsible for preparing the report. For USG awards, check with CRS' public resource specialist about whether the report requires headquarters review before submission. If so, set in-country deadlines in the DIP accordingly! Again for USG awards, the headquarters' Overseas Finance Department prepares the quarterly financial reports, known as Standard Form (SF) 269. Ensure you retain copies of these. Financial reports for donors other than USG are usually prepared by the Country Program.
Sub-awards	USG Award Agreements may specify that sub-awards are made on the basis of competitive tender, and that local USG personnel must participate in the selection of partners and review all sub-agreements between CRS and partner organizations. Ensure that you identify key clauses, regulations, and other requirements that must be included in any sub-agreements that CRS makes with partners.

Original Documentation	Some donors (The Humanitarian Aid Organization of the European Commission [ECHO], for example) may require CRS to provide original documents to support expenditures made against the project. However, CRS does not release original documents since they must be retained for audit purposes. If this is required, see your DRD/MQ as this issue can usually be negotiated with the donor.
Other Donor Compliance Issues	These issues may include certifications that must be included in project agreements with partners (e.g., USG awards that require anti-terrorism or other certification).
Audit/Project Close-out	USG awards are covered under the A-133 Single Audit Act, so a separate project audit is not required for these awards. Some donors, however, require a separate audit. It is usually performed by an independent audit firm, although sometimes it will be completed by donor personnel. If an audit is required, find out if it must be paid for out of project funds. If so, make sure you have included this cost in your budget.
Marking	USAID's 22 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 226, Marking Regulation, is a requirement that all USAID programs be identified and marked appropriately as "American Aid" to ensure that the American people are credited for foreign assistance. A Branding Strategy and Marketing Plan must be submitted to USAID once CRS is identified as the "apparent successful candidate." The approved Marketing Plan will be incorporated into the Award Agreement and will become a compliance and audit standard for the program. *(See CRS Implementation Guidance for the USAID Marking Regulation for more information.)*

Reflection Opportunity

1. In your experience, what happened when an Award Agreement was not carefully reviewed prior to detailed implementation planning or project implementation?
2. What problems did this cause?
3. What did you learn from this experience that you would share with other project managers?

ANALYZE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

As with project design, stakeholder analysis is one of the first steps of detailed implementation planning. **CRS projects involve a multitude of stakeholders—individuals, groups and organizations important to its success.** These stakeholders may have a high level of interest in the project, a powerful influence over it, or both.
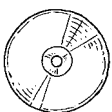
But wait, didn't you do stakeholder analysis during project design? ProPack I stated the importance of **periodic stakeholder analysis**. "As the project design effort continues and your understanding of the project improves, you may want to check your initial stakeholder analysis. The information generated may make you think of new people or groups that have to be included as you go forward."

Now, you and your partner need to **identify who else needs to be involved**. Have new project stakeholders emerged? For example, have additional partners been identified that were not included in the earlier stages of project development? Is this a consortia project with a large number of important stakeholders? Have individuals within organizations changed, such as the diocesan development director or the local donor point person? If these people know little about the project, you can involve them now in detailed implementation planning to ensure their commitment to project objectives.
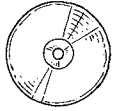
For your project, you may simply need to review the stakeholder analysis that was already completed, because it still contains correct and adequate information about who needs to be involved and how that can best be achieved (see *ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 2, pp. 43–44*). If there have been significant changes since the project was originally designed, you may decide to redo the stakeholder analysis. If this is the case, follow the guidance in *ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 2, pp. 40–45*.

Once you have completed one of the two options above, plan your approach to **stakeholder management**. Think through how much time you and your partners need to devote to communicating with each other and with other stakeholders, and how this should best be organized.

- You may decide to hold an initial stakeholder conference to plan important implementation issues together.
- You may decide to invite a donor representative to visit the project one year after project start-up to gain his support.
- You may schedule a mid-term evaluation planning meeting with all key stakeholders six months prior to the event.
- You will want your finance manager to be involved in all DIP meetings to ensure that financial systems and budget issues are considered. See *ProPack I, Chapter V, pg. 154* on the importance of involving finance staff from the start.
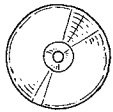
It may not always be possible to hold face-to-face meetings with stakeholders. Refer to *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 41-42* to ensure you know how to use technologies to include stakeholders who may be distant.

From Theory to Practice: Stakeholder Management in Hindsight

The School Connectivity Project was the first cross-border project for EME. This education project aimed to upgrade school resources and equipment by installing computers to improve information technology and partnering (known as "twinning") local schools with schools in the United States. Most Country Programs did not fully understand the scope of the project and, thus, only viewed it from their local perspective. This led to the perception that this was a small activity, rather than a large, important project. This perception negatively affected implementation because project activities tended to receive very low priority.

Reflecting on this experience, the School Connectivity regional project manager stated that if another cross-border project was designed, she would bring Country Program staff together for detailed implementation planning, first through face-to-face meetings and then via online meetings. This would encourage individual Country Program staff to support the project, reinforce joint accountability, and aid in the completion of project activities on time.

SECTION 3
ACTIVITY SCHEDULING

SECTION OVERVIEW

Now that you have started to compile important DIP documentation, such as the Award Agreement and any updates to the stakeholder analysis, it is time to move on to Activity Scheduling. This may be facilitated by CRS or undertaken entirely by the partner depending on the project scope, and the skills and experience of CRS and its partners.

In Section 3, you will do the following:

- consider the concepts of sequential and parallel project activities;
- review how to define, sequence and assign project activities;
- review how to make an Activity Schedule using a Gantt Chart format; and
- examine how Activity Schedules link to the project's budget and M&E system.

From Theory to Practice: The Importance of Activity Scheduling

In one Country Program, staff were struggling to implement a multi-sectoral grant that experienced many delays. The project manager decided to hold a meeting with staff and partners to detail all the project activities. Together they estimated a realistic timeframe for each activity and made a flow chart that clearly showed which ones needed to happen before others, and which could be carried out at the same time. With this information, the project team was able to estimate the overall timeframe for completing the project, and they used this revised timeline to negotiate an extension with the donor. Project implementation then proceeded relatively smoothly, and the project was completed as planned.

As the example in the "From Theory to Practice" story shows, important project activities may be overlooked in the proposal and never get done, affecting the achievement of higher-level objectives. An important part of detailed implementation planning is making sure that **all necessary project activities have been planned and budgeted**!

This story also illustrates another essential concept behind Activity Schedules: **Some activities are dependent on other activities being completed first.** For example, you can't train staff if they haven't been hired! These dependent activities are **sequential**. In other words, **they need to be completed before the next activity can start**. Problems carrying out the first of a series of sequential activities will have a ripple effect and cause serious project delays.

In contrast, some activities may not have the same dependency on other tasks. These **nondependent activities are parallel, which means they can be done at the same time.** For example, inviting participants to a workshop and ordering vehicles for field work are two parallel activities. Unlike a sequential activity, a delay in carrying out one of these parallel activities will not have a negative impact on the other.

ONE: REVIEW THE RELEVANT PROPOSAL ITEMS

To begin, **use information from two documents in your project proposal: the Proframe with the objectives set at the Activities level and the Activity Schedule**. The following paragraphs and Figure 3.5 show how to use information from two documents in your project proposal.

Figure 3.5: From Proframe to the Activity Schedule
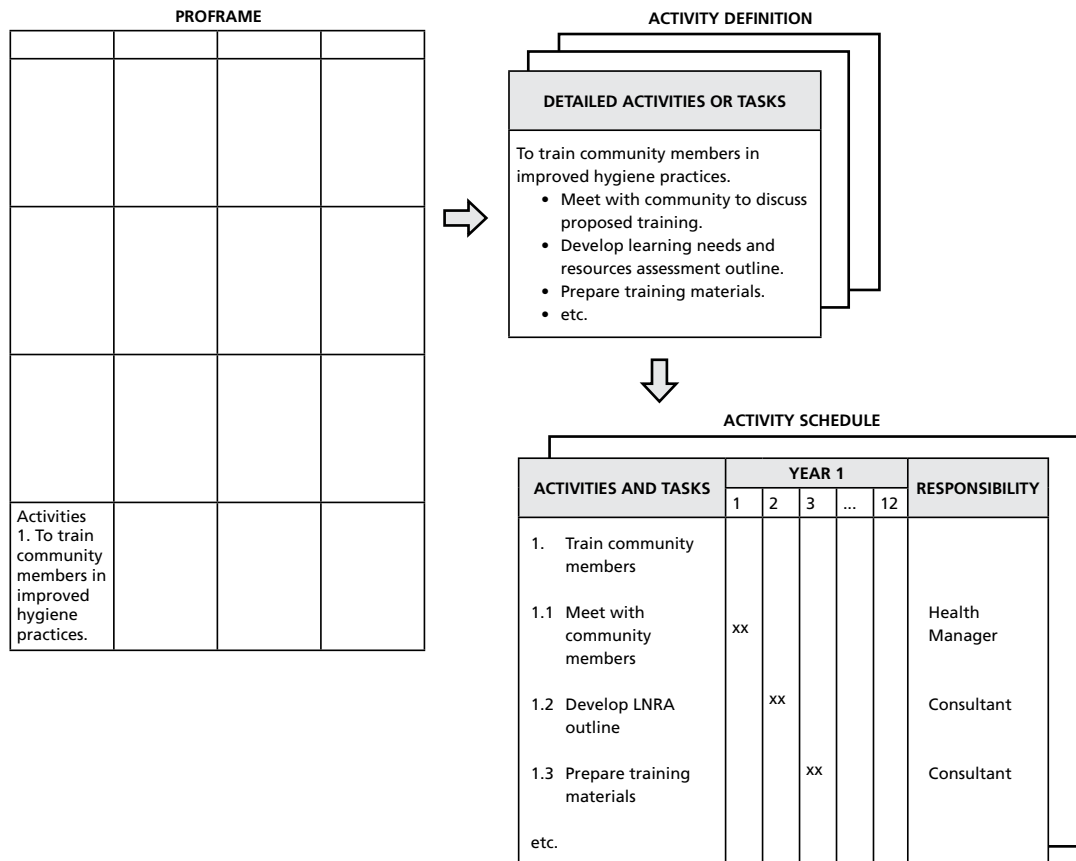
The Proframe

Activities-level objectives in the Proframe describe the functions to be undertaken and managed in order to deliver the Outputs to targeted community members. These activities are described in broad terms (e.g., "train staff"). "Train staff" can stand alone in the Proframe but does not suggest all of the detailed steps required for training: designating a trainer, finding a venue, developing a curriculum, completing a needs assessment, inviting participants, etc. All this detail would clutter up the Proframe and detract from its purpose and usefulness.

The Proposal Activity Schedule
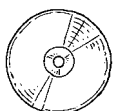
stressed the difference between an **Activity Schedule** that is done during implementation and the one that is done during detailed implementation planning. An Activity Schedule "shows how the broad categories of activities are broken down into more specific actions. The aim here is not to write a detailed implementation plan—that will come later once the funds have been awarded. Instead, the purpose is to present a holistic picture of project activities over the project life to show that careful consideration has been given to the project's responsibility for delivering the specified Outputs. Upon award of the funds, the

(proposal's) Activity Schedule will be revised, updated and drafted with greater precision, at least for the initial period of the project … The Activity Schedule ... developed for the project proposal is the starting point for this (detailed implementation planning) work."

In contrast to the work in the proposal, the DIP Activity Schedule summarizes:

1. detailed activities for the first period of the project;
2. an ordering of the activities;
3. start and end dates for each activity, taking into consideration whether they are sequential or parallel;
4. project milestones; and
5. the person responsible for each activity.
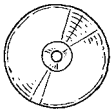
Gantt charts are recommended because they are easy to use and understand (see Figure 3.6). They were also recommended in ProPack I and are one of the "view" options in Microsoft (MS) Project software, if you are using that as a project management tool.

Figure 3.6: Gantt Chart Format for an Activity Schedule

ACTIVITIES AND TASKS	YEAR 1												RESPONSIBILITIES
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1. Train community memebers	xx	xx											Kwesi Ampong, Health Manager
1.1 Meet with community members	xx	xx											
1.2 Develop LNRA outline		xx											Consultant to be appointed
1.3 Prepare training materials			xx	xx	xx								Consultant to be appointed
etc.													

Now you have to make some decisions. Was the Activity Schedule in your proposal detailed enough, so that it requires only a quick review and adjustment during the DIP planning meeting? Or would it be better to redo it with the stakeholders responsible for its implementation? In most cases, you will develop a detailed Activity Schedule for the first year and a less detailed one for the remaining years. Then, at the beginning of each successive year, you will develop a detailed schedule for that particular year.
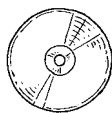
ProPack I, Chapter V, Section 7, pp. 173–175 suggests steps to complete the proposal's Activity Schedule. The following items are very similar to those, but provide details appropriate for an Activity Schedule prepared during detailed implementation planning.

TWO: DEFINE THE ACTIVITIES

One cause of project difficulties is that significant activities can sometimes be unintentionally overlooked. Activities have to be identified, so that the time and other resource requirements for each one can be determined. Again, **you may have done this when developing the Activity Schedule in your proposal, but it is worth a second look since you are now at the implementation stage.**

Diagramming Activities

To define activities, **start by making a diagram with each of the Output-level objective statements in boxes at the top. Then, list the Activities-level objective statements for each Output.** Diagramming will help you visualize the total number of Outputs and related Activities.

Examples of Output-level objective statements and related Activities from two different projects are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Examples of Outputs and Related Activities

Example from an Education Project	Example from Tsunami Shelter Project
Communities have created more girl-friendly school environments. (**Output** from Proframe) ↓	Families to receive necessary supplies and training to provide transitional housing according to Sphere standards. (**Output** from Proframe) ↓
CRS and partners to train and support Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) in best practices for creating girl-friendly school environments. (**Activity** from Proframe)	CRS to organize communities in cash-for-work housing construction. (**Activity** from Proframe)

(Note that only one of several Activity-level objective statements for each Output was chosen for this table to keep it simple.)

Detailing Activities

Now, you will break each Activities-level objective statement into related, more-detailed Activities, often called tasks. In Table 3.3, you see examples for two projects. For the education project, what tasks are required to train and support PTAs? For the Tsunami shelter project, what tasks are required to organize communities in cash-for-work housing construction? List these tasks, and put them in a logical sequence.

Table 3.3: Examples of Detailed Activities or Tasks

Example from an Education Project	Example from Tsunami Shelter Project
Activity: CRS and partners to train and support PTAs in best practices for creating girl-friendly school environments.	**Activity:** CRS to organize communities in cash-for-work housing construction.
Related Tasks include: 1. Work with the partner to recruit, hire, and orient a girls' education coordinator. 2. Identify best practices via an assessment of successful NGO programs. 3. Identify existing PTAs within schools. 4. Hold meetings with PTAs and school officials to explain the project and the training program. 5. Conduct a learning needs and resources assessment of PTAs. 6. Plan the training program.	**Related Tasks include:** 1. Assess and document damage of households with community members. 2. Get communities to organize themselves into groups of five to build transitional housing. 3. Sign MoUs and project agreements with local officials and community organization.

How much detail is necessary here? You want a list of activities that is manageable and can be assigned to someone. **Use your judgment on the level of detail needed.** For example, listing all the activities necessary for recruiting a girls' education coordinator (e.g., advertising in the local paper, collecting resumés, telephoning candidates to set up interviews, etc.) is too detailed to be of use. This level of detail would be better described in the to-do list of the partner project officer (see *Chapter II, Section 3, Checklist 2.11 pg. 49*). Working together on this step with partners and other stakeholders at a DIP planning meeting will help to clarify the difference between Detailed Activities for the DIP Activity Schedule and those appropriate for a to-do list.

THREE: SEQUENCE THE ACTIVITIES

Next, **estimate the amount of time needed to implement each activity**. Make your best informed guess at how long each activity will take to complete by drawing on past experience or by asking a knowledgeable colleague.

Be as realistic as possible, and think about the typical disruptions and delays that occur, which may affect the time required to complete this activity. For example, identifying existing PTAs seems to be an easy activity—perhaps a day or two will suffice. But, if this project is in southern Sudan where there are almost no roads, distances between locations are great, and insecurity threatens travel, this seemingly simple activity will certainly take a great deal longer!

Look at the Critical Assumptions box for the Activities-level objective statement in the Proframe to see if there are other things to consider. Implementation of a government plan, for example, may delay progress in completing activities.

Look at the commitments you may have made to deliver Outputs, particularly those specified in your project Award Agreement. It may be the case that all farmers need increased skills by a certain date; your activities will have to be programmed to ensure that you can meet that

deadline. Balancing these commitments against realistic time estimates for associated activities may lead you to consider actions to speed up implementation. Hiring a consultant, for example, to conduct a baseline survey will free up staff time for other important activities; but hiring depends on the availability of a consultant, a budget to cover these additional costs, and a staff person to organize and manage the extra workers. Use your judgment to determine the best course.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think of times when you or your partner did not correctly estimate the time needed to complete a project activity.
2. Why was your time estimate inaccurate?
3. How did you make adjustments?
4. What did you learn from this experience? Did these lessons prompt you to do anything differently in another project situation?
5. How does your office manage this kind of organizational learning?

Once you have estimated the amount of time needed for each activity, **think about the start date required and whether the activity is parallel or sequential.** This will help you to put the activities in the most logical order.

Drafting an Activity Schedule in Gantt Chart Format

You can use graph paper and a pencil to make rough draft sketches of the Gantt chart using squares to show blocks of time. You can also put activities on separate *Post-it*™ notes or index cards to sort out their most logical order. The more visual and participatory you make this process, the more partners and other stakeholders will feel they can offer their experience and ideas.

Checklist 3.2: DIP Planning—Working with Partners or Large Teams to Create Activity Schedules

To conduct activity scheduling in a visual, interactive way with partners or large groups of people, try the following suggestions.

✓ Assign each of the Activities-level objective statements from the Proframe to a small group. Each small group will then define the activities further and write tasks required to attain their assigned Activities-level objective statement on index cards or *Post-it*™ notes, one task per card.

✓ Small groups can then present their work to the larger group for discussion and revision.

✓ Once the card sets are revised, participants are invited to organize them on a wall in sequence, across from each Activities-level objective statement. (Experience shows that there is usually a lot of discussion during this step!)

✓ Small groups are then asked to show timetables and inter-relationships among cards in different categories.

✓ In the end, you will have a very large draft Activity Schedule, in Gantt chart format, for your project.

Some project managers use software, such as MS Project, to create Critical Path Analysis flowcharts. These flowcharts are more sophisticated tools that help to order project activities in a logical manner. MS Project also includes tools to generate Gantt charts. Experience with using this type of software for CRS projects has been mixed (see Table 3.4), so check with colleagues before purchasing or investing time in learning the software.

Table 3.4: Pros and Cons of Using MS Project Software

Advantages (Pros)	Disadvantages (Cons)
• MS Project obliges users to think very carefully about identifying essential activities and their logical order. • The output of MS Project is a tangible plan that can be communicated to colleagues and partners. • MS Project is designed so that revisions to an existing implementation plan can be made relatively easily. • Once MS Project is mastered, it can usually be applied to any project.	• MS Project must be purchased, so there is a financial aspect to consider. • Staff need significant time to learn the software. • MS Project is, arguably, more suited to "blueprint" projects where there are fewer uncertainties in implementation. • The Garbage In, Garbage Out principle still applies. • Access to information technology varies, so it may be difficult for partners and other stakeholders to participate meaningfully in the process.

FOUR: ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY FOR EACH ACTIVITY

Be clear about who is responsible for each activity. The Activity Schedule from your proposal includes a column for responsibilities, and it may help to review that now.

Take your draft DIP Activity Schedule and fill in the Responsibilities column for each activity as illustrated in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Draft DIP Activity Schedule

ACTIVITIES	YEAR 1												RESPONSIBILITIES
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1. Partner recruits, hires, and orients a girls' education coordinator	xx	xx											Maryse Narcisse, Project Manager for Partners in Education
2. CRS identifies best practices via an assessment of successful NGO programs	xx	xx											Edward Smith, CRS Project Manager
3. CRS identifies existing PTAs within schools		xx	xx										Elise Duchamp, Education Coordinator
4. CRS holds meetings with PTAs and school officials to explain the project and the training program				xx	xx	xx							Elise Duchamp, Education Coordinator
5. CRS conducts a learning needs and resources assessment of PTAs					xx	xx	xx						Consultant, to be appointed
6. CRS plans the training program							xx	xx	xx	xx			Elise Duchamp, Education Coordinator leads, Edward Smith, CRS Project Manager and Sophie Jones, CRS Education Technical Advisor to provide advice

Be specific in describing who is responsible; use names or titles and avoid vague references, such as "the partner" or "CRS." If more than one person is responsible, be clear about who is taking the lead. This **helps promote accountability**.

Beware of Activity Schedules showing one person who is responsible for nearly all project activities listed. In reality, most projects are implemented by a team of people, and they may need to distribute responsibilities among themselves. Ensure that you or others are **delegating tasks transparently in order to maximize efficiency**. (See *Chapter II, Section 3*, *pg. 52* for more information on delegation.)

Think back to the results of the stakeholder analysis, and ask if you are appropriately involving people in decisions about responsibilities—or just assigning people without asking them first! **People are more willing to implement activities if they have had a voice in making the decision.**

FIVE: FINALIZE THE ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

The Activity Schedule must also be **aligned with human and financial resources**. Turn to *Chapter V, Section 1, pp. 132-136* and *Section 3, pp. 151-153*, and review the sub-sections on recruiting project staff and reviewing the proposal budget. Think through the activities and the staff positions planned for this project. Are they aligned?

Detailed implementation planning should **ensure that staff, funds and activities are aligned.** An imbalance between the elements of time, people and money is a common problem affecting project implementation.

Double-check your project budget by costing each of the activities in the Activity Schedule, and make sure they are accurately reflected in the budget. This is detailed in *Chapter V, Section 3, pp. 151-153*. Finalizing the Activity Schedule will be a collaborative effort between you, your partners, and the finance staff.

Review your nearly-completed Activity Schedule. Are there any activities that you and your partners would label as **critical milestones**? Critical milestones are simply **those few activities that you judge to be very important**. These are highlighted within the Gantt chart and should be monitored carefully to ensure they are completed on time. Examples of critical milestones might be the signing of a project agreement among consortia members, the submission of Annual Program Plans (APPs) or the release of mid-term evaluation findings.

Once you have completed the Activity Schedule, use Checklist 3.3 to ensure quality control.

Checklist 3.3: How to Ensure Quality Control of the DIP Activity Schedule

✓ Is the list of Activities appropriately detailed?
✓ Are the Activities in logical order?
✓ Are timeframes realistic? Do they accurately reflect whether Activities are sequential or parallel?
✓ Are responsibilities clearly and appropriately assigned?
✓ Is the budget sufficient for staff and activities?
✓ Are critical milestones highlighted?
✓ Do all stakeholders understand and agree to the Activity Schedule?

Each stakeholder group may have its own Activity Schedule. For small projects, one schedule might be sufficient, but for larger, more complex projects, CRS and its partners may have separate Activity Schedules.

M&E and the Activity Schedule

Once the project is underway, **the Activity Schedule serves as one of the indicators for monitoring achievement at this Activity level**. Although it will not provide the whole picture, it will allow you to report whether activities have been completed in a timely manner. You may say, for example, that the number of training programs have been completed on time, but other indicators are likely to be required to show the number of men and women being trained, the costs (planned versus actual) of the training, and so on.

From Theory to Practice: On Track Despite the Rain

In one Country Program, CRS and its partner routinely monitor the Activity Schedule to see if items are being completed on time. In one project, unexpected heavy rains caused flooding and a delay in conducting an important baseline survey. Once partner and CRS staff realized this, they consulted the finance manager to review the project budget and Award Agreement. This enabled them to take positive action: They were able to shift project funding and hire additional survey teams. Thus, the survey began one month later than scheduled, but was completed twice as fast and on time.

CHAPTER IV
DIP PART B: SETTING UP THE M&E SYSTEM

SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

A key part of detailed implementation planning is transforming the Proframe and M&E plan from your project proposal into an operational M&E system.

In Chapter IV, you will do the following:

- review M&E definitions;
- understand the importance of an M&E system and how it is different from the M&E plan in a proposal;
- learn about three M&E approaches CRS applies in its work;
- examine six components that transform a proframe and an M&E plan into an operational M&E system; and
- learn how to document your M&E system by compiling an M&E Operating Manual.

The Indicator Blind Spot story illustrates some of the differences between an M&E plan in your proposal and an operational M&E system.

From Theory to Practice: An Indicator Blind Spot!

CRS and its partner wrote a proposal for a water and sanitation project which included a well-designed Proframe and all of the recommended M&E planning worksheets. After funding, detailed implementation planning took place, but it was felt that the M&E plan in the proposal was detailed enough, especially after all the effort that had been put into the M&E worksheets for the proposal. CRS staff monitored project progress through written reports sent by the partner every quarter, and everything seemed on track.

Six months into project implementation, CRS staff made an unplanned site visit. They discovered that while the partner was dutifully and correctly focusing on collecting information on the Proframe indicators, an institutional "blind spot" had developed: many unanticipated effects were occurring that the partner's project officer had not been reporting. For example, informal discussions with some women revealed that they valued the project mostly for the security it offered their children. Before, when they washed clothes at the riverbank, they constantly worried about their small children wandering off and drowning. Other women had spontaneously begun a new business that had never existed before in this village—taking in laundry from wealthy community members. On the downside, however, some women indicated that the shorter walk to the new water point meant that they missed out on the socializing that was part of their usual walk to the river.

Not surprisingly, CRS staff were very interested in this information because it showed how the water and sanitation project was affecting different women's assets beyond the foreseen benefits of increased potable water and shorter distances to the water points. The CRS regional staff were, in fact, looking for this very type of information to support agency efforts to promote IHD.

After discussions with the partner project officer, CRS staff realized that the M&E plans did not include any time for critical reflection events that might have provided the opportunity for these interesting, yet unexpected results to be reported. They also observed that tracking the Proframe indicators was taking up so much time that it was affecting the ability of the project manager to implement and manage other aspects of the project. A planning meeting with the partner's director and staff resulted in a decision to redistribute M&E tasks among staff, allowing the project manager to allocate her time to all aspects of her job. Critical reflection events held on a quarterly basis were also scheduled on the M&E calendar.

Reflection Opportunity

1. In a project you currently manage, how well do you know what is happening through the M&E system?
2. How much time do you spend collecting information on the Proframe indicators compared to the time you spend analyzing it and on critical reflection? Do you think this is a good balance?

DEFINITIONS: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND M&E SYSTEM

Monitoring is a continuous process of collecting, analyzing, and documenting information in order to report on progress towards achieving agreed project objectives. It provides an ongoing opportunity for learning. Top-quality monitoring information assists timely decision-making, ensures accountability, and provides the basis for evaluation and learning. Monitoring provides **early indications of change** thereby enabling projections to be made about future project success.

Evaluation is a periodic, systematic assessment of a project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability on a defined population. Evaluation draws from data collected via the monitoring system, as well as any other more detailed data (e.g., from additional surveys or studies) gathered to understand specific aspects of the project in greater depth.

Table 4.1: Differences between Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring	Evaluation
… is the provision of information and its use to enable management to assess implementation progress and take timely decisions.	… is based upon the data generated by the monitoring system to assess and document the impact of an intervention.
… is concerned with whether project Activities are being undertaken, Outputs delivered, and the project is leading to the initial behavior change outcomes that were anticipated in its underlying theory of change.	… is concerned with an assessment of achievements—both anticipated and unanticipated—at IR- and SO-level.
… should help to ensure that any IR-level progress towards achieving the project's SOs is maintained according to schedule.	… should help explain the trends in outcomes and impact of the project.
… is an internal project activity.	… is often an externally-led event, though should involve the active participation of project staff.

… is an essential part of good management practice.	… is an essential activity in a dynamic learning organization.
… is an integral part of day-to-day management, and must be integrated within the project management structure.	… is not necessarily such an integral component of daily management.
… takes place during the implementation phase.	… can occur at discrete points in time during implementation, but is more commonly thought of as taking place at project mid-term and completion. When it occurs at project start-up, it is often referred to as "the baseline."
… is generally focused on the question **"Are we doing things right?"**	… is generally focused on the question **"Are we doing the right thing?"**
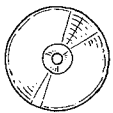
Figure 21 in *ProPack I (Chapter IV, Section 1, pg. 99)* summarizes how the related but distinct activities of monitoring (M) and evaluation (E) are linked. In a dynamic learning organization both M <u>and</u> E should be seen as integral components of the systems for knowledge management and organizational learning.

A high-quality M&E *system* represents the way monitoring and evaluation processes and events are organized, managed and resourced (human and financial support). It documents and communicates the achievement of objectives and ensures that experiences arising from project activity inform decision-making and learning in a timely manner. An M&E system integrates more formal, data-oriented tasks (e.g., collecting data on Proframe indicators) with informal monitoring and communication. It also ensures that people responsible for M&E have sufficient capacity and resources to undertake their job. Underlying all M&E systems is a desire to ensure that managers and other stakeholders get maximum benefit from the system.

The word "system" is used intentionally. It brings to mind well-organized, inter-dependent activities or components and clear procedures that contribute to a well-defined purpose. Unless you have an M&E system, it is likely that your M&E activities will be conducted in a scattered and untimely way—if they are conducted at all!

In your proposal, you will have developed an M&E plan; during the DIP process, you will transform it into an operational M&E system. The plan is an excellent start, but most likely it is not detailed enough to provide the basis for a strong system. Furthermore, project stakeholders may not have been sufficiently involved during the project development stage, and this could compromise ownership of all the planned M&E activities. You will also want to double-check that you and your partners have the capacity and resources to implement the M&E plan and, subsequently, sufficient understanding of how to use the information you will be gathering.

THREE M&E APPROACHES USED BY CRS

Three M&E approaches relevant to CRS' work are defined here. These three approaches are complementary and overlap. (See *Chapter VI, Section 3, pp. 178-200* and *Chapter VII, Sections 1 and 2, pp. 215-248* for more information.)

1. Results-based M&E

Results-based M&E links the monitoring of progress on Activity- and Output-level (i.e., lower-level) objectives to the achievement of IR- and SO-level objectives. This approach **emphasizes the use of monitoring information by managers to make decisions** about the direction of their work.

THIS REPORT SUGGESTS WE'RE ALL REALLY BUSY, BUT I WONDER WHAT IMPACT WE'RE HAVING?

From Theory to Practice: A Results-based M&E Example

> A training workshop for young mothers on improved hygiene has been conducted as planned, and participants have shown they learned the key lessons. Some examples of results-based questions would be:
>
> - Once they are back home, do they put into practice what they learned?
> - If they do, what impact does this have on the health of their children?

Information on lower-level objectives ("doing things right") is important. If success is not first achieved at this level, then it is unlikely that success with higher-level project objectives ("doing the right thing") will occur. Results-based monitoring is concerned with data that show whether a project is delivering the goods and services that it is contracted to provide. Gathering early evidence of behavior change among those targeted for assistance is a vital monitoring activity. If done well, such evidence should enable project decision-makers to assess the validity of the project's theory of change in a particular environment. (See *ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 5, pp. 88–89* for more information on the theory of change.)
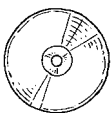
2. Utilization-focused M&E

Utilization-focused M&E underpins CRS' approach to monitoring and evaluation. **This approach focuses attention on the intended use of M&E information by intended users**. This is why doing a stakeholder analysis—to identify potential users—at the beginning of the DIP process (see *Chapter III, Section 2, pp. 72-73*) is so important to setting up the M&E system.

3. Participatory M&E

Participatory M&E places special emphasis on **giving voice to people served by CRS and its partners. In this approach, stakeholders work together to decide how to assess progress, conduct data collection, and analysis and take action on the findings.** Participatory M&E encourages mutual learning by all stakeholders.

All three approaches influence how CRS, partners and other stakeholders do the following:

- plan for M&E as part of project design and proposal development;
- set up M&E systems during detailed implementation planning;
- conduct M&E during project implementation; and
- use M&E information to decide upon future project direction.

WHO TAKES THE LEAD?

Who takes the lead in setting up the M&E system during detailed implementation planning? The answer is "It depends!" The process may be coordinated by an M&E officer or an M&E unit, but this depends on the scope of your project and what M&E staff, if any, are available in your office. You and other project personnel will need to work closely with your M&E staff, who can contribute much at this early stage. Whatever the circumstances, it often makes sense to establish an M&E working group so different perspectives inform your thinking.

No matter what kind of staff and system is planned, best practice indicates that all CRS project manager job descriptions should include important responsibilities for oversight of project M&E. In most cases, CRS partners will need guidance and support to set up their M&E system. **It is very likely that you will be working as a team—CRS project manager, M&E specialists, and partner staff—on this critical piece of detailed implementation planning.** This can be a very rewarding experience as you discover together the full potential that utilization-focused information can offer.

Reflection Opportunity

1. How would you amend your existing job description and performance plan to represent more accurately your actual M&E responsibilities for the projects you are currently managing?
2. Do other program staff and supervisors in your office have clearly defined M&E responsibilities in their job descriptions and performance plans?
3. How might you ensure that the job descriptions and performance plans of your colleagues include relevant information about M&E responsibilities?

SECTION 2
SIX COMPONENTS OF AN M&E SYSTEM

SECTION OVERVIEW

An M&E system is based on six components. Each component will produce documents that together make up the **M&E Operating Manual**. (See *Section 3, Table 4.12, pg. 128* for a *Summary of Components and Related Documents for the M&E Operating Manual.*) Think of the M&E Operating Manual like a handbook for a mobile phone. It provides users with all the details and information they need to use the M&E system efficiently! Once finalized, a copy of the M&E Operating Manual should be kept in the "Detailed Implementation Plan" drawer in the project filing cabinet (see *Chapter III, Section 1, pp. 64-65*) as an important component of the DIP.

Figure 4.1: Six Components of an M&E System

Components of an M&E System	
1. Consider the Whole M&E System	**2. Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators**
3. Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting	**4. Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes**
5. Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting	**6. Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required**

Six Components of an M&E System

One: Consider the Whole M&E System
Two: Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators
Three: Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting
Four: Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes
Five: Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting
Six: Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required

This is what you will learn.

In **Components One and Two,** you will:

- consider, in a holistic manner, the overall M&E system;
- learn about the importance of establishing an M&E working group;
- understand the importance of defining an agreed purpose statement for a project's M&E system;
- learn to write a succinct and clear M&E purpose statement;
- review how to assess information needs of key project stakeholders; and
- learn how to review existing project indicators in light of the purpose statement and information needs.

In **Component Three**, you will:

- learn how to plan and describe how each indicator will be measured (how, where, when, by whom, etc.);
- review examples of data collection systems; and
- learn about the links between the indicators in the proframe, the data gathering forms and evidence-based reports.

In **Components Four, Five and Six**, you will:

- understand the importance of turning information into knowledge through planning for critical reflection events that enhance individual and organizational learning;
- learn how to plan for quality communication and reporting; and
- check that you have the appropriate resources and capacities to implement the M&E system.

"TOGETHER WE CAN DO THIS, TEAM!!"

COMPONENT ONE:
CONSIDER THE WHOLE M&E SYSTEM

Read Me First!

> To develop an M&E system, CRS project managers need to understand all of its elements. Thus, the word "components" is used rather than "steps." **Read the entire chapter, and make sure you understand all of the pieces.** Your challenge is to set up a coherent, useful system, and this is the best way for you to achieve that goal!
>
> **In developing the M&E system, expect to go back and forth between the components, rather than taking them in chronological order.** Defining the purpose of the M&E system will probably come first, but other components will require much back and forth. For example, details on capacity building for the M&E system are in Component Six, but you have to keep these things in mind as you finalize your review of indicators and data collection methods in Components Two and Three. So use your common sense and project experience when designing the M&E system for a particular project.
>
> Start each project with a fresh perspective because it may require a different set of forms from other projects you have worked on. **The forms and examples in this Chapter must be tailored to your project.** There is not, unfortunately, one model that will fit all projects. With time, experience and examples from other projects, this task will become less difficult.
>
> Like any plan, the M&E system set up during detailed implementation planning should not be seen as inflexible. As the project evolves, some information needs will change. The **M&E system for your project should be regularly reviewed** throughout project implementation, most likely on an annual basis, to ensure that it provides vital information to support learning and evidence-based, results-oriented project management decision-making.
>
> **Establish an M&E working group that could meet as needed to design the system and monitor how well it works once operational.** After the system is set up, you will find that some of the forms may have to be modified. You will find bugs in the system during implementation, so it can be helpful to have a working group to oversee it.

Component One is an opportunity to organize your approach to developing an M&E system, to establish an M&E working group, and to develop a purpose statement for the system.

A carefully designed M&E system that reflects the three approaches used by CRS (see *Section 1, pp. 86-87*) is potentially very influential. It can engage partners, community members, and other important stakeholders to work in partnership on the direction and content of the project.

Figure 4.2: Component One—
Consider the Whole M&E System

1. Consider the Whole M&E System	**2. Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators**
3. Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting	**4. Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes**
5. Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting	**6. Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required**

Gather All Work Completed for the Proposal
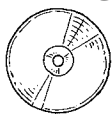
This work is described in . It may include the Results Framework, Proframe (or its equivalent if the donor has requested a different format), M&E planning worksheets, and other commentary from the proposal. Consult this work as necessary during detailed implementation planning; it provides a strong foundation for your operational M&E system.

Set up the Table of Contents

In the M&E system, there are many tables, data gathering forms, reporting forms and other documents that you will be working with. Setting up a Table of Contents (ToC) in the beginning will help you organize your thinking. As you plan the forms for your system, you can add them to the ToC and track progress on their completion. This ToC can be set up based on the Six Components, which are listed in Table 4.12 *pg. 128.* The example below is a short version of a working ToC from an HIV&AIDS project.

From Theory to Practice: The M&E Operating Manual ToC for a CRS/Vietnam Project

Component	Document in the M&E Operating Manual	Date of Document	Comments
1. Consider the whole M&E System	Table of Contents…………………………………….. M&E working group……………………………… Purpose Statement………………………………	Jan 24, 2007 Jan 23, 2007 Jan 16, 2007	Still in process Get approval of HoP
2. Review the Information Needs and Indicators	Results Framework (revised)……………………… Proframe (revised)……………………………... Stakeholder Information Needs…………………... Other Information Needs (Critical Assumptions & Risk Analysis)……………………………………	Jan 19, 2007 Jan 19, 2007 Jan 17, 2007 To do	Jane to finish with team on Jan 31

3. Plan for Data gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting	**Data Gathering and Reporting Forms**
	 1. Health Center Monthly Report Form…………
	 2. Referrals from Out-patient Clinic Tally Form…
	         Instructions for Monthly Report and
	         Referral Tally form…………………………..
	 3. Quarterly Report Form……………………...
	         Instructions for Quarterly Report Form….
	 4. Training and Workshop Form ………………....
	         Instruction for Training and
	         Workshop Form……………………………..
	 5. Critical Assumptions and Risk Analysis
	         Information Form…………………………….
	         Instructions for Critical Assumptions Form
	 Monitoring Responsibilities Worksheet……………
		Jan 18, 2007
		 Jan 18, 2007
		
		 Jan 18, 2007
		 To revise
		 To do
		 To do
		
		 To do
		
		 To do
		 To do
		 Jan 18, 2007
			Jane & team to complete on Jan 31
			
			 All these forms need to be finalized with Health Center Staff
			
			 Need to discuss with CR Jane and team on Jan 31

4. Plan for Critical Reflection and Processes	Critical Reflection Events ….……………………. Planned Evaluations ….…………………………	To do To do	Schedule meeting to do
5. Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting	M&E Calendar …..…………………………………. Reporting and Communication Schedule…………..	To do Jan 18-to revise	Jane and team to complete on Jan 31
6. Plan for Capacities	Staff Capacity Assessment and Training ……………	To do	Discuss with Health Center staff

Define the Purpose of the M&E System

Why are you doing M&E in this project? The three approaches used by CRS for M&E—results-based, utilization-focused, and participatory—will likely inform the response of the M&E working group. For example, in most projects, results-based M&E means that one purpose of M&E is to ensure higher-level objectives (i.e., the IRs and SOs) are achieved. These are generally defined by tangible benefits to project participants. But there are probably some additional important reasons for doing M&E that may be unique to your project or which address concerns around utilization and participation.

Remember that **if the purpose of the M&E system is very clear, the other steps are easier to complete.** Some examples are included in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Possible Purposes of an M&E System

Organizational Learning	To identify and share best practices and lessons learned from projects in which IHD is a focus with other CRS Country Programs and regions.
Capacity Strengthening	To design and implement an M&E system for a specific project that is part of a larger capacity strengthening program for CRS, its partners, and other important stakeholders.
Innovation	To pilot innovative methods for participatory, community-based M&E.
Policy Orientation	To ensure M&E findings contribute to discussions on agency approaches to IHD.
Relationship Building	To ensure that the M&E system is designed and implemented in a way that improves relationships among CRS, its partners and other stakeholders.

A purpose statement from I-LIFE, a Title II consortium project in Malawi, is provided as an example.

From Theory to Practice: Purpose Statement of the I-LIFE M&E System

- To **ensure accountability** to different stakeholders in terms of financial management, achievement of objectives and service delivery.
- To **enhance learning** so that programs are improved; new projects are designed that better serve communities; lessons learned, findings, and results are shared; and project stakeholders know if I-LIFE activities made a difference in communities.
- To **allow managers to make better decisions** about I-LIFE activities, and know if I-LIFE is being implemented effectively and if resources are being allocated appropriately.
- To **inform policy makers** about the implications of project findings.

Documentation for the M&E Operating Manual

Information for this section of the manual may include:

- ToC that helps you keep track of process on documents and forms
- List of the members of your M&E working group
- Purpose statement that enables stakeholders to see at a glance, the purpose of your system
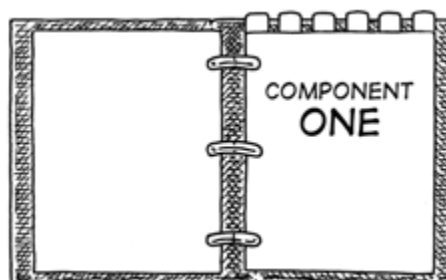
COMPONENT ONE

COMPONENT TWO:
REVIEW INFORMATION NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS
AND CHOICE OF INDICATORS

Utilization-focused M&E requires that the M&E working group consider end-use from the beginning! In other words, you will **need to know right from the start how the M&E information is later going to be applied by key users to make decisions.** In this component, you will review and assess the information needs, interests and decision-making responsibilities of all key project stakeholders—the intended users of information. Even if this was done earlier, this component helps to double-check that all priority stakeholders will have the information they need to make good decisions about the project, based on the M&E system.

Figure 4.3: Component Two—Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators

1. Consider the Whole M&E System	**2. Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators**
3. Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting	**4. Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes**
5. Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting	**6. Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required**

Identify Your Stakeholders

Who are the potential users of M&E information? Who needs to make informed decisions? These questions are best answered by referring to the stakeholder analysis done during the first steps of detailed implementation planning (see *Chapter III, Section 2, pp. 72-73*). For most projects, CRS staff, partners, project participants, and donors are obvious users. You will also want to identify other potential information users who are specific to your project. For example, CRS/Malawi's I-LIFE project identified community-based organizations, traditional leaders, district and ministry government officials and local politicians.

Be specific when naming users. For example, instead of "CRS staff" think about specific CRS information users, such as the Country Representative, finance manager or procurement officer. Each have different information needs because they make different types of decisions.

Remember the earlier comments about establishing an M&E working group. Individuals from your list of key stakeholders might be intrested in joining your group.

Identify Your Stakeholders' Information Needs

What are the specific information needs of each of these stakeholders? Why do they want this information? What decisions will they make with this information? Work closely with the appropriate decision-makers to make sure you understand their needs.

Some examples for a health and nutrition project are included in Table 4.3. Each information user depends on the M&E information to make informed decisions or actions.

Table 4.3: Illustrative Data and Information Needs in a Health and Nutrition Project

Intended M&E Information User	Data Needed for Decision-making	Illustration of Decisions That Might Be Based on the Available Information
Community Infant Caretakers	• Infant growth data	• Does the monitoring program need to be expanded to cover all families in the community? • What is the health status of the infants that are being monitored? • Is there a need to review the current approach to infant care?
Village Health Committee	• Number of women and men in the community that have received training in health and nutrition • Number of participants who have demonstrated understanding of the knowledge and skills taught	• Is more training needed? • Have the right people received the training? • Are these people using their new skills in their work? • Are there any community members who can act as promoters of improved health and nutrition practices?

Intended M&E Information User	Data Needed for Decision-making	Illustration of Decisions That Might Be Based on the Available Information
Project Managers and Partner Project Officers	• Activities completed in the last six months • Challenges that have arisen in the course of project implementation • Validity of Critical Assumptions • Community members' descriptions of what has been the most significant change over the last six months • Use of health and nutrition messages by community members • Impact on health of community members	• Are current financial and human resources sufficient to ensure project activities can be implemented well, on-time, and within budget? • Is there a need to take any additional action to ensure progress towards the achievement of higher-level objectives? • Is it clear why challenges have arisen and what the possible solutions might be? • Is there a need for additional information to understand the challenges more clearly? • Is there a need for any corrective action related to the Critical Assumptions? • Are there are any unexpected benefits or costs that should be supported or addressed, respectively?
CRS Regional Technical Advisor for Health	• Lessons learned about the new peer education approach • Identify which community members in particular have benefited or lost out	• Should CRS advice to Country Programs in the region regarding the new peer education approach be amended? • If yes, how? • What can be shared with other regions?
Donors	• Rates of uptake of improved hygiene practices • Improved health benefits arising from the adoption of improved health practices • The project donors have a prescribed set of indicators they want monitored	• Is the project meeting reasonable targets concerning efficiency and effectiveness? • Is there a need to approve changes to the original set of Activities and Outputs? • How best can the pertinent lessons from this project intervention be disseminated more widely to other similar programs?

Review Proframe Indicator Statements
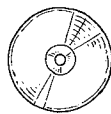
Review the Proframe's Performance Indicator statements in light of the stakeholders' needs. Remember from *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 2, pg. 109*, Performance Indicator statements do the following:

- define more clearly the essence of the associated objective statement;
- provide Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound (SMART) elements to the objectives;
- suggest evidence of how much or how well objectives are being achieved;
- verify the project's underlying theory of change;
- determine whether the project is on track or whether course corrections need to be made; and
- enable managers to make timely and better-informed decisions.

> ### *Think About It …* **Indicators and the "Right Road"**
>
> CRS/Malawi's I-LIFE M&E manual describes indicators as "markers." Think of them as road signs that show whether you are on the right road, how far you have gone, and how far you still need to go in order to reach your destination.
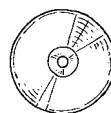
Table 4.4 shows what information is typically provided by the indicators associated with each of Proframe's five objective levels. This information is summarized from *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 3, pp. 132–133*.

Table 4.4: Information Provided by Different Types of Indicators

Objectives Hierarchy	Information Typically Provided by the Associated Indicators
Activities	- Focus on implementation progress is typically measured through administrative, management and financial tracking, and record-keeping systems; training reports, etc. - The indicators answer the following types of questions: - Was the Activity completed with acceptable quality and as planned? - Were planned numbers and types of items purchased and distributed? - Were the meetings held? - Did the numbers and gender of people in the target groups trained meet the anticipated targets?
Outputs	- Focus on goods and services delivered through successful completion of activities. - Generally measured by pre- and post-test training scores or practical assessments of increased knowledge, skills and attitudes; creation of structures or systems; kilometers of roads or number of schools rehabilitated; and so on.

Intermediate Results	• Focus on demonstrable evidence of behavioral change such as adoption, uptake, coverage or reach of Outputs. • Tracked as soon as Outputs have been delivered and have had a reasonable time to take effect. • Lightly monitored at first; explored in more detail if required; and then formally evaluated at mid-term against baseline data.
Strategic Objectives	• Reflect the benefits expected to occur for communities by the end of the project as a result of behavioral changes at IR-level. • End of project results are compared with corresponding baseline findings to measure these benefits against targets set. • Measured during final project evaluation.
Goal	• Unlike other objectives, the Goal statement is usually general and abstract, describing a desired state that occurs beyond the life of the project. For this reason, a Goal may not have an associated indicator. • If measured, data are drawn from appropriate, pre-existing sources such as the United Nations (UN), national government reports, etc.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Given the information in Table 4.4 on potential information needs of various project stakeholders, which levels of Proframe objectives and related indicators might interest project managers and officers most, and why?
2. Which level might interest donors most, and why?
3. What information needs of project stakeholders may NOT be addressed through the data collection system set up to track Proframe's prescribed indicators?

If in doubt, rule it out!

Together with the M&E working group, systematically and critically review each indicator in light of the M&E purpose statement, the list of users and their information needs, and the scope of your project. Because collecting indicator data costs time and money, you will want to be clear why each indicator has been chosen, how each responds to a specific information need, and how the information that will be generated will be used by stakeholders to inform decisions they need to make or actions they will take.

It may not always be possible to make revisions to the indicators, particularly if the donor has strong opinions about what needs to be included. In this regard, good dialogue with the donor and other important stakeholders is essential.

Think About It … **Need to Know vs. Nice to Know**

Don't forget the **"less is more"** principle for indicators! Select indicators that provide information that someone will use for project decision-making. Resist demands for too much data to be collected. Don't overwhelm project managers with data collection on questionable indicators.

Identify Other Information Needs
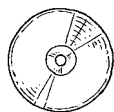
The Proframe indicators usually do not provide all of the information needed during the implementation of a project. Issues or questions may arise that call for the gathering of additional information. Also, information must be collected for the **Critical Assumptions** noted in your Proframe. (See monitoring Critical Assumptions in *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 2, pg. 122* for more information.) **Allow time in your M&E plan for these unplanned activities.**

What are some examples of other information that may be tracked during project implementation? You may want information on how a new partner perceives CRS' support early in project implementation. If they are not happy, you will want to decide on how best to respond. You may want information on how well a certain government ministry supports the project. How many officials are coming to the project meetings? If you don't get their support early on, the project will surely run into greater difficulties later. You may also find some pleasant surprises that are important enough to track in a more formal way. The public officials may be so engaged, for example, that you decide to measure and report on their participation in the project.

Keep a list of these other information needs. Use your best judgment to decide what level of monitoring is appropriate for each of these other potential issues. For example, you may decide that monitoring the participation of government officials in meetings needs to be done only occasionally. If their commitment seems to be diminishing, then the intensity of monitoring can be increased, as appropriate, before any follow-up action is decided upon. This more holistic approach reflects the full scope of an M&E system.

Documentation for the M&E Operating Manual
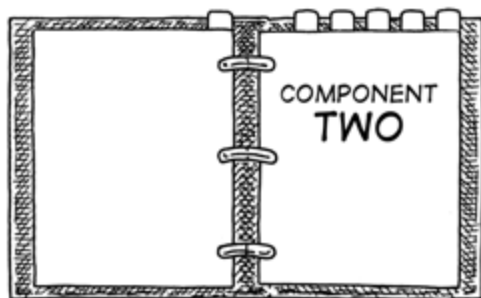
Information for this section of the manual may include the following:

- information needs of stakeholders you identified using Table 4.3 on *pp. 94-95* of this section as a guide;
- the Results Framework from your original proposal;
- the Proframe with an updated set of indicators; and
- critical assumptions and any additional information needs that the M&E working group may have identified.

COMPONENT THREE:
PLAN FOR DATA GATHERING, ANALYSIS
AND EVIDENCE-BASED REPORTING

Introduction

Definitions: Data, Information, Knowledge and Learning

M&E is only useful if it results in improved decision-making. This is the underlying value of a utilization-focused approach to M&E and requires data to be gathered and transformed into information and knowledge. It is helpful to **distinguish between terms that are often used interchangeably**—data, information, knowledge and learning—and the uses to which they are put.

Figure 4.4: Component Three—Plan for Data Gathering, Organization and Analysis

1. Consider the Whole M&E System	2. Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators
3. Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting	4. Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes
5. Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting	6. Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required

- **Data** refer to raw, unanalyzed material (facts, figures, opinions and perceptions), gathered by an information system.
- **Information** refers to analyzed data, often presented in a form that is specifically designed for a given decision-making task, and transmitted to and received by decision makers.
- **Knowledge** refers to the subsequent absorption, assimilation, understanding and appreciation of that information.
- **Learning** is the process through which individual and agency knowledge is gained. Learning is a necessary but insufficient condition for improved program quality. It is the *practical application* of that learning that will enable CRS to deliver greater impact with a given set of resources.

Proframe Indicators, Data Gathering and Evidence-based Reporting

In Component Two, you and your stakeholders finalized your list of indicators. **Now, in Component Three, you will determine how to gather, organize, analyze and report on data. This is, in a sense, the heart of your M&E system. You will be linking the Proframe indicators with data gathering forms and then making sure those form link with your evidence-based reporting formats. While it will initially take time to think this through and to set this up, it will save you time in the long run.** Component Three contains other suggested tools and forms to help you ensure that each performance indicator will be gathered in a systematic way so that your reports will document consistent and comparable information. Let's take a moment to look more closely at what is meant by evidence-based reporting.

Evidence-based reporting is an approach to report writing in which statements made about the progress of the project are supported with verifiable information. Project managers write reports based on the best evidence available from the M&E system to support the findings.

Many CRS staff feel that their approach to report writing is ad hoc. They struggle to write reports that speak to the objectives of the project, based on meaningful analysis of the indicators. As a result, many reports have strong statements about the progress made, yet little supporting evidence to justify the claim.

An evidence-based approach to reporting requires you to **think forward** to the kind of reports you will need to write (to satisfy the stakeholders and donors). As you think forward, you know you are expected to compile an annual report on the progress the project is making in achieving its objectives. No surprise there! The annual report will need to have information not only about the Activities that have been undertaken, and the Outputs delivered, but also some indication of how well the project is progressing towards achieving the IRs. Again, this should be familiar to you. So, to find out more precisely what specific information you will need to report, **look back** now at the Proframe and its indicators to find the information required in the reports.

For example, perhaps your Activity-level indicators require you to report on the number of training workshops you have held during the year, and the number of participants attending, disaggregated by gender. In Component Three you will set up a system to ensure you have the necessary data in time for writing the report. If at the IR-level, your indicator suggests that you anticipate a certain percentage of trainees will be applying the recommended practice in their homes, then Component Three will help you determine how best you can gather, organize and analyze those data so that, again, you can make evidence-based statements in your report.

Think About It…

One very useful thing to do at this early stage is for the M&E working group to think about the kinds of tables, graphs or other means for communicating information in a report. It doesn't matter that you don't have any 'live' data, you can still use this as a technique for working out what data you must collect to be able to report systematically against the stated objectives.

Setting up the M&E system requires care – Component Three in particular – is a bit like the man who is trying to spin a lot of plates at the same time.
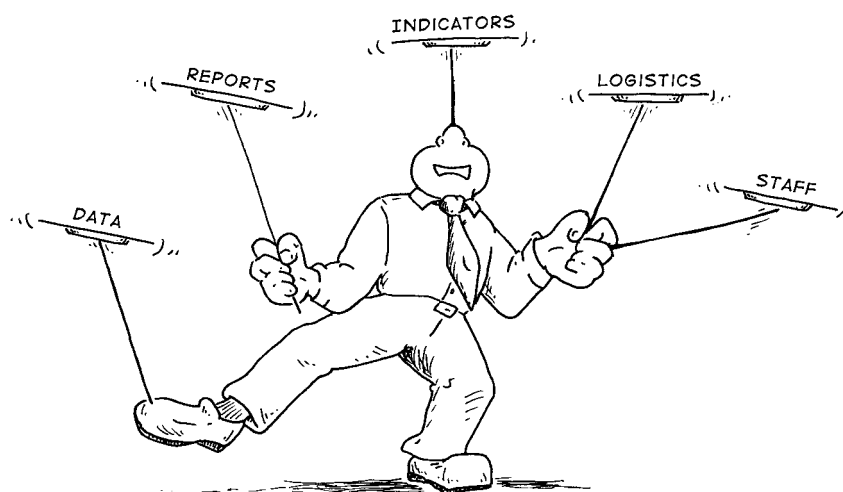
There are many pieces to contend with, and the challenge is to keep your eye on all of the different parts of the system to ensure it will provide you with the data you need, at the time you need it, for your reports.

But how do you get from the list of indicators in your Proframe to a set of linked data gathering forms and reporting formats? Page 111 provides information on designing these forms. Before designing them, however, it will be useful to review the sections on cost and complexity of data collection; data worksheets; and other data gathering concerns. With these tasks completed, you will be ready to design the forms because all of the indicators will be clear, data collection methods will be decided and responsibilities for collection and analysis will be determined.

Cost and Complexity of Data Gathering
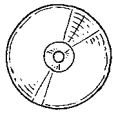
Turn to Figure 23 in *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 2, pg. 118* to see the trade-offs between cost and complexity when comparing different methods of data gathering. Ensure that you have the time, money, and staff to gather, organize and analyze data. Remember the dotted line in the Proframe between the Performance Indicator Statements in column two and the Measurement Methods/Data Sources in column three? As suggested in *ProPack I, pg. 117*, experience shows that performance indicator statements are often written without asking what approach to measurement is appropriate, how they can be realistically measured and analyzed, what resources are required, and who will be responsible.
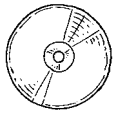
PROFRAME

	Performance Indicator Statements	Measurement Methods/Data Sources	

This step requires careful planning, since it is the details that can be the most troublesome. As an example, the plan for data gathering, organization, and analysis for a food security indicator is listed in the Zimbabwe "From Theory to Practice" story box.

From Theory to Practice: Drilling Down to the Details—Data Gathering, Organization and Analysis for a Large, Multi-agency Project in Zimbabwe

In determining how best to gather data for end-use monitoring purposes, the following issues were considered:

- the sample unit—households which were participants in the project and non-participants;
- the survey tool—community food security questionnaire;
- the sampling method—random selection of project participants and non-participants;
- the sample frame—the universe or population which the sample was to represent (e.g., a complete list of all the households or population in the project area);
- the sample size—five households per ward in seven districts giving an approximate total number of five sentinel farmers x 113 wards or 665 total sentinel farmers;
- field-testing and refining the survey tool;
- the survey training required—central training for agriculture district staff, who in turn would train community-based surveyors in their districts;
- data gathering procedures to be followed—collected monthly, collated at ward level by the 20th of each month, and sent to the project office by the 25th of each month;
- data entry and analysis procedures; and
- a planning calendar for all of the above.

(Source: Adapted from C-SAFE)

ProPack II does not provide details on topics such as sampling or survey techniques. M&E and other technical advisors can help with these issues. In addition, this information is widely available from resources listed at the end of this chapter.

Review Data Gathering Worksheets

Review each Performance Indicator Statement in column two of the Proframe along with the description in column three of its associated Measurement Methods/Data Sources and the appropriate M&E planning worksheets. You will want to ensure that information gathering, organization, and analysis has been planned in sufficient detail.

From Theory to Practice: Refining and Detailing the M&E Planning Worksheets

> Building for the Future is a $5.5 million, five-year program to empower youth to build democracy and stability in Georgia, working with implementing and technical resource partners. A Measurement Methods/Data Sources worksheet and other M&E worksheets were developed for the proposal. When the Chief of Party arrived, however, he realized that his information needs demanded more detail and, as a result, he approved additional M&E activities. Living conditions in Georgia differed tremendously between rural, urban, or breakaway regions, so the M&E unit was requested to separate the data collected for various indicators to reflect these geographical differences. Furthermore, the Chief of Party requested the inclusion of real-time evaluations (see *Chapter VII, Section 1, pp. 223-224*) as a measurement method for assessing progress in achieving the behavior change indicators at IR-level.

The story from Georgia shows the kind of additional detailed design and planning work that may be needed as the M&E plan is turned into an operational M&E system. Working collaboratively with partners and other key stakeholders to review the performance indicator statements is vital. It enables all those who will be involved in data gathering to verify the technical and resource feasibility of the proposed measurement methods/data sources. Later, this will help motivate all concerned when the work has to be done!
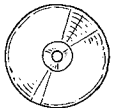
Following are descriptions of some M&E worksheets introduced in *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 4, pp. 139–146* and a description of how these worksheets should be revised and updated during the DIP process.

Measurement Methods/Data Sources Worksheet

Keep project stakeholders—especially partners—involved in this step. The more stakeholders and partners are engaged in selecting the most appropriate and practical methods, the better the chance they will collect data in a way that supports high-quality M&E.
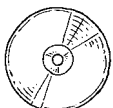
Columns two and three of the project Proframe should provide you with a set of SMART performance indicators and how they will be measured. Review them by using the Measurement Methods/Data Sources Worksheet included in *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 4, pg. 139*. The worksheet includes the indicator definition, the data collection methods/data sources, the frequency and timing of data collection, and other important considerations. (See *pp. 138–140 of ProPack I* for guidance on filling out the worksheet.)

Review and, if necessary, change the original specification of each indicator and measurement method to improve the chances that data will be collected in a uniform manner. In other words, you are seeking an M&E system in which field staff gather data systematically, so that they are consistent over time and comparable across sites.

> CRS/Malawi's I-LIFE project emphasizes three important words to remember when reviewing the indicators, and calculation and measurement methods: 1) Consistent, 2) Systematic and 3) Comparable.

A very clearly written method of calculation for an indicator is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Calculating Percentage of Households with Latrines in Use

Indicator	Percentage of Households with Latrines in Use
Source of data	Physical count and partner records
Method of measurement	Numerator: Number of households with latrines in use Denominator: Total number of households in the community Numerator -------------- X 100 = **percentage of households with latrines in use** Denominator
Instructions	Twice a year, physically count latrines in use, then monthly add new household latrines and subtract full or collapsed latrines.

(Source: UNHCR 2004)
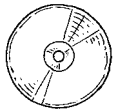
Potential problems around data validity will be eased if you are able to utilize **commonly accepted indicators** that have clear guidance for their measurement. This may, in time, allow for comparison of data across multiple projects. Some donors may require you to use a specific set of standardized indicators (e.g., there is often very clear guidance provided for Title II projects); this must be reflected in the project proposal's M&E plan. Consult *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 2, pp. 111–112* for more information on when and how to use standardized indicators. Useful websites for standardized indicators are listed at the end of this chapter.

Baseline Survey Worksheet

Baseline surveys are an important reference for project evaluations. A baseline survey using a probability sample is appropriate if it is intended to collect the same information at other points during the project cycle. In this way, a baseline survey **provides information on the pre-project status of participant conditions against which performance indicators will normally be compared at mid-term and at the end of a project.** Thus, baseline surveys should be done before project implementation and **ought to be one of the project's first activities**.

However, an all-too-common scenario is that a baseline survey is not conducted at the outset, which causes difficulties for evaluation later on, as described in the "From Theory to Practice" story.

From Theory to Practice: Trying to Evaluate Without a Baseline

> In one CRS program, staff planned to write a proposal for a Title II aid program called a Multi-Year Activity Plan (MYAP) that focused on health promotion. The new proposal was to be based on an evaluation of the previous food aid program called the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP). Early in their attempts to evaluate the TAP, staff realized they had no baseline. Without one, they could not document the success of the TAP, so they gathered anecdotal evidence that suggested that it had improved lives. Yet, as they developed the MYAP, they found themselves struggling with the design for lack of good data from the previous program.
>
> To compensate for the lack of a baseline in the TAP, staff developed an elaborate plan with over 100 variables for the MYAP. At the same time, USAID organized a baseline survey that represented all areas where Title II operated. Participating in this seemed like a better option than trying to tackle a plan with more than 100 variables, so CRS participated in the collection of the USAID baseline data. During the mid-term review, however, they learned that national level sampling did not provide good data for the specific CRS target area. Staff found themselves, again, without good baseline data to measure project impact.

As the Title II story illustrates, some projects have difficulties with baseline surveys. Some common problems are that they:

- are done late, or not at all;
- are poorly designed;
- are excessively detailed; and
- require knowledge, skills, and experience that CRS and partner staff may not have.
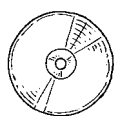
Good planning should help you address these potential difficulties. Filling in the Baseline Survey Worksheet will help ensure that this first activity goes as smoothly as possible, regardless of whether the CRS office is implementing the survey, or if it has been contracted out to a specialist. Review the Baseline Survey Worksheet and questions in *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 4, pg.143*.

From Theory to Practice: Example of Baseline Survey Guidance for Child Survival

> USAID DIP guidance for Child Survival projects provides the following examples of baseline studies that may be conducted for such projects. Surveys may include, but are not limited to, the following:
>
> - a census;
> - a population-level baseline KPC (knowledge, practices and coverage) survey;
> - a health care provider's assessment (i.e., during a facility assessment or a health worker competency survey);
> - a national Tuberculosis (TB) review/assessment;
> - a TB cohort analysis;
> - an organization or partner capacity assessment; and
> - any complementary qualitative research.
>
> USAID DIP guidance further requires that baseline survey reports must include a description of sampling techniques and interview processes.

(Source: USAID 2005)
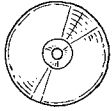
While information in <u>ProPack I</u> and this manual will help to a limited extent, and there are many written references that deal with this topic, you will most likely require assistance from your M&E unit, other technical advisors, or an outside consultant. If you contract out the work, look for a capable group that has expertise in survey work in your project's specific sector.

Extra help is usually needed because designing, planning, and conducting baseline surveys demand special skills. Checklist 4.1 provides tips for managing a baseline survey.

Checklist 4.1: Tips for Managing a Baseline Survey

✓ If you hire a consultant for a baseline survey, develop a well-written SOW, and allow plenty of time for the recruitment process in order to get high-quality technical assistance. Refer to *Chapter V, Section 1, pg. 136 and chapter VII, Section 2, pp. 237-239* for more information on how to write a strong SOW.

✓ Ensure that baseline surveys are completed as early as possible in the project. This will improve your ability to analyze impact based on data collected at the end of the project.

✓ Plan for sufficient staff and time to work on all phases of the baseline—bottlenecks often occur in data processing and analysis.

✓ Pre-test questionnaires and make sure data are reliable.

✓ Collect only data that correspond to the agreed upon set of performance indicators (i.e., that need to be analyzed and reported).

✓ Ensure that questionnaires are designed to simplify—not complicate—data processing.

✓ Ensure that baseline surveys are replicable, because they will need to be repeated at project completion and sometimes during a mid-term evaluation.

✓ Share your baseline survey experiences with the deputy regional director for program quality (DRD/PQ) and the PQSD M&E team as your contribution to wider agency learning!

✓ If working with external consultants,
  • request that they provide all data collection tools and gathered data as part of their deliverables, and
  • ensure that the external consultancy is designed and implemented as a capacity-strengthening opportunity for CRS and partner staff.
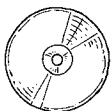
There is a wealth of information available elsewhere on baseline surveys and related topics. The <u>I-LIFE Handbook on M&E Essentials,</u> for example, contains guidance on conducting baseline surveys, including question development, questionnaire layout and length, coding, key steps in conducting an interview, sampling and data management. These references are listed in the *Related Reading* section at the end of this chapter.

If, for whatever reason, a baseline survey is not undertaken, you will still need to gather data that can serve as a reference point to measure project performance. Bamberger *et al* (2006) suggest the following possible alternatives to baseline surveys:

  • reconstructing baseline data for project populations;
  • assessing the situation at the beginning of the project based on recall;
  • working with key informants; or
  • using participatory evaluation methods.

See *Chapter VII, Sections 1* and *2, pp. 215-248* for more information.

In some projects, the baseline is zero because the initiative is new and the results are simply counted from the beginning of the project. The "From Theory to Practice" Peacebuilding story box illustrates this scenario.

From Theory to Practice: Baseline Data for a Peacebuilding Project

> CRS/Philippines has a peacebuilding project that is intended to strengthen the capacity of community leaders to promote peace in their villages. With the acquired knowledge and skills, it is hoped that the leaders will work with community members to design and implement initiatives that will build linkages with different local groups. In this project, the IR-level indicator is the number of villages that are implementing peacebuilding activities. The baseline at the beginning of the project is zero, because no village groups have ever undertaken such peacebuilding initiatives.

Performance Indicator Tracking Table

The Performance Indicator Tracking Table (PITT) is **a required M&E planning document in all Title II-funded projects**. The PITT provides timely information for project reviews and evaluations. For example, a mid-term evaluation will aim to explain the over- or under-achievement of project targets. This analysis may result in requests for revised targets and amendments to certain indicators. As part of a final evaluation's assessment of project impact, there will be a review of achievement at SO-level, as summarized in the PITT worksheet.

Even if donors do not require the PITT, it is still recommended for consideration by the M&E working group for the following reasons:

- it helps promote results-based M&E by tracking indicators related to higher-level objectives;
- it provides a useful tool for annual project reports; and
- it summarizes and communicates essential project information among project stakeholders.

In your proposal, you might have a draft PITT. The PITT can only be fully completed, however, once the baseline survey is undertaken. During detailed implementation planning, and together with other important stakeholders, you will want to revise the initial target estimates so that they are aligned with the baseline survey data, unless the survey was done in the project planning stage. **Once the baseline data are entered, the PITT should be updated annually to show actual achievements compared to targets.** If modifications need to be made to the PITT targets, make sure that you seek approval from the donor, if required.
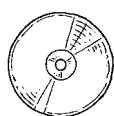
Guidance on how to fill out a PITT is included in *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 4, pp. 140–143*; on the ProPack II CD ROM; and in an M&E model (Guidelines for the Preparation and Use of Performance Indicator Tracking Tables). A Performance Indicator Tracking Tables template and a Sample Completed Performance Indicator Tracking Table are also available on ProPack II's CD ROM. For further information on preparing and using PITTs, please refer to the guidance manual listed at the end of this chapter.

Setting Targets for the Performance Indicator Tracking Table
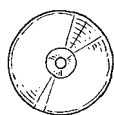
Setting accurate targets requires careful consideration. Detailed information on setting targets during project design and proposal development is included in *ProPack I, Chapter IV, Section 3, pp. 134–135*. A summary of this information plus some additional tips on setting targets are included in Checklist 4.2, and in the guidance manual listed above.

Checklist 4.2: Tips on Setting Targets

✓ Identify the baseline. This establishes a reference point against which the target must be set.
✓ Identify relevant trends, such as the historical trend in the indicator value over time. Is there a trend—upwards or downwards—that can be drawn from existing reports, records, or statistics? If so, be cautious about claiming success if your project is building on an existing trend.
✓ Identify expectations of progress that project stakeholders may hold or that are related to international standards.
✓ Identify expert opinion. Ask government ministry officials, CRS regional technical advisors or other technical specialists about what is possible or feasible with respect to a particular indicator and country setting.
✓ Identify what research findings reveal. Evaluation findings may help to choose realistic targets, and these may be available or well-known for certain sectors.
✓ Identify what was accomplished by similar projects elsewhere. This may come from your own experiences or you can check with colleagues, other NGOs or donors.
✓ Resist the temptation to set targets that are overly ambitious just because they look impressive on paper!

Set Up the Data Gathering and Analysis System

Now that you have reviewed the proposed indicators, you will want to make sure your M&E system generates good quality data.

Checklist 4.3: Tips for Ensuring Good Quality Data from Your M&E System

✓ Choose methods and develop related forms to record data.
✓ Develop paper-based filing and computerized database systems for collating and storing data.
✓ Train staff, partners or community members who will be involved in filling out forms and collating and storing gathered data.
✓ Choose appropriate methods to analyze data.

There are already many sources of information about data gathering (e.g., Laws 2003). As project manager, you can check the various references as well as draw on expertise within your Country Program and the agency to decide upon the best method for your projects. The following guidance is brief and will give you basic information. Check *Related Reading* at the end of this chapter for more information.

Choose Data Gathering Methods

Data may be quantitative or qualitative.

Quantitative data refers to observations that are represented in numerical form. Examples include the number of training workshops conducted, the number of people trained and their test scores, the number of food insecure households in a district, or participants' attitudes about a certain subject. All of these can be expressed as numbers, as amounts or degrees—that is as quantitative data. Quantitative data can be analyzed with statistics, both descriptive and inferential. Quantitative data may come from secondary data sources, such as facility-based records, formal tests, standardized observation instruments and project records.

Qualitative data is the general term given to evidence that is text based rather than numeric in representation. These kinds of data result from attempts to capture participants' experiences in their own words, through (semi-structured) interviews (group, individual, focus, and so on), participant observations (more typically unstructured but also structured), and documents that may be analyzed from a variety of perspectives. Qualitative data consist of detailed, in-depth descriptions and analyses of situations, people, events, interactions and observed behaviors; and direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts.

1. In a project you currently manage, how would you describe the balance you have achieved between quantitative and qualitative performance indicators?
2. How was this particular balance chosen?
3. How might you change things to achieve a better balance, if one is needed?

The distinction between qualitative and quantitative data is somewhat arbitrary because all evidence has dimensions of both. For example, qualitative data may give way to frequency counts of various themes, and a statistical finding may be described in everyday language. Just because you can quantify something does not mean it is necessarily a more accurate representation of reality. This is why **it is useful to think of quantitative and qualitative data as being complementary**. For example, a quantitative analysis may allow you to report how many people living with HIV&AIDS received counseling, and how they rated the quality of that service; while qualitative methods can be used to understand in greater depth what lies behind those rating scores (I-LIFE 2005).

Think About It … Feelings Do Count!

Don't think that subjective data can't be quantified. For example, how individuals rate the quality of an HIV&AIDS counseling service is clearly subjective, but you can still count how many people said it was "very good," "good," "poor" or "very poor."
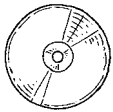
Most of the above information is summarized from *ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 3, pp. 60–63*. There is an explanation of secondary data collection, interviews, observation, quantitative and qualitative approaches, and a brief summary of PRA methodologies. Although the discussion is in the context of assessment methodologies, the information remains relevant to your choice of data collection methods for the M&E system.

A few **general tips on selecting data gathering methods** are included in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: General Tips for Selecting Data Gathering Methods

Make good use of secondary data	• Always check to see if another group, person, or organization is collecting data that may be useful in your context. Baseline studies often fail to utilize available information from development agencies and academic institutions with long-term experience in the area. • Information you seek may already be available from a community or district-level office. • Remember that secondary data are unlikely to provide an exact match with your requirements, but they may provide a reasonable fit. They may also identify gaps where further data need to be collected.
Be clear on the level of precision required	• Good M&E is not the same as academic research, even though many of the data collection instruments are common to both disciplines. • While high levels of numeric accuracy may sometimes be desirable, in some cases you may not need such data. • Discussions with a range of key informants can sometimes meet the level of precision required; don't assume that only statistically-sound sample survey data collection methods are reliable. • It is important that key stakeholders discuss this, since there are significant resource allocation implications.

Assess the method's feasibility.	• Ensure that the method selected is feasible given the resources at your disposal. • Check that the required skills, time, and money needed to use this method are available. • Identify the different options for data collection and their relative merits.
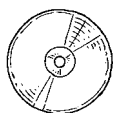
For more information on feasibility, read *pg. 118* in *ProPack I (Chapter IV, Section 2)*. This page includes a list of questions that will help you choose appropriate data gathering methods. There is a general tendency in monitoring (in both development and relief programming) to ignore the importance of qualitative data. This may reflect a feeling of security with having numeric data, but also the lack of experience that staff may have in working with qualitative data.

Given the complementarities that exist between qualitative and quantitative approaches to data gathering, the M&E system would benefit from both.

Choose Data Gathering Instruments

As part of setting up the data gathering and analysis system, you will need to consider data gathering instruments (i.e., the **techniques** that you and your staff will use) that are appropriate and feasible, reflecting both your data needs and the human and financial resources you have for this purpose. Completing your Monitoring Responsibilities Worksheet will help you make decisions about which instruments—paper-based or electronic—to employ.

A number of organizations have begun to use Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), also commonly known as Palm Pilots, on an experimental basis for survey-based data gathering. It is widely thought that this technology has great potential for data gathering, although there are some who are skeptical as to its feasibility, functionality and sustainability factors in international development project contexts.

Table 4.7: Pros and Cons of Using PDAs to Gather Data

Advantages (Pros)	Disadvantages (Cons)

• Increases the reliability of gathered data by reducing human error.
• Enhances the level of consistency in survey responses.
• Saves labor time in re-typing and data aggregation, thereby improving the time taken for analyzing data and producing process and performance indicators.
• Contributes towards better decision-making processes at the project level through enhanced levels of project data sharing and analysis.
• Enables field-staff, partner and community capacity-strengthening.
• Improves the graphical representation, and visual impact analysis, of data if PDA is connected with Global Positioning System.
• Increases overall productivity by improving data analysis and reporting.
	• Increases the training time required for data gatherers.
	• Outstanding technological issues, such as:
	  o Slippery stylus tips (oiled, moistened touch).
	  o Small keyboard size means that data collectors are not always accurately inputting information.
	• Additional cost of equipment and user training time.
	• Respondents may be more cautious when responses are recorded into an electronic device.
	• The programming requirements of the PDAs can be significant.

(Source: Willard 2005)

Review the Monitoring Responsibilities Worksheet

Monitoring systems require time and commitment of project personnel. It is important to address four key questions:

1. Who will be responsible for gathering data?
2. Who will supervise that process?
3. Who will analyze the gathered data?
4. Who will report the information that will be generated by the analysis?
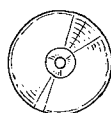
The Monitoring Responsibilities Worksheet will help you to consider the responsibilities of data gathering, analysis and reporting. It was included in ProPack I and is also on the ProPack II CD ROM. This form also includes a column for thinking through the budgetary implications. If you completed this form during proposal development, you can revisit it now and make sure you are aware of the likely cost implications of your proposed monitoring system.

Consider the Summary Master Performance Indicator Sheet
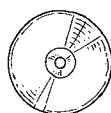
Your ability to gather, organize and analyze data will, in part, depend on your ability and willingness to complete the series of M&E planning worksheets previously described. Some CRS staff have found it helpful to summarize the worksheet information on a Master Performance Indicator Sheet for each indicator. This can then be inserted into the M&E Operating Manual to provide an easy point of reference for indicator information.

Design Forms for Gathering Data and Reporting

It is now important for you to consider systematically the data gathering forms and reporting forms. In one CRS health and nutrition project, the forms in Table 4.8 were developed to track project indicators.

Table 4.8: Forms Used in a Health and Nutrition Project

Form Name	Purpose
1. Pregnancy Register	To record health status of all pregnant women in the village.
2. Children's Register	To record health status of all children under two in the village.
3. Health Activities Register	To record health activities carried out in the village.
4. Census	To identify total population of the village, and list all children under two and pregnant woman.
5. Quarterly Supervision Report	To support and improve the work of community health workers.
6. Quarterly Health Activities Report	To extract information on health status from the pregnancy and children's registers.
7. Quarterly Health Activities Summary Report	To summarize all quarterly health activities reports by region.
8. Training Report	To track all training completed within the project.

(Source: Adapted from Charleston et al. 1999)

You can see in Table 4.8 that data gathering forms come in many different shapes and sizes! In this case, to obtain the data she needed for the quarterly and annual reports, the project manager called upon three types of register, a census and four different types of project reports. Clearly then, data gathering is not just about designing and filling in questionnaires!

Review Approaches to Creating Forms

How do you get from the list of indicators in your Proframe to a set of linked data gathering forms and reporting formats? There are different ways to approach this task. Look at the checklist of options below and decide which approach or some variation of these approaches would be most useful for you and your M&E working group. If you have completed all of the worksheets noted above, you will have all of the information you need to design the forms for data gathering and reporting.

Checklist 4.4: Ideas on Developing Data Gathering Forms and Reporting Formats

✓ Review the donor indicators or report format and develop the data gathering forms that are needed so that the reports are easily compiled.

CRS Vietnam supports a District Health Center's care program with PEPFAR funds. The program has a set of pre-determined indicators (e.g., number of clients, by gender, attending outpatient services). CRS took the list of indicators and created a monthly and quarterly report format. Based on those formats, CRS developed data gathering tools so that hospital staff could easily fill in the monthly forms that would be used for the monthly and quarterly reports. CRS added a few data gathering forms for information to be used in a quarterly report, not required by PEPFAR, but of interest to staff (e.g., the functioning of the Continuum of Care Coordinating Committee).

✓ Develop your own quarterly and annual reporting formats from your list of indicators. From that, develop the various data gathering forms needed and work with partners to assure that appropriate forms are developed.

In the same project as noted above, a second component supports a community center for PLHA and is funded by a Caritas donor. That donor accepted CRS' indicators (e.g., number, by gender, of clients attending coffee house counseling services; satisfaction with services). Using the master list of indicators, CRS developed its own monthly reporting format and then data gathering forms that would be needed to collect those data.

✓ Develop a master list of indicators by SO along with information such as who would collect and on what form. This will give you a list of forms that you would need. Use that information to develop a quarterly report format so the partner is clear about what needs to be collected and how it is reported.

Performance Indicator	Data Gathering	Findings to be Presented in
Number, by gender, attending counseling services	Client intake forms	Partner Quarterly Report
Satisfaction with counseling services	Focus group questionnaire	Partner Annual Report

✓ Check the indicators and develop blank tables, graphs, etc. that you might want to insert in your report. Use this information to make sure you develop the appropriate data gathering forms that will collect the necessary data. The PITT is an example of such a table (see *Section 2, pg 106*).

Indicator	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
# of women 'fully' adopting new hygiene recommendations			
# of women 'partially' adopting new hygiene recommendations			
# of women not adopting new hygiene recommendations			

✓ Plot out the relationship between the various data gathering forms and reports needed. For example, it may help to map out a diagram to show the different pieces of the system (see below).

Figure 4.5: An Illustration of the Linkage between Performance Indicators,
Data Gathering and Evidence-based Reporting
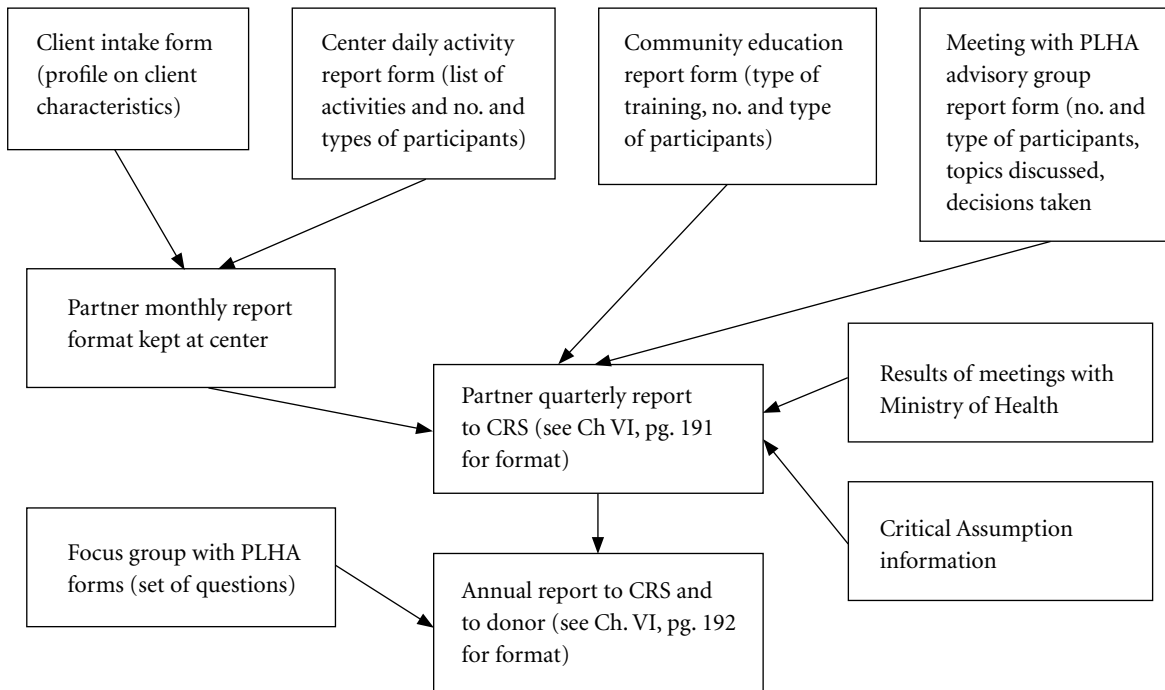
The above checklist and figure can help the M&E working group think through how it wants to organize the data gathering process. What are your indicators? Who needs to collect them on which form? How will those data and the analysis be written in the various reports? When? By whom? This is the core task of Component Three.

> ### Think About It…
>
> Think about the 'look' of the different forms you are planning. An attractive layout with ample space for writing will help ensure the forms are filled out correctly. The resources used to produce forms should be based on the size and scope of the data gathering tasks. For example, a form that will be re-used over several years will likely justify printing on good quality, thick paper. Forms developed for a small, short-term project may be photocopied at the office. A large project with a more complex M&E system may justify, if resources allow, expert advice on form layout and presentation.

Write Instructions for Data Gathering Forms

Each form developed should be accompanied by clear instructions on how data are to be collected and recorded. For example, the form for the "Training Report" mentioned at the bottom of Table 4.8 was accompanied by an instruction sheet to ensure data were collected in an accurate and consistent manner. The "From Theory to Practice" box below shows the directions that were provided on that sheet.

From Theory to Practice: Sample Instruction Sheet for Training Report Form

1. Fill out the form after each training course for community workers, partners or others.

2. Write the name of the zone and district where the training took place.

3. Write the dates that trainings were provided and the total number of hours of training. Example: one day would be eight hours and the total eight hours. If it was four days for eight hours each day, the total would be 32 hours.

4. In "Given by," indicate with an "X" who presented the training. If more than one institution gave the training, you can mark more than one "X." For example, if a training course was given for Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and a partner, mark an "X" in the space before both MoH and partner.

5. In "Number Attending," indicate the total number of people receiving the training by category (job, gender, etc.). For example, 10 TBAs and 15 Community Health Workers.

6. In "Topic," mark with an "X" the topic or topics that were presented during the training.

(Source: Adapted from Charleston et al. 1999)

Checklist 4.5 was provided to CRS/Aceh staff to help them think through the organization and management of the instruction sheets that accompanied their data recording forms.

Checklist 4.5: Tips on Preparing Instruction Sheets for Data Forms

✓ Develop a standard format that can be applied to the set of instructions that will be written for each form. Contents should include the following:
- Purpose
- Form to be completed by
- Frequency
- Detailed instructions for completing form
- Form to be provided to
- Other

✓ When writing instructions, assume that you need to explain everything. It is important that as the project is implemented, and as there is turnover of staff, there is a source document that explains all there is to know about the data recording forms.

✓ Keep the language used in the forms clear and concise.

✓ Include a preface that provides an overall summary of the complete set of forms and how they fit together.

✓ Develop a set of sample, completed forms with accompanying explanatory comments so that readers can see a finished example.

✓ Once the instructions have been drafted, have them translated into the local language that the field staff will be using in their work, if necessary.

✓ Develop a training package for field staff on how to complete the forms.

✓ Test the instructions to see if they are sufficiently clear to the intended users, assuming they will be operating independently.

✓ Make sure the instructions are kept up-to-date and are amended as the data recording forms are revised over time.

✓ Make sure the M&E Operating Manual contains the latest set of instruction sheets, and that amendments to data recording forms are communicated immediately to those collecting information.

Plan to Implement the M&E System

Train Others to Complete Data Gathering Forms

This step should not be skipped. The people who fill out these forms need to be trained carefully to do this work accurately. If possible, involve the staff, partners, or community members who will be filling out the data gathering forms at all stages of their design and testing. This increases the likelihood that the forms will be well understood by those who will be using them most regularly, which will reduce human error and improve the quality of the data collected and recorded. Table 4.9 includes key 'dos' and 'don'ts' concerning training people to fill out data forms.

Table 4.9: Dos and Don'ts for Data Form Testing and Training

Do!	Don't!
Ensure that users understand the purpose of the form and how the information will be used.	Assume users understand the purpose, relevance, and rationale of M&E forms.
Work with users to design and redesign forms to make sure they can be easily used. Remember that people with limited literacy skills tend to write larger.	Overburden community volunteers with excessive form-filling and record keeping.
Perform field tests of forms and their instruction sheets.	Print large quantities of forms until they have been field tested.
Ensure training includes discussions of each individual question, interview techniques, and practical application under observation.	Assume that only one training workshop or session on how to fill out forms will be sufficient.

(Source: Charleston et al. 1999, Poate and Daplyn 1993)

Note that *Component Six: Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required* in *Chapter IV, Section 4, pp. 123-126* further discusses training and capacity strengthening required for M&E activities.

Ensure Quality Control of Data Gathering

Robust management systems are needed to support high-quality data gathering. Quality control practices can be built-in to ensure that the data are being collected in a reliable way.

Checklist 4.6: Questions to Ensure Quality Control during Data Gathering

✓ Do people understand the purpose and use of the forms?
✓ Do the forms enable you to gather all the data that are required for monitoring purposes?
✓ Are the forms in the most appropriate language? Is the translation accurate?
✓ Do the staff feel they have sufficient skills to gather the data? If not, what specific training do they require (e.g., on interviewing and communication techniques)?
✓ Are forms being filled out systematically, correctly, and consistently?

Quality control may be relatively straightforward and does not need to be complicated. With spot checks, supervisory staff can observe whether field staff are filling out forms correctly. Data gathering issues can be discussed in detail at a project review meeting. At a more technical level, it is possible to program acceptable ranges of responses into some software (e.g., MS Excel) so that any improbable data are highlighted for possible rejection. For example, if someone lists an age of a participant as 149, the software will highlight it for revision or rejection from the database.

Collate, Organize and Store Data and Information

Discuss how data will be managed with the M&E working group. How will they be collated, organized and stored? **Collating refers to how you aggregate, add up, or roll-up the data.** You might, for example, collect data by sub-district, but then add up the figures to produce a sum for the districts and, eventually, at project-level.

Filing and recordkeeping are key components of a well-functioning M&E system. Organize recordkeeping from the beginning so that project stakeholders know where M&E information is stored, how it is organized and how they can access it. For example, **use distinct project names and dates for files**, not "donor report" or "proposals." Ensure that any confidential information is stored appropriately, and that there are clear and well-understood protocols for accessing it.

All of us have suffered from loss of data at some point; it can be very frustrating, and always seems to happen at the least convenient time! So, **you will want to include guidance on data storage in the M&E Operating Manual.** This guidance may include instructions for the safe storage of records that are required in the Award Agreement, like audit-related financial documents. Also, plan to store information that you will need for project evaluations. Finally, define your policy on backing-up electronic data, and stick to it.

Analyze the Data

Choosing a method for analysis depends on the type of data being gathered. For **quantitative data, analysis will follow statistical procedures and show trends in terms of percentages or ratios. Analysis of qualitative data will involve looking for patterns in descriptions and then providing an explanation for those patterns**; software is available for this kind of analysis (e.g., NVivo, Excel; Epi Info; Statistical Package for the Social Sciences [SPSS]), if the size of the project justifies the investment.

In both cases, analysis will involve comparing planned results with actual ones to understand the reasons for differences; to compare variations over geographical areas or between groups; or simply to monitor changes over time. For further information see IFAD 2002; Laws 2003; Nichols 1991; Gosling 1995.

Gather, Organize and Analyze Other Information

When you reviewed the information needs of users, you made a list of information that may not be generated by formal indicators. With your M&E working group, take another look at that list now, and plan the ways you will gather and analyze that information.

You could, for example, plan to monitor Critical Assumptions during quarterly project progress review meetings. By doing it once a quarter, you are ensuring that the process is systematic but not burdensome. If issues should arise during this light monitoring of Critical Assumptions, you will have to decide if additional M&E effort is required.

For example, if your quarterly information reveals that the government is not providing the necessary complementary services at some of your project sites, you may decide to do a quick survey of all your sites to see if the issue is more widespread. Depending on your findings, you will then need to decide how best to respond.

Ensure that project site visits include time to assess unanticipated events and outcomes. If you find that there are indeed occurrences of unexpected positive or negative outcomes, you may wish to build-in to the regular M&E system a more systematic approach for monitoring these unplanned outcomes. It is important that your M&E system has some flexibility to add additional activities as needed.

Documentation for the M&E Operating Manual

This part of the M&E Operating Manual will be quite large. Information for this section may include most of the following:

COMPONENT THREE

- Data gathering forms and instructions;
- Data reporting forms and instructions;
- Measurement Methods/Data Sources Worksheet;
- Performance Indicator Tracking Table;
- Baseline Survey Worksheet;
- Monitoring Responsibilities Worksheet;
- Master Performance Indicator Sheets (if you decide to develop these);
- Written plans to gather information not gathered via indicators; and
- Any relevant additional written plans for data gathering, organization, and analysis.
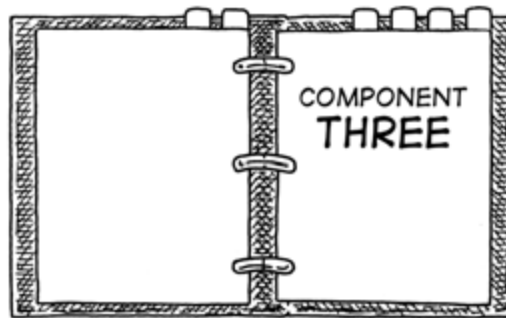
COMPONENT FOUR:

PLAN FOR CRITICAL REFLECTION EVENTS AND PROCESSES

Set a Schedule

Many CRS projects have gathered a lot of data but have not turned them into useable information and knowledge! Nor are they using the generated information to help inform management decisions. **By systematically planning time for reflection and analysis, you help ensure that data are transformed into valuable knowledge. By doing, this, project management decisions will likely build on the lessons learned as the project progresses.**

In this component, the M&E working group will plan routine critical reflection events in order to do the following:

- validate project information coming from observations, monitoring data, and project visits;
- analyze the findings; and then
- use these findings to inform project decision-making.

Figure 4.6: Component Four—**Plan for** Critical Reflection Events and Processes

1. Consider the Whole M&E System	**2. Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators**
3. Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting	**4. Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes**
5. Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting	**6. Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required**

These events will help generate a dynamic learning environment leading to better project implementation.

Critical reflection events should be held frequently during project implementation. Regular project review meetings may be held monthly, quarterly or at year-end, depending on the context and specifics of the project. Periodic events may be scheduled, such as a learning review following a major training event or a lessons-learned workshop following a project evaluation. Critical reflection can also occur less formally through ongoing discussions between project stakeholders or other such events.

Documentation for the M&E Operating Manual

To complete this component, make a list of the critical reflection events for your project and include them in the M&E calendar, which is described in the next step.

COMPONENT FOUR

Reflection Opportunity

1. Considering your own project experiences, how well have critical reflection events been planned and implemented?
2. How would you improve these types of critical reflection events?

COMPONENT FIVE:
PLAN FOR QUALITY COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING

So far, you have identified the potential users of M&E information, their information needs and a system for gathering, organizing, and managing the data. You have also planned opportunities to reflect on and analyze the M&E information as it becomes available.

You may have already worked out a schedule of **when users need the information and in what format**. If not, this is a good time to clarify these issues. While it is usually known when donors need progress reports, it is also **important for the M&E working group to think about when information is most needed to make critical management decisions with partners and participants.**

Figure 4.7: Component Five—**Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting**

1. Consider the Whole M&E System	2. Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators
3. Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting	4. Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes
5. Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting	6. Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required

Communicate Project Information

Think about this aspect of M&E in a strategic manner because there are many ways to communicate project information. The utilization-focused approach to M&E obliges you to consider what form of communication is most suitable for each important stakeholder. Always remember that good communication does not flow only one way. Look at your project's communication strategy as an opportunity to dialogue with important stakeholders, thereby not only improving understanding of what is occurring, but also building relationships in the process.
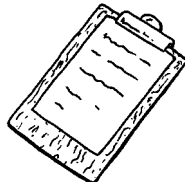
> **Don't Forget!**
>
> ProPack II includes a quarterly and annual progress report format in Chapter VI, Section 3, pp. 191-192 and a final report format in Chapter VII, Section 3, pg. 255.

Progress reports are a good means of communication, but there are others, such as site visits, project management meetings, specific critical reflection events, courtesy visits to stakeholders and officials, and so on. Plan for these different opportunities for communication in a coordinated way with others involved in the project. Think about how the different approaches might be interconnected. For example, the drafting of a progress report, can be followed up by dialogue in the field with community members and partners to ensure that their voices are reflected in the final version.

From Theory to Practice: Integrating Information to Take Action

> Observations of a community health rally in one community during a **site visit** reveal few participants. This problem also shows up in **progress reports**—the number of caregivers coming to the events is far fewer than planned. At the **quarterly review meeting**, observations and M&E information are shared, and project team members agree that a problem exists. During the meeting, team members analyze what is causing this problem. It turns out that the low number of caregivers participating in the rallies is due to poor communication of rally schedules. Project team members end the review meeting by making an **action plan** to resolve this problem.

Remember that the steps in setting up the M&E system are iterative, meaning you will go back-and-forth between them. It is best to think about report due dates before developing data collection formats. For example, if you know that the annual report for a donor is in May, you can work backwards to ensure that relevant data are gathered, collated, organized and analyzed on time to feed into this report.

Donor reporting requirements are usually clear and listed in the Award Agreement. But you also are accountable to other important stakeholders, such as community members, partners, CRS regional and headquarters offices, government officials, and so on. They too have a legitimate stake in the M&E findings.

All too often, community M&E information needs are ignored. Yet, there is a wonderful opportunity to discuss M&E information with community members and check that your understanding includes the insights and perspectives of different community members. Dialogue with communities can be managed in many creative ways, and discussing initial monitoring findings with community members will ensure that your understandings are grounded in reality. Moreover, participatory approaches to monitoring encourage a greater role for the community in tracking project progress.

From Theory to Practice: Pinning Down the Data!

In CRS/Philippines, the community health volunteers were trained to prepare a health data board which was put up in a strategic place in the communities, such as near the chapel or village hall. A spot map showing the location of each household was on this data health board. Each household was illustrated by a house-shaped material.

The community selected four to five monitoring indicators (e.g., nutritional status, presence of sanitary latrine, fully immunized child, etc.) based on their community health action plan. These indicators were then written onto each of the households shown on the board.

Every quarter, the trained volunteers would update the health board using color-coded map pins. For example, if the pre-school child in a family was below normal weight, a red pin was placed under the nutritional status column; if the child's weight was normal, a green pin was used instead.

This way, the community was actively involved in monitoring project progress, looking out for where individual households might be facing challenges and, thus, ensuring a richer dialogue among themselves, and CRS' partners and staff.

COMMUNITY HEALTH DATA BOARD
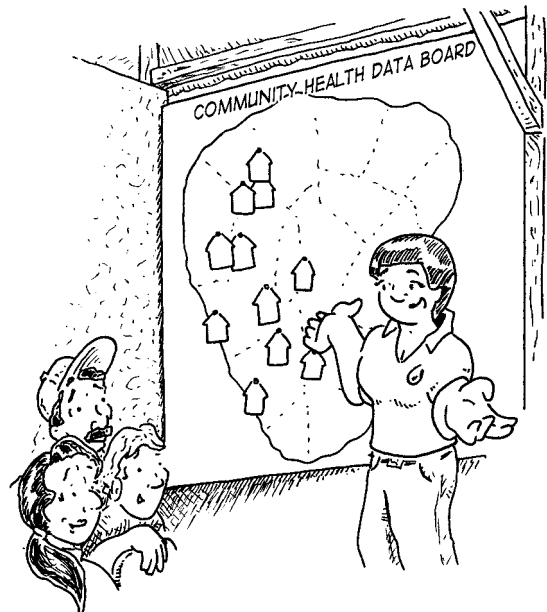
Reflection Opportunity

1. List the communication efforts in your current project.
2. How well do they work? For example, do you depend solely on progress reports to know what is happening? What other sources would help you verify information in the progress report?
3. How often do you report back to the communities?
4. How might your communication efforts be improved?

The M&E Calendar

M&E information must inform project management decisions—this is the central idea in CRS' approach. **The M&E Calendar helps to ensure that information is available at the time required by those who need it to inform their decisions.** The timely provision of information will enhance the likelihood that it will be used. For this reason, an M&E Calendar is vitally important.
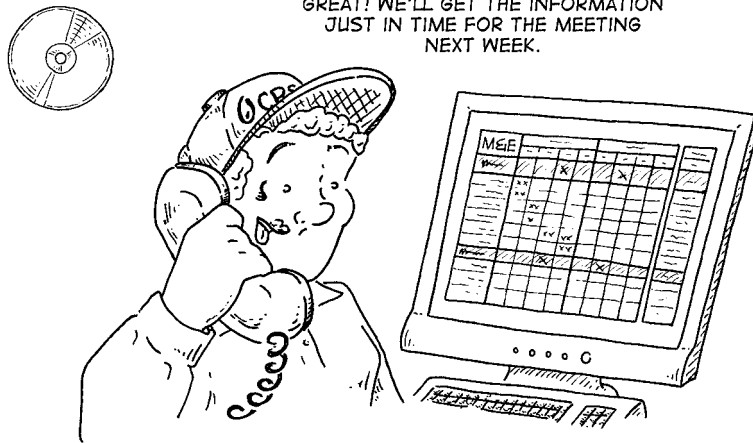
An M&E Calendar establishes critical deadlines for reporting. ProPack I includes a sample M&E Calendar in *Chapter IV, Section 4, pg. 145*, which uses a Gantt chart format. Specific plans for critical reflection events can be integrated into ProPack I's M&E Calendar by simply adding a row to include these types of events. The most important point in all of this is that the M&E Calendar should be discussed, understood and agreed upon by those involved with the project that have a particular need or interest for the M&E information.

Other Reporting Schedules

For small projects, you may simply integrate reporting information into the Activity Schedule. For larger projects, it will be useful to have a separate M&E Calendar—or both if you find it helpful. For large, multi-sector projects, many managers find it useful to have a separate Reporting Schedule that summarizes all project reporting and other major communication events. **Include plans for financial reports, regardless of the schedule you use.**

An example of a reporting schedule for the Consortium for Southern Africa Food Security Emergency (C-SAFE) project is shown in the "From Theory to Practice" box below.

From Theory to Practice: C-SAFE Project Reporting Schedule

Type of Report	Format	Messages	Submission to Country Lead	Submission to Regional Project Unit
C-SAFE Monthly Narrative Reports	Narrative word document	**Achievements**: FFA, HIV & AIDS, Training, M&E, Consortium initiatives, plans for the month.	10th of every month.	15th of every month.
C-SAFE Food for Assets (FFA) Template	Numerical Excel table	**Numbers of**: FFA projects; participants, specifying male and female; number of person days; etc.	Quarterly by 10th of that month (Jan, April, July, September).	Quarterly by 15th of that month (Jan, April, July, September).
M&E Tracking Template	Narrative word document	Examples of how M&E information is being used in country (stories, case studies, etc.).	Quarterly by 10th of that month (Jan, April, July, September).	Quarterly by 15th of that month (Jan, April, July, September).
C-SAFE Communications and Marketing	Narrative word document	Success stories from the field.	When stories become available.	As soon as stories have been verified.
Semi-annual report	Narrative and numerical excel table	Bi-annual review of program progress.	Regional Project Unit sends detailed reporting schedule each March and September.	

Documentation for the M&E Operating Manual

Information for this section of the manual will include some combination of the following:

- Updated Activity Schedule showing key reporting and communication events;
- M&E Calendar; and
- Project Reporting Schedule.
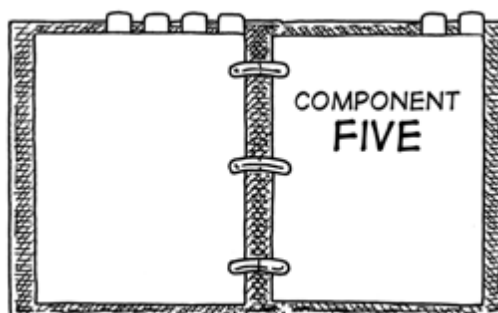
COMPONENT FIVE

COMPONENT SIX:
PLAN FOR THE RESOURCES AND CAPACITIES REQUIRED

At the core of good M&E systems are the resources and capacities that exist for undertaking the planned activities. Now that you have a comprehensive M&E system nearly set up, you can do a final check to ensure that staff, partners and, if appropriate, the community are able and willing to carry it out. **This is one last check on the feasibility of your M&E system.** It is also the basis of an action plan for M&E capacity strengthening.

Figure 4.8: Component Six—**Plan for the** Resources and Capacities Required

1. Consider the Whole M&E System	2. Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators
3. Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting	4. Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes
5. Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting	**6. Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required**

Review of Resources and Capacities

A well functioning M&E system requires human resources, training, and financial and material resources. As the project manager, your job is to ensure that staff and partners with M&E responsibilities have the knowledge, skills, tools and support to carry out their respective tasks.

Your CRS colleagues can support your efforts. Through various communication means (e-mail, the M&E Community of Practice listserv, Breeze, SharePoint, VOIP, etc.), you have a great opportunity to tap into the CRS body of M&E experience. *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 41-42* describes in more detail some of the technologies available to support virtual teams and communication.

Don't Forget!

Conducting Capacity Strengthening Assessments (*Chapter V, Section 2, pp. 140-145*) discusses overall capacity needs that are reviewed during the DIP. You can integrate this step into an overall capacity assessment review—or keep it separate for M&E depending on the scope of your project's M&E system.
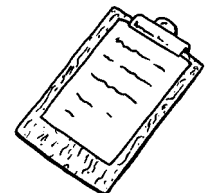
Structures to support M&E systems vary widely within CRS. The M&E system may function well under one project manager, or it may require an M&E unit. Encourage your colleagues to join the M&E working group. Regardless of the M&E structure you adopt, success will depend on good communication. Table 4.10 illustrates different options depending on the project scope.

Table 4.10: Illustrative Options for M&E Structures

Project Scope	Project's M&E Organizational Structure
A one-year, privately funded project for a single sector that has a small budget.	M&E is done by project staff responsible for project management and implementation. It may be supplemented by technical M&E assistance from the regional office.
A large, outside donor-funded project.	An M&E project officer may be hired with technical support from Headquarters. If necessary, the more time-consuming or complex pieces of M&E might be contracted out to external institutes or consultants who are well-placed to provide technical assistance.
A multi-year, integrated project with consortia members.	An M&E coordinator or unit is included as part of the project management organizational structure. This may be supplemented by external technical assistance.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Compare different M&E organizational structures you are familiar with.
2. List some of the advantages and disadvantages of these different structures (i.e., M&E officer, separate M&E Unit, or M&E undertaken by project staff themselves) for the particular project situation.
3. How might you encourage colleagues to join your M&E working group?

Now is a good time to review the organizational structure for your project to ensure that the proposed M&E system is workable.
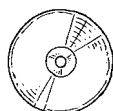
ProPack I includes a table in *Chapter IV, Section 4, pg. 144* that outlines M&E cost considerations including:

- human resources (% of salaries, etc.);
- material resources (computer equipment, etc.); and
- other likely expenses (communication costs, external consultants, preparation of reports, etc.).

The list of questions in Table 4.11 below will help you and your partners to decide whether the necessary resources and capacities exist for the M&E system to operate effectively.

Table 4.11: Questions to Ask before Finalizing Your M&E System

Resources and Capacities	Questions to Ask Before Finalizing your M&E System
Human Resources and Capacities for M&E	• Who is responsible for carrying out various M&E activities? • Are M&E responsibilities included in job descriptions? • Do these staff members have the required time to carry out these tasks? • What are their existing M&E capacities? • What training is necessary? Ensure that anyone who is required to fill out a form or do reports knows why they are doing it and how to do it! • Is there a comprehensive plan for developing human resources and capacities for M&E over time? If not, what will it take to develop one? • What support can reasonably be expected from the regional office and PQSD? • What consultancy support will be required? Does a database exist of possible consultants? • What lateral linkages should be developed with government structures and other local agencies working in the same area in order to strengthen agency knowledge and understandings?
Organizational Structures	• If there is an M&E unit, how many people will it have, where will it be located and under whose authority? • How do M&E officers and project managers interact while conducting M&E activities? • What is the best way to develop and sustain an M&E working group?
Other Resources	• What space or equipment is necessary to store information so that it is accessible to those who need it? • What level of computerization is required and appropriate for data collection, collation, and analysis? • What is the view of CRS' Regional Information System Analyst/ Management Information Technology staff on M&E computing needs? Do computers have the capacity to run software like MS Project? • What level of software knowledge is required for data management, analysis and reporting (e.g., SPSS vs. MS Excel)? • Is the issue of portability (laptop versus desktop) important? • What expertise is needed to set up a computer system?
Financial Resources	• Is there a separate M&E budget and have sufficient resources been allocated?

(Source: Adapted from IFAD 2002)

Documentation for the M&E Operating Manual—M&E Budget and Unit Protocol

Information for this section of the manual may include the following:

- M&E Cost Consideration forms;
- A separate M&E budget, if it exists; and
- Other documents as necessary. For example, there may be a written protocol on how an M&E Unit will function or how M&E staff and project managers should interact.

COMPONENT
SIX
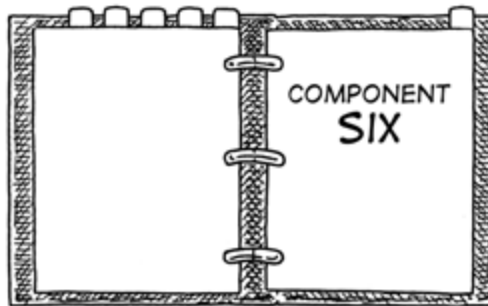
SECTION 3
COMPILING THE M&E OPERATING MANUAL

Ensure that the ring binder containing all the documents for the M&E Operating Manual is complete and that everyone who needs a copy has one. The Master Copy should be kept in the "Detailed Implementation Plan" drawer in the filing cabinet for the project.

Congratulations!

You have now completed and documented the six components required to set up your project's M&E system! In this regard, the work you and your staff have done—the careful and methodical compilation of the Operating Manual—is a significant contribution that will help to improve the standard of project M&E.

A high quality M&E Operating Manual is particularly important when there is high staff turnover. The manual will help ensure continuity and consistency in the way M&E is undertaken for your project. So don't forget to keep it up to date.

Table 4.12 summarizes the documents related to each of these six components that will be included in your project's M&E Operating Manual. Consider inviting partners and key stakeholders to an event to launch the Manual. This will provide you with an opportunity to publicize the existence and purpose of the Manual, and to acknowledge the hard work that you, your staff, and other stakeholders have completed.

Table 4.12: Summary of Components and Related Documents for the M&E Operating Manual

Component	Document for the M&E Operating Manual
One: *Consider the Whole M&E System*	• **Table of Contents.** • **Purpose** statement. • List of **M&E working group** members.
Two: *Review Information Needs of Stakeholders and Choice of Indicators*	• **Table of information users** and data needed. • **Results Framework and Proframe** with updated and refined performance indicator statements for each objective level. • **List of additional information needs** that are not measured through the formal indicators system.
Three: *Plan for Data Gathering, Analysis and Evidence-based Reporting*	• **Data gathering forms** and instructions. • **Report forms** and instructions. • **Measurement Methods/Data Sources Worksheet**—for more detailed information relating to the collection of performance indicator data. • **PITT**—for a tabular summary of the annual, mid-term, and end-of-project targets for each indicator. • **Baseline Survey Worksheet**—for more detailed information about how the baseline survey is to be conducted and related resource implications. • **Monitoring Responsibilities Worksheet**—for assignments of the responsibilities for different phases of M&E activity and to "flag" the budgetary implications. • **Written plans to gather information not collected via indicators.** For example, how Critical Assumptions will be monitored.
Four: *Plan for Critical Reflection Events and Processes*	• **List and brief description of critical reflection events**—routine meetings (e.g., quarterly review meetings) or special events (lessons learned workshops) where M&E information feeds into project management decisions and learning. • **Short narrative describing the purpose and process of mid-term, final, or other types of evaluations and any plans to measure project sustainability.** As discussed earlier, detailed guidance for planning evaluations is included in *Chapter VII* and should be reviewed before finalizing the M&E Operating Manual. • All of this is then integrated into the M&E Calendar.
Five: *Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting*	One or more of the following: • **Updated Activity Schedule** showing information on M&E activities. • **M&E Calendar**—for annual scheduling of activities, including reporting deadlines to coincide with key decision-making events of the main intended users of M&E data. • **Reporting Schedule**—for large projects with multiple reports. • **Brief description of media and formats** for data and information presentation to different intended users (donors, project stakeholders, community members, etc.).
Six: *Plan for the Resources and Capacities Required*	• **M&E Cost Consideration** forms. • **M&E budget** (if separate). • **Other documents** as necessary (for example, protocol on how M&E unit will function, etc.).

RELATED READING

Following is a list of traditional and online resources available if you would like to read more about the information presented in Chapter IV. Please see the Reference List located at the end of the manual for a complete list of all the resources used in ProPack II.

Section 2—Six Components of an M&E System
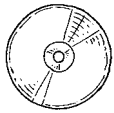
- Collison, C. and G. Parcell. 2001. *Learning to Fly: Practical Lessons from One of the World's Leading Knowledge Companies.* Oxford: Capstone Publishing Limited.

- McMillan, D. E. and G. O'G. Sharrock. 2007 *Guidance for the Preparation and Use of Performance Indicator Tracking Tables (PITT).* One of a series of modules developed jointly between the American Red Cross and CRS.

Section 3—Compiling the M&E Operating Manual
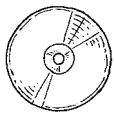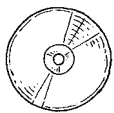
- Bamberger, M., J. Rugh, and L. Mabry. 2006. *RealWorld Evaluation. Working Under Budget, Time, Data, and Political Constraints.* California: Sage Publications.

- Church, C. and M.M. Rogers. 2006. *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs.* Washington D.C.: Search for Common Ground. http://www.sfcg.org

- Guijt, I. and J. Woodhill. 2002. *Managing for Impact in Rural Development: A Guide for Project M&E.* Rome: International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). This manual has very useful sections on setting up M&E systems that were used extensively in this chapter. http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm

- A book with practical and comprehensive technical advice on survey design for agriculture projects is Poate, C.D. and P. F. Daplyn. 1993. *Data for Agrarian Development.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- For a practical guide to data collection techniques, see S. Laws. 2003. *Research for Development: A Practical Guide.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications; P. Nichols. 1991. *Social Survey Methods: A Fieldguide for Development Workers.* Development Guidelines No. 6. Oxford: Oxfam; and L. Gosling. 1995. *Toolkits: A Practical Guide to Assessment, Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.* Development Manual No. 5. London: Save the Children.

- Other CRS-supported manuals with detailed information on data collection methods include: CRS' Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): A Manual for CRS Field Workers and Partners and I-LIFE's Handbook on M&E Essentials.

- McMillan, D. E. and G. O'G. Sharrock. 2007. *Guidance for the Preparation and Use of a Performance Indicator Tracking Tables (PITT).* One of a series of modules developed jointly between the American Red Cross and CRS.

Websites

Below is a list of websites that provide standardized indicators of use to CRS projects.

General (search for various sectors within each)

http://www.usaid.gov
http://www.worldbank.org
http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/policy/handbook.htm
http://www.undp.org and especially http://hdr.undp.org/
http://www.oecd.org

Emergency Response

http://www.unhcr.org and especially
http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/statistics/opendoc.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=40eaa9804
http://www.sphereproject.org/index.htm

Food Security

http://www.fantaproject.org

Child Survival, Health, HIV/AIDS

http://www.childsurvival.com/ and especially http://www.childsurvival.com/kpc2000/kpc2000.cfm
http://www.coregroup.org/about/csh_net.cfm
http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure
http://www.unaids.org/en/

Microfinance

http://www.seepnetwork.org/
http://www.cgap.org/
http://www.ids.ac.uk/impact/
http://www.responsability.ch/en/index.html
http://www.responsability.ch/de/5_4discuspaper/DiscusPaper2.pdf

Miscellaneous

This is a site from the University of Wisconsin, Agriculture Extension about using Excel for data analysis.
https://cecommerce.uwex.edu/pdfs/G3658-14.PDF

Epi Info can be downloaded for free from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This software is used by public health and other professionals. Epi Info helps you rapidly develop questionnaires, forms, customize data entry processes, and enter and analyze data.
http://www.cdc.gov/epiinfo/

CHAPTER V
DIP PART C: PROJECT RESOURCES
AND DIP DOCUMENTATION

SECTION 1

RECRUITING STAFF AND CONDUCTING PERFORMANCE PLANNING

SECTION OVERVIEW

CRS project managers are often responsible for hiring staff. This section focuses on staffing activities during detailed implementation planning and describes CRS' human resource management processes, which aim to be fair, transparent, and are modeled on industry best practices. Your role as a CRS project manager is to ensure that these processes are practiced in your projects. You will have to assess how these processes are relevant to partners who manage their own hiring.

In Section 1, you will do the following:

- review issues and challenges in project staffing;
- consider good practices in human resource management related to detailed implementation planning, including project staff recruiting, interviewing, hiring, orienting, and performance planning; and
- consider the importance of organizational structures in defining the lines of authority, decision-making and communication.

From Theory to Practice: Assumptions vs. Reality Part One—Challenges in Project Staffing

> "I managed a multi-country project, and we had many problems. I worked on the assumption that staff assigned to my project would devote 100% of their time to the activities; I found out otherwise. Oftentimes, they were diverted to other tasks within the Country Program. Some staff were assigned to my project simply because another project they were working on was ending and this meant an extension in employment. This negatively affected project implementation—having more dedicated technically skilled staff would have made a big difference as the project strategy was new, and it was hard to gain acceptance by the local community."

Reflection Opportunity

1. What have been your challenges in project staffing, and how did they compare to the "Assumptions vs. Reality" story?
2. Why did these challenges arise?
3. What did you learn from this experience? Did these lessons prompt you to do anything differently in another project you managed?

The "From Theory to Practice" story on project staffing shows the **importance of careful recruitment, orientation and development of project staff, and the importance of setting performance objectives**. Perceived capacity can be much larger than real capacity. Staff thought to be devoted to the project can, in fact, be spending time in meetings, working on new proposals, or doing other non-project work. Under-estimating the capacity needed to implement a project is a common management problem.

REVIEW THE RELEVANT PROPOSAL ITEMS
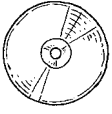
Review *ProPack I, Chapter V, Section 5, pp. 169–170* in your project proposal. If you followed the guidance in ProPack I, you should be able to answer the questions listed in Checklist 5.1.

Checklist 5.1: Questions on Organizational Structure and Staffing

✓ Who is responsible for various project phases?
✓ What are the positions required and the associated qualifications? Have job descriptions been written?
✓ Will existing staff be used or new staff hired?
✓ How will these people be managed or linked to other stakeholders?
✓ What are the plans for upgrading staff skills over the life of the project?
✓ If volunteers are providing services, what are their duties, and how much time are they expected to devote to the project?
✓ Where are these positions located in existing or new organizational structures of CRS and its partner?
✓ What community structures or groups will support the project?
✓ What short-term or long-term technical assistance is required?
✓ How will communications and decision-making work?

If the answers to these questions in your proposal do not exist, are too vague or no longer reflect reality, now is the time for detailed planning discussions with your partners and other stakeholders on project staffing and human resource management. **The Activity Schedule should clearly and correctly show which staff are responsible for listed activities.**

RECRUIT AND ORIENT YOUR STAFF

The steps below provide guidelines for staff recruitment and performance planning within projects. They pertain to staff that are recruited to work for CRS on specific projects. However, CRS often assists local partners in establishing their performance management systems. You must judge how the information below pertains to partners who are responsible for recruitment and performance planning for their own staff.

Step One: Recruit and Hire Project Staff

While recruiting staff is an obvious first step in projects, it is often delayed for any number of reasons. **"If a position goes unfilled for several months, this presents a serious threat to achieving project objectives,"** warns one CRS project manager.

Be prepared to hire quickly during the early days of the project by learning how the CRS recruitment system works and by assessing the local market for the required positions. Remember that recruitment of new staff can proceed while the donor is still considering the proposal. Jobs can be advertised with the wording, "This position is not guaranteed because it is dependent on a successful grant application to the donor," and offers of employment can be made contingent on funding being received.

Checklist 5.2: Getting Help from your HR Manager

A human resources manager can help with the following:

✓ pre-screening candidates;
✓ developing interview questions;
✓ giving impartial advice;
✓ providing information on salary rates and benefits;
✓ considering the fit of the candidate with the team;
✓ performing reference checks; and
✓ negotiating the salary and other benefits with the successful candidate.

Job Descriptions

Clear job descriptions provide objective standards for the job. They are a practical way of promoting a fair recruitment process and can help reduce pressures to hire unqualified staff. Review any job descriptions included in the proposal. If none was included, you and your partners need to create them. Don't start from scratch; contact the Human Resources Department in your country or headquarters for samples. You can also review How to Complete a Job Description, which will help you to write a clearly organized job narrative.
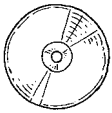
Recruitment
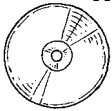
CRS has a Recruitment and Hiring Overview available on the agency Intranet site in the human resources section. It shows the required documents and information for job posting, interviews, reference checks and offers, and should be reviewed when hiring for international staff positions. Much of this information is applicable when hiring for national staff positions as well.

For local recruitment, you want to ensure that a full and fair recruitment process takes place. The actions listed in Checklist 5.2 should be followed to ensure this is accomplished.

Checklist 5.3: Tips to Ensure a Full and Fair Recruitment Process

✓ Establish clear criteria for selection. Criteria may include specifications, such as experience; particular skills, such as community mobilization; and academic achievement.
✓ Advertise the job in multiple channels that will be read or listened to by the types of people you want to attract.
✓ Select candidates who best meet the specified criteria.
✓ Ensure that the list reflects an ethnic, gender, or other mix as appropriate. You should seek applications from well-qualified women, as they are often under-represented.
✓ Adhere to relevant labor laws.
✓ Ensure procedures for final hiring decisions are clear and transparent.

If you did not assess the job recruitment system of your partner during project design, this should be reviewed now. Your Country Program human resources manager can assist.

At the end of the recruitment process, inform candidates on the status on their application. It is common courtesy to let candidates know that they are no longer being considered for the position or that the position has been filled by another candidate.

From Theory to Practice: Supporting Partner Recruitment and Hiring Systems
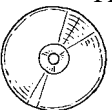
The CRS/Nigeria Partner Reference Manual includes guidelines for Nigerian partners on posting vacancy notices, screening and short-listing, interviewing, reference checks and notification of successful candidates.

Interviewing

You or your partner have the job description in hand, a transparent candidate search has taken place, and several candidates have been identified. It is now time for the interviews. They may be conducted by an individual but are **best done by a team,** which helps to guard against bias. A human resources officer or manager should also be part of the interviewing team. Involving local staff in interviews can be useful and empowering—in some CRS offices, staff are invited to interview potential supervisors.

A good interview helps to identify candidates who are competent, a good fit in the organizational culture, and able to stay for the duration of the job. According to one CRS project manager, staff retention can be a challenge. "We help the dioceses to hire good staff, but they leave, so it is hard to put improved systems and operations in place." Encourage partners to conduct exit interviews of staff who are leaving to understand their reasons.

Good interviews are planned and structured. Before the interviews, make copies of candidates' resumés. Read them and check for missing or incorrect items, education, technical skills, and work history. This helps to organize interview questions. Ensure that the same set of questions is used for all candidates being interviewed for the same job. If a team is involved, hold a briefing meeting to review questions and decide who will ask what. Develop criteria to rank and compare candidates.

To supplement interviews, consider collecting additional information from candidates through tests, presentations, or participation in a meeting or training workshop. For example, a candidate for a capacity strengthening position could be asked to develop a short training session and deliver it to the interview team.

Table 5.1: Sequence and Structure of a Job Interview

Opening	• Put candidate at ease. • Explain the job. • Clarify the candidate's background and any obvious concerns—a gap in the resumé or any other missing information. You can start this by asking, "Tell us about yourself."
Fact-finding	• Ask open, yet targeted questions. • Probe for actual experiences of past performance; do not ask questions about how the candidate would behave in a hypothetical situation. For example, ask for a description of a situation or task the candidate had to deal with, the action they took, and the result of that action. • Ask why the person wants to leave their current employer and position. • Assess career aspirations. • Assess strengths. Strengths may have to do with knowledge, skills, and talents.

Sharing Information	Once you have the key information you need, switch gears and share information with the candidate. The extent to which this is done may depend on your evaluation of the candidate. Don't sell the organization until you are sold on the candidate. You may tell the candidate the following kind of information. • Information about the partner organization or CRS as an agency. • The department or unit into which the job fits. • The kind of work required and where it will lead. • The people they will work with. • The person they will be supervised by.
Closure	• Assess compensation expectations, if not completed during pre-screening. • Ask, "Is there anything else you want to tell me?" • Give the candidate a chance to ask any final questions. • Tell the candidate what will happen next. • Express thanks and appreciation, and close on a positive note. You never know, someday this person might be your boss!

(Source: Jud 2005)

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) stress the importance of selecting candidates who are a good fit with the job. **Project managers must know the difference between talent, skills, and knowledge—which of these can be taught and which must be brought to the job by the candidate.** For example, someone hired for community organizing needs to be fairly outgoing; this is a talent and not something one picks up through training.

From Theory to Practice: Understanding the Difference between Talents, Skills and Knowledge

> For an M&E officer position, this may translate into knowing how to conduct baseline surveys, and mid-term and final evaluations (*knowledge*); the ability to train and organize partners and project participants to undertake such evaluations under time constraints and logistical difficulties (*skills*); and being able to do so with a nice, easy manner and little direct supervision or guidance (*talents*).

Reference Checks

CRS recruiting guidelines state that reference checks are a very important part of the selection process. They can reveal potential problems that may result in a decision not to proceed with a candidate. References also help you to understand the strengths and weaknesses of a candidate that may help to manage the new employee. Reference checks focus on the personal qualities and past performance of the candidate. In some situations, the validity of diplomas or certificates must also be checked.

For international staff positions, CRS headquarters checks three professional references from current or past supervisors. In-country reference checks should be done by the Country Program's human resources manager. Interview panel members can make suggestions on areas to probe. For some positions, the human resources manager may wish to involve headquarters-based or regional technical advisors to assess a candidate's references.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think back to the last recruitment and hiring process you or your partner followed in your current or previous project. Compare it to the guidelines above.
2. What worked well and why?
3. What guidelines were not applied? What happened as a result?
4. What will you do the same or differently next time?

Hiring Consultants
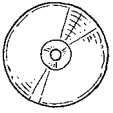
CRS' Human Resources Department has guidelines on hiring consultants. (Guidelines: Consultants vs. Employees) The first step is to fill out the Consultant Requisition Form. The requisition form, together with a SOW and the consultant's resumé, is then sent to headquarters for processing. Check the policy on the human resources section of the Intranet on Consultants (Independent Contractors). Note that CRS has a consultant database, and all consultants must be registered on it. Check with CRS' Human Resources Department for more information.

If you are planning to hire local consultants, you need to ensure that CRS and its partner have clear policies and procedures for hiring, contracting, and paying them. Your human resources manager or Country Representative can advise.

Consultants need clear and well-defined SOWs to do their jobs well. Checklist 5.4 contains useful questions and an outline to use when preparing this crucial document.

Checklist 5.4: Guidance on Preparing a Consultant SOW

Before writing the SOW, consider the following questions.

✓ What products or results do you want delivered at the end of the proposed service?
✓ What expertise is needed to create those products or results?
✓ Who will manage, host or support the consultant? How much time will that involve?
✓ Who will be involved in creating the products or results? How much time will that involve?
✓ How much time is reasonably needed to produce each deliverable? Include time to bring the consultant up to speed in terms of background information.
✓ What is your budget? Does the budget available correspond with the time needed? Does the budget provide necessary equipment and transportation?

Once you and others have answered these questions, write the SOW using the following outline.

✓ Background and purpose for the assistance needed.
✓ Responsibilities of the consultant and expertise required.
✓ Identification of who the consultant reports to and collaborates with.
✓ Timeframe for the project.
✓ Tasks (what the consultant will do) and deliverables (what the consultant will produce).
✓ Budget (number of days, transport, per diems, incidentals and other line items).
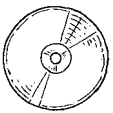
For more information, consult the Capacity Building Guidance: Guidelines and Tools for Getting the Most from your Technical Assistance. In addition, guidance on developing a SOW for an evaluation consultant is included in *Chapter VII, Section 2, pp. 237-239.*

Step Two: Orient Staff

The first responsibility of a project manager is to ensure that new staff have the appropriate tools and information to do their jobs. Think this is obvious? Think again.

From Theory to Practice: Assumptions vs. Reality Part Two—A Story from East Africa

> "When our partner hired parish peacebuilding officers, we assumed they knew their jobs! We didn't train them or prepare them for implementation because there was such a delay between writing the proposal and getting the funding. You can only train or prepare staff if you secure the funding first. We found this out early on in the project and trained them, but lost time."

Investing in staff orientation helps prevent wasted time and costly mistakes. **Staff orientation ensures that new hires know what their roles and duties are and how to perform these duties.** Importantly, they must gain knowledge of CRS as an agency, so orientation includes sessions on Catholic Social Teaching (CST), a Justice Reflection, partnership and the history of CRS. Orientation also includes an introduction to administrative and financial policies and procedures, and, importantly, any security considerations relevant to the post of employment.

From Theory to Practice: CRS' Policy on Employee Orientation
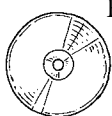
> The CRS policy on Employee Orientation states that, "supervisors should make sure that all new employees receive a careful orientation to all aspects of the work of CRS. This orientation should begin the first day of employment. All parts of the orientation should be completed by the end of the first month of employment."

How to Conduct Orientation

Orientation includes time for reviewing important project documents; short meetings with supervisory and project team staff to discuss questions and plans; meetings with financial or administrative managers; site visits; courtesy visits to partners, etc. Learning-by-doing is also an effective method to orient staff. For example, newly hired project staff can participate in the detailed implementation planning process, which is an excellent way to internalize the objectives and strategies of the project.

The CRS/EME region has a three-stage orientation process. Selected steps are summarized in Table 5.2.

> **Think About It …**
>
> CRS/Kenya has an **orientation ring binder** that includes handouts for new staff orientation. It can easily be adapted to a new employee's particular job.

Table 5.2: CRS/EME's Three-stage Employee Orientation Process

Stage 1 **General Orientation** (done by human resources officers)	• Put new employees at ease. • Ensure they have reviewed relevant policies. • Describe cultural and office norms of CRS. • Introduce CST themes and the CRS Just Workplace document. • Review organizational charts, holiday schedules, timesheet procedures, how to find resources, use of computers, etc. • Conduct a tour of the office.

Stage 2 **Departmental Orientation** (done by direct supervisor)	• Welcome and introduce new employee. • Review regional vision and strategy. • Review organizational charts and communication flow. • Discuss principles of partnership, management quality, program quality and security. • Schedule orientation visits to departments, including finance, administration and human resources. • Review job description and performance management. • Team new employees with an experienced staff person.
Stage 3 **Specific Job Orientation** (done by direct supervisor and other colleagues)	• Review skills required for successful performance. • Review special documents, resources or tools that will help in their job. • Participate in a Justice Reflection. • Discuss who can serve as point people on various topics.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Compare the orientation procedures used for new employees hired in the project you manage to those in Table 5.2.
2. What would you change for your situation?

Step Three: Set Performance Objectives

Consider this reflection from a CRS DRD/MQ. "My experience is that project managers set project goals and objectives but fail to spend time with staff to set individual performance objectives. Then they wonder why there is no alignment between what staff do and the accomplishment of project objectives!"

Performance planning is an annual process of setting specific performance objectives and identifying areas for professional development. Performance objectives are evaluated during annual performance appraisals. This is done in combination with continual reflection, formal training, ongoing feedback, recognition, and coaching to ensure that new employees have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to do their job well. The CRS Performance Management System Guidance provides a comprehensive explanation of the process.

CRS has a Performance Planning and Assessment form on which the employee drafts up to five results-based objectives that are tangible, measurable, and critical to success over the next year. These objectives are listed on the left side of the form. After the performance objectives are finalized, employees and managers review them and discuss the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required. Plans are then made for employee learning and development.

> **Think About It...**
>
> CRS defines performance planning as a joint effort between an employee and her manager to do the following:
>
> • determine annual, individual results-based objectives based on Country Program, regional or headquarters departmental needs;
> • discuss knowledge, skills and attitudes required to excel in one's job; and
> • review behaviors that demonstrate CRS values.
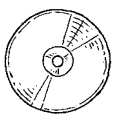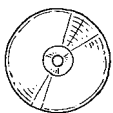
Staff use this performance plan as a monitoring tool and track actual results achieved over the year on the right side of the form. The Performance Planning and Assessment form is then used during coaching sessions, as well as in the final staff appraisal meeting.

In addition, many CRS Country Programs promote use of monthly work plans by their own staff and by partner project staff. These monthly work plans are linked to the project's Activity Schedule and provide more details about what that particular staff member is responsible for within the timeframe. Monthly work plans resemble the to-do lists described in *Chapter II, Section 3, pg. 49* as a time management tool.

Figure 5.1: Performance Objectives and Time Management

PERFORMANCE PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT	⟷	PROJECT ACTIVITY SCHEDULE	⟷	MONTHLY WORK PLAN

Step Four: Review Project Organizational Structures

Project staff need to understand how their job fits within their organization in terms of lines of **authority, decision-making and communication**. CRS and its partners also need to understand each other's organizational structures to know who should communicate with whom. This is particularly true if you are managing a complex project or consortium that spans Country Programs and continents as illustrated by the "From Theory to Practice" story on partnership principles.

From Theory to Practice: When Partnership Principles Clash

CRS was leading a large consortium project in an emergency setting composed of a mixed group of faith-based and for-profit organizations. CRS and the consortium members all shared responsibilities for managing local partners. However, there was no protocol for communication among consortium members and partners, so CRS applied its own partnership principles while other organizations used very different approaches.

During the project, a number of problems arose. Differences in organizational cultures shaped the approach of each consortium member to project implementation with partners. For example, some consortium members were top-down decision-makers, so their partners had minimal involvement in key decisions. During implementation, CRS staff attempted to provide advice about partnership to consortium members, but the advice was ill-timed and even perceived as threatening. As a result, some local partners distrusted the consortium and had unclear ideas about their own roles and responsibilities within the project.

Your project proposal briefly describes the organizational structures that support your project: those of CRS, its partners, and community structures or groups. Detailed implementation planning provides a good opportunity for project stakeholders to review, reaffirm, or update the project's organizational structure and lines of authority, decision-making and communication.

SECTION 2

CONDUCTING CAPACITY STRENGTHENING ASSESSMENTS

SECTION OVERVIEW

This section responds to concerns about whether all partners, including CRS, have adequate capacity to implement the project.

In Section 2, you will do the following:

- understand the links between long-term organizational assessments and project-specific capacity assessments; and
- review programmatic, technical, and management capacities that may require strengthening for smooth project implementation.

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As stated in *Chapter II, Section 2, pp. 24-30*, capacity strengthening of CRS and its primary partners is a longer-term commitment to promote organizational development. Using organizational assessment, CRS and its partners have identified strengths, prioritized areas for improvement, and created an action plan. This type of assessment may be part of a long-term strategic program planning process.

The capacity strengthening activities of a project may be a piece of the longer-term organizational development strategy or action plan. Project implementation, however, usually requires additional, project-specific management, technical and community organizing capacities. This is why a capacity assessment is also done during project design. Project-specific capacity assessments enrich and complement—but do not replace—the long-term organizational development process done by CRS and its partners.

REVIEW THE RELEVANT PROPOSAL ITEMS

Capacity is defined as the ability of individuals and organizational units to perform functions effectively, efficiently and in a sustainable manner.
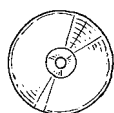
During project design, ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 5, pg. 92 advises doing a capacity assessment or analysis to measure the ability of CRS, partners, and the community to implement a particular project strategy and related activities. You may have used the Organizational Capacity Checklist in ProPack I, Chapter VI, pp. 192–193. The proposal format suggested in ProPack I includes a section on Capacity Building and Community Participation (Chapter V, Section 6, pp. 171–172) that describes existing capacities and the strategies planned to build them.

Now, as part of detailed implementation planning, you and your partners need to review the capacity strengthening section of the proposal. Discussing other parts of the DIP may have

revealed capacity strengthening needs that were inadvertently overlooked in the project proposal. For example, as you and your partners planned for recruitment of project staff, your partner may have realized that their existing systems for this are not strong enough. Look over Checklist 5.5 as you complete this task.

Checklist 5.5: Reviewing the Capacity Strengthening Components of your Proposal

✓ Are the capacity strengthening strategy and activities based on a valid, relevant and up-to-date organizational assessment?
✓ Do the capacity strengthening activities still hold true now that implementation is about to begin?
✓ Does the approved project budget support planned capacity strengthening activities?
✓ Are the capacity strengthening activities described with sufficient detail?
✓ Is it clear how capacity strengthening will be monitored and evaluated?

Note that *Chapter IV, Section 2, Component 6, pp. 123-126* addresses the issue of capacity strengthening for M&E specifically.

ASSESS OR RE-ASSESS CAPACITY

During the DIP process, you and your partner may decide that more detailed organizational and capacity assessments are required before project implementation begins. Most organizational assessments cover the full range of capacities needed for project implementation and management. Assessment categories can include, but are not limited to the following:

- technical capacities (e.g., resources and systems required to implement a child survival project);
- management capacities (e.g., those needed for financial controls, reporting or commodity tracking); and
- community organization capacities (e.g., the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to maximize community participation within a project).

Below are some examples of existing tools or useful questions you and your partners can consider for any further capacity assessments to be done as part of the project's DIP process.

Capacity Indices and Tracking Systems

CRS recently evaluated and consolidated organizational and project-specific capacity assessment tools already in use within the agency. CRS is pilot-testing a more systematic, standardized set of assessment tools for itself, its partners and communities called capacity indices. These are especially relevant to Title II projects but can be adapted for any project.

These tools assess capacities according to a number of categories. Each category is made up of variables, which are further broken down into standard, measurable indicators. Examples are shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Examples of Capacity Assessment Categories and Indicators

Category	Variable	Indicator	Scoring scale
Commodity management	Capacity of commodity systems	Commodity reporting capacity	1. Records of commodities are incomplete or inaccurate and reports are irregular. 2. Records of commodities are complete and accurate, but reports are irregular. 3. Records of commodities are complete and accurate, and reports are regularly produced. 4. Same as number three plus these regularly produced accurate reports feed into annual results and loss reports in a timely manner.
Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	Indicators and PITT	Knowledge and use of the PITT in monitoring and reporting	1. Staff are unfamiliar with the indicators for their specific site and their portrayal in a PITT. 2. Staff are familiar with the indicators for their specific site and their portrayal in a PITT. 3. Same as number two plus staff routinely use the PITT as a tool for strategic planning and monitoring in staff and partner meetings. 4. Same as number three plus staff routinely include and refer to the PITT in reports with analysis of implications.

Using these kinds of capacity assessment tools can (1) provide a strong analysis for a sufficiently-detailed description of capacity strengthening needs (2) establish a baseline for capacity strengthening and (3) be used as a monitoring tool to measure progress by re-doing the assessment on a yearly basis, or in mid-term and final evaluations.

Measuring community capacities allows CRS and its partners to learn how effectively they are organizing committees, mobilizing communities, and building capacities within them. The Title II Capacity Index includes a set of indicators that can be adapted to local situations using the following variables:

- community organization;
- participation;
- transparency of project committees' management;
- internal functioning of project committees;
- capacity of community groups to analyze, plan and take action;
- ability to manage risks;
- communication and exchanges with outsiders; and
- individual capacities (of group or committee members).

Technical Assessments

For many projects, an assessment that focuses on specific technical skills is required to identify capacity strengthening needs and resources. The approach consists of identifying the technical and managerial skills required to plan and implement specific elements of projects. For example, in the case of water and sanitation, standards for project development can be used to highlight the capacity needs of CRS, its partners and participating communities.

From Theory to Practice: Rural Water Supply and Sanitation—Assessment through Skills Requirements
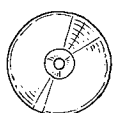
As described in Guidelines for the Development of Small-Scale Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Projects in East Africa, CRS and its partners are urged to consider the three phases of project development: planning, implementation and sustainability. In each phase, relevant indicators and guideline statements that define essential features of water and sanitation projects are identified. The implementation phase, for example, contains guidelines for such activities as community involvement, construction, health/hygiene education, training, monitoring, reporting and an exit strategy. The guideline statements can be used to identify the types of skills needed to achieve the activities.

The Microfinance Alliance for Global Impact (MAGI) story box describes a technical capacity assessment that is conducted within microfinance projects.

From Theory to Practice: MAGI—Assessment for Accreditation
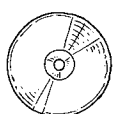
MAGI is an alliance of high-performing microfinance programs. CRS' partners can become accredited members of the MAGI alliance through a process of organizational development. Capacity strengths and weaknesses are identified through an assessment that measures management information systems; financial and non-financial services; financial administration; internal controls; and planning and organizational structure, systems and policies. The MAGI Planning and Assessment User's Guide can be found on the ProPack II CD ROM.

Internal Control Assessments

That a partner has technical capacity is important—but not sufficient. The partner must also have strong operational financial and internal control systems to ensure that project funds can be safely received, tracked and spent.

Table 5.4 provides information on basic financial systems that should be in place.

Table 5.4: Basic Financial Systems

Supporting Documents	Every financial transaction should be backed up by a properly-authorized supporting document (e.g., a receipt, payroll slip). This is the evidence that a specific transaction has taken place.
Cashbook	Every transaction should be recorded in a cashbook. A cashbook is the list of the money that an organization has spent and received. The cashbook must be regularly reconciled to cash in the bank or the safe.
Account Codes	Account codes should be added to the transactions entered in the cashbooks. The codes allow similar transactions to be added together and summary reports to be produced by transaction type. The set of account codes that an organization uses is called its Chart of Accounts.

An **internal control assessment** will help pinpoint areas needing strengthening. It is recommended that you and the finance manager assess the internal control systems of each partner, **focusing on their financial management, accounting and financial reporting systems.** Table 5.5 provides a list of internal controls for key areas of financial management.

Table 5.5: Financial Management Internal Controls

Financial Planning	**Budgets** predict the timing and amount of income and expenditure. The partner should have a budget for the organization as a whole and for individual projects. They must be realistic! Budgets must be based on a reasonable assessment of the funding available and the capacity of the partner to implement the activities within the given timeframe.
	A **cash flow forecast** is an estimate of when receipts and payments will happen. This is necessary to ensure the organization does not run out of cash, leaving it unable to pay salaries, for example.
	Donors fund specific projects with specific budgets. **Keep track of which donor is funding which project or part of a project.** Money received from one donor for one project cannot be lent to another project. In fact, this is often illegal. Accepting money from two different donors for precisely the same project costs is also illegal.
Financial Reporting	Partners should prepare accurate **monthly internal financial reports** to show how money has been spent and whether there are enough funds to support project activities in the coming months. At a minimum, the monthly financial report should show all income and expenditures made during the month and the amount of money held in cash at the bank.
	Donors rely on financial reports to monitor and evaluate project progress and to continue funding a project. The partner must provide an **external financial report to CRS** based on the frequency specified in the project agreement, and not less than every three months. The report to CRS will usually include the following elements: • a report of actual expenditure compared to the budget; • a cash flow forecast for the next three months; and • a report showing the use of funds received from CRS. Information included in the financial report will usually (depending on the maturity of the partner) be substantiated with original support documentation and should also include bank and cash reconciliations. Your finance manager will advise you on the specific format required.
Competent Staff	Strong financial management relies on **competent staff**. Staff need to have the right skills and support to carry out the responsibilities described above. This means that project managers also need to understand financial management.

Other categories of an internal control assessment include personnel management and payroll, procurement, fixed asset management and commodity tracking, and reporting. The assessment is ideally done during project design but most likely will need revisiting during the DIP process.

After the assessments, the team can discuss the results. Together, you will develop a realistic action plan that addresses any findings and agreed-upon recommendations. The partner should be able to comply with all key financial standards before they begin implementing the project. If there are serious deficiencies, then you must discuss the situation with your Country Representative as this could present a potential liability for CRS.

USE ASSESSMENT FINDINGS TO GUIDE CAPACITY STRENGTHENING STRATEGIES

Findings from capacity assessments are used to develop an action plan. It will provide details for the specific project-related capacity strengthening strategies and activities required for smooth project implementation and management. For example, the assessment may reveal that partners do not know how to promote community participation. The project can then include capacity strengthening activities such as training in PRA or study visits to a successful community development project. *Chapter VI, Section 2, pp. 168-177,* includes an overview of innovative and effective capacity strengthening activities often used in CRS project implementation.

Capacity assessments also provide useful information about which management and leadership style is most appropriate to adopt with various partners. The concept of situational leadership, which was discussed in *Chapter II, Section 1, pg. 19* also applies. For example, the assessment may confirm that you are working with a very strong partner who has a well-functioning financial system. Do not micro-manage this partner! Instead, focus on coaching a new partner whose capacity assessment has revealed weaker systems.

Lastly, depending on what type of assessment tools are used, you may be able to create a baseline and indicators to measure the success of your capacity strengthening activities.

SECTION 3

MANAGING PROJECT RESOURCES

SECTION OVERVIEW

You are accountable, as a project manager, for the stewardship of project resources. These include cash, in-kind contributions and supplies. Detailed implementation planning helps ensure systems are in place and well understood so that these resources can be managed successfully.

In Section 3, you will do the following:

- increase your understanding of how detailed project budget planning fits within the larger CRS budget cycle;
- review guidance on how to plan for managing project resources including cash, in-kind contributions, and supplies and materials;
- review the steps to revise project budgets, plan for in-kind contributions, and plan for supplies and materials; and
- learn how to develop a high-quality partner project agreement.

INTRODUCTION

Some project managers don't pay attention to financial and administrative details. Read "The Boring Details" story, and answer the Reflection Opportunity questions that follow to assess your own practices and attitudes.

From Theory to Practice: The Boring Details

> Jane is a project manager for a one-year education project funded by a European donor and implemented by a local partner organization. She has great working relationships with the partner's education officers; they are very excited about the education activities, and implementation is proceeding according to the Activity Schedule. Jane meets regularly with her partner to review progress, but they always end up focusing on programmatic aspects. They just never have time to look at the finance or administrative details. And to tell the truth, they find these details quite boring! Monitoring shows that the project's IRs are well on track, and everyone is excited because there is great potential for a new round of funding from this donor.
>
> Three months before the end of the project, however, problems emerge. The partner complains to Jane that they've run out of money and can't continue implementing. Jane immediately goes to see the CRS finance manager, and he explains that the partner has never submitted any financial reports and, thus, no further advances can be issued. Jane schedules a meeting with the finance officer to resolve this problem, but as they investigate, even more problems emerge. After reviewing the expenditure reports in detail, Jane realizes that the partner has exceeded the agreed-upon budget for activity costs. For example, they purchased a motorcycle even though this was not planned for in the budget. The staff budget line is well under-spent and Jane learns that her own salary has not been charged as planned to the project. She ruefully admits that she is behind on submitting timesheets—another boring task she just never finds the time to complete!

Reflection Opportunity

1. What was the cause of Jane's resource management problems?
2. How do Jane's problems compare to ones you have faced in your own project management experience? What caused the problems in your situation?
3. What would you advise Jane to do differently during detailed implementation planning for her next project?

As Jane's story illustrates, detailed implementation planning must include work with financial and administrative staff, such as finance managers, human resources managers and procurement officers. This section includes detailed implementation planning guidance and steps that help to ensure careful stewardship of the resources CRS receives.

A REVIEW OF ESSENTIAL BUDGET PLANNING TASKS: YOUR PROJECT BUDGET AND THE BIG PICTURE

Your project budget does not exist in isolation! It is one of many that make up the total annual budget of the Country Program. The Country Representative must ensure that all project activities are implemented within the approved country budget. Because of this, it is **vital to review the CRS budget cycle and see how your project budget fits into the big picture.**

Table 5.6 highlights major budgeting and planning tasks at the Country Program level, how these are done, when, and by whom. This information is included so that you can clearly see how budget planning, revising and monitoring tasks affect more than just your project. For example, if you do not budget correctly nor monitor project expenditures against budget on time and correctly, it affects not only your country finance staff but also the work of the regional and headquarters staff in their own budget analyses. The table also shows how much your work overlaps with that of the finance staff.

Table 5.6: Overview of Essential Budget Planning and Monitoring Tasks

Essential Task	Tool Available	Frequency	By Whom?
1. Plan an Annual Country Program Budget	APP	Annual (April/May)	Senior Country Program Staff
2. Record a New Project	Project Tracking System (PTS)	As soon as project is approved; ongoing as project details change.	Project Manager
3. Amend an Approved Budget	Budget Maintenance	As soon as the project is approved; ongoing as funding changes.	Project Manager and Finance Manager
4. Set Up a Project Number	New Donor Source/ Project Form (NDS/P)	As soon as the project is approved.	Finance Manager
5. Create a Detailed Budget	Account Codes Budget Template Analysis Codes	As soon as the project is approved.	Project Manager with help from Finance Staff

6. Ensure Adequate Cash Flow	Cash Forecasting	Quarterly (January, April, etc.)	Project Manager and Finance Manager
7. Review Project Spending	Budget Comparison Report Full Drill Down	Monthly	Project Manager and Finance Manager
8. Analyze Project Spending Trends	Quarterly Financial Analysis Report	Quarterly (January, April, etc.)	Senior Country Program Staff

Note that tasks one through six in Table 5.6 are completed as part of the DIP and thus explained next in further detail. Tasks seven and eight are completed during project implementation and will be addressed in *Chapter VI, Section 4, pp. 201-206*. Please note that a number of budget forms will be discussed over the next few pages. Full-page versions are available on the CD-ROM.

Task One: Plan an Annual Country Program Budget

The APP process starts each year in March/April, when headquarters determines the regional allocation of CRS private resources, and ends each September with official CRS Board of Directors approval of the annual budget and planned program activities for each Country Program. What do the Country Programs do between these two dates?

By mid-May, each Country Program must complete an APP workbook. Project managers are required to submit financial, staffing, equipment and narrative information about the projects they manage; this information is then consolidated. Next, **the Country Program budget is summarized on the Budget Reconciliation Form (BRF) within the APP workbook.** The APP shows the budget for country administration, direct project expenses, locally generated revenue, and the value of commodities for distribution and related freight charges. All of this information is segregated by donor source and project number.

The APP is then reviewed by the regional office and submitted for final review to headquarters. **Once approved, the BRF serves as the official Country Program budget for the fiscal year.**

Task Two: Record a New Project

The Project Tracking System (PTS) is a database that provides a central location for basic information about all the projects the agency is implementing around the world. PTS is now available to all staff via the CRS Intranet and will eventually link to the headquarters' accounting system, JD Edwards, so that project financial information can be accessed as well. The Project Tracking System User Manual is available on the ProPack II CD ROM. PTS currently stores the following data about each project:

- project title
- project start and end dates
- project goals and objectives
- project summary
- project file (text/budget)
- contact person
- project location

- participant information
- partner information
- programming areas
- budget information
- grant information
- reporting due dates

When a new project is approved, CRS project managers must enter its information into PTS. If information about a project changes at any stage of implementation, you must update PTS. The Country Representative approves any changes, and the data is then uploaded to the regional office for review and final approval. Approved data is uploaded by the regional office to the central agency database.

Task Three: Amend an Approved Budget

As noted above, the BRF is the approved, annual working budget for a Country Program. Your projects must be included on that form for you to be allowed to spend money on them. **During the year, you can add new projects or change financial data in ongoing projects through the Budget Maintenance Process.** The CRS fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30, so any financial data you present would be contained within that timeframe. For example, if a new project starts June 1, the BRF would provide the four-month budget to fund activities through the end of September. The remaining budget will be added to the following year's BRF through the Budget Maintenance Process.
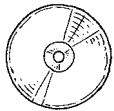
As project manager, you are responsible for initiating the Budget Maintenance Process. You must give the financial information about your project to the Finance Department. **Finance staff will fill out a document called the Budget Maintenance Form (BMF). The BMF amends the country's fiscal year budget, the BRF.** The BMF is reviewed and approved by the Country Representative, then sent to the Regional Director for approval. **Before it is approved, however, the regional office will check to see if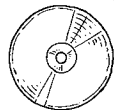 PTS has been updated. The budget data in PTS and on the BMF must agree.** The approved BMFs are submitted by the Finance Department to headquarters at the end of each month.

Task Four: Set Up a Project Number

The New Donor Source/Project form (NDS/P) is completed by the Finance Department at the same time as the BMF. Its purpose is to set up the new project's donor source and project number on the JD Edwards accounting system in headquarters. If the Country Program does not submit the NDS/P Form, all expenses registered against the project will be rejected and put in a suspense file. Suspense files create extra work for countries and headquarters to reverse and correct! You can see that submitting this form will help save time in the long run. The Country Program obtains the donor source and project numbers as follows.

- **Donor Source Number, USG award—**assigned by headquarters' Overseas Finance Department.
- **Donor Source Number, Non-USG award—**assigned by the Country Program using the Donor Source List available on the Intranet.
- **Project Number—**assigned by the Country Program in accordance with the Project Tracking Policy outlined in the Overseas Operations Manual.

Task Five: Create a Detailed Budget

Budget Template Form
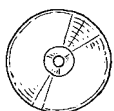
Approved project budgets are entered into the Country Program finance system, which is called Sun Systems. A standard CRS Budget Template is used to transfer this information. Your role is to fill out this form, which shows project expenditures by fiscal year, type (account code), and accounting period (month). The total on the Budget Template must be the same as the amount on the BMF, otherwise Sun Systems and the BRF will not agree. The Finance Department checks the Budget Template form and then uploads it to the Sun Systems accounting system.

Account Codes
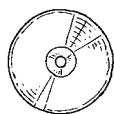
When financial data is entered into the CRS accounting systems—Sun Systems and JD Edwards—**each type of expense is assigned a four digit number called an account code**. For example, the code for CRS Building Rent is 6401. The Chart of Accounts, which includes all of the account codes, can be found on the Intranet; a list of <u>Frequently Used CRS Account Codes</u> is included in the ProPack II CD ROM.

For your project, you will assign an account code to each budget item so that the CRS Finance Department can track expenses and give you information to manage your budget. Note that some codes in the accounting system are specific to project expenditures by partners (e.g., the code for Partner Occupancy Expense is 6155).

Ideally, you assigned account codes during proposal development when you created the budget. If this was not done then, it needs to be done now. It is vital to **collaborate with the finance staff during this step** so that everyone understands how the account codes work for your particular project.

Checklist 5.6: Tips for Creating Detailed Budgets for USG Grants
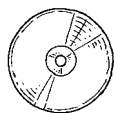
Creating a detailed budget in Sun Systems for USG grants is easier if you follow the <u>CRS Cost Application Guidance</u>.

✓ The guidance advises following the Chart of Accounts when developing individual line items, so that specific expenses are not overlooked.
✓ The working proposal budget can include account codes to help with the later conversion into a Sun budget template.
✓ In the final budget submitted to the USG, the Cost Application, broader categories are used to present a clear document. These categories are created by "rolling-up" (consolidating) expenditures under appropriate account codes.

Transaction Codes

With a thoughtfully prepared budget and Transaction Codes (T-codes), you can generate many useful reports from Sun Systems that respond to the information needs of different project stakeholders. For example, Sun Systems can be set up to provide reports that do the following:

- mirror the reporting format required by the donor;
- group expenses by activity and sector; and
- group expenses by Strategic Objectives.

T-codes identify different variables of a project budget. The donor source number (T0) and the project number (T2) are, in fact, T-codes. Transactions having the same T-code can be grouped together for reporting.

There are two optional T-codes (T6 and T7) that can also be used by the Country Program to attach more information to a transaction. You might use T-codes to track project activities by location, for example.

To use T-codes, tell the finance manager what financial information you need and what the report should look like. She can then advise you how this can be achieved. Setting up T-codes must be done before the Budget Template is entered into Sun Systems and before the project starts to incur expenses. If you do not set this up carefully, you will generate financial reports that are inaccurate. Once the system is established, a T-code must be correctly attached to a transaction when it is entered into the financial system. If this is not done, the whole transaction must be reversed and re-entered.

From Theory to Practice: Using T-codes to Respond to Stakeholder Information Needs

> Heng manages an integrated project with a number of different training workshops. The project's donor is interested in comparing the costs of these trainings, so Heng needs to report on the cost of each one. Heng achieved this by using T-codes to assign different numbers to each workshop and to each of their expenses. Heng can now run separate financial reports for each training he oversees.

Task Six: Ensure Adequate Cash Flow
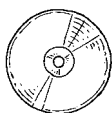
You are responsible for managing monthly and quarterly cash needs for your projects. To do this, **you must submit a Donor Source Worksheet detailing anticipated spending for each project that you manage**. These worksheets are then consolidated by your Finance Department into the Cash Forecast form and submitted to headquarters. If the cash forecast is not submitted, money will not be available for operating and program expenses.

Beware, many project managers have a tendency to overestimate how many activities will actually be undertaken in a specific planning period. This leads to cash that sits in bank accounts, exposed to potential currency losses.

Deadlines for submission of Cash Forecasts to headquarters are as follows.

- October 15 for the quarter starting October 1
- January 15 for the quarter starting January 1
- April 15 for the quarter starting April 1
- July 15 for the quarter starting July 1

Again, note that task number seven, Review Project Spending, and number eight, Analyze Spending Trends, from Table 5.6 are described in *Chapter VI, Section 4, pp. 201-206.*

Now that you have taken a good look at the budget planning big picture, the next section will show you how to review and revise the project budget during detailed implementation planning.

REVIEW THE PROPOSAL BUDGET

Most projects have a time lag between preparation of the proposal budget and approval. Along with other elements of the project proposal, the budget will also need to be reviewed during detailed implementation planning. Now that you know the exact amount of funding available, a budget review will ensure that the activities and human resources are aligned with the approved funding and the framework of the Award Agreement.

The budget review process is led by the CRS project manager because you are accountable for meeting the project objectives with the available funding. The process also includes CRS financial staff, partner representatives and other relevant project stakeholders. All of the people who manage a project, or a sector within a project, should be involved in the budget review. This ensures they understand the following:

- the costs they are expected to manage;
- the coding they must use to capture expenditure data; and
- the amount of money they have to meet sector objectives.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think about a project you currently manage. Who was involved in the budget review process during detailed implementation planning? Did this have any implications—positive or negative—on the project?
2. In your situation, who specifically within the Country Program should be involved in the budget review process during detailed implementation planning, and why? Which other project stakeholders should also be involved, and why?

Align the Project Budget, Activity Schedule and Other Required Resources
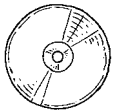
If you developed your project budget according to [ProPack I](#) guidelines, it was linked to the list of activities included in your proposal's Activity Schedule.

Figure 5.2: Aligning the Activity Schedule and the Budget

Activities necessary to achieve expected results
• Drilling of boreholes with handpumps for unserved villages.
• Construction of latrines/bathing cubicles, solid waste pits.
• Hygiene promotion work to develop local capacity; training of community health and hygiene promoters.
• Training of community based hygiene promoters to ensure proper maintenance of latrines and waste management.

Description	Units	Unit Cost	Amount
Materials to construct bore holes at schools in the northern corridor	15	8,900	133,500
Materials to construct bore holes in 6 villages of origin in Kulbus	6	8,900	53,400
Construct permanent pit latrines for schools	15	5,360	80,400
Hygiene/Sanitation promotion in schools	15	1,300	19,500
Hygiene/Sanitation promotion in IDP villages	6	1,300	7,800
Household pit latrine construction materials	1,500	152	228,000

In *Chapter III, Section 3, pp. 74-82* you updated and refined the Activity Schedule, taking financial, human and other resources into consideration. This back-and-forth process means that you should have an updated budget that reflects any changes in activities made during detailed implementation planning. Now double-check that you considered everything. Checklist 5.7 includes costing factors that, if present, may mean your budget needs to be revised.

Checklist 5.7: Costing Factors to Consider during DIP Budget Review

✓ An increase or decrease in the market prices of items.
✓ A significant change in the U.S. Dollar (USD) to local currency exchange rate.
✓ Costs that were mistakenly missed in the original budget.
✓ The implementing partner is no longer available.
✓ Staff assigned to the project who come at a higher cost than originally planned or begin work later than planned.
✓ An increase in office overhead (e.g., as the result of a move).

Reflection Opportunity

1. Review your project experience. Which of the costing factors in Checklist 5.7 did you face in adjusting your proposal budget?
2. What would you add to this list?

Revise the DIP Budget

If you discover that indeed, the budget needs revising, **do not assume that you can automatically make budget revisions without approval!** Know the approval process for budget revisions in your Country Program. Do not forget any relevant **Award Agreement terms** (budget line item flexibility, donor approval of specific costs, etc.) that may influence both the budget review and the possibilities for revisions!

Inform your Country Representative if the budget review process reveals either of the following:

- A likely funding shortfall. The Country Representative can see if other sources of funding are available.
- A likely funding excess. You can discuss whether the scope of the project should be reconsidered to absorb the funding. If this is not possible or desirable and if the funding is from CRS, the Country Representative can re-program the surplus elsewhere.

Clarify Who Has Expenditure Authorization

Be clear about who among your project staff is authorized to approve expenditures and the maximum transaction amount they can approve. On larger projects, the project manager will have overall signatory authority but may choose to delegate authority for certain sections of the budget to other staff.

In making decisions about signatory authority, strike a balance between subsidiarity and stewardship. There is no one recipe—much will depend on the situation, experience of project staff, the maturity and reliability of partners and other factors. Discuss systems that might be set up for your project with your Country Representative and finance manager. The DRD/MQ can provide guidance as well.

> *Think About It … Beware of Micro-managing!*
>
> One interpretation of stewardship led to a situation where the CRS head of program was approving every transaction, making for a very slow and cumbersome system. In this case, the head of program might have considered delegating approval of low-cost transactions, combined with a monthly review of the detailed expenditure report to ensure compliance.

PLAN FOR IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

In-kind contributions are non-cash donations of goods or services. In-kind contributions typically used in CRS projects include the following:

- food commodities, related ocean freight and food transport;
- office and warehousing space;
- vehicles, furniture and equipment; and
- pharmaceuticals.

The largest in-kind donations received by CRS are food commodities and related ocean freight from the U.S. Government. The agency also receives donated commodities from the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) and from the European Union.

In-kind contributions are recorded as revenue to CRS and as an expense to the project. There must be a written agreement for all in-kind donations. The contributions are recorded at their Fair Market Value in the fiscal month that CRS takes title to the goods or receives the services. **The Country Program is responsible for ensuring that the expenses are properly recorded in the General Ledger**. This requirement applies to in-kind contributions that are shipped from the United States and coordinated through CRS' Shipping Department, as well as to donations whose receipt was negotiated by the Country Program. For detailed accounting refer to the [Finance In-kind Contributions policy](#) on the CRS Intranet.
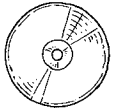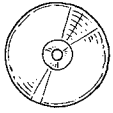
For **commodities received from the WFP,** the Country Program must sign a standard [Field Level Agreement.](#) CRS generally takes ownership of WFP commodities in-country (i.e., the agency does not coordinate shipment of the commodities), so the responsibility for documenting and recording these commodity receipts rests with the Country Program.

In-kind donations or commodities received from the U.S. Government are generally provided through USAID and the Department of Agriculture (USDA). USAID commodities furnished to CRS are subject to USG regulation 22 CFR Part 211, while the USDA commodities fall under USG regulation 7 CFR Part 1499. Each of these regulations dictates specific reporting requirements.

USG commodities are shipped from the United States. Although someone else may be responsible for the many detailed steps of ensuring that in-kind contributions arrive at their destination, you need to understand the following procedures because the time and condition of their arrival will affect your project activities. As project manager, you are responsible for minimizing any complications and risk.

Agreements

USAID/Title II

1. Upon approval of a proposal, USAID draws up a Transfer Authorization (TA) agreement with CRS (the Title II equivalent of an Award Agreement).
2. An Annual Estimate of Requirements (AER) must be signed by the Country Representative and the local USAID mission. It is then sent to the resource specialist in OSD at CRS headquarters for signature. Afterwards, she will forward it to USAID/ Washington for final signature.
3. Once all four signatures are received, the resource specialist will send a copy to the CRS Shipping Department, which is responsible for monitoring the procurement and shipping of all USAID and USDA food.
4. The Country Program will submit a Call Forward, which is a request for the commodities to be shipped. A Call Forward is made on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis depending on the scale of the food intervention. It is sent to the Mission with a copy to the CRS Shipping Department.

USDA

1. The draft of the USDA agreement should be reviewed by the Shipping Department.
2. Once the agreement is signed, a copy is sent to the Shipping Department.
3. The Country Program notifies the Shipping Department to call forward the commodities in accordance with the schedule in the agreement.

(The following procedures are the same for both USAID and USDA commodities.)

Call Forwards

The call forward is due by the 1st of the month for packaged goods and by the 11th of the month for bulk goods. CRS' Shipping Department will enter the request into the Commodity Credit Corporation's Food Aid Request Entry System (FARES) database and send the Country Program a copy once approved. Commodity types and quantities submitted on the call forward should be consistent with those submitted on the AER.

Shipments

Once notified by USDA (which handles all USG food shipments) that the cargo is available for shipping, a freight forwarder will book the shipment and enter its details into a database that tracks shipments from US production sites to their final destinations. The Shipping Department will send database reports to the in-country logistics person showing arrival information.

Once shipped, the documents will be sent electronically by the freight forwarder with originals arriving via a courier. Ocean freight is paid to the carriers by the Shipping Department, as well as inland freight for landlocked countries.

Commodities are shipped under many different types of arrangements. You need to understand your project's specific arrangement and ensure that CRS is paying only the costs it must pay, not the costs that should be settled by the shipper or local carriers.

PLAN FOR SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

As project manager, you ensure that staff and partners have the materials and equipment they need. To do this, you should work closely with the purchasing officer in your Country Program to assure that the right materials arrive on time.

In this sub-section you will:

- understand key elements of the CRS Purchasing Manual;
- review how to work effectively with your Country Program's Purchasing Department; and
- learn about the procedures for purchasing other materials or services not ordered through the Purchasing Department.

Review the CRS Purchasing Manual
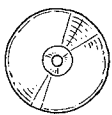
Purchasing can be a sensitive area. Without careful oversight, the system can be abused for personal profit. Familiarize yourself with the ethical standards and purchasing policies and procedures contained in the CRS Purchasing Manual. They make clear which purchases must be conducted through the Purchasing Department. This information is summarized in Checklist 5.8.

Checklist 5.8: CRS' Ethical Standards in Purchasing

✓ CRS will purchase all goods and services on the best terms consistent with the required quantity and delivery and at the lowest total cost.

✓ Acquisition will be without favoritism and on a competitive basis, whenever practical, to obtain maximum value for each dollar spent.

✓ All interested suppliers will receive fair and impartial consideration.

✓ Affirmative action will be taken to provide maximum practical opportunity to minorities, women, and small businesses to participate as suppliers and contractors.

✓ Those responsible for procurement shall continuously conduct searches of the market for new sources of supply.

✓ Any form of discrimination is prohibited.
✓ All applicable regulations and procedures regarding use of and accounting for government and other donor funds must be specifically followed.
✓ Employees shall not solicit, request, accept or agree to accept any significant gift from a supplier or prospective supplier. No monies are to be accepted as a gift for any reason whatsoever.
✓ No employee shall participate in the selection of a vendor if there is a real or apparent conflict of interest.
✓ No employee may authorize his or her own reimbursements for expenses.

Checklist 5.9: Key Steps in Purchasing Processes at the Country Program Level

✓ Any staff member may initiate a purchase request, called a Purchase Requisition.
✓ The Purchase Requisition must be reviewed by the relevant CRS authorizing official before it is submitted to the Purchasing Department. The CRS Purchasing Manual contains details about specific approval limits.
✓ The Purchasing Department gathers three bids for all transactions of $500 or more.
✓ Most purchase transactions above $5,000 (with certain exceptions) are referred to CRS headquarters for price comparison and permission to purchase locally, if this is desired. Refer to the CRS Purchasing Manual for more information on when permission to purchase locally may be granted.
✓ A Bid Committee reviews bids received and selects the supplier based on quality, price, delivery time, performance and other relevant factors.
✓ The Purchasing Department prepares a Purchase Order, which is the binding contract between CRS and the supplier.
✓ When items are delivered to CRS, they are checked for quality and quantity against the Purchase Order by someone outside of the Purchasing Department.
✓ The Finance Department will only prepare payment for goods when they have all the purchase documentation that shows items have been delivered and are in accordance with the terms of the Purchase Order.

Note that CRS expects its partners to have a Purchasing Manual which meets the agency's standards.

Meet with the Purchasing Officer

The CRS Purchasing Manual requires all Country Programs to have procurement staff whose job is to purchase items on behalf of the office. It is important that you meet with the purchasing officer during the early stages of project planning. You should review the Activity Schedule, the revised budget, and other relevant detailed implementation planning documents together. Table 5.7 includes a list of issues you should discuss together at this time.

Table 5.7: Issues to Review with Your Procurement Officer during Detailed Implementation Planning

Timing	Some items, especially vehicles, take longer to deliver than others. Use the purchasing officer's knowledge and experience to plan the dates by which you must order items to have them in place when you need them. Also consider how the donor might view the timing of a purchase. For example, if you buy a vehicle at the end of a project, it may be disallowed in the audit because it was not used for project activities.
Unit Costs	The purchasing officer should have been involved in providing data for the original project proposal budget, but costs change. Discuss if there is still enough money in the budget to buy what is needed.

Budget	It is usually best to order all equipment at the start of the project if possible to avoid implementation delays or end-of-year purchasing frenzy. However, you may be restricted by the amount of money that is available each year, or by the amount that is approved for a particular piece of equipment. Ensure the purchasing officer is aware of any constraints so you can avoid expensive mistakes.
Donor Regulations	The donor might place geographic restrictions on where you can buy the goods or where the goods are manufactured. They may also require you to seek approval before you can purchase an item. Make sure that the purchasing officer has a copy of the Award Agreement and knows the rules for your project. A USG Resource Management Regulations Matrix is included on the CD ROM.

Purchase Other Materials and Services

Some materials and services are not processed by the Purchasing Department; check with your Country Program for specific exceptions, but they may include the following:
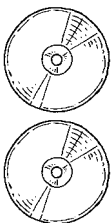
- **Consulting contracts** (unless subject to competitive bidding)—refer to the CRS Policy on Consultants (Independent Contractors); and
- **Travel**—air travel between continents requires a local approval waiver after price comparison with the CRS travel agency. Refer to the CRS Policy on Travel.

PLAN FOR PAYROLL COSTS

Payroll should run smoothly and efficiently. Problems can be avoided if you carefully read the Award Agreement, understand donor requirements, as well as CRS policies, and apply these in your detailed implementation planning process. Table 5.8 summarizes some common problems.

Table 5.8: Common Causes of Payroll Cost Problems

Key Staff	USG awards often specify key staff or key positions. CRS must obtain prior approval from the donor if it later wishes to transfer the named staff member or eliminate the position.
Approval of All Staff	Some donors (e.g., United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees [UNHCR]) may need to approve each individual who works on the project. They will disallow costs of any staff that do not appear on the approved list. You may be asked to provide monthly payroll records and timesheets to substantiate the cost.
Fixed Amounts	Some donors (e.g., ECHO) provide a fixed amount per staff position, and the amount applies irrespective of the actual payroll costs incurred. You need to budget accordingly. Note that a Country Program salary structure and scale for a particular position is always applied in practice regardless of the donor's fixed rate below or above that scale. This ensures internal coherence in the salary structure.
Uncontrolled Costs	If the project manager is not fully in charge of the staff assigned to the project, then costs can quickly run out of control. Examples of this include: staff who are only supposed to work part-time on the project charge too much time; non-assigned staff are directed to work on the project when there is no budget to cover them; staff simply charge time to the project because they know they are budgeted there. This is particularly a problem when implementation is delayed or slower than expected.
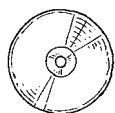
All donors want to be reassured that they are only paying for actual time worked on the project they are funding. Indeed, USG A-122 cost principles state that recipients must keep accurate records of hours worked. CRS therefore has a <u>Finance Effort Reporting policy</u> **which requires all staff to submit timesheets**. CRS/Finance must ensure that partner organizations have a similar system in place (i.e., that actual time worked is charged correctly against projects).

The main points of CRS' Effort Reporting policy are listed in Checklist 5.10.

Checklist 5.10: Main Points of CRS' Effort Reporting Policy

✓ CRS timesheets must be completed by each employee on an after-the-fact determination of actual activity and must record actual hours worked.
✓ Supervisors are responsible for checking and approving timesheets of all the employees they manage to ensure that they are properly filled out, reflect the correct numbers of hours worked, and the correct funds to be charged.
✓ Timesheets go to the Finance Department, because they are responsible for preparing payroll.
✓ Finance Departments must use the timesheet information to allocate actual payroll charges to projects in the accounting system.

During detailed implementation planning, it is therefore important for you to **communicate clearly to staff and partners who is eligible to charge time to the project and how much time they can charge.** Your job during project implementation is to then monitor activities to ensure that only actual time worked is charged to the project.
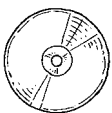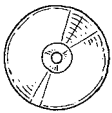
DEVELOP PROJECT AGREEMENTS WITH PARTNERS

Since partners implement projects, an agreement must be signed between CRS and the partner before any funds can be transferred. A separate project agreement is completed for each project with local partners.

Table 5.9: The Difference between an MoU and a Project Agreement
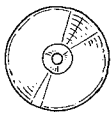
> Memoranda of Understanding are not the appropriate instrument for a transfer of public or private resources to partners. The transfer of public resources to partners should be made through a project agreement, otherwise known as a sub-grant agreement or contract. **A project agreement** (like the Award Agreement with the donor) **is a legal document that protects CRS from potential liability.** Project agreements clarify institutional expectations and arrangements involved in project implementation.
>
> The **MoU is essentially a partnership document** (see *Chapter II, Section 2, pg. 27)*. MoUs between CRS and its partners reflect the agency's Partnership Principles and the mutual understanding of the parties about why each has entered into the partnership, expectations, and how the parties will engage one another. More than just a document, the formulation of an MoU is a process for discussion, clarification and negotiation that is critical to partnership. This process could take two months to a year, and is considered joint work. **The Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue** has a section in *Chapter 4* titled *Putting It Together* on creating an MoU with exercises that may be useful in guiding the process.

Although partners implement projects, CRS is still accountable to the donor for the whole project because CRS is the award signatory. **You must ensure that the project agreement with the partner includes all the main regulatory terms and conditions to which CRS is bound.** In the case of USG awards, this can result in a very lengthy document full of legal terms and references to USG circulars. As unwieldy as this may appear, it is important that you ensure that the relevant terms and conditions flow through to the partner project agreement and that the partner understands what is required of them. In many cases, the Award Agreement may require USG approval of all sub-award agreements so they can ensure that key terms will be observed by all implementing parties.

> ***Think About It …***
>
> If you forget to include regulatory terms and conditions in sub-agreements or project agreements, you are creating a potential liability for CRS!

The Overseas Operations Agreement Policy explains the differences between project agreements for privately funded projects and other types of agreements. CRS has a Project Agreement template for privately funded projects which is also located on the CRS Intranet. A template for USG-funded projects is being developed by CRS. Contact your public resource specialist for the latest version.

The draft project agreement should be prepared by CRS and reviewed with the partner. The project agreement should take the points listed in Checklist 5.11 into consideration.

Checklist 5.11: Guidelines for Developing Project Agreements

Project agreements should accomplish the following:

✓ commit CRS to providing only the funding the donor is making available—not more. Check the obligated amount in local currency!

✓ specify financial and narrative reporting requirements.

✓ specify whether project evaluations are required.

✓ specify ownership of project assets. Consult the Award Agreement and CRS policy as necessary.

✓ limit the amount of funding advanced to the partner based upon what the partner can reasonably spend in three to four months. CRS requires that partners liquidate (i.e., present documentation to support expenses charged to the project) at least every three months. Subsequent cash advances will be adjusted if any prior funding remains unaccounted for with the partner.

✓ clarify that at least 75% liquidation with proper documents must exist before new funds can be released.

✓ take into consideration the currency of the budget and the amount of flexibility the partner will have to move funding between line items.

SECTION 4

DOCUMENTING THE DIP

Take a deep breath—you have nearly completed detailed implementation planning! The project has a revised accurate Activity Schedule, an operational M&E System, staff have been recruited and trained, an accurate budget exists, financial and resource management systems are in order, and capacity strengthening plans are updated and clear.

Equally important, the meetings, workshops and discussions held during detailed implementation planning have:

- strengthened your relationships with partners and other project stakeholders, including the finance staff in your Country Program; and
- resulted in everyone having a clear and shared understanding of the project.

Ensure that the Master Project File has all of the relevant documents that you and others have revised or developed during detailed implementation planning. If donors have other formats, you should have enough information for their forms.
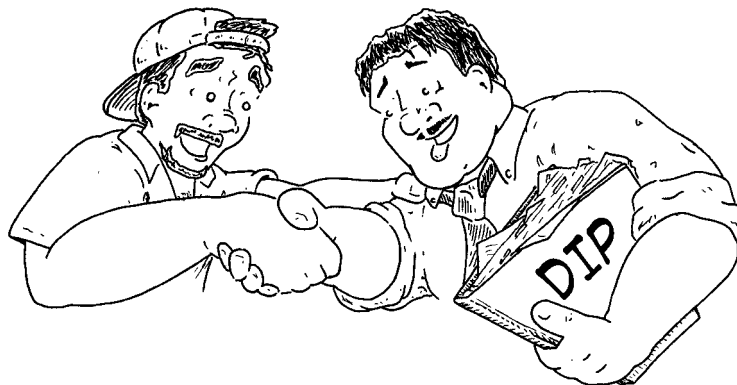
SET UP OR REVISE PTS DATA

If you have already entered data about your project into the PTS via completion of the New Project form, it may need updating now that the DIP is nearly completed. The PTS manual states that updates to project information should occur as soon as the project manager is aware of changes to the project. Consult the appropriate person in your Country Program to submit any changes in your project to the PTS database.

RELATED READING

Following is a list of traditional and online resources available if you would like to read more about the information presented in Chapter V. Please see the Reference List located at the end of the manual for a complete list of all the resources used to compile ProPack II.

Section 2—Conducting Capacity Strengthening Assessments
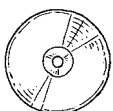
- The AIDSRelief Point of Service Management Guide includes a useful Internal Control Assessment Checklist.
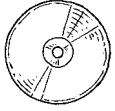
- Organizational assessment forms can be found in *ProPack I, Chapter VI, pp. 191-193*.
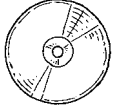
- The CRS Project Proposal Guidance (1999) includes many examples of organizational assessments from outside sources and brief guidance on how to undertake them. A Gender Audit, used in CRS/Kenya, is also included. This information is found in the PPG Appendix, pages 102-121.

- Contact PQSD for updates on consolidated and standardized organizational assessment and capacity assessment tools.

Websites

- http://www.capacity.org/en/knowledge_corners/capacity_building_for_local_ngos

Section 3—Managing Project Resources
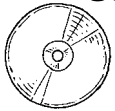
- The CRS Intranet has **tools and training materials on USG resource management** pertaining to cash, monetization, and commodities. These training materials are available at:
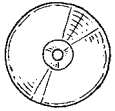
- The CRS Purchasing Manual is also available on the Intranet at:

- Policies on purchasing contained in the Overseas Operations Manual include:
    - Importation of Program Property for Partner Organizations;
    - Information Technology;
    - Property Management;
    - Purchase of Program Property; and
    - Selection and Purchase of CRS Vehicles.

These policies are available on the CRS Intranet at:
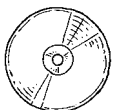
- Other useful CRS resources available on the ProPack II CD ROM include the following:
    - Project Tracking System User Manual
    - Cost Application Guidance
    - Facilitator's Guide and Manager's Guide to Essential Finance
    - MAGI Planning and Assessment User's Guide
    - Guidelines for the Development of Small-Scale Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Projects in East Africa

CHAPTER VI
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

In Chapters III to V, you have completed the important steps of detailed implementation planning: a detailed activity plan; a comprehensive M&E plan and a plan to manage personnel and resources. This chapter will help you think through the important steps in project implementation and monitoring.

Figure 6.1: Project Cycle and Implementation
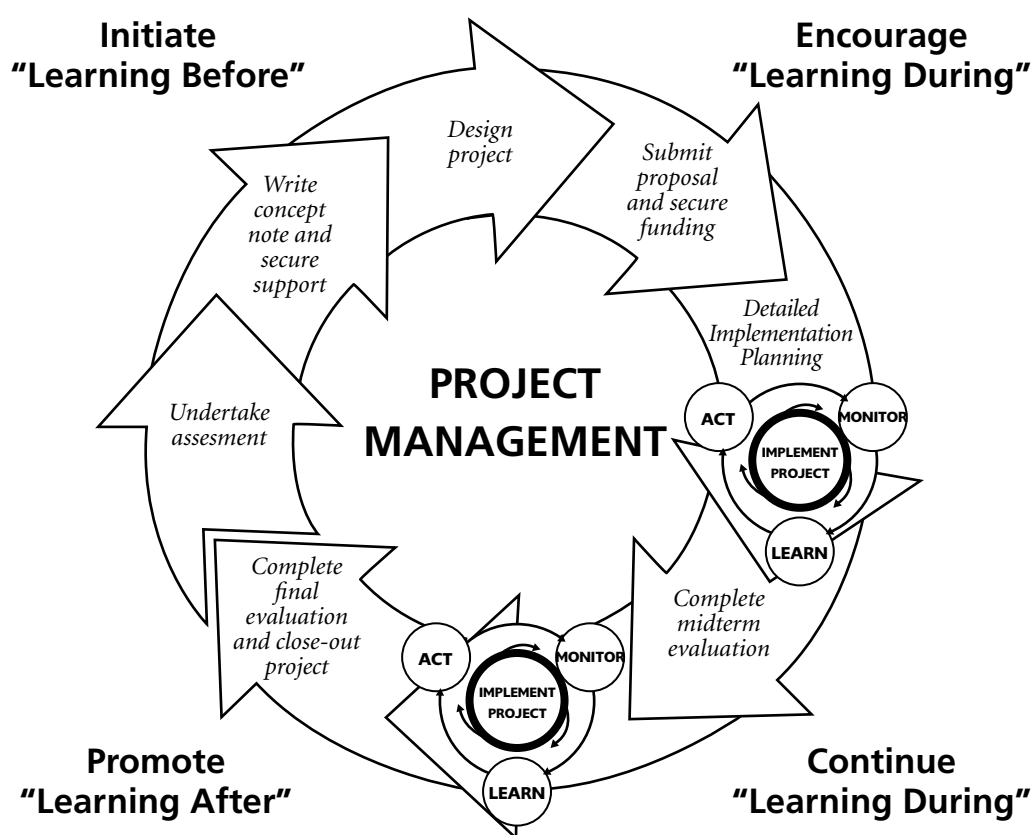
SECTION OVERVIEW

In Section 1, you will do the following:

- reflect on the challenges of implementation;
- review the definition of implementation;
- study the elements of this stage of the project cycle; and
- consider your role during project implementation.

Implementation means carrying out the DIP. Sound simple? Think again. Consider the "From Theory to Practice" story from CRS Jerusalem/West Bank/Gaza, which describes the challenges of project implementation in a rapidly changing environment.

From Theory to Practice: Implementation during Conflict

The Community-Led Village Revitalization Project was implemented in a number of West Bank villages. Responding to self-identified community needs, the project aimed to revitalize services and build capacities in the sectors of water, education and health. Project partners included the Palestinian Hydrology Group, the Union of Agricultural Works Committees and the Women's Affairs Technical Committee. Technical training and support was provided by ministries and local NGOs.

During project implementation, the Al-Aqsa Intifada began along with unprecedented levels of confrontation and mobility restrictions within the West Bank towns and villages. Intense, violent conflict continued throughout project implementation. A closure policy was instituted as a security measure to prevent violence. Closures restricted the movement of Palestinian people, vehicles, and goods. A network of military checkpoints, roadblocks, and physical barriers was established, impeding travel between West Bank towns and villages. Violence and these restrictions on movement hindered the ability of CRS and its partners to implement project activities. While CRS kept all offices open, areas such as Jenin were under complete closure for an extended period.

Despite these constraints, a number of factors kept project implementation on track during this very difficult period. Strong commitment, dedication and trust among CRS, its partners and the community were most important. The CRS team and their partners saw their work as a mission rather than just a job. Teamwork and delegation of authority was crucial; colleagues filled in for each other depending on their accessibility. CRS field staff, partners and local communities helped keep project implementation moving ahead as planned.

As the situation deteriorated, staff sought even more creative solutions to get to work or out to the field. Staff who could not report to the CRS offices went instead to partner offices to work. Staff used their knowledge of alternative agricultural roads to reach their destinations during curfews. Visits were routinely rescheduled depending on closures and the shifting security situation. CRS staff also regularly adjusted the Activity Schedule, enabling them to make up for lost time.

Reflection Opportunity

1. What is your experience of the best laid project plans being disrupted due to conflict, instability, changing trends, shocks or other events?
2. How did you and your partners respond with regard to project implementation?
3. What knowledge, skills and attitudes were vital for project managers in that situation?

The story from West Bank illustrates the **flexibility and creativity required during implementation**. Having a road map does not prevent you from changing your route along the way if you find there is heavy traffic or road work on your initial route. In the same way, having a DIP does not mean you cannot make changes as project implementation bumps up against obstacles and challenges.

This story also highlights the **importance of relationships among CRS staff, its partners and community groups and members**. In this project, all of these stakeholders worked together during implementation and, in doing so, overcame great challenges.

IMPLEMENTATION DEFINED—ART AND SCIENCE

The definition of implementation is "to carry out" or "to put into practice." **Project implementation involves coordinating people and other resources to carry out the project's plans in order to achieve the project's objectives.** Translating plans into action is the **science of implementation.**

Yet, as we have already seen, implementation is far more than just administering a plan. **The art of implementation is how well you critically analyze and understand what is actually happening and how easily you respond to challenges by adjusting plans.** The art of implementation is dramatically illustrated in the story from the West Bank.

Implementation is based on a systematic process of rigorously discussing who, what, how and when; constantly questioning; actively following up; and ensuring accountability. Accountability means regularly and systematically analyzing the use of resources, carrying out activities, delivering outputs in a timely fashion and within budget, and achieving the IR- and SO-level objectives—tangible benefits to the people we serve.

IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN THE PROJECT CYCLE

The implementation stage of the project cycle, as portrayed in Figure 6.2, shows how implementation takes place within a dynamic learning environment: monitoring, learning and then acting on that learning to ensure improved performance.

Implementation does not imply unthinkingly carrying out a DIP as if it were an unchanging blueprint. Instead, **implementing the DIP is a process requiring flexibility and responsiveness, while never forgetting the central purpose of the project.** An important feature of a dynamic learning organization is that project managers are empowered to respond to unforeseen events as they arise—their task is to *manage*, not simply to administer, the implementation of a plan.

Figure 6.2: Implementation Stage of the Project Cycle

ACT
Tomorrow before leaving, we will hold two focus group meetings-one with youth and another with women-to be sure everyone's perspective is clear. We will discuss this plan with the village elders tonight to get their permission and so that they understand why we want to hold these additional meetings.

MONITOR
How did the meeting go? We observed that the village elders and chief dominated discussions during the entire meeting, and that women and youth just stood in the back, silently observing.

IMPLEMENT: HOLD COMMUNITY MEETING

LEARN
Why did this happen? We didn't realize that it was culturally inappropriate for men and women to mix in one meeting. If we only hold this one meeting, we won't benefit from the perspective of women and youth in the project discussions. This could lead to a situation where they are sidelined in the process.

Monitoring, learning and acting take place throughout the life of the project. For example, when the first community meeting is held, learning influences the next steps.

As you recall from *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 34-36*, organizational learning depends in part on planning time for reflection and utilizing skills in critical, analytical thinking. Similarly, *Chapter IV, Section 2, pp. 117-118* showed us the importance of including time for critical reflection events and processes. Checklist 2.2, Questions to Foster a Learning Environment, in *Chapter II, Section 3, pg. 35* advises that project stakeholders regularly ask, "What is happening, and why? What are the implications for the project? What should we do next?"

Two of CRS' Guiding Principles underpin this stage of the project cycle.

1. **Subsidiarity** is reflected in CRS' accompaniment of partners during the project implementation phase. It is also reflected in the implementation and decision-making roles of partners and community members who are involved in and affected by the project.
2. **Stewardship** is reflected in the significance that CRS attaches to finance and M&E in order to ensure that project resources are used correctly and that results are achieved. See *Chapter I, pp. 6-7* for further discussion of these two Guiding Principles.

CRS' ROLE IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

No matter what the situation, CRS project managers are accountable for the project outcomes and for managing for results.

The nature of a CRS project manager's involvement in implementation depends on a variety of factors: capacity (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of community members and partners; type and nature of partnership; complexity of the project; and demands of donors. Remember from *Chapter II, Section 2, pp. 24-30*, there is **no simple formula for excellent accompaniment of partners.**

Checklist 6.1: Project Managers' Responsibilities During Implementation

✓ build and maintain good relationships with partners and all key stakeholders.
✓ ensure that everyone keeps the SOs in sight.
✓ help monitor the project to maintain progress towards objectives and keep budgets on track.
✓ enable a dynamic learning environment via critical reflection events and processes, and related follow-up.
✓ enable partners to adjust the DIP to what is actually happening.
✓ ensure high-quality, relevant capacity strengthening occurs via technical assistance, peer support, training, etc.
✓ foster good team spirit and individual motivation.
✓ give ongoing coaching and feedback.
✓ submit regular narrative and financial reports.
✓ enable the partner to comply with donor and CRS regulations and conditions.

These implementation responsibilities demand the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes for project managers described in *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 31-59* of this manual. The story from the West Bank, for example, clearly illustrates the importance of skills and attitudes such as trust, integrity, teamwork and delegation during accompaniment of partners in project implementation.

SECTION 2
GUIDANCE FOR CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

SECTION OVERVIEW

Mutual capacity strengthening is a cornerstone of the relationship CRS has with its partners. As written earlier, many organizations use the term capacity building, but this term may be mistakenly interpreted to mean that no capacity exists and that it must be built from scratch. **Capacity strengthening recognizes that both partners and CRS have a set of resources, insights and skills that can benefit from capacity assessments and relevant skill-building.** In many books and manuals, however, capacity building and capacity strengthening are used interchangeably.

In Section 2, you will do the following:

- examine general principles of adult learning applicable to any capacity strengthening activity;
- consider three broad steps of capacity strengthening: 1) assess and identify needs and resources, 2) provide appropriate and innovative capacity strengthening activities, and 3) follow up and monitor activities; and
- review a selection of innovative capacity strengthening ideas and activities.

INTRODUCTION

During implementation, CRS project managers often take an important role in capacity strengthening. Consider the "From Theory to Practice" story from Ethiopia on the value of high-quality capacity strengthening.

From Theory to Practice: Accompaniment in Action—From a Partner in Ethiopia

> Our agroenterprise project was a great success. It is an excellent example of a transparent, flexible and friendly relationship. CRS helped connect us with research institutions that provided us with top-notch training. CRS organized this training, shared technical information and followed-up. Continuous theoretical and practical training worked well because the workshops were planned in a participatory way and were based on real needs. Linkages with other institutions also allowed us to communicate, share information and document lessons learned. CRS also guided us on funding procedures, released funds on a timely basis and gave us needed support for our financial management system.
>
> Implementation went smoothly—we planned together, trained together and worked closely with farmers to understand their problems and viewpoints. CRS followed up on our activity implementation status. Their visits, joint monitoring and evaluation, documentation and reporting were useful. For example, joint monitoring helped farmers to become more aware of their problems and successes. Altogether, we've made remarkable improvements in our institutional capacity.

This project, part of a larger Agroenterprise Learning Alliance, used a variety of capacity strengthening activities. A **Learning Alliance** is a long-term knowledge-sharing community jointly composed of stakeholders at many levels, such as research, development agencies, policy makers and practitioners. These stakeholders have complementary knowledge of good practices and skills that they share, adapt, apply and innovate to strengthen local capacities, improve performance in the field and scale-up. The Agroenterprise Learning Alliance is a **clear example of mutual capacity strengthening**.

The Agro-enterprise Learning Alliance experience used a combination of capacity strengthening activities over a period of time that included **study visits, workshops, training, learning from peers, on-the-job assignments and technical assistance visits.** The partner who wrote this story continued his own learning by delivering technical assistance to a CRS Country Program in another region.

PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

Capacity strengthening activities are related to learning—improving knowledge, acquiring skills or examining attitudes. The learners in this case are busy and professionally trained CRS and partner staff. Appropriate and well-planned learning activities that meet immediate and relevant needs are highly appreciated. Poor-quality learning activities are a waste of time and will lower the credibility of the organizers. Consider the well-researched principles of effective adult learning described in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Selected Principles of Effective Adult Learning

Respect	Learners must feel heard and respected as people. Respect transcends cultures, and the task of the educator, trainer or technical advisor is to discover how to show respect in a particular culture.
Immediacy	Learners need to see the immediate usefulness of new information. Adults do not have time to waste and want to learn what will make a difference in their work or life now. Immediacy makes for high motivation. Without immediacy, there is no enthusiasm and no excitement.
Relevance	Learners learn faster and more permanently when the subject matter is significant to them. A trainer, coach or peer advisor's task is to make content relevant by connecting it to the themes and knowledge of learners. If adults do not see the relevance of content, no matter how crucial that content is to the teacher, learners quickly determine that they do not need to know it.
Active	Learning is more effective when it is active, rather than passive. When a learner takes a new theory, concept or practice and tries to use it, she will understand it more completely, integrate it more effectively with past learning, and retain it longer.

(Source: Adapted from Vella 1995)

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think about a situation where you helped to organize a learning activity, such as a training workshop, for partners that they really appreciated and applied.
2. What made this learning activity so useful to partners?
3. How do your answers to question two above compare to the principles of effective adult learning in Table 6.1? What is similar? What is different?

THE THREE STEPS OF CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Although there is no one recipe, most capacity strengthening efforts involve three broad steps:

1. **Before**—assess and identify needs and resources;
2. **During**—deliver high-quality activities; and
3. **After**—follow up, monitor and evaluate.

Experience shows that most capacity strengthening efforts focus too much on the second step above. Assessments, the first step, should be done immediately before any event to assure that it is relevant and meets the immediate needs of the learners. Learning takes hold when newly acquired skills are immediately put into practice in a work environment that enables follow-up support from peers and supervisors, the third step.

Read Me First!

This section highlights selected capacity strengthening activities that CRS project staff commonly manage during implementation. It also includes brief descriptions of some innovative capacity strengthening activities. Think of this section as a starting point for you to begin exploring ideas about capacity strengthening. Then you can undertake more in-depth research for detailed guidance on topics that you find interesting.

Step One: Assess and Identify Needs and Resources

Assess current practices, strengths, weaknesses, and challenges to ensure that the specific capacity strengthening activity is relevant and immediate.
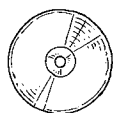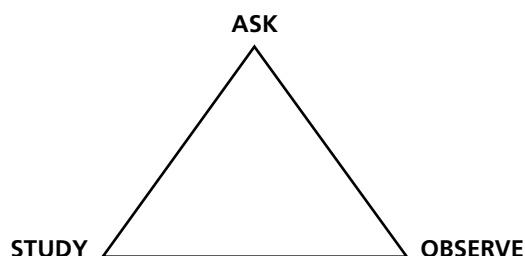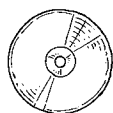
Figure 6.3: Learning Needs and Resources Assessment

A common capacity strengthening activity is training. **A pre-training Learning Needs and Resources Assessment asks who needs what and according to whom.** It helps uncover what specific learners need to learn from their own perspective, as well as those of supervisors, colleagues or other project stakeholders; what they already know; and how training can best fit their situation. Most learning needs and resources assessments involve **asking** (individual or group interviews, questionnaires); **studying** (document reviews, such as reports or job performance evaluations); and **observations** (of trainee practices, relationships, etc.) (Vella 1995).

Refer to *ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 3, pp. 56–57* on the Four Dimensions of Need. These dimensions are applicable to learning needs and resources assessments, as well as project assessments.
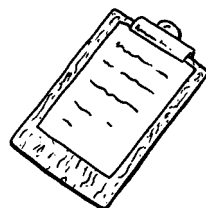
Don't Forget! Essential Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for Project Managers

A key skill in any exercise to identify needs and resources for capacity strengthening is learning to listen! Review the *Facilitating, Coaching* and *Communicating* sub-sections in *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 43-48* for ways to improve active listening.

Step Two: Deliver High-quality Activities

Once learning needs and resources are identified, the capacity strengthening activity can be refined and delivered. Table 6.2 contains a selected list of capacity strengthening activities that CRS project managers and partners have implemented. Some are well-known and widely used, such as training or technical assistance. Others may be new to you.

Table 6.2: Examples of Capacity Strengthening Activities

Category	Examples of Activities
On-the-Job	- Coaching - Mentoring - Providing and receiving feedback - Short-term assignments (e.g., joining an evaluation team; participating in another country's SPP preparation; and acting as a technical reviewer), and temporary duty assignments (e.g., working as head of program for three months) - Technical assistance
Training	- Workshops - University courses and distance learning - Conferences and similar learning events - Self-study
Awareness-raising and Peer Learning	- Facilitated discussions - Community organization - Communities of practice - Peer learning - Study visits

Some of these capacity strengthening activities are described below. Once again, think of these descriptions as a way to begin exploring ideas. Then you can conduct further research on those of most interest to you.

On-the-Job

Coaching, Mentoring and Providing and Receiving Feedback

Other chapters with information on coaching and mentoring are as follows:

- *Facilitating, Coaching and Mentoring—Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 43-44;*
- *Communicating* and how to provide feedback effectively—*Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 44-48;* and
- *Guidelines and Tools for Performance Management—Section 5, pp. 208-213* of this chapter.

Short-term and Temporary Duty Assignments

In the AIDSRelief project, a finance staffer from one of the consortium members was given a short-term assignment to a CRS Finance Department to assist with processing liquidations of partner advances. The finance staffer gained knowledge and skills, and the relationship between CRS and the consortium member was strengthened.

Temporary duty assignments tend to be at least one to two months, and assigned staff take on responsibilities for a certain set of activities. These types of assignments are common in emergency programs where staff are needed quickly to perform certain functions. Staff have the opportunity to bring their skills to the situation and to train others; it's also an opportunity to learn a lot about emergency operations.

Technical Assistance

Ongoing technical assistance is key. This assistance may come from CRS regional or headquarters technical advisors, consultants, partners, government technicians, other NGOs, peer community workers or other sources.

Single events do not achieve their objectives if there is no follow-up or support to apply new knowledge or practice new skills. Checklist 6.2 will help you organize effective technical assistance.

Checklist 6.2: Organizing High-quality Technical Assistance

Plan	✓ Develop a SOW to clarify the aims, activities, tasks and deliverables of the technical assistance. Partners and other relevant project stakeholders should always contribute to the SOW content. (Guidelines for developing SOWs are included in *Chapter V, Section 1, pg. 136 and Chapter VII, Section 2 pp. 237-239.*) ✓ Ensure that logistics are well-organized so that the trip or event runs efficiently. Technical assistance can be costly, so you want to maximize the time that the technical advisor has to spend with the people he needs to work with.
Communicate	✓ Ensure that appropriate briefing and debriefing sessions have been planned. Holding informational meetings with project stakeholders, such as government, Church or other local officials are excellent ways to promote collaboration, support and interest for the project in general. ✓ Balance time spent with staff in headquarters or capital city offices with time spent with staff or project participants in the field as appropriate. ✓ Ensure that the people responsible for continued post-technical assistance support are aware of and involved in activities.
Monitor	✓ Ensure that the technical assistance is going as planned. Monitoring helps you or your partners to uncover any problems early on so you can resolve them. Asking the following questions can help: • Is the technical assistance provided meeting the quality standards that were outlined in the SOW? • Are principles of effective adult learning being applied? • Are standards of high-quality technical assistance being upheld? • How are staff and partners responding to the assistance being provided?
Evaluate	✓ Invite colleagues and partners to evaluate the technical assistance provided; many CRS Country Programs require this. This helps technical advisors improve their own practices as well.

In order to complete the last item in Checklist 6.2, check to see if your Country Program or region has its own evaluation form for technical assistance. A sample technical assistance evaluation form is shown in Checklist 6.3.

Checklist 6.3: Sample Evaluation Form for Technical Assistance

✓ Name of technical assistance provider.
✓ Recipients.
✓ Purpose of technical assistance (summarize from the SOW).
✓ Give an overall rating of the technical assistance by checking one choice below.
   Excellent_____ Good_____ Adequate_____ Poor_____ Unsatisfactory_____
✓ What did you like most about what the technical advisor provided? Be specific and explain how it was helpful.
✓ What would you change about the technical assistance provided?
✓ How will the technical assistance products or deliverables help in the work of those who received assistance?
✓ Are there any further comments?
✓ Follow-up/Next steps.

(Source: Norem and McCorkle 2006)

CRS project managers often mediate between technical advisors and those receiving the assistance. Consider the "From Theory to Practice" story on Managing Technical Advisors, and discuss the Reflection Opportunity questions.

From Theory to Practice: Managing Technical Advisors

> Lani is a CRS project manager who felt lucky when a senior technical advisor agreed to come and provide assistance. This advisor was a renowned expert with many years of experience, and CRS staff and partners were excited about the upcoming visit. After the advisor arrived, however, things began to go wrong. The advisor had very poor communication skills, and on the first day, unwittingly insulted one of the senior CRS staff. Lani observed the situation deteriorating but did not know what to do.

Reflection Opportunity

1. If you were Lani, what would you do?
2. Have you ever faced a similar situation? What happened? How did you resolve it?
3. At what point would you involve your supervisor or Country Representative in this situation?

Training

When training is mentioned, a workshop in a hotel conference room comes to mind. If you think of training more as learning, you will realize it can be undertaken in a variety of ways as appropriate for different learners. As listed above, **training can be undertaken through self-study of existing manuals and online resources, at universities or through participation in workshops.**
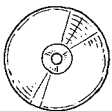
CRS defines training as a formal procedure for acquiring the skills, knowledge or attitudes required for successful job performance. (CRS Guidelines for Effective Training is available on the ProPack II CD ROM.) If you undertake more traditional workshop-type training, ensure that effective adult learning principles are applied. Training approaches that have been proven to be effective include problem-posing education, transformative learning or popular education. These training approaches are well-described in reference manuals and books, such as *Training through Dialogue* (1995) and *Taking Learning to Task* (2001) by Jane Vella.

## Awareness-raising and Peer Learning

This category refers to learning activities that are structured to provoke changes in attitudes and practices or to gain knowledge. Facilitation skills, such as asking open questions or using problem-posing approaches are used in this type of learning. The "teacher" is often a peer or colleague rather than an educator or expert.

Facilitated Discussions

Learning Conversations are a community-based learning activity. CRS/South Asia has used this method effectively with women's self-help groups in India. A **learning conversation is a 30-minute group discussion inspired by simple stories that are relevant and address a group problem.** A trained facilitator introduces a thought-provoking idea or story to a group. The group then discusses the story and brainstorms solutions to similar problems they face.

Learning conversations are a non-threatening way to encourage community members to talk with one another, solve problems and bond over common solutions. Guidelines and sample stories are detailed in Field Guide 1.2 Learning Conversations written by CRS and Freedom from Hunger.
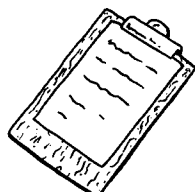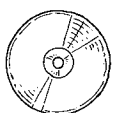
> **Don't Forget! Essential Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for Project Managers**
>
> Review *Chapter II, Section 2, pp. 24-30* on motivating staff and partners to understand why peer learning is so effective as a capacity strengthening activity.

From Theory to Practice: A Learning Conversation Solves a Dilemma in Jamaica

> A learning conversation in Jamaica used a story about Women's Savings Groups. The story described a dilemma in one village where all the women were enrolled in groups except for the poorest who could not afford the savings rate. After the discussion, the women who participated created an action plan to encourage poor women in their own community to join Women's Savings Groups.

Community Organization

Community organization is a process through which groups identify common problems, issues, or goals; mobilize resources; and develop and implement strategies for reaching these goals. Learning activities typically include facilitator-led problem-posing sessions. In some countries, these facilitators are called animators. They are often members of the community themselves.

In the following problem posing drawing for discussion (*adapted from Hope et al. 1995*), the women first sell some of their maize during the harvest season at a low price to get cash for other needs, and then in the planting season when their remaining maize stocks are gone, they are forced to buy maize at twice the price.
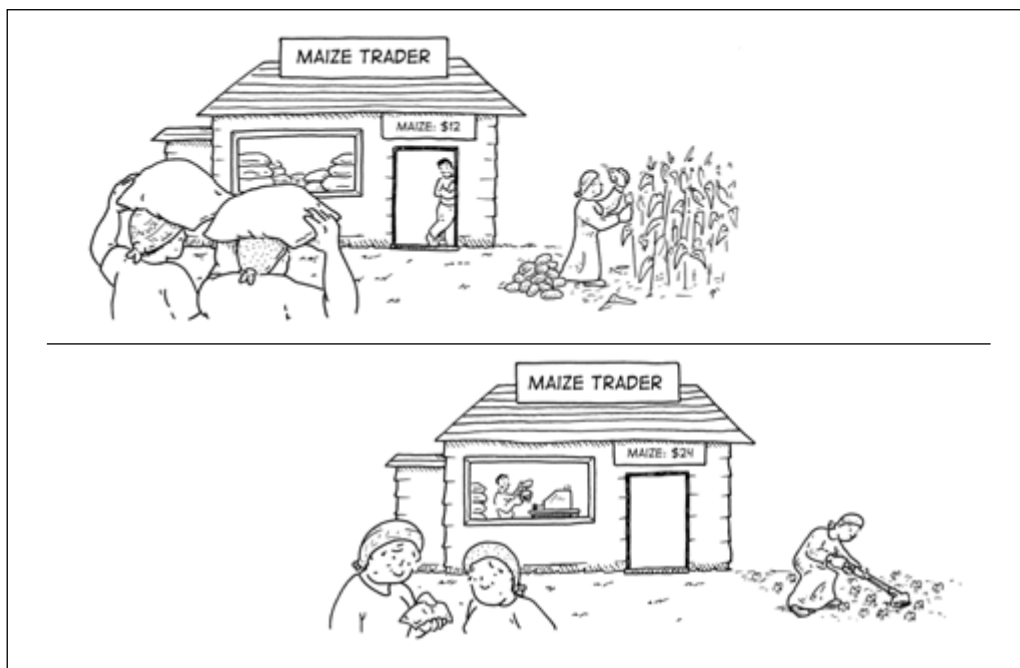
In a community organization, community members are often involved in PRAs and analysis of their own situation as part of awareness-raising and learning. Meetings are held where a photo, picture, short drama, or story is used to raise a relevant problem or issue affecting the community, uncovered during the PRA. Participants are then asked to analyze this problem and decide what can be done to resolve it. This feeds into action planning and community mobilization activities, such as committee organization (Stetson and Davis 1999).

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice are defined as "collections of individuals bound by informal relationships that share similar work roles and a common context ... [they] are not constrained by typical geographic, business unit, or functional boundaries, but rather [are bound] by common tasks, contexts, and work interests ... the word 'practice' implies knowledge in action (Lesser and Prusak 1999)." In other words, **communities of practice are informal groups of people who share similar interests and concerns, and hold a common sense of purpose in order to learn together and create knowledge in a manner that is fluid and self-organizing.** They collaborate, teach each other, learn, solve problems and jointly develop better practices.

Some CRS staff with common interests, such as M&E, have listservs that support common learning. Through listserv membership, materials such as reports, lessons learned, best practices and other documents are circulated in response to requests for information.

With the promotion of new information and communication technologies in CRS, it is likely that communities of practice will become a significant element in any capacity strengthening activity.

Peer Learning

The "From Theory to Practice" Peer Learning story box shows how this capacity strengthening activity has been promoted within two CRS projects.

From Theory to Practice: Examples of Peer Learning

- Women's groups in Haiti were involved in Hearth nutrition education programs. On International Women's Day, a CRS partner planned a community celebration so the groups could share their knowledge with other community members. The women wrote and performed in creative theater productions about the importance of Vitamin A, optimal child care and feeding, and other topics.

- Peer Assist is a learning activity used in some microfinance projects. During review meetings, branch managers from high-performing branches share their experiences with peers and answer questions.

Study Visits

Well-organized study visits can be a powerful tool to promote awareness-raising among staff, partners and community groups.
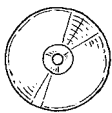
MorningStar, named for a self-help group in India, is a three-day guided cross-partner review; peers learn from each other and gain insight from sharing experiences. The review is an opportunity both to share good work and to identify opportunities for improvement. Special attention is paid to sharing unexpected results—called pleasant surprises—that have emerged during project work.

Well-organized capacity strengthening activities that respond to relevant and immediate needs are appreciated. If not perceived as relevant, learners quickly determine that the activity is not useful.

From Theory to Practice: Good and Bad Experiences with Study Visits

> A mixed team of international, national, and partner staff spent a day visiting agroenterprise groups supported by CRS/Kenya. Everyone learned a lot from observing the groups at work and asking questions. In contrast, another study visit organized by CRS for partners to visit an agroenterprise project and partner in Ethiopia was less successful. Some visiting partners said that the practices they saw could not be translated or applied to their own settings because of differences in organizational size, capacity and programming experience.

Reflection Opportunity

1. In your current project, how have you or your partners promoted learning from peers?
2. What went well? What could have been improved?
3. What new peer learning activity do you intend to try out?

## Step Three: Follow-up, Monitor and Evaluate

How do we know whether newly acquired skills and knowledge are being applied once those trained have returned to their offices and homes? The **enabling environment is an important concept**. If the community, home or office environment does not encourage trainees to utilize what they have learned, then no matter how good the training, its value will be limited. For example, if a partner learns all about ProPack II, but returns to an office where the manager is resistant to changing existing management practices, then little will have been gained from the training. **Ensure that you, your partners, community members and other stakeholders support and reinforce the application of any newly acquired knowledge or skills.**

Follow-up ensures that the investment in capacity strengthening is effective (Vella et al. 1998). Examples of follow-up actions include the following:

- checking that SOW deliverables and planned reports from a technical advisor were completed;
- evaluating a training event to see what additional support is needed by trainees;
- debriefing a study visit to analyze what was learned and what visitors intend to apply;
- encouraging trainees to use their new knowledge and skills as much as possible in day-to-day work; and
- monitoring the effectiveness of significant capacity strengthening teaching and learning initiatives, both during and after any event.

From Theory to Practice: Success Case Study—Evaluation of a Project Design Workshop
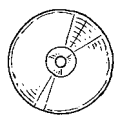
> This method was used to evaluate a regional training workshop on project design and the use of ProPack I. The evaluation was carried out five months after the workshop was implemented, and its objectives were to accomplish the following:
>
> - assess if, and how, trained staff were actually using changed knowledge, skills and attitudes in project design; and
> - measure achievement of workshop IRs and unintended results.
>
> The Success Case Study method involves sending a short e-mail questionnaire to workshop participants. The results help identify which participants are most and least successful in applying what they learned. These participants are then interviewed to determine the reasons for success or non-success.

This particular evaluation revealed that participants who effectively applied what they learned in the training had the following:

- substantial pre- and post-workshop support from technical advisors and senior Country Program managers to use the project design skills promoted in ProPack I;
- many opportunities to practice acquired skills in their current work; and
- significant support from fellow Country Program colleagues who attended the workshop.

Another important factor in their success was the workshop's emphasis on critical thinking skills. Successful trainees learned how to adjust project design tools—rather than blindly apply them—to a multitude of settings and situations.

The results of the study were shared with Country Representatives during a regional meeting. With this information, they understood the conditions needed to make the training more successful. *(Evaluation method based on Brinkerhoff 2003)*

If you have assessed capacity during project design or the DIP, you will have a clear baseline against which to monitor the effectiveness of capacity strengthening activities. After the activities, you and your partners can monitor progress with these indicators.

From Theory to Practice: Monitoring Local Community Capacity in Niger

In Niger, CRS and other international organizations implemented Title II food security projects. Each organization agreed to use the same assessment tool and indicators to rank local capacities. The tool revealed clear differences in capacity between older villages, which had benefited from project activities and newer villages, which had not. Capacity strengthening efforts were thus focused on the newer villages. The tool was also used to assess sub-groups, such as community-based health committees. This information was used to target training towards the committees that needed it the most.

SECTION 3

PROJECT MONITORING AND REPORTING

SECTION OVERVIEW

Monitoring is a systematic and continuous process of collecting, analyzing, and documenting information that enables regular reporting on the progress of work over time. It is a basic and universal management tool for identifying the strengths and weaknesses in a project. Project monitoring assists all the people involved in making timely decisions, ensures accountability, and provides the basis for evaluation and learning in a way that improves the quality of the work.

Monitoring provides **early indications of progress** and achievement of objectives. As circumstances change, monitoring can also help determine whether initial project objectives remain relevant and appropriate. For these reasons, monitoring is conducted throughout the life of the project.

Monitoring activities, of course, include measuring indicators and tracking Critical Assumptions identified during project design and planning. It should also embrace participatory approaches whereby project stakeholders are encouraged to observe and report on events and changes triggered by the interventions and in the environment in which the project is operating.

In Section 3, you will do the following:

- review the definition of monitoring;
- understand the importance of monitoring and how it links to evaluation; and
- examine monitoring guidance and tools for project managers.

INTRODUCTION

Read the "From Theory to Practice" story box and answer the Reflection Opportunity questions that follow.

From Theory to Practice: Monitoring Can Be Good for Your Health!

> Hamida manages a CRS health project in which one of the SOs is to lower the incidence of acute childhood diarrhea. The indicator is a 15% reduction of cases of acute diarrhea seen at the health clinic. The project has several IRs dealing with the prevention and home management of diarrhea.
>
> Four months into the project, Hamida and her team review the IR data. They see that communities are progressing with prevention activities as planned—latrines are being constructed along with hand-washing facilities. Activities-level indicators also show that the project is conducting training on oral rehydration therapy (ORT) as planned. ORT training includes information on the importance of increasing fluids, continued feeding or breastfeeding, and using packaged Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) to prevent dehydration.
>
> The team becomes concerned, however, because monitoring data also shows that households are still not properly managing diarrhea. Health clinic staff continue to see many children with dehydration and other serious warning signs.

After holding discussions with trained caregivers, the project team finds out that while they understand how to mix ORS and when to administer it, they have no access to the ORS packets. The team meets with the community health committee and the clinic staff. The health clinic staff explains that they did not receive ORS packets as part of their drugs. Hamida and her team help the committee and the health clinic staff work out a plan to make sure that ORS packets are made available at an affordable price. This was done at almost no extra cost. Hamida and her team are now confident that the mid-term evaluation will show that the project's SO will almost certainly be met.

Reflection Opportunity

1. If you were Hamida's supervisor, what feedback would you provide to her following this incident?
2. What difference did Hamida and her team's use of monitoring information make to the project?

The Results Framework and the Proframe help to promote a results-based, utilization-focused approach to monitoring. In the past, project monitoring tended to focus exclusively on lower-level objectives—the busywork. Inputs, Activities, and Outputs were monitored (i.e., expenditures and staffing levels tracked, numbers of participants counted, etc.). This type of monitoring has many names, such as implementation monitoring, output monitoring, input monitoring and process monitoring. In comparison, results-based, utilization-focused monitoring, otherwise known as performance monitoring or impact monitoring, goes beyond the "Did they do it?" question to focus on "What actually changed?"

Monitoring for results combines the following:

- traditional implementation monitoring;
- assessment of higher-level objectives; and, most importantly,
- decision-makers' use of the information.

In the Health story, Hamida and her team monitored Activities and Outputs but kept the higher-level objectives (IRs and SOs) clearly in mind.

From Theory to Practice: Where Are the Fish??

One UN project consisted of digging fish ponds for food insecure farmers. There was an Output statement, but it was to dig "x" number of fish ponds rather than to provide fish as protein or as a resource to trade. This turned out to be critical, because the target number of fish ponds was achieved, but none were ever stocked with fish! The monitoring reports gave no indication that nothing had been achieved in terms of fish resources or food security.

(Source: ALNAP, 2003.)

Why Monitor?

Monitoring assists managers and other key stakeholders in making appropriate and timely decisions that help them continuously improve and guide their projects towards ultimate success.

Monitoring can be seen as a means to an end—the end being higher-quality projects and good relationships with partners.

> *Think About It …*
>
> Monitoring is a support activity that should enhance the work of those involved in project management and implementation. Monitoring must never become so burdensome that it impedes implementation. If this is the case, revisit the M&E system set up during detailed implementation planning, and always ask who needs to use this information and for what purpose.

Results-based, utilization-focused monitoring accomplishes the following:

- **Improves upward and downward accountability.** It contributes to stewardship because it helps CRS and its partners manage the substantial funds they receive.
- **Improves project decision-making.** It provides regular and timely information on progress to managers and alerts them to problems that need attention.
- **Focuses staff on impact.** Results-based monitoring ensures that staff keep their eye on desired impact and not just on day-to-day operations. Recall the story of Hamida and her team!
- **Strengthens relationships.** If used incorrectly, monitoring may be perceived by partners as policing. This will weaken relationships because trust is diminished. Insightful monitoring creates an open atmosphere where people can learn from mistakes and make improvements. It encourages shared learning and awareness-raising among partners, community members and other stakeholders.
- **Helps advocate for change.** Possessing high-quality, up-to-date, field-based monitoring information allows projects to inform local and national policies, and influence how donors think about development.
- **Improves project design.** If monitoring data shows a big difference between what was planned and what is occurring, decision-makers will want to look more closely at the theory of change on which the project design was based. The project strategy may need adjusting. Lightly monitoring Critical Assumptions ensures that changes in the environment that may influence adjustments to the project design (e.g., unexpected shocks, altered structures and systems, amended or new macro-level policies) are tracked.
- **Makes allowances for unexpected occurrences.** It is not possible to predict the outcome of a project intervention with complete certainty. Just imagine how dull life would be if you could! In the event that there are unanticipated events, then the M&E system should have sufficient capacity to absorb any necessary additional monitoring that may be required.

> *Think About It … Quality Not Quantity!*
>
> It is better to track a few indicators well than to do a poor job of monitoring many indicators.

What Is Monitored?

All key aspects of a project are monitored. In addition to tracking objectives and indicators, monitoring is integrated with Country Program management systems, particularly budget and personnel. (See *Sections 4* and *5* in this chapter for more information on financial monitoring and performance management.)

Who Monitors?

Monitoring is a day-to-day activity done during project implementation. It is an essential part of good management—not simply a job done by the M&E officer or unit! This is why project manager job descriptions should include M&E responsibilities, such as finding ways to encourage and support a community's own monitoring efforts; making sure monitoring is undertaken during field visits; ensuring the timely production of progress reports; analyzing information from these reports and providing feedback; overseeing the financial management of projects; facilitating exchanges of lessons learned; and encouraging the use of M&E data in decision-making. Other ideas for the performance plan should have become apparent as you read through Chapter IV on establishing an M&E system.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Read your job description.
2. How would you amend it in light of the above paragraph?

How Does Monitoring Affect Evaluations?

A strong **monitoring system is essential for high-quality evaluations**. Why? Good evaluations rely upon and build on the information collected and analyzed during monitoring. For example, if monitoring data suggest a trend in a particular direction (e.g., increasing female participation at water-user meetings), staff can explore in greater detail why and how these trends are occurring, as well as acknowledge the significance of the trend in the context of the project and make adjustments as needed. Evaluations can also review information collected during monitoring over the life of the project in order to judge achievement. Understandings generated through monitoring will enable you to understand and explain final evaluation data and findings. (See also *Chapter IV, Section I, pp. 84-85* for more information on the difference between monitoring and evaluation.)

> Remember, evaluations complement—but do not replace—monitoring. Monitoring is aimed at providing ongoing knowledge for decision-making, while evaluation implies a formal event at a specific point in time during the life of the project.

MONITORING GUIDANCE AND TOOLS FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

Chapter I stated that ProPack II does not include definitive guidance on monitoring and evaluation. Instead, only the guidance and tools that are most relevant to CRS project managers have been included. More detailed resources exist, however, and these have been listed in the Related Reading section at the end of this chapter.

In this sub-section, you will do the following:

- review general guidance for monitoring Activity-, Output- and IR-level related indicators;
- examine guidance for commonly used monitoring tools (progress reports, field visits, project review meetings, etc.) that is mentioned in most CRS project manager job descriptions; and
- consider ways to promote critical and systems thinking during monitoring activities that will enhance learning and decision-making for improved performance.

Monitoring Activity-, Output- and IR-level Indicators

Soon after project start up, staff or partners will begin collecting information on the Activities-level indicators in line with the M&E Operations Manual; data on the Outputs and IRs will be collected at a later time. Partners or staff will collect data on forms created during detailed implementation planning. Once the data have been gathered, they will be collated and analyzed for reporting purposes. Critical Assumptions will also be tracked to see how the external environment may be affecting project implementation.

In Tables 6.3–6.5, you will find information about monitoring Activities, Outputs and IRs. This is a review of similar information presented in *Chapter IV, Section 2, pp. 96-97*.

Table 6.3: Monitoring Activities

Objective Level	Information Typically Provided by the Associated Indicators

Activity	• Focus on implementation progress typically measured through management and financial tracking, record-keeping systems, training reports, etc.
	• The indicators answer questions such as:
	  o Was the Activity completed with acceptable quality and as planned?
	  o Were planned numbers and types of items purchased and distributed?
	  o Were the meetings held?
	  o Did the numbers and gender of people in the target groups trained meet the anticipated targets?

Activity-level Indicators

Activity-level indicators will be measured very early on during project implementation. These indicators are measured through regular reviews of Activity Schedules, project and partner staff work plans, and corresponding budget expenditures. This information is supplemented by information from progress reports, site visits or meetings that indicate problems or successes in carrying out project Activities. You will continue working with Finance Department staff to monitor the project budget. This is explained in detail in *Section 4, Financial Monitoring, pp. 201-206*.
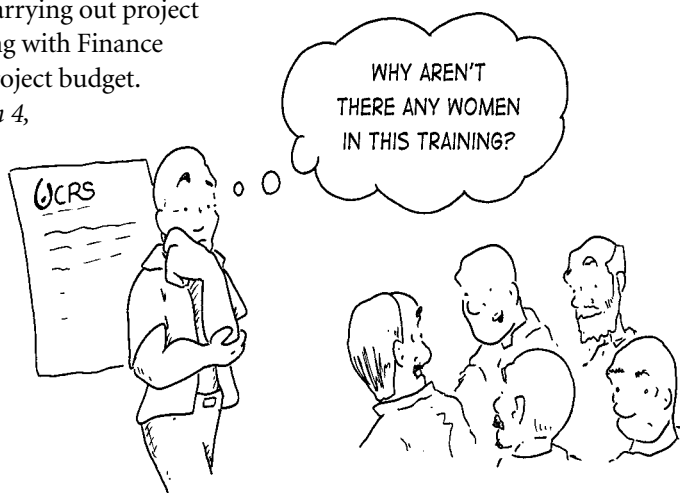
Reflection Opportunity

1. Imagine that you are reviewing a CRS project implemented by a new partner who has little experience. You review the Activity Schedule with the partner and visit a few project sites to observe the activities already underway. You find that all activities have been completed on time, within cost and to an acceptable level of quality.

2. What actions should you take as a project manager?

Did you answer "None?!" Consider how you can **reinforce and reward positives**. If things are going well—the DIP is being implemented according to the quality standards that have been set, on time, and within budget—do not sit back and relax! Provide specific positive feedback to those responsible: other CRS colleagues, staff and partners. Review *Chapter II, Section 3, pg. 57* on the importance of recognizing and rewarding star performers and how to do it. See how you can maintain this momentum and communicate what is working well to other partners—or even to the wider CRS world. As a dynamic learning organization, CRS seeks to ensure that knowledge is accessible to all.

Table 6.4: Monitoring Outputs

Objective Level	Information Typically Provided by the Associated Indicators
Output	• Focus on goods and services delivered through successful completion of activities • Generally measured by pre- and post-test training scores or practical assessments; creation of structures or systems; kilometers of roads or number of schools rehabilitated; and so on

Output-level Indicators

Output-level indicators allow project managers to measure the quantity and quality of the goods and services delivered. For example, many projects involve capacity strengthening (i.e., providing partners or communities with new skills, knowledge and attitudes). If the Activity was a training workshop, the Output-level indicators would measure participant levels of understanding and their ability to apply a skill or to reflect a new attitude. This information might be gathered through a self-assessment of participants' increase in knowledge via end-of-training evaluations; a demonstration of an acquired skill; or comparisons of pre- and post-training scores or tests. **These indicators are measured immediately following the implementation of project Activities when the Output is delivered.** Progress reports, site visits and meetings will also provide information on the quality of the activities undertaken and any problems or successes.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Imagine that you manage a project to construct school latrines and train students in hygiene and sanitation. The latrines were constructed on time and within cost, and site visits confirmed the quality of the work. Training was also provided on time; however, a post-training evaluation showed nearly no changes in knowledge, skills, or attitudes.
2. What action should you take as a project manager?

WELL, THAT WAS A SUCCESSFUL CLASS, WASN'T IT?

In this situation, the Activity (training) was completed, but the Output (increased knowledge, skills, and changed attitudes) was not delivered. Upon further questioning, it turns out that a usually reliable training organization sent a novice trainer who lectured the trainees all week. As a result, many sessions had very poor attendance. On the basis of this information, you and your partner will need to take decisions on how to ensure that an experienced trainer, with knowledge of more effective learning methods, is engaged, and to find a way to monitor the Activity more closely.

Table 6.5: Monitoring Intermediate Results

Objective Level	Information Typically Provided by the Associated Indicators
Intermediate Results	- Focus on demonstrable evidence of behavioral change such as adoption, uptake, coverage or reach of Outputs - Tracked after Outputs have been delivered and a reasonable time has passed for their potential uptake to have occurred - Lightly monitored at first; then explored in more detail if required; and then formally evaluated at mid-term against baseline data

IR-level Indicators

IR-level indicators focus on demonstrable evidence of a behavioral change by project participants as a consequence of the Outputs that have been delivered. Monitoring IR indicators begins soon after the Outputs have been delivered and once the project intervention has had an appropriate amount of time to take effect. For example, if women rice farmers received training (Activity) and have demonstrated their increased knowledge and skills (Output), you will have to wait until the rice planting season to learn if the women are actually using the improved cultivation techniques (IR).

In general, IR-level indicator monitoring involves finding out the following:

- if targeted members of the community are actually being served;
- how those targeted are reacting to the delivery of project goods and services (or Outputs); and
- how the behavior and performance of those targeted are responding to those project goods and services.

You will want to start with "**light" monitoring of IRs early on**. This may involve simple interviews to get feedback from a small sample of community members. There may be other approaches for doing initial monitoring. More **formal evaluations of IR indicators are usually done during the mid-term evaluation**.

Having said that, if reports from the initial monitoring suggest a lack of progress, then you will need to decide whether more substantial monitoring is required to verify your findings, or to find out at which step the behavior change is not occurring. Your goal is to arm yourself with enough information so that the correct management decisions can be taken to ensure that, ultimately, project performance is not threatened.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Imagine that you manage a project supporting extension services to poor female farmers. Contact with a small sample of women indicates that they attended and understood a rice cultivation training. However, since returning to their village, none of them have adopted the recommendations presented at the training.
2. What action should you take as the project manager?

If you find that there are unexpected responses to the project or participant uptake is lower than anticipated, you and your partners will probably want to conduct a more formal study. In the Reflection Opportunity above, you and your partner may decide to visit the farmers, village extension workers and other key people to try to understand better what is happening so that appropriate and timely adjustments can be made to the project's deliverables. This may involve analyzing in more detail individual's attitudes, perceptions, and behavior all in the context of their lives. (Examples of simple tools for problem diagnosis and analysis are included in this section.) Based on this analysis, you and your partners may have to change the way you are implementing the project.

From Theory to Practice: Using Barrier Analysis

Barrier Analysis is an example of a rapid assessment tool that can help identify why recommended health behaviors are reluctantly adopted or not adopted at all. The tool focuses on eight behavioral causes to understand why someone does or does not do something. A facilitator's guide is available online, and more information is listed in Related Reading at the end of this chapter.

As we saw in *Section 1, pp. 164-166*, the cycle of monitoring-learning-acting is normal. It simply reflects the uncertainty and risk that surrounds CRS programming in the real world where we cannot be sure of how individuals, households and communities will respond to interventions. A good project manager is aware of this uncertainty, embraces it and seeks ways to navigate through it. As soon as sufficient information becomes available, the high-performance project manager will respond in a way that ensures the project can still achieve its SOs.

Collecting Monitoring Data Related to SOs

Note that SO-level indicators are most often measured during project evaluation. You will, however, probably be collecting some data relevant to SOs as you monitor IR-level indicators. Using the female rice farmers from the previous Reflection Opportunity as an example, you may find that some of them have adopted the new techniques—the IR indicator. Since the SO of the project is to improve the income women derive from marketed rice, you may be able to start monitoring this aspect of the program once you identify the women who have adopted the new technique. Are these women producing more? Are they selling more at the market? Are they getting a good price? Look at your SO indicators to see if you can start collecting information either informally or formally before a mid-term evaluation.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Introduction

Progress reports are the primary vehicle for analyzing, summarizing, and communicating monitoring data to managers so they know what is going on and can take any necessary decisions. Progress reports help project managers:

- **assess achievements**—indicating possible future success in attaining the SOs;
- **manage the financial aspects of the project**—permitting progress on activities to be compared to expenditures;
- **record what is working, what is not, and why**—enabling good decision-making;
- **facilitate dialogue and learning among stakeholders**—facilitating mutual capacity strengthening;
- **promote a better understanding of the project among stakeholders, some of whom may be distant**—enhancing ownership and commitment; and
- **create an institutional memory**—contributing to individual and organizational learning.

(Source: Adapted from Kusek and Rist 2004)

Little is learned from poorly written progress reports. As one CRS senior manager said, "As an agency, we are very good at telling people what we plan to do; we are not quite so good at telling them how well we have done!"

Some of the progress reporting challenges that CRS project managers have experienced are listed below.

Think About It…

CRS project managers' main complaints about progress reports are that they:

- do not tell them about progress against objectives;
- do not include evidence for reported successes;
- do not analyze the findings;
- are viewed as a donor requirement and not used to record and inform decision-making;
- focus on Activities and do not reflect higher-level objectives;
- do not clearly communicate successes or challenges;
- do not tell the full story of what is happening at the project location; and
- suffer from limited writing skills, or poor knowledge about what to report on and how to organize the information within the report.

Well-written reports bring together many of the underlying elements of CRS' results-based utilization-focused approach to implementing and monitoring for results, namely by:

- making sure that the content and style reflects the information and decision-making needs of intended readers;
- ensuring that documents are produced in time to inform management decisions; and
- keeping in mind that resources invested in reporting should add value to the understanding of project implementation.

Progress Reports: Organizational Learning and Honest Reporting

Have you ever read a project progress report that told a very different story from what you knew to be true? Challenges and problems occur on a daily basis in any project; however, they are not the same as failures. In a dynamic learning organization, **mistakes can help prevent failures if they are used for learning.** It is common knowledge that we learn as much from failure as we do from success. Despite this, it is natural for people to over-emphasize, and even exaggerate, success while minimizing challenges and failures in their progress reports.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Do your staff or partners tend to share the good news and hide the bad in the progress reports you receive?
2. What steps has your office taken to guard against this tendency?
3. Do the monitoring and progress reports you see tend to show the same findings again and again?
4. What might this tell you about monitoring, reporting, and learning in your situation?

Review Checklist 2.2, Questions to Foster a Learning Environment, in *Chapter II, Section 3, pg. 35* to see if there are organizational factors affecting how well progress reports reflect what is really happening.

Progress Reports: Who Are They For?

High-quality progress reports require clear guidance on content and format to make them easy to write and read. This will maximize their usefulness for dialogue, learning, and data-based decisions. Those responsible for writing project progress reports should have answers to the following questions, **all of which should have been addressed in Component Two and Three in the M&E system.**

1. Who are the intended report readers?
2. What do they need to know?
3. What specific questions need to be addressed?
4. When do they need the information?
5. Is there available guidance regarding the format and length of the report (e.g., as specified by the donor, local government or CRS)?

Well-written progress reports help to ensure that decisions relating to project management and implementation are informed by data and analysis. The **heart of the progress report is a comparison of intended achievements and results with actual achievements.** A good example of this is the PITT in an annual report. (See Guidelines for the Preparation and Use of Performance Indicator Tracking Tables (PITT) It is an excellent tool for comparing actual progress with your original plan. This comparison helps you identify any significant deviations from what the project intended to achieve in the specified time.
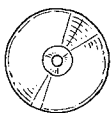
If the progress report indicates that activities are not going as planned—and it is important to understand that there may be good reasons why this is so—managers should analyze why, and then decide upon an appropriate response. One course of action might be to obtain additional information to understand better what has occurred before making any further decisions.

Progress reports also include **financial information that enables a comparison between actual and planned expenditures**. Related information on liquidations and budget monitoring is included in *Section 4* of this chapter (*pp. 203-205*).

Progress Reports: How Often?

It depends on the donor. Who are they, and what are their reporting requirements? It is unlikely that you will ever be in a situation where there is no guidance on progress reporting.

Within CRS, there are two types of progress reports: quarterly and yearly. **CRS requires annual project progress reports for all privately funded projects**. These reports are submitted to your regional office. CRS staff are responsible for ensuring that the annual reports are well written and contain the basic information required by the agency. Note the example from SARO in the "From Theory to Practice" story box.

From Theory to Practice: Report Writing by Partners in SARO

SARO project officers create reporting schedules and formats with partners when they set up the M&E system during detailed implementation planning. These are integrated with donor requirements so that partners are not burdened with report-writing. When possible, SARO project officers schedule site visits just before the progress report is due in order to discuss any missing information.

In most CRS regions, Country Programs require quarterly progress and financial reports from partners. These are usually submitted 15 to 30 days after the close of the quarter. Keep the donor requirements in mind, however, when negotiating the reporting schedule with the partner. For example, CRS has to report on USG awards within 45 days of the quarter end, so make sure the partner provides its financial report to CRS in time for the agency to meet this deadline.

In addition to your project review, the quarterly report is used to liquidate advances and approve funds for the next quarter. This is why it is important for you to compare expenditures with achievements. Inconsistencies should be discussed with the partner before you approve the next project advance.

Review Award Agreements for projects funded by other private or public donors to determine the frequency of reporting and information required. Most USG grants require quarterly or bi-annual reports and have a specific format.

Think About It …

Look for opportunities to link the completion of progress reports with other scheduled learning events.

Make the best use of your progress reports. For example, if the project intends to host quarterly project review meetings, then your detailed M&E planning should be set up so that the progress report is available for discussion at these meetings. This is where the M&E Calendar comes in handy! (See *Chapter IV, Section 2, pg. 121* for more information on the M&E Calendar.) Even better, prepare progress reports a week early so that meeting participants have an opportunity to review the contents in advance. Think of ways to use the structure of your progress report to set the agenda for your quarterly review meeting.

Planning the progress report schedule in advance—and including it on the M&E Calendar—will ensure that there is no last minute panic in an attempt to meet the quarterly deadline!

Progress Reports: Who Writes Them?

CRS works with a wide variety of partners. Some can write excellent reports with little guidance, and others struggle with even the basic reporting requirements. As with other aspects of project design, you will have to work with your partners to decide who will do what on progress reporting. For quarterly reports from partners with less experience and capacity, perhaps you will decide to focus less on written documentation and depend more on discussions in meetings and site visits. For these partners, CRS staff may have to draft the full annual report, share it with them, and ask them to approve what CRS has written.

In cases where CRS staff help with report writing, you have an excellent chance to strengthen the relationship by using this as an opportunity to develop partner capacity in working with data and report writing. Partner staff will, over time, develop skills in these important areas of their operations.

Use your best judgment and experience when negotiating and working with partners on their progress reporting responsibilities. Always be on the lookout for ways to add value to this aspect of development work.

Progress Reports: An Aid to Dialogue

As a manager, it is a basic courtesy to acknowledge receipt of a report. Put yourself in the shoes of the author; obviously, it is very discouraging not to hear back from report readers. If possible, it is good practice to provide comments and feedback—a word of praise, a question or comment, a request for clarification. These actions show interest in the staff and partners who have worked hard on the report, and also further the idea of progress reports as an aid to dialogue.

Think About It …

If progress reports are well written, they should provoke questions and comments. As the dialogue develops around the report, mutual understanding and learning will increase.

Project managers also need to get out to the community where the project is operating. This way, they can observe, listen, check for problems and ask questions that encourage staff to take progress reporting seriously. In sum, there should be plenty of good dialogue about project progress!

Progress Reports: Quarterly, Annual and Final

As mentioned earlier, during project implementation, there is an annual and quarterly progress reporting system. (A final report is also due at the end of the project; this is discussed in *Chapter VII, pg. 255*) While the two types of reports contain similar information, they each have a unique identity, fulfill a different purpose, and require different amounts of time and effort to complete. Table 6.6 describes the differences between all three reports.

Table 6.6: An Overview of the Three Types of CRS Progress Reports

Report	Characteristics and Length	Primary Users
Quarterly **Suggested Length:** 4-6 pages of narrative	• Submitted by the partner to Country Program • Includes a Results Framework. • Emphasizes Activities and Outputs, compared with plan. • Summarizes challenges and associated responses in bullet point format. • Includes an expenditure report and request for next advance of funds. • Includes plans for next reporting period.	• Partners, Country Program staff, regional technical staff for reviewing progress, challenges and next steps. • Partners and project participants to review progress, challenges and next steps. • Usually not circulated outside of Country Program office and regional technical staff.
Annual **Suggested Length:** 10 pages of narrative	• Submitted by the partner to Country Program. • Country Program staff may have to provide report-writing technical assistance where partners lack experience and capacity. • Includes the Results Framework and Executive Summary from proposal. • Includes a brief summary of major activities. • Reports on Outputs and analyzes progress on IRs (organized by IR), compared with plan. • Includes an updated PITT. • Summarizes challenges and associated responses. • Includes a financial report and analysis. • Describes plans for next year.	• Partners, Country Program staff, and regional technical staff for reviewing progress, challenges and next steps on an annual basis. • Partners and project participants to discuss progress, challenges and next steps. • CRS world, because this is the official documentation of progress for each project. This document is available for others to learn from; it is the institutional memory.

Final (See *Chapter VII, pg. 255* for more information.) **Suggested Length:** 15-20 pages of narrative	• Submitted by the partner to Country Program. • Country Program enters an abstract of the final report into PTS. • Country Program staff may have to provide report-writing technical assistance. • Includes the Results Framework and Executive Summary from proposal. • Includes the final PITT. • Includes an overall assessment of achievement against what was originally planned. • Includes the Final Financial Report.	• Partners and Country Program staff to discuss successes achieved and challenges encountered. • CRS world, because this is the official documentation of progress for each project. This document is available for others to learn from; it is the institutional memory. • PTS.

Progress Report Formats—Quarterly and Annual

Quarterly Progress Report Format

As noted above, not all partners are able to write good progress reports. While you will need some information in writing, it can also be collected through discussions in quarterly review meetings with partners or during site visits. Table 6.7 shows the kind of information you need on a quarterly basis, and what will support the release of the next project advance. Refer to *Chapter IV, Section 2 pp. 99-116* on evidence-based reporting.

Table 6.7: Quarterly Progress Report Format

Quarterly Progress Reports
1. **Cover Page:** Title of project, project number, time period covered by the report, and date
2. **Reference Documents** *(Results Framework and Proframe - or donor equivalent)*

3. **Progress Report**
 	
   a. Organize under each IR, report on progress of Activities and Outputs compared with plan
 	
   b. Ensure statements about progress are based on evidence from your M&E system

4. **Program Analysis**
 	
   a. Successes
 	
   b. Problems and challenges
 	
(Note: In each of these areas, you should record unexpected events and the likely implications for the project.)
 	
   c. Opportunities to build on successes and address problems and challenges

5. **Financial Analysis**
 	
   a. Report of expenditures against planned budget
 	
   b. Explain differences

6. **Plans for the Next Reporting Period**   a. List major Activities to be carried out, including upcoming M&E events

Annual Progress Report Format

This report covers the same six points of the quarterly report, but more information and in-depth analysis is required. Refer to *Chapter IV, Section 2 pp. 99-116* for a review of evidence-based reporting.

Table 6.8: Annual Progress Report Format

<table>
<tr><td align="center">Annual Progress Reports</td></tr>
<tr><td>

1. **Cover Page:** Title of the project, project number, time period covered by the report, and date

2. **Reference Documents**

   a. Results Framework and Proframe (or its donor equivalent)

   b. Executive Summary of the proposal (shorten to one page or less, and use for all reports)

   c. Updated PITT showing actual progress against planned targets

3. **Progress Report**

   a. Organize this by IR (or SO, if the document is a mid-term or final evaluation report)

   b. Write out the IR objective statement, and comment on any early or anecdotal evidence of progress towards achievement of the IR-level objective (if SO, analyze data supporting progress towards SO achievement)

   c. List of Outputs delivered during the reporting period, compared to plan

   d. Brief summary of major Activities during the reporting period, compared to Activity Schedule

   e. Ensure statements about progress are based on evidence from your M&E system

4. **Program Analysis**

   a. Analysis of successes, problems, and challenges

   b. Comment on Critical Assumptions outside of the project manager's direct control

   c. Highlight unanticipated events (positive and negative) and their likely implications for the project

   d. Opportunities to build on successes and address problems and challenges

5. **Financial Analysis**

   a. Report of expenditures against planned budget

   b. Comment on any major variances between actual and planned expenditures

   c. Proposed modifications to the budget

6. **Plans for the Next Reporting Period**

   a. List major Activities to be carried out, including any significant M&E activity

</td></tr>
</table>

> **Don't lose sight of higher-level accomplishments!**

Encourage CRS staff and partners to organize the report—quarterly, annual or final—around the SOs and IRs. This will keep them focused on the higher-level objectives. Moreover, the feedback you provide can also encourage report writers to focus on results, not merely on Outputs and Activities. For example, the questions you raise might ask for greater detail on how higher-level achievement is more or less affected by what has happened at Activity level.

It may be that the **Quarterly Report will give relatively greater weight to lower-level objectives,** compared to the Annual Report. This is a reflection of the different time periods covered by each report. Nonetheless, there is still room with regular quarterly reporting to **maintain focus on the project's higher-level objectives**. For example, the second Quarterly Report could highlight how progress at the lower level might affect achievements at IR- and, possibly, SO-level. Again, use your best judgment; the point is to **avoid reporting only the busy work**.

For the CRS project entitled Vietnamese with Disabilities, the team organized part of their quarterly reporting format around the Objectives as stated in the project's Proframe. Part of a quarterly report is shown in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9: Example of a Quarterly Report—Vietnamese with Disabilities Project

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">**CRS/Vietnam:**
Vietnamese with Disabilities Project</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">**SO1:** Children With Disabilities have benefited from improved and expanded education and community support systems</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">**IR:** Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) leaders have included Children With Disabilities in the school system</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">**Outputs**</td><td align="center">**Performance Indicators**</td><td align="center">**Progress and Comments**</td></tr>
<tr><td>Provincial education officials increase their knowledge and skills to implement Inclusive Education (IE).</td><td># of provincial officials nationwide with increased IE knowledge and skills.</td><td>Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of 20 officials in 2 project provinces measured in baseline survey.</td></tr>
<tr><td>MoET legal documents explicitly mention inclusion of Children With Disabilities.</td><td>MoET Strategy on Education of Children with Disabilities (supported in previous CRS/USAID project) completed and approved by Minister.</td><td>Fundamental School Quality Levels prepared by MoET and PEDC did not mention IE and accessibility in earlier drafts; CRS recommended that they be amended to do so.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Evidence-based pilot of IE in junior secondary school is developed.</td><td># of national workshops held on junior secondary IE.</td><td>For internal administrative reasons, MoET postponed 3 national-level workshops planned for Q1/2006 to Q2.</td></tr>
</table>

(Source: Adapted from CRS/Vietnam's Quarterly Report # 2, [January-March 2006], USAID Cooperative Agreement #486-A-00-05-00019-00, April 24th, 2006)

Write, Share and File the Progress Report

Report writing is sometimes seen as a chore! Checklist 6.4 includes tips to make the process more efficient for the writer and the final product more interesting to the reader.

Checklist 6.4: Tips for Writing Progress Reports

✓ Prepare for report writing in advance—this will be facilitated by having a progress report entry in the Operating Manual's M&E Calendar.

✓ Refer back to the forms for reporting that you developed for your M&E system (see Chapter IV, Section 2). If you did not develop forms then, do it as part of the first quarterly report and then use these formats for following quarterly reports.

✓ Gather the necessary information ahead of time from your colleagues.

✓ Information you are likely to require will include: Activity Schedules, the PITT, other analyzed data, partner progress reports, field visit reports, notes from interviews with project staff or project participants, etc.

✓ Collect the last progress report (hard copy and computer file copy).

✓ Sections 1 and 2a in the annual progress report format in Table 6.8 will not change from report to report, so keep this on file.

✓ Use charts, tables, maps, photos, etc. to break up narrative and make the report more readable and succinct.

✓ Put yourself in the shoes of the reader as you draft the report. Keep it brief and to the point; write short sentences; and use clear, simple English.

PROJECT XYZ

PROGRESS REPORTS

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION DOCUMENTATION
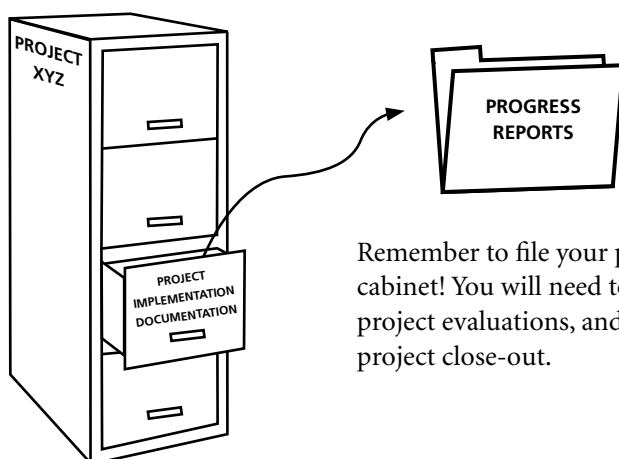
Remember to file your progress reports in your filing cabinet! You will need to access these when conducting project evaluations, and they are required by audit during project close-out.

FIELD VISITS

Field visits by CRS staff to partners are important monitoring and communication opportunities. Field visits may combine observations of project activities, discussions with members of the community, progress report reviews and project review meetings. In addition to monitoring and communication, field visits should be seen as a good time to build relationships—sometimes in surprising ways!

From Theory to Practice: Solidarity in Action

During one field visit, a CRS project officer accompanied her partner to observe some community health rallies. These were taking place in very isolated communities, and everyone had to travel on donkeys to get there. Bumping along the path, stopping to speak with villagers, sharing a simple lunch, and overcoming difficulties crossing a river helped to build a bond among CRS and partner staff—and provided material for many amusing stories of their donkey-riding skills!

In another project setting, getting to the villages where the project was operating usually involved at least a day of trekking by foot—often more time. Traveling at walking speed provided an ideal opportunity for staff and other stakeholders to get to know each other and to observe things along the route that might be of potential value for the project site.

In some countries, good communication infrastructure and a limited number of partners permit very frequent field visits and interactions. In other countries, field visits may be costly and logistically difficult to organize. In either case, good planning will maximize their value and help avoid superficial, drop-in visits that Chambers (1983) terms "rural development tourism."

In the CRS/SARO region, field visits are prepared well in advance with a clear **field visit plan or SOW and are followed by a trip report** sent to partners no more than one week after the visit. Table 6.10 provides an example of part of a trip report written by the LINKS Learning Center. (See ProPack II CD ROM for Field Trip Report Template.)

> Like a progress report, the trip report should be seen as a prompt for better dialogue.
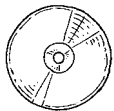
Table 6.10: Trip Report—LINKS Learning Center

Name	Martin Schafer
Place of Travel & Partner visited	Surin, Thailand—Small Enterprise Development (SED)
Date of Travel	April 18 – 25, 2006
Contact Person	Ms. Nanasip—General Manager (GM)
Executive Summary	Trip was conducted to assist in the preparation for the SED Board of Directors (BoD) meeting and to attend the meeting.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	RESULTS AND DECISIONS	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	LESSONS LEARNED
Assist GM in preparation of SED BoD meeting.	Discussed each agenda item. Assisted GM in planning presentation of items to Board.	GM gained confidence and a good idea on how to discuss items. BoD members had Excel worksheets and Word documents to help them understand the issues. BoD was able to make decisions based on well-prepared information.	SED GM needs to draft minutes using decisions and instructions document as a guide. SED GM needs to prepare Loan Agreement.	When assisting a GM to prepare BoD documents, you need more than four days. It will need to happen two weeks before meeting to cover all areas sufficiently, as well as to allow time for printing and collating the materials.

(Source: Adapted from LINKS Learning Center, Manila, Philippines, 2006)

Is your monitoring limited to exchanges with partners in your respective offices? Ensure that you manage your time so that monitoring includes observations and conversations with project participants. You may learn a lot!

The guidance in Checklist 6.5 addresses the dilemma presented in the monitoring illustration and helps to ensure that field visits are well-organized and managed.

Checklist 6.5: Field Visit Guidance

✓ Prepare a plan or SOW for each visit. This plan should include the field visit objectives, a draft schedule of activities, itinerary and courtesy visits, and a list of materials needed for the trip.

✓ Discuss the field visit plan with your supervisor, relevant colleagues, and partners. Partners to be visited should help finalize the details of the itinerary, courtesy visits, etc.

✓ Ensure that you complete the administrative procedures required by your Country Program. These may include filling out an Advance Request Form or Travel Authorization Form, a Vehicle Request Form, a Purchase Order for an airplane ticket, etc.

✓ Bring copies of relevant project documents from the Master Project File. These documents may include the project proposal, Award Agreement, Results Framework, Proframe, DIP documents, such as the updated Activity Schedule, the M&E Operating Manual binder, the updated project budget, the last progress report written by CRS and the partner, action plans and the last field visit report.

✓ Upon arrival, meet the partner and further discuss or revise the plan.

✓ Make courtesy visits. Visiting Church representatives and local authorities, even if there is not an immediate need, is very important! Local authorities often play a role in coordinating NGO activities in their area, and frequent interactions enhance communication, demonstrate respect and build relationships.

✓ Refine the schedule of activities for the field visit, which may include:
— meetings with project staff to discuss progress on activities, problems and challenges, and plans made or decisions taken to resolve them;
— observations of project contexts or activities. Take advantage of the field visit to accompany partners in their current project activities. It is vital to speak with project participants and this should be part of any field visit. Emphasize the need to observe regular activities rather than special, orchestrated events. Take photos that can be used for progress reports or on the CRS website;
— discussions in the field with project participants to assess their views and opinions on project implementation;
— meetings with financial and administrative staff to review receipts, cash books, check on project supplies or vehicles logs; and
— a final debriefing meeting with relevant partner staff.

✓ Write up a brief field visit trip report, focusing on key findings and recommendations. See the trip report as a way of promoting dialogue about the site you visited, the sector in which activities are taking place, innovations you saw, and so on.

✓ Consider sending a draft trip report to partners for their feedback. This will help you summarize information from the debriefing and ensure mutual understanding of the report's findings and recommendations. Any dialogue you have with partners about the draft will only help to strengthen the final version of the report.

✓ Send a copy of the final trip report to partners and file it in the Master Project file. This helps you to document that adequate project monitoring took place. Documentation is important both for project continuity and may be a requirement for a project audit.

(Source: Adapted from CRS/SARO Program Manager Orientation Guidelines)

Donor Site Visits

CRS may be responsible for managing donor site visits—sometimes with little advance notice. These visits can be positive if well managed. They can also be disruptive or stressful for partners, for example, if security conditions require time-consuming special arrangements.

In planning for a donor visit, it is advisable to follow the Field Visit Guidance described in Checklist 6.5. Most importantly, the purpose of the visit should be clear to all those involved. In addition, ensure that you, your partners and other project stakeholders are up-to-date on the project's Results Framework, current Activities, and financial status.

WE HAVE A FEW PEOPLE WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO MEET.
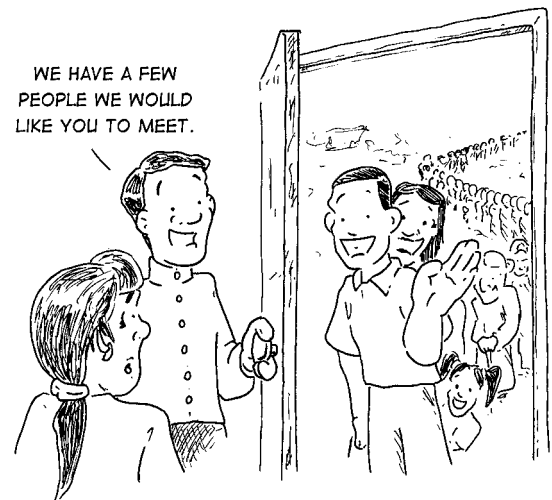
Reflection Opportunity

1. Think back on the field visits made for the project you manage.
2. Which of the guidelines above would have helped to improve them?
3. What would you add to the guidelines based on your own experience?

PROJECT REVIEW MEETINGS

Project review meetings among CRS staff, partners, and other relevant stakeholders are **important critical reflection events**. They are essential for a results-based monitoring system because they provide an excellent opportunity to reflect on information generated by the system or other sources, such as recently completed evaluations or observations from site visits.

It is helpful at such meetings to have copies of the Results Framework, or have to it posted on a wall. In this way, participants can ensure the conversation relates to the broader project aims and objectives. Using this results-based approach, those present will feel encouraged to raise important issues that might otherwise get lost in a detailed discussion focused on project activity.

Project review meetings also provide a planning opportunity; for example, you can make detailed work plans for the period before the next meeting.
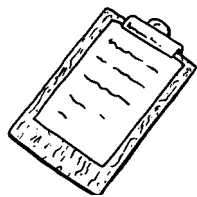
Don't Forget! Essential Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for Project Managers

Chapter II, Section3, pp. 50-51 includes guidelines for holding effective meetings. Like any other project-related meeting, project review meetings should be well planned and facilitated.

From Theory to Practice: I-LIFE's Project Review Meeting Agenda

In Malawi, the I-LIFE project staff begin project review meetings with activities that establish safety, trust and respect. These include introductions, a welcoming activity to help make everyone more comfortable, Appreciative Inquiry to share what is going well, and participant expectations. In addition to reviewing quarterly reports and other project monitoring data, the meeting includes a discussion of challenges, capacity strengthening needs, partnership issues and planning for the next quarter. Teambuilding exercises are also scheduled during the project review meeting to strengthen relationships among CRS and its partners.

Promote Analysis: Ask "Why?"

Learning reviews, progress reports, field visits and project review meetings are excellent opportunities to focus on explanatory data and analysis—to address the "why" questions. For example, monitoring data may reveal that planned activities are not happening. When you or your partners learn this, it is time to ask, "Why?" Then, you can take well-reasoned actions to get activities back on track. Not only that, the "why" questions can look at how issues around continued project progress are likely to affect project success at SO-level, as highlighted in the Digging story in the "From Theory to Practice" box.

From Theory to Practice: Digging and More Digging!

In one CRS Country Program, a Title II project was paying farmers with in-kind food aid to dig conservation ditches that would reduce erosion levels on the nearby hillsides. The project manager was very proud of the extensive area over which such ditches had been built. However, it became evident to the visiting team that even though the conservation ditches were being completed in good time and within cost, farmers were not maintaining them. The project's underlying theory of change had assumed that the farmers would perceive the benefits of the ditches, and thereby feel sufficiently motivated to maintain them. But this was not happening!

Given this, it was clear that there was little chance of the project attaining its higher-level food security objectives. In order to move forward, a better understanding of why farmers were unwilling to maintain the ditches would be needed help the project manager decide what to do to achieve SO-level success.
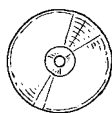
Small, but significant steps can be taken to promote analytical thinking. Remember how this was presented in *ProPack I, Chapter III, pp. 26–29*—the art and science?

Checklist 6.6: Promoting Analytical Thinking

✓ Promote dialogue at every opportunity. By its very nature, dialogue encourages analytical thinking. It's a good way to increase understanding of the IHD Framework.

✓ Build regular critical reflection events and processes into project management and implementation processes.

✓ View monitoring as a learning process through "learning reviews" (see Chapter VII, Section 1, pp. 222-223). Such events use a sequence of open questions to learn why things are happening, their effects and what should be done. The emphasis is on honest, open inquiry.

✓ Review the project's Critical Assumptions to analyze how outside processes, structures and systems might be affecting achievement of the objectives.

✓ Ask different people—staff, partners, participants and so on—to share their reasons why something is happening as a way to understand the issue from a variety of different perspectives.

✓ Expect the unexpected! Being open to unplanned events, outcomes and changes is an essential part of the results-based monitoring way of thinking.

Checklist 6.7: Examples of "Open" Questions for Monitoring and Analyzing Unexpected Events

✓ What has happened since we last met that was unexpected?
✓ How was it different from what we anticipated?
✓ Critically, what does this mean for project implementation?

Tools for Analysis
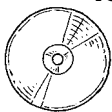
You may find it useful to refer back to some of the analytical tools promoted in *ProPack I, Chapter III, Section 4, pp. 73–83*, such as the problem tree analysis. You may want to encourage CRS staff or partners to utilize **analytical tools to dig deeper and analyze more thoroughly** implementation successes or challenges. Stronger analysis-based understanding will help staff and partners to resolve project implementation challenges effectively. Following are examples of two analytical tools that may help to explain why.

IHD Framework

Even if the IHD framework was not used during project design, **reviewing the boxes and categories within the framework can help you analyze implementation successes or challenges**. For example, if you and your partners are implementing a primary education project (which strengthens human assets), the project's outcomes may be affected by a recent government policy change around universal access to education (structures and systems) that was not anticipated when the project was designed. Another factor may be rising morbidity and mortality related to HIV/AIDS and the consequent loss of household financial assets due to illness and death. This could cause many households to pull their children out of school or send their children into the labor force to feed the family.

Figure 6.4: Integral Human Development Framework
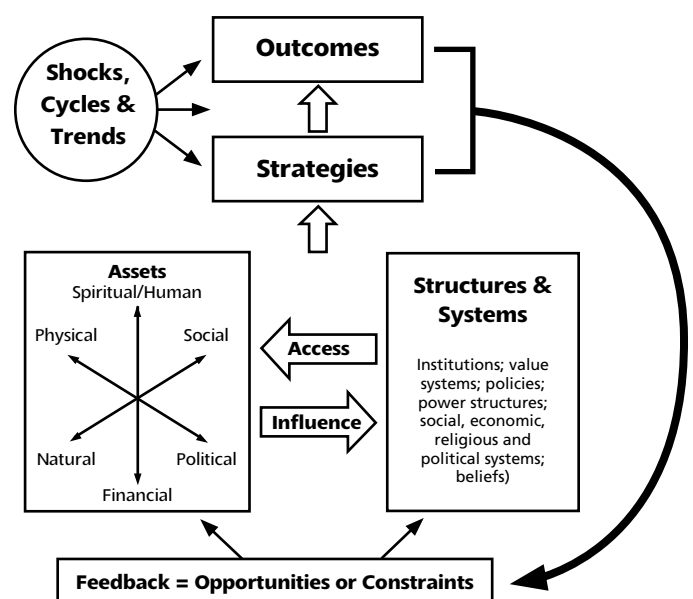
Force Field Analysis

Force Field Analysis is used to look at factors that help or hinder progress. A simple diagram is used; at the top of a piece of paper or a chalkboard, you define the problem or situation to be analyzed and then list underneath the forces that help or hinder its resolution. Once these forces are identified, meeting participants can identify and discuss ways to increase and strengthen the helping forces and ways to reduce or minimize the hindering forces.

Additional information on IHD Framework and Force Field Analysis is available in the Related Reading section at the end of this chapter.

Reflection Opportunity

1. What analytical questions or tools have you used with partners in the course of project monitoring to understand better why particular outcomes have occurred?
2. What difference did the use of those questions or tools make in terms of taking better project decisions?

MONITOR, LEARN AND ACT

Recall the cycle involved in implementation: monitor, learn, and then act. If monitoring information obtained via progress reports, field visits and project review meetings shows that things are not going so well, analyze why and take informed action to get results.

You and your partner can develop a process to find solutions, make decisions, re-plan, make changes, or take whatever actions are necessary to improve the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project. See *Chapter VII, Section 1, pp 221-225.*

Document the list of needed actions, persons responsible, deadlines established and who is responsible for follow-up. This plan of action can inform detailed planning for the next period of project implementation.

Figure 6.5: Implementation: Monitor, Learn and Act
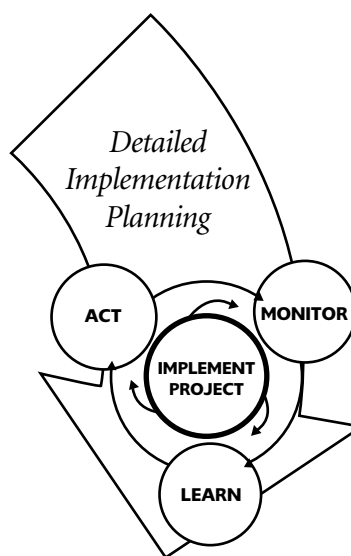
SECTION 4

FINANCIAL MONITORING AND REPORTING

SECTION OVERVIEW

Financial monitoring follows the same "monitor, learn and act" cycle as monitoring of project indicators. As project activities are implemented, you need to do the following:

- regularly check that expenses are accurately charged to the correct budget line;
- consider the trends in overall spending versus what has been achieved to date; and
- make adjustments to the budget and Activity Schedule to ensure that the project's objectives can be achieved with the remaining money.

In Section 4, you will do the following:

- review how financial information enters the Country Program accounting system;
- review the steps for financial monitoring; and
- examine your responsibilities as a project manager for: (1) expenditure approvals, (2) Quarterly Financial Analysis reports and (3) donor financial reports.

INTRODUCTION

In *Chapter V, Section 3, pp. 147-148,* essential budget planning and monitoring tasks were introduced in Table 5.6. The last two tasks in that table concerning financial monitoring during project implementation are repeated now in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11: More Information on Essential Budgeting—Financial Monitoring Tasks

Essential Task	Tool Available	Frequency	By Whom?
7. Review Project Spending	Budget Comparison Report Full Drill Down	Monthly	Project Manager and Finance Manager
8. Analyze Project Spending Trends	Quarterly Financial Analysis Report	Quarterly (January, April etc.)	Senior Country Program Staff

The project budget is a plan for spending. Once spending starts, you and your partner have to monitor actual expenditures against what was planned in the budget. Any **differences, known as variances, between actual expenditures and the budget** must be examined. This analysis forms the basis for corrective action.

From Theory to Practice: Illustration of a Budget Variance and Corrective Action

The training budget for a privately funded CRS project was $5,000. At the end of the first year, the actual expenditure was only $3,500, a variance of $1,500. The project manager, in collaboration with partner staff, decided that since the training workshop had already met their objectives, they would use the remaining $1,500 to provide resource library materials to trained partner staff.

Reviewing and Approving Expenditures

You must review documents and approve the expenditures to be charged against the projects you manage. You may choose to delegate this responsibility to others if your project is particularly large or complex. See Checklist 6.8 for a better explanation of exactly what you are approving.

Checklist 6.8: Your Authorization of Partner Expenses

By signing a partner liquidation report, a disbursement request, or even a timesheet, you are certifying the following:

✓ The expense is allowable within the agreed budget;
✓ The project budget can absorb the expense without overspending;
✓ The donor source, project number, account code and description on the disbursement form are correct; and
✓ The activity that generated the expense actually took place (e.g., workshop, trip, purchase, time worked, etc.).

How Financial Information is Captured by CRS' Accounting Systems

Your job as project manager is to ensure that financial information is accurate and complete. To do this, you need to understand the process that CRS uses to record expenditure information against your project.

1. The project manager (or with approval, a headquarters department, regional office or other Country Program) approves an expense to be charged to your project.
2. The Finance Department prepares a Journal Voucher, which is approved by the Country Representative or headquarters department head.
3. Finance staff then enters the information from the Journal Voucher into the accounting system. The Country Program accounting system is called Sun Systems; the headquarters system is JD Edwards.
4. Country Programs send their accounting records to headquarters by the 8th day of the month following the end of each calendar month. This is known as the Month End Close.
5. When all the Month End Close files have been received, HQ extracts expenses that need to be transferred to other Country Programs and sends them via the Intra Agency File. These are usually entered into Sun Systems by the Country Program during the last week of the month.
6. After entering the Intra Agency File, the project level expenditure information on Sun Systems is now complete for the accounting period. The consolidated expenditure information for all CRS countries and departments can be viewed using the Executive Financial Dashboard on the CRS intranet.

Figure 6.6: Financial Information Flow
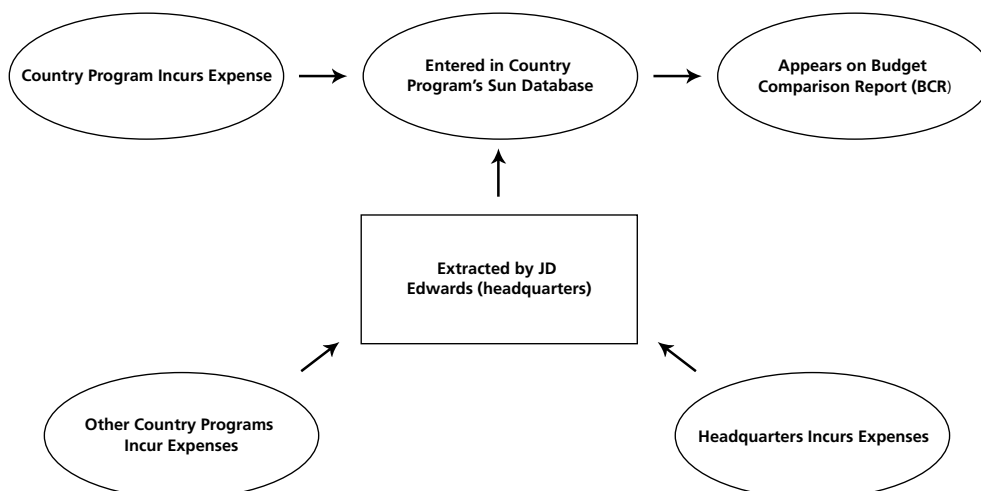
HOW TO MONITOR AND REVIEW PROJECT SPENDING

Review project spending each month. During detailed implementation planning, you discussed the format of the reports that you require from the Finance Department. You may also have Vision installed on your workstation. Vision is an easy-to-use, Excel-based application that enables you to generate finance reports yourself.

The following five steps are offered as a clear, structured way to monitor project spending. You may not necessarily follow these steps in exact order. Use your judgment!

Step One: Monitor Partner Spending
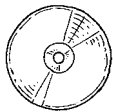
If a partner receives an advance, they must report back (liquidate the advance) within 90 days. Refer to the **Kenya Budget Status and Advance Request form** for an example of a liquidation package. Even if the partner is being reimbursed for spending their own money, CRS requires regular reports (at least every 90 days) so expenses can be captured in the accounting system and, if necessary, reported to our donor.

When the partner's financial reporting package arrives at CRS, you should review all the documents to ensure that expenses are valid, within budget, and to confirm that activities actually took place. You will then approve the report (see Table 6.12 on the next page) and forward it to the finance manager for detailed verification.

Discuss any errors or disallowed costs with partners. Remember situational leadership from *Chapter II, Section 1, pg. 19*! Experienced partners who submit high-quality reports on time will probably need fewer visits than a new partner. More visits should take place with a partner who scored lower on the financial assessment (done during proposal development or during the DIP), which indicates a need for stronger systems or internal controls.

If financial monitoring of a partner raises serious compliance issues, CRS should send a follow-up letter to the head of the project asking that these issues be addressed and closed before the next site visit, or within 45–90 days. If necessary, discuss compliance issues with your supervisor, finance manager and Country Representative.

Step Two: Review the Details
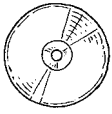
Each month, you should review a Detailed Transaction Report (also known as a full drill down). Consider bringing the project team together to assist in this exercise. **You must ensure that all the expenses charged to your project are all of the following:**

- **coded accurately** (to account code, T6 sector or activity);
- **allowable** (included in the approved budget and within the approved time period);
- **valid** (costs for another project are not coded here);
- **authorized** (by you or your designee); and
- **complete** (are any expected expenses missing from the report?).

Refer to progress reports when the team meets to review these details. This will help to verify expenditures against implemented activities, such as travel, training workshops, etc. You should also review the items listed in Table 6.12.

ELEPHANT RENTAL!?! THAT WAS NOT IN THE BUDGET.
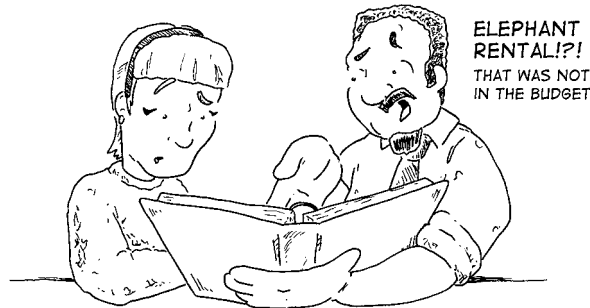
Table 6.12: Project Manager Checklist for Reviewing the Financial Report

Advances Made to Employees and Vendors	✓ These must be liquidated in accordance with the Accounts Receivable Policy. Employee advances must be liquidated within 30 days, or within 5 days of returning from a business trip; vendor advances must be liquidated per the terms of the contract with the vendor or consultant. ✓ Remember that the expenses for which the advances were used cannot be recorded against the project until the advance has been liquidated.
Advances Made to Partners	✓ These must be liquidated within 90 days. ✓ Remember that although advances to partners are recorded as an expense as soon as the advance is made, the details of how the money was spent cannot be recorded until the partner submits a financial report.
Status of Funding	✓ If the donor is funding the project in installments, make sure that expenditures do not exceed income.
Allocation of Shared Costs	✓ Some costs, such as rent and utilities, are allocated by the Finance Department across all projects using an appropriate and reasonable method. You need to understand the allocation methodology used in your Country Program. This will help you to understand better how to monitor your project budget.
Gain or Loss on Currency Conversation	✓ Local currency advances made, or cash held, against your project may cause gains or losses to appear on your project spending report. ✓ You can help manage this by ensuring that advances are liquidated according to policy and that cash forecasts are accurate.

If you find errors, you should tell the Finance Department immediately, and follow up to ensure that discrepancies are investigated and corrected.

Step Three: Review the Budget Comparison Report
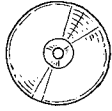
Remember that during the detailed implementation planning process, you agreed with the finance manager on the formats and schedule for the production of financial reports (see *Chapter V, Section 3, pp. 147-151*). **Use the [Budget Comparison Report](#) (BCR) to compare actual project expenditures with the budget.** Make sure that the BCR is prepared in the currency stated in the agreement. You should compare budget to actual expenses for 1) the current month and 2) the period since the start of the project, also known as Inception to Date.

Step Four: Explain Any Variances

You should be able to explain the reasons for any variances (remember, these are the differences between actual expenditures and your budget). Possible reasons for variances include the following:

- delays in hiring key staff;
- invoices were not processed;
- advances to a vendor or an employee were not liquidated;
- partner liquidations were not processed; and
- supplies were more or less expensive than budgeted.

Remember, learning means analyzing and asking "why?" For example, "delays in implementation" is not an adequate explanation for a variance! Why was there a delay? **Get down to the root cause of the problem** so that it can be effectively resolved.

Step Five: Take Appropriate Action
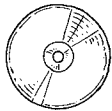
Financial monitoring may show that project activities are not being achieved within budget. Or it may show that if the spending trend continues, you will have money left over at the end of the project. **Half-way to three-quarters through the project, it is helpful to prepare a [Financial Projection](#) to estimate how much you are likely to spend.**

You or your partner may need to reduce costs, amend the Activity Schedule, or revise the budget. These kinds of actions may need to be done in consultation with the donor.

FINANCIAL REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Quarterly Financial Analysis Reports

CRS requires each region to analyze its spending and report back to headquarters on any reasons for under- or over-spending. One of your responsibilities as project manager is to assist your Country Program in preparing its Quarterly Financial Analysis report for submission to the region. This requires you to explain the reasons for any variances and trends in expenditures for the projects you manage. Use information from steps four and five above to complete this report.

Donor Financial Reports

As a project manager, you play an important role in submitting financial reports to the donor. First, ask the Finance Department to prepare the report. Then, **review it for accuracy, presentation and compliance with donor requirements.**
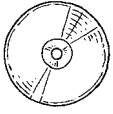
For example, if you manage a USG project, it is helpful for financial management if the interim financial report follows the format of the SF-424. It is unnecessary to create a new reporting format because, if you followed the CRS Cost Application Guidance, the project's budget will already be in SF-424 format.

Finally, **the Country Representative or her designate must sign the report.** Note that CRS headquarters prepares and submits official financial expenditure data for all USG awards using the SF-269. However, USAID missions and other U.S. government agencies may also request periodic financial reports directly from Country Programs. While CRS is under no legal obligation to provide anything other than the SF-269, it is often important in terms of donor relationships to respond to such requests as long as the reporting requirements are not overly difficult.

SECTION 5

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

SECTION OVERVIEW

In Section 5, you will do the following:

- review the definition of performance management;
- understand its importance to project success; and
- review key guidelines to performance management, including coaching and providing feedback.

INTRODUCTION

High-quality performance management is crucial to the success of any project. During project implementation, **CRS and its partners are responsible for supporting staff to do their jobs and for monitoring their performance. This kind of monitoring is called performance management.**

Detailed implementation planning ensured that a **performance management system** for the project was in place within CRS and its partners. CRS has its own agency-wide performance management system.

Research on healthy workplaces has revealed 12 elements needed to attract, focus and keep the most talented employees. Checklist 6.9 summarizes these elements.

Checklist 6.9: Twelve Elements Needed to Attract and Keep Talented Employees

Employees need to:

- ✓ know what is expected of them at work;
- ✓ have the materials, equipment and knowledge they need to do their work correctly;
- ✓ have opportunities to do what they do best every day;
- ✓ receive recognition or praise for doing good work;
- ✓ feel cared for by a supervisor or someone else at work;
- ✓ receive development or training;
- ✓ feel that their opinions count;
- ✓ feel that their job is important to the mission or purpose of the organization;
- ✓ feel that co-workers are committed to quality work;
- ✓ have a best friend at work;
- ✓ have had a talk about personal progress over the last six months; and
- ❖ have opportunities at work to learn and grow.

(Source: Buckingham and Coffin 1999)

CRS' performance management system promotes communication and frequent feedback to staff in a supportive environment and is based on the 12 elements in Checklist 6.9. CRS' system includes the following:

- **performance planning** (described as part of the detailed implementation planning process in *Chapter V, Section 1, pp. 138-139*);
- **development and training** so that staff have the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to do their job well;
- **coaching and feedback**;
- **annual assessment** of performance results; and
- **rewards and recognition**.

Specific guidance on CRS' Performance Management System can be found on the Intranet.

***Think About It …* Partners and Performance Management**

For many of CRS' partners, the concept of performance planning and management is unfamiliar and it may take time for them to work comfortably within such a system. In working with partners to strengthen their human resource management systems, you might begin by introducing the idea of periodic reviews of project staff activities. Once they are comfortable with this activity, you can introduce the idea of performance objectives and other components.

During implementation, CRS project managers have responsibilities for **coaching and providing feedback** to agency and partner staff. The importance of using these activities as key performance management tools can be found in *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 43-44.*

GUIDELINES AND TOOLS FOR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Coaching

Informal coaching occurs when supervisors observe a project staff member in action and then provide specific feedback. Table 6.13 provides guidelines for giving effective feedback. Instead of lecturing, skilled coaches ask incisive questions that help the staff member to think more critically about her actions.

CRS' policies require that formal coaching sessions be conducted twice a year. During these sessions, managers ask their staff the questions listed in Checklist 6.10.

Checklist 6.10: Coaching Discussion Questions
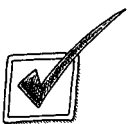
✓ What actions have you taken over the past four months to achieve the objectives listed on your performance plan?
✓ What have you learned over the past four months?
✓ What work relationships or partnerships have you built?
✓ What part of your current job are you enjoying the most?
✓ What are you struggling with? What can we do about this?
✓ What will be your focus for the next four months?
✓ Does your performance plan need any adjustments?
✓ What can I do to support achievement of your objectives?

Giving Feedback

As stated earlier in *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 47-48*, feedback is a vital and proven, yet under-used method for improving staff performance. Table 6.13 features practical guidelines tailored to CRS staff that you either supervise or work with. Following these guidelines can make giving feedback a normal, non-threatening part of everyday project implementation and monitoring.

Table 6.13: Guidelines for Giving Feedback

Be specific and descriptive, but concise	• Give specific, descriptive examples of the behavior or performance that you have observed. • Don't use judgmental language like, "You are unprofessional." Instead, say, "You have missed three deadlines." • Speak only for yourself (avoid "Everyone is saying…"), and restrict examples to things you know for certain.
Provide positive feedback	• Don't take good work for granted; tell people when they do a job well. • As above, avoid general praise like, "Keep up the good work!" **Be specific.** Say, "I noticed that partners were engaged and pleased with the excellent preparation and strong facilitation of the last project review meeting you organized."
Direct feedback towards behavior that the person can control	• Saying, "Your English is unclear" is not a constructive comment. Focus on areas that the person can improve.
Be direct, clear, and to the point	• Not being clear can create misunderstanding and discomfort. Don't leave the person guessing.
Time your feedback appropriately	• Feedback is most effective right after the behavior or performance occurs or after it's asked for. Ensure privacy, and allow time for discussion. • Is the moment right? Consider more than your own need to give feedback.
Be calm	• Don't attack, dump (overload), blame or vent your anger. • If you are not calm, do not provide feedback at that time. Wait until you cool off.
"When you do x, I feel y"	• Say, "When you are late for meetings, I feel frustrated" instead of, "You are always late for meetings!"
Watch out for non-verbal communication	• Avoid giving feedback with inappropriate non-verbal gestures such as raised eyebrows, rolled eyes, or a sarcastic or haughty tone of voice.

Receiving Feedback

We often don't think about how to receive feedback and avoid soliciting it. Feedback from your partners, project colleagues, or the staff you supervise is a concrete way of widening your Johari Window panes (see *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 33-34*). It helps you keep a check on and improve your project management skills and practices.

Table 6.14: Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

Solicit feedback in clear and specific areas	Ask, "How might we as CRS staff improve the usefulness of our project site visits?"
Make it a point to understand the feedback	Use paraphrasing skills, and ask clarifying questions, such as "What I'm hearing is… "
Help the giver to be specific	Ask, "Could you give me a specific example of what you mean?"
Avoid making it more difficult for the giver of feedback	Reacting defensively, angrily or arguing are all ways to turn feedback off.
Don't give explanations	It may be hard to remain silent, but keep in mind that explanations often seem defensive.
Show appreciation	Thank the person for making the effort to give you feedback.
Respond to key points	Say what you intend to do as a result of the comments you are receiving.
Remember that feedback is one person's perceptions—not universal truth	Keeping this in mind can help you to be less defensive. Confirm the feedback with others to determine if there is a pattern.
Pay attention to non-verbal feedback	Are people falling asleep as you speak? Do they look uncomfortable?

Reflection Opportunity

1. How would you adjust the feedback guidelines in Table 6.14 to be culturally appropriate in your project management situation?

Multi-rater Feedback Process
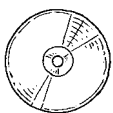
To help managers and employees identify growth and performance needs, CRS strongly recommends (though it is not required) doing a **Multi-rater Assessment**, also known as a 360-degree assessment. **The employee identifies three to five individuals (supervisor, peer, subordinate, etc.) to provide feedback via a questionnaire**, which is usually returned to the supervisor to ensure anonymity. The supervisor then presents the feedback to the employee during a regularly scheduled coaching session.

Checklist 6.11: The CRS Multi-rater Questionnaire

The CRS multi-rater questionnaire asks three questions as follows:

✓ What are this person's strengths? (**Appreciative Feedback**)
✓ How can this person be more effective in the future? (**Constructive Feedback**)
✓ Are there any additional comments?

Soliciting Feedback from Partners

What do your partners think? CRS/India's performance management system includes a formal feedback process whereby partners evaluate the agency according to the criteria shown in the "From Theory to Practice" story box. You may be inspired by this process to assess your own skills in the accompaniment of partners during project implementation.

From Theory to Practice: Soliciting Feedback from Partners in India

- Our organization's partnership with CRS fosters two-way learning and sharing of ideas.
- CRS staff have responded to our proposals and other requests promptly.
  CRS staff have helped us to implement the best solution to problems and needs identified by the community.
- CRS staff have facilitated linkages between our organization and local resources (e.g., training, financial, government, etc.).
- CRS staff have facilitated linkages between our organization and other Church partners from whom we have learned.
- CRS staff listen carefully to our needs and realities before making suggestions.
- CRS staff learn from us and appreciate this opportunity.

Providing Feedback to Partners

What would you do if you observed a partner disrespecting a community member involved in a project? This is a very difficult question to answer because CRS staff do not supervise partner staff. You have to apply the "art" of project management to this situation and use your best judgment. What is the most effective way to communicate your opinion? Should you provide feedback to the partner staff member in question or to her supervisor? How urgent is the situation?

You need to work within the boundaries of partner personnel practices and procedures, taking up issues with leadership as necessary.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Imagine you have to communicate some hard and bitter decisions to partners. How do you do this without damaging the relationship?
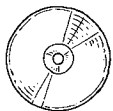
For these kinds of situations, the CRS Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue includes information on cooperative communication. This is a communication method that promotes people working with you, rather than against you. **Cooperative communication helps build productive relationships through the use of positive language and questions.**

From Theory to Practice: Negative versus Positive Language

> Consider these two sentences:
>
> 1. "If you had bothered to read the report, you would know…"
> 2. "It might be that the report wasn't clear on those points. Would you like me to explain?"
>
> The first sentence suggests blame—the person was lazy or uncaring. The second explains what can be done, sounds helpful, and provides choices. This is an example of cooperative communication. Here are two other examples:
>
> 1. "The information we have suggests that you have a different viewpoint. Let me explain our perspective."
> 2. "What options do you see for getting past that obstacle?"

Analyzing Performance Problems

Projects depend on people and teams. When staff successfully implement their to-do lists, meet their work plans, achieve performance objectives and work well within teams, the project itself is more likely to reach targets and objectives on time. Performance difficulties can be minimized if, when recruiting or assigning staff, you seek to maximize the use of their talents instead of encouraging them to assume roles for which they are unprepared.

If, however, project staff members are not working as effectively or productively as you had anticipated, find out more so that you can help correct the situation. Following are some common reasons for poor performance. Once you find out the reasons behind the poor performance, you can take the most appropriate action to improve the situation.

Poor job performance may occur because the project staff member:

- does not know how to do his job—he doesn't fully understand expectations, his job roles or responsibilities, or how to carry out assigned tasks;
- is unaware that his performance is unacceptable;
- is hampered by unclear lines of delegation or authority due to the organizational structure he is working within;
- is not properly trained for the position;
- is not adequately supervised, guided or coached; and
- has never received feedback to help correct his performance.

Resolving Performance Problems

With Supervised Staff

Take action if project activities are not being achieved on time. You or a partner may have to re-plan pieces of the DIP, or provide on-the-job training in time management. If project activities are not being achieved well or according to acceptable standards, you may have to provide coaching, bring in technical assistance or organize a short training course. If the project is suffering due to poor performance by CRS staff and you have identified the underlying reasons why, then you need to resolve the problems. This may involve the following actions:

- reviewing responsibilities and tasks, and making sure the employee understands what is expected of her;
- arranging for additional training;
- providing closer supervision and the resources needed to carry out tasks; and
- allowing the employee to try to improve her performance and then checking her work again.

What happens when efforts are made to resolve performance problems but they are unsuccessful? Peter Drucker (1992) advises that poor performing staff should be given clear feedback and another chance to try as noted above. This action should be clearly documented. If things do not change, however, he advises management action. You may want to see if you can shift job responsibilities so that the person's talents are better aligned with his or her job tasks and responsibilities—or you may have to take a more difficult decision. Keeping a poor performer on the job is not a good decision; it is harmful to the person, the project and the organization.

Taking action on poor performing staff is, of course, easier said than done. There may be legal or other constraints on such actions. You must respect local labor laws and seek advice from your Human Resources Department or Country Representative when managing these kinds of situations.

With a Partner
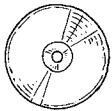
In this situation, you can capitalize on past investments in developing a strong relationship with your partner, one characterized by transparency and openness about both capacities and constraints. CRS' Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue includes a useful strategy called the **Joint Conflict Management Process**. This can help if a conflict develops between CRS and its partners in the course of project implementation. The four parts of the process are described in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15: The Four Parts of the Joint Conflict Management Process

Part One	Discuss and analyze the conflict
Part Two	Find an appropriate time and place to discuss the conflict
Part Three	Discuss it by carefully setting ground rules, letting each person define and discuss the problem, identifying underlying mutual interests, summarizing new understandings of the conflict, and finding mutually satisfying solutions.
Part Four	Follow up to see if the conflict has been effectively resolved.

Consult the Partnership Toolbox for specific details on this process. The Toolbox offers many additional ideas and resources for managing partner relations and possible conflicts during project implementation.

> Talk to your supervisor if you are experiencing what you consider to be serious problems with your partners in project implementation.

Rewards and Recognition

As discussed in *Chapter II, Section 3, pg. 57,* remember that the key to retaining talented staff is recognizing and praising them for good work. Providing specific, descriptive, positive feedback is a proven and effective performance management tool—but one that is under-used. Regular appreciation, active interest and support can do a lot to motivate staff and partners.

In addition to positive feedback, appreciation within CRS is conveyed through "spot awards," public recognition, certificates, annual service awards and through the Performance Management System. Providing opportunities for staff to go on temporary duty assignments is another way of recognizing hard work and talents.

RELATED READING

Following is a list of traditional and online resources available if you would like to read more about the information presented in Chapter VI. Please see the Reference List located at the end of the manual for a complete list of all the resources used in ProPack II.

Section 2— Guidance for Capacity Strengthening
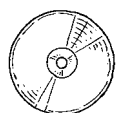
- Check with your region for tested, widely used community organization and capacity strengthening manuals. For example, in East Africa, *Training for Transformation* (Hope et al. 1995) is a manual with many tools, training session designs, and ideas that are appropriate for community-based capacity strengthening.
- Norem, R. H. and C. M. McCorkle. April 2006. *Capacity Building Guidance: Guidelines and Tools for Getting the Most from your Technical Assistance,* Version 1.0. Baltimore: CRS.
- Vella, J. 1995. *Training Through Dialogue: Promoting Effective Learning and Change with Adults.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Vella, J. 2001. *Taking Learning to Task: Creative Strategies for Teaching Adults.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Vella, J., P. Berardinelli and J. Burrow. 1998. *How Do They Know They Know: Evaluating Adult Learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Websites

There are many websites on capacity strengthening. Some of the best are listed below.

- http://www.intrac.org
  INTRAC provides training, consultancy, and research services to organizations involved in international development and relief. On the website, you will find links to a praxis interchange—a resource allowing people to connect and share their knowledge of research and practice in capacity strengthening.
- http://www.impactalliance.org
  Hosted by PACT, the Impact Alliance: Strengthening Local Capacities for Positive Social Change site includes a resource center with books, articles, websites, conferences, as well as other information. The site also hosts online communities related to capacity strengthening.
- http://www.capacity.org
  Includes a manual for capacity building for local NGOs.
- Resources used in many of the ProPack I training workshops are available on the PQSD/M&E Intranet site. Please contact the M&E team should you experience difficulties accessing the available materials.

Section 3— Project Monitoring and Reporting
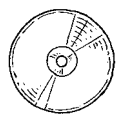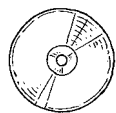
- Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Program. 2005. Steps to Behavior Change. http://www.jhuccp.org/research/behviorchange.shtml.
- CRS. August 2004. Project Tracking System (PTS) User Manual. Version 1.1. Baltimore: CRS.
- A facilitator's guide to Barrier Analysis is available online at the following website: http://barrieranalysis.fhi.net/
- McMillan, D.E. and G.O'G. Sharrock. 2007. *Guidelines for the Preparation and Use of Performance Indicator Tracking Tables (PITT).* One of a series of modules developed jointly between American Red Cross and CRS. Baltimore: CRS.

Websites

- www.mindtools.com
  This website has more information on Force Field Analysis.

CHAPTER VII
PROJECT EVALUATION AND CLOSE-OUT

SECTION 1

EVALUATION—DEFINITIONS AND TYPES

SECTION OVERVIEW

Figure 7.1: Project Cycle and Evaluation
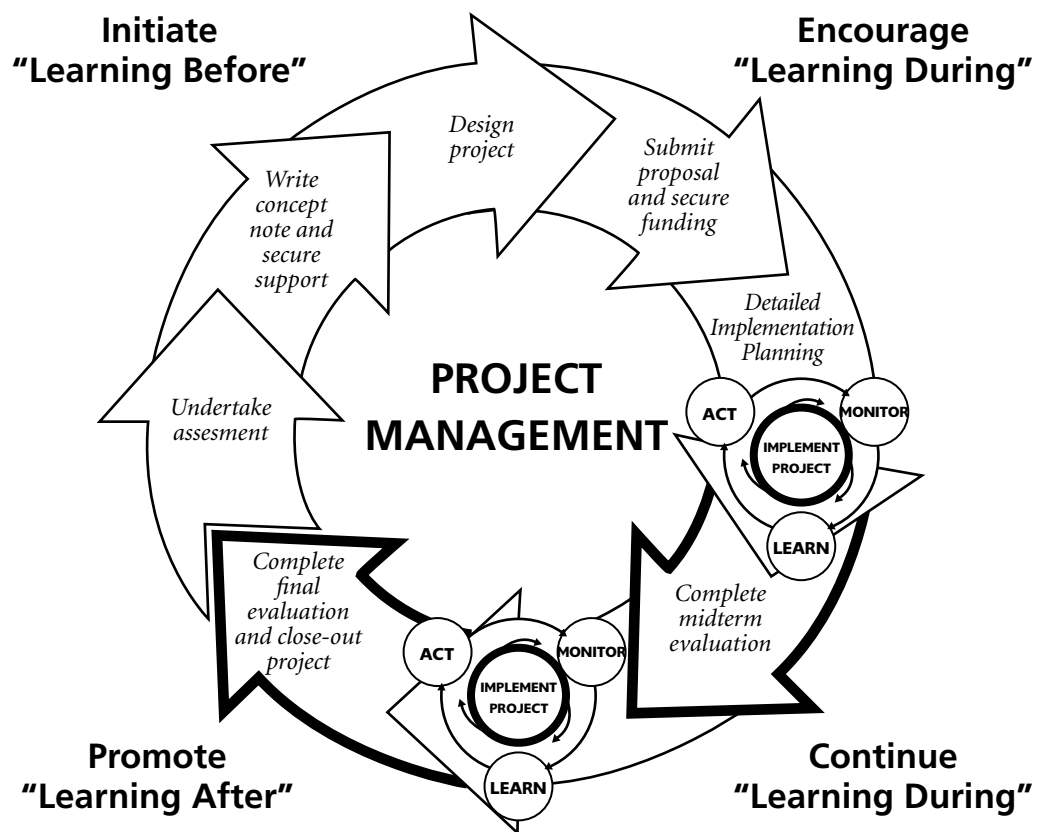
Your project is now well underway. A baseline (one type of evaluation) has been completed. At the outset of project implementation, you and your partners began monitoring, reporting and disseminating learning. Then you acted upon it by taking informed management decisions to build on successes and make improvements or corrections to problems you identified. As implementation proceeds, you will now undertake evaluation activities. If you followed the proposal format in *ProPack I, Chapter V, Section 4, pp. 167–168*, you will already have a description of a mid-term and final evaluation for your project.
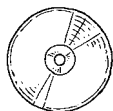
Evaluations are costly and even the simplest takes time. Careful thought has to go into planning a worthwhile evaluation. **So why evaluate?** The project cycle diagram (Figure 7.1) suggests that what is learned from an evaluation will influence future decisions in your current project, as well as the design of new projects.

Evaluation is a periodic, systematic assessment of a project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact on a defined population. While monitoring is ongoing, evaluation is periodic. It draws from data collected during monitoring, as well as from additional surveys or studies to assess project achievements against objectives.

Evaluations usually involve comparisons. Most often, they are based on conditions before and after the project. More rarely, evaluations compare populations who receive services with those who did not. **Evaluation aims to determine the extent to which desired changes have occurred and whether the project is responsible for the changes** (I-LIFE 2005).

In Section 1, you will do the following:

- review the utilization-focused evaluation approach promoted by CRS;
- consider the importance of evaluation; and
- examine different types of evaluations often used.

UTILIZATION-FOCUSED EVALUATIONS

CRS promotes Utilization-focused Evaluation (UFE). This approach to designing and conducting evaluations is based on work by Patton (1997, 2002). The **underlying concept is that evaluations should be undertaken in a way that will maximize the likelihood that the learning will be applied by the intended users of the findings.**

Research indicates that stakeholders are more likely to use evaluations if they understand them and feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings. This understanding and ownership comes from **active involvement in the evaluation from beginning to end.** Consider the "From Theory to Practice" story of a project evaluation conducted by CRS/Guatemala.

From Theory to Practice: Learning from a Literacy Project

> CRS/Guatemala's partner implemented an adult education project called Comunidades Mayas Alfabetizadas (Mayan Literate Communities) financed by USAID. Literacy training of Mayan men and women was an important project activity and was based on Freirian principles of action and reflection (Freire 1970). One of the IRs was that participants actually apply new literacy skills in their work (either in their farming or informal market businesses). Other important project objectives involved increasing critical awareness skills—participants' ability to analyze their situations, examine their beliefs about how they could transform their realities, and, ultimately, to increase their self-worth and dignity.
>
> To measure progress throughout the project, USAID hired a consultant to carry out an external monitoring and evaluation process, including the mid-term evaluation. The consultant was very competent and knowledgeable. Not only was she skilled at leading focus group discussions (an appropriate method for evaluating these objectives), but she also had excellent knowledge of the Mayan Quiche culture. In addition, she did a good job of involving CRS and its partners in the mid-term evaluation exercise. It was a great mentoring opportunity.
>
> The focus groups and other mid-term evaluation activities revealed important lessons learned for this project. The literacy trainers were having problems implementing the curriculum with the Freirian action and reflection approach, and seemed to lack creativity and confidence. Project stakeholders also learned that female literacy trainers had the best results, and adult learning groups with women members had the best attendance!

Information from the mid-term evaluation helped CRS and its partners improve the project over the second half of its implementation. They improved the quality of instruction given to the literacy trainers; motivated the entire group of trainers by sharing the successes of the women; and made certain that adult learning groups were composed of a mix of men and women.

Reflection Opportunity

1. How does the story from CRS/Guatemala compare to the reality of how evaluations are used—or not—in your situation?
2. **What accounts for the difference when evaluations are used for decision-making and when they are not?**

Evaluators are responsible for conducting systematic, data-based evaluation inquiries, ensuring the honesty and integrity of the process. In the UFE approach, evaluators are responsible for involving evaluation users from the start, while at the same time respecting the security, dignity and self-worth of respondents, other recipients of project aid, participants and other stakeholders.

The Guatemala mid-term evaluation illustrates some of the important principles of UFE. These principles are summarized in Checklist 7.1.

Checklist 7.1: Principles of Utilization-focused Evaluation

✓ All evaluations should be driven by a commitment to the information needs of those who will use the findings.
✓ Use involves making decisions, evaluating progress and improving programs.
✓ Use must be considered from the beginning—not at the end of the evaluation.
✓ Promoting use within evaluations can require more financial and time costs but will result in more benefits, including engagement, ownership and an increase in organizational learning.
✓ Stakeholder analysis helps identify primary intended users and other evaluation actors, giving voice to diverse perspectives.
✓ Evaluations are tailored to each specific situation and set of users.
✓ Commitment to use findings is nurtured by actively involving users in significant decisions about the evaluation.
✓ Outside evaluators are guided by professional standards (see Table 7.1) and principles.
✓ Outside evaluators play a facilitation and training role, thereby increasing critical and evaluative thinking of participants.

(Source: Adapted from Patton 1997)

A UFE will be compromised if any of the following occur:

• outside evaluators make primary decisions;
• users are defined as vague audiences instead of real people;
• evaluators assume the donor is the primary stakeholder; and
• evaluators wait until the findings are determined to identify users.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think back to the last evaluation you were a part of.
2. **How did you participate in the process, and how did it allow you** to see your project in a different light?
3. How did it compare to the UFE approach described in Checklist 7.1?

EVALUATION STANDARDS

Evaluation standards promote a high-quality product. Table 7.1 lists standards set in the United States for education programs.

Table 7.1: Evaluation Standards

Stakeholder Identification	Persons involved in or affected by the evaluation should be identified so that their needs can be addressed.
Evaluator Credibility	The persons conducting the evaluation should be both trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation, so that the evaluation findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance.
Information Scope and Selection	Information collected should address pertinent questions about the program and be responsive to the needs and interests of other specified stakeholders.
Report Timeliness and Dissemination	Important interim findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users, so that they can be used in a timely fashion.
Evaluation Use	The evaluation should be planned, conducted and reported in ways that encourage follow-through by stakeholders, to increase the likelihood that it will be used.
Practical Procedures	Evaluation procedures should be practical and keep disruption to a minimum while information is obtained.
Political Viability	Disagreements among various groups should be anticipated, and the evaluation should be planned and conducted so that their cooperation can be obtained. This will help avoid attempts to disrupt the evaluation or to bias or misapply the results.
Cost Effectiveness	The evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value, so that the resources expended can be justified.
Rights of Human Subjects	The evaluation should be designed and conducted to respect and promote the rights and welfare of human subjects.
Human Interactions	Evaluators should respect human dignity and worth in their interactions with other persons associated with an evaluation, so that participants are not threatened or harmed. (Confidentiality on HIV&AIDS is an example.)
Conflict of Interest	Conflict of interest should be dealt with openly and honestly so that it does not compromise the evaluation processes and results.
Defensible Information Sources	The sources of information used in a project evaluation should be described in enough detail so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed.
Valid Information	The information gathering procedures should be developed and implemented to ensure that the interpretation arrived at is valid.
Reliable Information	The information gathering procedures should be developed and implemented to ensure that the data obtained is sufficiently reliable.
Justified Conclusions	The conclusions reached in an evaluation should be explicitly justified, so that stakeholders can assess them.

(Source: Adapted from the U.S. Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation 1994)

1. Which of the standards in Table 7.1 are most relevant to a planned evaluation in your project, and why? Which are not, and why?
2. What are the different ways you would consider applying these standards to a planned evaluation?
3. What might you add to the list?

EVALUATION SCOPE AND PURPOSE

While UFEs are very situation-specific, project evaluations usually address some or all of the following issues (Patton 1997; Chen 2005; Bamberger et al. 2006)

- **Relevance:** Was the project a good idea given the situation needing improvement? Did the project aim for the right objectives? Were the underlying causes of the problems the project is designed to address accurately diagnosed and adequately addressed? Does it deal with target group priorities?
- **Efficiency:** Were project resources used in the best possible way to achieve the objectives? Why or why not? What could we do differently to improve implementation and maximize impact at an acceptable cost?
- **Effectiveness:** Is there evidence that the project achieved its objectives? Which objectives were achieved and which were not? Why? Is the project strategy and theory of change sound? Why or why not? What internal and external contextual factors determined the degree of success or failure?
- **Impact:** To what extent has the project achieved its SO and contributed towards its longer-term Goal? Can the impact on the target population be measured? What unanticipated positive or negative consequences did the project have? Why did they arise? What impact has the project had on different subsets of the target population, including the poorest and most vulnerable groups? Are there different impacts on men and women? Are there ethnic, religious or similar groups who did not benefit or who were negatively affected?
- **Sustainability:** Are outcomes sustainable and benefits likely to continue once the project is completed? Why or why not? Is it likely the same impacts could be achieved if the project were implemented in a different setting or on a larger scale?

These issues are related to the purpose of the project evaluation; it may have one or more of the three purposes shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Three Purposes of Evaluations

Improvement	• Identify project strengths and weaknesses, in order to increase project relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. • Evaluations with an improvement orientation are often called **formative evaluations**.
Judgment	• Measure project impact and sustainability. • Analyze costs and benefits of the project strategy. • Provide accountability to project stakeholders. • Evaluations with a judgment orientation are often called **summative evaluations**.
Knowledge	• Provide generalizations about the effectiveness of a project strategy or what works. • Build on theory through identification of best practices or lessons learned. • Influence policy development.

(Source: Patton 1997)

From a UFE perspective, before you embark on an evaluation, ask yourself, "Why are we doing this?" Sometimes you will be obliged to do an evaluation because future funding or support depends on it. Or it may be required in an Award Agreement. But more often you will evaluate to learn. In order to answer the "Why?" question, be clear about the following three questions.

<table>
<tr><td>Think About It …

When the cook tastes the food, it is formative evaluation; when the dinner guest tastes the food, it is summative evaluation.</td></tr>
</table>

1. **Who is the evaluation for? One group? Many?**
2. **What is it we want to find out?**
3. **What decisions need to be made when the evaluation findings are presented?**

EVALUATION TYPES

Evaluations can be classified in many ways. ProPack II is organized according to the stages of the project cycle, so the evaluation types described below focus on those undertaken at the various stages. There are, of course, other ways to classify evaluations (e.g., focusing on the evaluation process—participatory, joint, and so on).

CRS projects may include one or more of the following types of evaluations:

- periodic evaluation;
- mid-term evaluation;
- final evaluation; and
- ex-post evaluation.

Table 7.3 summarizes the purpose and scope of these evaluation types, followed by more detailed descriptions.

Table 7.3: Summary of Evaluation Types

Evaluation Type	Evaluation Purpose	Evaluation Scope
Periodic	Improvement-oriented	Efficiency, effectiveness
Mid-term	Improvement-oriented and judgment-oriented	Efficiency, effectiveness, relevance
Final	Judgment-oriented and knowledge-oriented	Efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact, sustainability
Ex-post	Knowledge-oriented	Impact, sustainability

Periodic Evaluations

Periodic evaluations are **improvement-oriented** and can be done at any time during project implementation, as needed. Three types described below are **diagnostic studies**, **learning reviews** and **real-time evaluations**.

Diagnostic Studies

Diagnostic studies (also known as thematic, or *ad hoc* evaluations) **are undertaken when a specific implementation question arises, often as a consequence of the analysis of monitoring data.** If monitoring reveals problems or issues, diagnostic studies give managers a more reliable range of solutions. For example, community members dug hillside conservation ditches but are not maintaining them. (see *Chapter VI, Section 3, pg. 198*) Why is this so? What possible solutions can be identified?

Diagnostic studies involve determining factors contributing to identified problems, reviewing constraints, and coming up with alternative solutions. For example, your project may have anticipated that women would change their hygiene practices, but your monitoring data suggests this is not happening to the extent expected. In this case, the project managers might request a diagnostic study to examine the reasons women are not changing. The findings would then inform the next steps in the project.

Examples of issues arising from an analysis of monitoring data for an agricultural project that might require a diagnostic study are shown in the "From Theory to Practice" story box.

From Theory to Practice: Examples of Issues Requiring a Diagnostic Study

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- A record number of farmers joined project-supported farmers' clubs during the first two years of project implementation, but membership is now falling. Why?
- The targeted population in most of the area covered by the project has accepted an important variety of maize, but farmers in two other districts rejected it. Why?
- Many farmers are not following recommended agricultural practices, even though they have learned about yield benefits. Why?
- Sales of farm produce appear to be rising on average, although it is not clear whether it is generally true or specific to a certain group of farmers. Why?

Methods for diagnostic studies may include the following:
- project records and documents;
- formal and informal surveys;
- interviews of key people;
- community meetings; and
- participant observation.

(Source: Casley and Kumar 1987)

Diagnostic studies are valuable because they generate information that informs management decisions regarding the allocation of project resources. For this reason, the timeline for the study should be considered carefully. If it is too short, the information generated might not add sufficient value to management decision-making; if it is too long, there is a danger that decisions will have been taken in the absence of diagnostic study information.

Learning Reviews/After Action Reviews

A learning review, also called an After Action Review, is a simple, quick and versatile learning tool that can be used to identify and record lessons and knowledge arising out of a project event. Learning reviews are also useful in emergency settings—particularly in the early phase of a rapid-onset emergency—since they are relatively straightforward to organize and host. During the review, questions are asked that help participants understand what was planned versus what actually happened.

As you recall from the project cycle diagram, (Figure 7.1) these types of learning reviews can be done at any time during any stage of the project cycle (i.e., *before*, *during* and *after* an event). Remember, these are quick reviews to look for immediate impressions of a particular event and to derive meaningful lessons. In general, learning reviews should take no longer than one to two hours.

Table 7.4: How to Manage a Learning Review/After Action Review

Hold the Learning Review Immediately	• Do it—each time and every time. Teams seem to struggle if you do a learning review sometimes but not others. You get better results if they are routine. • Carry out the review while all the participants are still available and their memories still fresh.
Create the Right Climate	• Clarify the purpose of the learning review, which is not to assign blame or praise but to help improve future project activities. • Have a strong team; this is critical. Real teams can use learning reviews; pretend teams cannot because there is not enough social capital and trust. • Review Checklist 2.2, Questions to Foster a Learning Environment, in *Chapter II, Section 3, pg. 35.*
Assign Roles	• Appoint a facilitator who can ask good, open questions to help the team analyze. Review Checklist 2.7, *Actions of Strong Facilitators*, and Table 2.7, *Questions Facilitators Ask*, in *Chapter II, Section 3, pg. 43 (checklist) and pg. 45 (table).* • Appoint someone to record major ideas on a flip chart. This helps ensure that participants were clearly heard, and the charts can later be shared with others not attending the review.

Five Open Questions	• Review the activity and its related objective or deliverable. For each one ask the following:
	  1. **What did we set out to do?**
	  2. **What did we achieve?** Focus on facts, not opinions.
	  3. **What went really well?** Again, look at the facts. Why did it go well? Compare the plan to reality. Identify successes.
	  4. **What could have gone better?** Compare the plan to reality. What prevented us from doing more? Identify challenges.
	  5. **What can we learn from this?** Make an action plan with specific recommendations and clearly assigned responsibilities to build on successes and resolve problems. Based on experience, what advice would we have for other teams?

Facilitating the Learning Review	• Choose an excellent facilitator to create a good learning review. • Be brisk—too much thinking and discussion seems to confuse rather than clarify (i.e., the greatest value in learning reviews comes from what is foremost in one's mind). • Be attuned to the politics. Most of the cases where a learning review has not been successful involved someone with power who did not like what was being said.
Close the Review	• Summarize key learning points (can be done by the facilitator). • Clarify responsibility for the post-learning review documentation and dissemination.
Share the Knowledge	• Make sure that the responsibility for managing the learning review knowledge is assigned to a specific individual or position. • Ensure that the knowledge generated in the learning review is made available to those who might benefit from it and at a time when they are most likely to need it. • Keep the learning review knowledge up to date.

Real-time Evaluations

Real-time evaluations (RTEs) are meant to provide quick and practical evaluative feedback to country teams and other levels of management during the early stages of a rapid-onset emergency response or for long-standing crises undergoing phases of rapid deterioration. An RTE should be a short exercise with a quick turn-around. Country visits by RTE teams should, in principle, not exceed a couple of weeks, during which Country Program offices, partners, and field sites should be visited. A final debriefing at the end of the RTE should include major points that will be in the report. They should be short and to the point. Final reports should be available seven to ten days after completion of the country visit.

An RTE is **improvement-oriented** or formative because it provides information that improves an on-going operation. It is timely and rapid and should engage participants through interactive peer reviews. RTEs help measure the effectiveness and impact of a given response, and seek to ensure that findings are internalized by managers responsible for effecting organizational or project design changes (Jamal and Crisp 2002).

Two examples of RTEs—one for a seed voucher and fair project and another for an emergency response intervention—are presented in the "From Theory to Practice" boxes.

From Theory to Practice: Real-Time Seed Voucher and Fair Evaluations

> CRS and its partners monitor Seed Fairs on the day they are implemented as part of their M&E system, using what is called a "minimum data set." Seed Fair exit interviews are conducted with both seed sellers and participants. These interviews provide information on indicators associated with the Activity-level objectives (carrying out a seed fair) and the Output-level objectives (scale, quality).

(Source: Bramel, P., T. Remington, and M. McNeil, eds. 2004)

From Theory to Practice: Plans for a Real-time Evaluation of CRS Tsunami Programs

> This evaluation was suggested three months after the initial response to the Tsunami. Its objectives were to accomplish the following tasks:
>
> 1   review the performance of all operations, processes, and systems in the early phase of the emergency response;
>
> 2   ensure accountability in the achievement of objectives and utilization of resources;
>
> 3   improve operations by providing lessons learned; and
>
> 4   satisfy donor, media, and public interest that the money given was efficiently used.
>
> The evaluation intended to study a range of issues, including: planning adequacy; speed of response; how the response could be improved; its relevance to individual country situations and the needs of the most vulnerable; coverage; identification of strengths and weaknesses; and compliance with international standards.

Mid-term Evaluations

A mid-term evaluation (MTE) is also mainly improvement-oriented and formative. They may be called process implementation evaluations or formative evaluations by other organizations. MTEs are conducted approximately mid-way through the project, for example, in the third year of a five-year project. MTEs may include an external evaluator who brings both an outside perspective and appropriate evaluation expertise.

In general, **MTEs identify where and how implementation can be improved in the remaining project time-period**. During the evaluation, project achievements of IR-level objectives are formally evaluated. In studying whether Activities helped deliver Outputs that then led to achievements at IR-level, an MTE provides a strong understanding of why project implementation is—or is not—on track towards achieving its SOs. This understanding provides a good basis for influencing the course of future project implementation.

MTEs may take on increased significance when they are part of a strategy to obtain further funding for a second phase of a project. A final evaluation is usually completed too late to influence the design of any new, follow-on proposals.

Most MTEs address at least one or more of the objectives in Table 7.5 and provide answers to the related questions.

Table 7.5: MTE Objectives and Related Questions

Objectives	Related Questions
Review project progress. Information is provided to stakeholders about how resources were used, whether planned activities were carried out within budget, whether project objectives (Activity-, Output-, and IR-level objectives) are being met, and the likelihood that the project's SOs will be met.	• Were project activities actually implemented as planned and described in the proposal and DIP? • How appropriate and close to plan were the costs, the time requirements, the staff capacity and capability, and the availability of required financial resources? • What are the links between the project's Activities, Outputs and IRs? • Are the planned IR-level objectives being achieved?

Address project relevance as an opportunity to re-examine the project's strategy or theory of change.	• What do participants like and dislike? • What are their perceptions of what is working and not working? • How well are IRs being achieved?
Provide an opportunity to acknowledge project successes or more critically examine project challenges or weaknesses.	• How well do project partners work together? • Has community participation been high? • Are relevant stakeholders kept informed? • Are government personnel supportive?
Develop lessons learned that help project stakeholders improve implementation during the remaining period.	• What successes can we build on? • What can we learn and apply from better understanding challenges?
Provide a quality check on the M&E system and on monitoring activities. MTEs help assess whether monitoring information is telling project stakeholders what they need to know.	• How well is the monitoring system functioning? Are data being gathered and reported as planned? • How useful are the project's performance indicators? Are modifications required? • Are unanticipated events and outcomes being sufficiently tracked? • To what extent are senior project staff using monitoring information to make management decisions? • What might this mean for the project during the remaining period?
Provide an opportunity to check on unexpected project results.	• What Critical Assumptions proved true? • What unanticipated outputs or outcomes have emerged during implementation thus far? • What might this mean for the project during the remaining period?

The "From Theory to Practice" box illustrates the type of improvement-oriented recommendations you might see from a MTE.

From Theory to Practice: Examples of MTE Recommendations

- Review the project, determine which Activities have not been completed, and formulate a revised plan for completing all Activities and strategies outlined in the proposal by the end of the funding period.
- Encourage the development of an explicit sub-component focused on non-agricultural income activities, pending a review of available resources.
- Help village extension agents and agronomists conduct more supervision missions.
- Strengthen technical monitoring of existing and new irrigated sites to increase crop productivity.
- Continue to negotiate with the government to ensure that extension services will be available to farmers in the future.
- Provide additional leadership training to Community Management Committees and ensure better linkages with the community to improve chances of sustainability.
- Find a better strategy for reinforcing the participation of vulnerable households in Food For Work-sponsored soil conservation activities.

Reflection Opportunity

1. How have MTEs benefited projects in which you have been involved?
2. Cite specific actions that were undertaken as a result of an MTE.

Final Evaluations

A final evaluation is largely judgment-oriented and is conducted towards the end of a project. It aims to determine the overall merit, worth or value of a project. Because of this judgment orientation, final evaluations include an external evaluator and require more planning and investment. A final evaluation can also be **knowledge-oriented** because it provides lessons learned for future project design.

In general, final evaluations do the following:

- provide information to project stakeholders on how the project has succeeded in **achieving the SOs**—the core purpose of the project;
- examine how **MTE findings were addressed**—or not;
- review **questions of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency** (that a MTE also considers) with an additional focus on **questions of impact and sustainability**;
- make a judgment about whether the project was a **good use of funds**; and
- **provide suggestions for follow-up programming**, if requested.

From Theory to Practice: Examples of Final Evaluation Recommendations

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Following are examples of the type of judgment- and knowledge-oriented recommendations that a final evaluation might suggest.

Judgment-oriented
- The project met its targets, but its impact on vulnerability and food security was less than anticipated because of insecure access and declining soil fertility.
- The project has been highly effective in increasing seed availability in the current context. The low participation of women, however, is a concern.
- While there is always room for improvement in the way trials and demonstrations are designed and monitored, this activity was successful in introducing new varieties.
- The targets were not achieved in trainings and the number of associations formed.
- Monitoring systems produced good information for reporting purposes, although there are some inconsistencies between annual reports.
- There was not much systematic information-gathering for programmatic decision-making.
- All in all, the project has been a satisfactory investment in terms of having a significant impact on vulnerability, livelihoods and food insecurity and has established a solid foundation upon which to build.

Knowledge-oriented
- A good understanding of markets appears to influence what farmers choose to produce.
- Capital mobilization is often the glue that holds groups together; if not done well, however, it can also become the force that tears them apart.
- In physical infrastructure projects, if the "software" side (i.e., management processes) is not developed, the "hardware" side (i.e., structures) will be lost.
- The project has established a basic foundation for a marketing strategy through its agro-enterprise approach with the formation of groups and some market analyses.

> *Think About It … A Cautionary Note on Impact and Measuring Attribution*
>
> Measuring the impact of development and relief projects is rarely straightforward. Identifying a causal relationship between an Activity and a particular Outcome can be difficult. A number of different factors may also contribute to change. To measure impact of a situation now requires comparison to the situation before. Projects try to do this through baseline data collection, individual or community recall, or, more rarely, use of control groups. Ultimately, it may never be possible to prove that a change is directly caused by a project because many factors can influence the results measured. The data collected in both monitoring and evaluation paint a picture. The better the ongoing monitoring, the better you can explain final evaluation findings. **Plausible attribution** is perhaps a more accurate term of what evaluations should strive towards. What's the lesson? Be cautious and grounded when setting SOs.

(Source: Adapted from Lentfer, J. and S. Nkoka 2005)

Donors may have specific guidance for final evaluations. In some cases, donor representatives expect to be invited to participate in the evaluation process. When you set up the M&E system during the DIP process, you considered the Award Agreement requirements as they relate to the project's final evaluation.

> **Don't Forget! Final Evaluations and Privately Funded Projects**
>
> Some project managers ask if final evaluations should be conducted for small-scale, privately funded projects. If the project was a pilot, a final evaluation will be vital in judging whether the project strategy should be adapted or implemented elsewhere. If the project was particularly innovative, an evaluation will provide information about effectiveness. Regardless of whether a final evaluation is done, **a thorough final report is due for all projects**. Final report guidance is included later in this chapter in *Section 3, Project Close-out, pg.* 255.
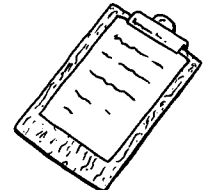
Ex-post Evaluation

An ex-post evaluation is knowledge-oriented and is sometimes called a sustainable impact evaluation. **These evaluations study the impact of a project at a defined period of time after project completion.** Ex-post evaluations usually aim to determine which project interventions have been continued by project participants on their own. The **findings may be used for advocacy efforts** by showing donors the effectiveness of investing in a particular sector—for example, the importance of supporting girls' education within a food security program. An ex-post evaluation of a set of projects and their effectiveness may **contribute to future program design**. In Rwanda, for example, a number of peacebuilding projects were evaluated seven years after the genocide to inform CRS' evolving approach to peace and justice program strategies.

Ex-post evaluations are not undertaken as regularly as MTEs or final evaluations. While project proposals will likely indicate sustainability concerns, it is fair to say that NGOs rarely evaluate what remains following the withdrawal of project funding. This may be due, in part, to the reluctance among donors to finance such evaluations, as well as an inability and unwillingness among NGOs to undertake evaluative work of this nature. This is unfortunate. With the use of creative evaluation approaches, the costs of an ex-post evaluation can be kept down, and important lessons can be generated regarding factors that help to ensure project sustainability. This is potentially rich information for the designers of new projects.

From Theory to Practice: Exception to the Rule—Ex-post Evaluation by CRS/Ethiopia

In 2004, CRS/Ethiopia conducted an ex-post evaluation of a Development Assistance Program (DAP) I project. The evaluation was undertaken six months after the end of the project. Its purpose was to:

- Assess the sustainability of the benefits of DAP interventions that were phased out; and
- Generate lessons learned and share collective experiences gained from DAP I implementation.

Methodology

The evaluation was carried out over a period of one month, and a team visited the sites of four DAP partners. The evaluation team included staff from the CRS Country Program and their partners. The team reviewed DAP reports, conducted interviews with community members benefiting from DAP interventions, visited project sites, and held discussions with community members, government officials, and partners.

Findings

The evaluation found that a number of project services and benefits had continued. Cropland bunding and irrigation practices intended to improve crop production were still being applied and, in some cases, had effectively improved livelihood resilience during a subsequent drought. Trained traditional birth attendants had continued to provide services with high levels of enthusiasm and commitment, and increased levels of health care-seeking behaviors were noted.

However, the ex-post evaluation also found a number of project benefits and services that had severely deteriorated. For example, nearly all water committees had dissolved, fee collection was irregular or had been discontinued, and many water schemes were not operational. Centrally managed nurseries had been abandoned.

Lessons Learned

- CRS/Ethiopia and its partners learned that the DAP potable water strategy had over-focused on the technical aspects ("hardware") while not paying enough atttttention to the community organizing dimensions and support by existing government services ("software").
- The strategy of centrally managed nurseries was a poor choice given the existing management capacity of communities and government.
- Even limited post-project follow-up by partners and government staff might have gone a long way towards mitigating the deterioration of project benefits and services.

Implications

The findings and lessons learned from this ex-post evaluation were used subsequently to inform the design of similar projects in Ethiopia. In addition, the evaluation was a valuable vehicle for raising awareness of these issues among partner staff. They learned much about the feasibility and effectiveness of their preferred strategies.

Reflection Opportunity

1. Think about the project you currently manage. Would you suggest doing an ex-post evaluation? Why or why not?
2. What are some ways to manage the ex-post evaluation that will maximize its benefit to partners?

Internal vs. External Evaluations

Internal evaluators are individuals associated with the organization implementing the project; external evaluators are not associated with the project.

Most donors request that key project evaluations (particularly final evaluations) be led by an external evaluator. Donors may also require approval of both the evaluator and their SOW. This is not to downplay the value of internally organized evaluations—especially those that help managers take good decisions for project correction and improvement. Rather, **using an external evaluator enhances the credibility of the process and helps avoid potential bias. An external evaluator also serves as a form of quality control for project management and for the implementing agency.** As such, external involvement strengthens the validity of the findings.

The same external evaluator should not do both the MTE and the final evaluation. If recommendations made by the evaluator at the mid-term are subsequently implemented, there may be a conflict of interest for one person to review the impact of their earlier suggestions.

For small projects with limited funding, hiring an external evaluator may not be an option. However, you can still bring in an outside perspective. For example, try grouping small projects together to fund an external evaluator; invite a regional technical staff member to participate; or invite a knowledgeable staff person from another CRS Country Program or another NGO to work on the evaluation as a learning opportunity.

Table 7.6 provides a list of the advantages and disadvantages of using external and internal evaluators. A well-balanced combination of both external and internal knowledge is usually ideal.

Table 7.6: Advantages and Disadvantages of External and Internal Evaluators

	External	Internal
ADVANTAGES	• Provides a fresh look at the project and can draw from other project experiences • Not personally involved, so it is easier to be objective • Is not part of the power and authority structure of the project • Trained in evaluation methods and has wide experience planning and conducting other evaluations • Better able to focus for longer periods of time on evaluation tasks	• Has in-depth understanding of the project and can interpret attitudes and behaviors of participants and stakeholders • May lessen anxiety as he is well-known to project stakeholders and has established relationships • Less expensive
DISADVANTAGES	• May have limited understanding of the project, and participants and stakeholders involved and therefore needs time to digest information on the project • May cause more anxiety as he does not have an established relationship of trust with project stakeholders • More expensive	• May be unwittingly constrained by attitudes such as "This is the only way to do things" or "We have always done it this way" • Personally and professionally involved, so harder to be objective • Is part of the power and authority structure of the project • May not be trained in evaluation methods and may have limited experience planning or conducting evaluations • May have time constraints for evaluation due to other duties

(Source: Adapted from Feuerstein 1986; McMillan and Willard 2006)

SECTION 2

GUIDANCE ON UTILIZATION-FOCUSED EVALUATIONS

SECTION OVERVIEW

CRS project managers, working closely with partners and other stakeholders, play an important role in initiating, organizing and managing evaluations. Often, project managers play a leadership role as the evaluation manager, ensuring that evaluations are well-planned and prepared and that team members receive support.

In Section 2, you will do the following:

- learn how to adjust or telescope evaluations;
- review the three phases of evaluations; and
- consider the practical steps of each phase.

TELESCOPING EVALUATIONS

UFEs are situation specific because they respond to the interests and information needs of identified users. Evaluations must also be further tailored by taking other factors into consideration, such as the following:

- project scope and size;
- resources available for the evaluation (budget, timeframe, etc.);
- complexity (stakeholder interests, institutional relationships, multi-country, multi-donor, multi-partner, etc.);
- donor guidelines mandated within the Award Agreement;
- availability of baseline and monitoring data gathered within the project that can be used in the evaluation;
- availability and capacity of project and partner staff to oversee, design, manage, and implement the evaluation;
- degree of public visibility; and
- decisions that need to be taken based on the evaluation's findings.

These factors—in particular, the decision-making needs of identified users—will help you determine the scope and size of your evaluation. They will also help to define the purpose, appropriate data collection methods, budget, time and skills that will be needed to complete the work.

- **Tsunami One Year Evaluation**—This is a good example of how multiple factors can contribute to the design of an evaluation. This was a large, high profile, emergency response in three countries, across two CRS regions. The evaluation had to be tailored to each of the three settings, as well as consider each country context, various program sectors at different stages of implementation, and different partner relationships. See the "From Theory to Practice" box on the next page for a summary of the evaluation.
- **C-SAFE Evaluation**—The C-SAFE regional initiative was created in response to the southern Africa food security crisis in 2002. A final evaluation was undertaken to assess the extent to which C-SAFE objectives were achieved in three countries and to document the resultant effects on participating communities. As part of the considerations for telescoping the SOW, the evaluation was designed to be less detailed for Lesotho which was a more recent member of the consortium. A copy of the <u>C-SAFE Scope of Work</u> is available on the ProPack II CD ROM.

From Theory to Practice: A Big Evaluation for a Big Program—Telescoping the Tsunami One-year Evaluation
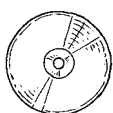
Tsunami Emergency
In December 2004, the world woke up to an earthquake in the Indian Ocean, which triggered a tsunami that swept coastlines and islands and killed an estimated 275,000 people. Within days, CRS began responding to the disaster in the three worst affected countries: India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. During its initial efforts, CRS responded to immediate needs by providing clean water and sanitation, shelter, food and non-food items, and livelihood recovery. After this initial response, the agency transitioned into its reconstruction phase and continues to work in the three countries, which are the focus of this impact assessment.

CRS Tsunami Response
The programs are providing assistance in the following sectors:
- food assistance;
- non-food items (plastic sheeting, cooking sets, mosquito nets, etc.) and shelter materials;
- environmental health (drilling and equipping boreholes, pit latrine construction, hygiene promotion, etc.);
- primary health (clinic construction/rehabilitation and operation);
- nutrition (supplementary feeding);
- education (primary school construction/rehabilitation and operation);
- agriculture (seeds and tools);
- protection (monitoring, training, fuel-efficient stove construction, etc.);
- psycho-social (individual and community counseling, advocacy, rehabilitation, and income generation activities);
- advocacy;
- peacebuilding and civil society; and
- capacity strengthening (all areas of program management, local communities, local partners, and NGOs).

Proposed Focus of One-year Evaluation
The main focus of the evaluation is to conduct a formative assessment of interventions in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

Evaluation Scope
The assessment will look at the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of both the initial response and of current ongoing operations in the three tsunami-affected countries. The evaluation will undertake an initial assessment of the impact of CRS' response on individuals and communities affected by the tsunami. Based on these assessments, recommendations will be made about what needs to be taken into consideration for future project direction in each country.

Evaluation Approach
The nature of the assessment will be primarily qualitative with quantitative analysis undertaken wherever possible and appropriate. Consultants will review the progress report indicators reported monthly to look for trends and gaps and to glean other relevant information. These indicators will be the basis for qualitative assessments. Given the complex nature of the emergency and its vast devastation, reconstruction efforts are still underway; this assessment will take into account the current stage of those efforts, so impact is likely to be at the IR level rather than the SO level.

CRS works within the context of Caritas Internationalis (CI) and will harmonize its approach to the extent feasible with CI evaluations to be undertaken during a similar timeframe. In that regard, the agency will take into account the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria for evaluating humanitarian aid. These include effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and relevance. Additional aspects of the assessment that would be beneficial include measuring coverage of programs, policy coherence, coordination and protection (where relevant). Assessments for each country in which CRS is implementing a tsunami response will be structured differently according to partner relationships, role within the Special Operations Appeal (SOA) and interventions. However, a core set of information will be collected from each country.

THREE PHASES OF AN EVALUATION

Introduction

An evaluation has approximately three phases, and each phase has a number of steps. While these steps are presented in rough, chronological order, as elsewhere, follow them in the way that makes the most sense for your situation. You may go back and forth as you feel necessary.

Phase One: Planning and Preparing for an Evaluation
The UFE approach asks you to pay particular attention to identifying users and involving them in the evaluation effort. For that reason, stakeholder analysis is revisited in this phase.

Phase Two: Implementing and Managing an Evaluation
The evaluation team will most likely include project insiders and outsiders who must work together efficiently and effectively under sometimes difficult conditions.
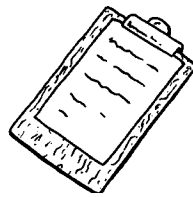
> **Don't Forget!**
>
> Refer to Essential Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for Project Managers, Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 38-42 for more information on building and managing teams.

Phase Three: Using an Evaluation
The core principle of UFE is that primary intended users (i.e., those stakeholders who will be taking decisions based on the outcome of the evaluation) should act upon the findings of the evaluation and its recommendations! This does not happen without sustained attention. By working closely with the UFE team, you and your partners can ensure that feasible and achievable action plans are written, and that evaluation findings are integrated into the next phase of the project and influence the design of future projects.

Phase One: Planning and Preparing for an Evaluation

An evaluation starts well in advance of the arrival of the evaluation team. They need a clear SOW, background documents, and staff assigned to support their work.
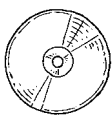
This section draws from a document entitled Preparing for the Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Pre-evaluation Planning. Although written for Title II project evaluations, this module is applicable to any evaluation.

Gather Preliminary Information

Review Donor Requirements

Many **donors have explicit evaluation guidance** for projects they fund. Some donors provide an explanation of what they expect in a mid-term or final evaluation in the proposal guidance or Award Agreement; others may require approval of the SOW or choice of consultants. It is wise to **make direct contact with donor representatives early in the evaluation planning process**. These visits will help to ensure that you are clear on all donor requirements surrounding the evaluation.

Donors may also provide technical support for your evaluation. They often develop useful guidance on technical aspects of an evaluation, such as how to sample. This type of guidance may be available on the technical support website for particular grant categories or can be obtained through CRS regional or headquarters technical advisors.

Review the Project Proposal and M&E Operating Manual

Review any evaluation plans or commitments made in the project proposal. You may also have other specific information in the M&E Operating Manual—information needs of stakeholders, baseline surveys, scheduling of the MTE and final evaluation or other sections.

Gather Lessons Learned

Ask for help, tips and evaluation-organizing lessons learned from partners, colleagues, designated M&E staff and your supervisor.

Organize Project Documents and Information

Well-organized project documents will help the evaluation team to work quickly and efficiently. Otherwise, they will waste time figuring out which documents they need and trying to find them.

Project staff can help organize this well ahead of the evaluation and before the arrival of any outside evaluation team members. In fact, the evaluation manager should **appoint someone whose sole task is to gather and organize critical project documents that will be reviewed by the team**. (See *Identify Evaluation Team Members* in this section on *pp. 236-237*) If you have kept an **M&E Operating Manual** as recommended here, compiling project information will not be difficult. A list of the documents most often used by an evaluation team is shown in Checklist 7.2.

Checklist 7.2: Documents Commonly Required by an Evaluation Team

- ✓ Project design documents (for example, a PRA study or needs assessment report)
- ✓ Field visit reports
- ✓ Results Framework and Proframe
- ✓ Progress and annual reports (CRS and its partners)
- ✓ The final, approved project proposal
- ✓ Internal or external project audits
- ✓ The Award Agreement
- ✓ Comparison of planned vs. actual expenditures
- ✓ Official amendments to the proposal and Award Agreement
- ✓ Budget analyses
- ✓ Relevant DIP documents
- ✓ M&E Operating Manual—including the latest updated PITT
- ✓ Monitoring and evaluation reports
- ✓ Review of relevant meeting minutes
- ✓ Project area maps
- ✓ Relevant training or technical reports
- ✓ Baseline survey reports
- ✓ Previous evaluation reports (e.g. the MTE report if a final evaluation is being planned)

Reflection Opportunity

1. Based on your last evaluation experience, what would you add to the list of project documents in Checklist 7.2?

Note that large, complex projects may require that the evaluation team develop documents or reports specifically for the evaluation. In most cases, an indicator update needs to be completed if this information is not in the latest progress report. Consult Preparing for the Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Pre-evaluation Planning (pp. 24–26) for further information.
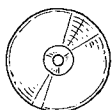
From Theory to Practice: Reading List for CRS/Malawi Final Evaluation

> The SOW for CRS/Malawi's DAP final evaluation indicated that the following documents would be needed for review by the consulting team:
> - DAP proposal;
> - DAP MTE;
> - annual Consolidated Results Report and Resource Request (CSR4s);
> - baseline studies;
> - Knowledge, Practice and Coverage (KPC) surveys;
> - outputs from the M&E system;
> - list of individuals and organizations in the DAP area partners and communities; and
> - final survey data and findings.

Conduct an Evaluation Stakeholder Analysis

First, it is important to **identify the interests and commitment of stakeholders to the planned evaluation and to determine the primary intended users of its** findings and recommendations. Once you are satisfied that all relevant stakeholders are represented, then **you will want to negotiate a process to involve the primary intended users in making decisions about the scope of the evaluation**.

Questions of scope must, of course, be informed by the resources available for the evaluation and any other relevant constraints. The users should be involved in the evaluation, but they may simply need to be consulted during a particular step—or they may need to be part of the team that plans and conducts the evaluation. You will also need to identify other stakeholders with an interest in or influence over the evaluation to see how they should be involved.

From Theory to Practice: Determining the Tsunami One-year Evaluation Stakeholders

> **Primary Intended Users**
> - CRS partner organizations
> - Country Representatives and staff working on the tsunami response in Aceh, India and Sri Lanka
> - Emergency Response Team personnel
> - Regional office personnel in SEAPRO and South Asia
> - CRS Vice President for Overseas Operations
>
> **Other Stakeholders**
> - Individuals and communities affected by the tsunami
> - CRS partners in-country
> - Caritas Internationalis
> - Other international NGOs/PVOs, including networks such as the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)
> - Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and other governmental donors
> - Private donors
> - Appropriate government staff in-country
> - Consultants working with CRS in-country

In general, an evaluation stakeholder analysis asks questions listed in Checklist 7.3.

Checklist 7.3: Questions for an Evaluation Stakeholder Analysis

✓ Who is funding the evaluation? Will this agency be the primary user of the information generated by the evaluation? Who is the main contact person(s)? What are their information needs, and have they been prioritized?
✓ Who else needs what information from this evaluation? Have these needs been prioritized?
✓ Who needs to be informed, consulted, work in partnership with or manage this stage of the evaluation?
✓ Who needs to help formulate the evaluation's purpose and major questions?
✓ Who needs to review and approve the evaluation consultant's SOW?
✓ Who needs to be briefed on the evaluation work schedule?
✓ Who needs to receive the evaluation report?

The stakeholder analysis will help you to identify evaluation team members; it will also provide you with the information that should go into the evaluation work plan, which should be summarized on a Gantt chart. (See *Develop an Initial Work Plan and Logistics Plan* on *pp. 238-239* and *Identify Evaluation Team Members* on *pp. 236-237* in this section for more information.)

***Think About It ...* Telescoping Evaluation Stakeholder Analysis**

Doing a stakeholder analysis may be complex or simple. A final evaluation of a consortia-type project will require a very careful stakeholder analysis, and managing all the stakeholders will take time. An MTE of a small, privately funded project with one partner also requires a stakeholder analysis, but it will be faster to complete.

Manage Evaluation Anxiety

The word "evaluation" often provokes sensitivities among staff and partners. Feelings about the evaluation may range from enthusiasm to resistance since the results can affect important decisions, such as how resources are allocated. Partners may have strong feelings about who should control the evaluation and make decisions.

Your job will be to anticipate and manage these sensitivities and anxieties. Applying the utilization-focused approach will help as this invites stakeholders to participate and help make decisions. Showing respect, facilitating communication and negotiating among project stakeholders are attitudes and skills you will need to manage sensitivities.

Determine the Primary Purpose and Intended Uses of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation will differ depending on whether it is a mid-term, final, or other type of evaluation. But the purpose will also be affected by the type of information primary users need in order to take management decisions, as well as any other requirements they may have.

Armed with the results of the earlier stakeholder analysis, you will want to prioritize the information needs of the primary user, the funding agency and others with an interest in the evaluation. As project manager, you will need to balance these different demands for information. Time must be spent ensuring that the priority information needs of key stakeholders are identified, discussed in a collaborative manner and agreed upon, bearing in mind the budget, time or other constraints facing the evaluation team.

From Theory to Practice: Collaborative Evaluation Design

> Well-conceived evaluation design greatly contributes to a useful product. While all the information comes from the field, the design needs to be a joint effort, seamlessly engaging both the field staff and the evaluators. This takes time. In one case, the process began with the field drafting a boilerplate SOW that focused on the evaluation methods, sites and names of key informants. Previous discussions had already revealed the evaluation type: an internal MTE.
>
> The evaluator suggested a menu of alternative evaluation objectives for the field to consider. These included: 1) Appropriateness; 2) Strategic Alignment; 3) Management and Administration; 4) Cost Accountability; 5) Implementation Process Appraisal; 6) Output Identification; 7) Outcomes Identification; and 8) Adaptability to Change.
>
> The field responded like a lottery winner on a shopping spree, picking numerous evaluation objectives for each of the many components of the program. The evaluator laid out the field's full request in the form of a planning matrix, including the objectives, lines of inquiry, decisions to inform and research instruments. This helped clarify the resources and time required to cover everything that was being requested—which amounted to over six months of work!
>
> Subsequent discussions were always based on the design framework, refining the lines of inquiry, and prioritizing the important decisions needing information. After several exchanges, the evaluator and the field staff agreed to an evaluation design that was useful to the program, achievable in the given time frame and budget and within the evaluator's competency.
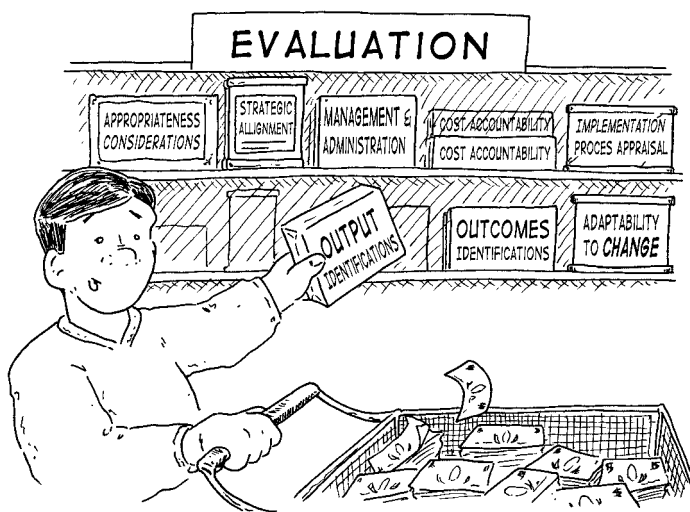
There may be multiple purposes for one evaluation. Its purposes could, for example, include judging the value of the project, providing training for CRS and partner staff, and building relations with community members. There may be very clear guidance from the donor on the evaluation purpose, and these should be shared with other stakeholders. Primary intended users of the evaluation (usually CRS and its partners) will also contribute to decisions about the purpose of the evaluation.

Identify Evaluation Team Members

Evaluations benefit from inside and outside perspectives. Depending on the project, the evaluation team should include a range of expertise and skills that match the specifics of the evaluation in question. You will want to balance local knowledge with the evaluation expertise of outsiders. For a large, complex project, it may be obvious that you need an evaluation expert— but it may also be important to include team members who understand CRS, can facilitate workshops, conduct on-site rapid research, and who have technical competencies in the project areas. You may want to seek team members who have good negotiation and conflict management skills, especially the team leader.

Table 7.7: List of Personnel Critical to the Success of an Evaluation

Position	Responsibilities
Evaluation Manager	As written earlier, this is usually the project manager, although it may be the head of program or the head of the M&E unit. This person provides support and leadership within the evaluation team and plays a significant coordinating role before, during and after the evaluation. If an outside evaluator is involved, the evaluation manager ensures that pre-evaluation preparations are completed in advance of the consultant's arrival.
Evaluation Team Leader	Often a regional technical advisor or outside evaluation consultant. This person is responsible for ensuring the evaluation is completed on time and to a high standard. They are also responsible for quality control, technical guidance and mentoring of other team members, as needed.
Evaluation Team Members	Roles and responsibilities of these members are defined according to the specific scope and requirements of the evaluation. To ensure clarity, include the specific responsibilities of individual team members in the SOW.
Logistics Coordinator	Responsible for setting up site visits and visits to officials; organizing food, transportation, and lodging; setting up office space and computer facilities for the team; and other tasks, as required. A critical position, though its value is often unrecognized.

If you decide to appoint an external evaluation consultant, ask for advice and assistance from other NGOs, your regional office, headquarters, or other in-country resources. CRS headquarters has a consultant database. Consult Human Resources for information.

Draft an Initial Evaluation SOW

The evaluation SOW summarizes the purpose and objectives agreed to by the donor and project stakeholders. The SOW describes the overall evaluation exercise by providing details about the evaluation planning process—who, what, how, when, and where. It also includes an initial work plan in the form of a Gantt chart. For some evaluations, you can use the Results Framework as a starting point, highlighting which project objectives you will be examining and the questions that need to be addressed in the evaluation. Preliminary ideas can then be shared with other relevant stakeholders for input. You may wish to hold a workshop with partners to review the draft evaluation SOW.

A good SOW—just like a DIP—provides an initial plan upon which the evaluation can build. A good, readily available guide for writing an evaluation SOW is Bonnard (2002). Although written specifically for Title II evaluations, much of the guidance is useful for evaluating other activities. As mentioned earlier, your donor may have specific guidance for the content and format of your evaluation and may want to sign off on the final version of the SOW. Spending time and ensuring that stakeholders are appropriately involved in preparing a SOW will help improve the evaluation's quality, relevance and subsequent usefulness to decision-making. In general, a well-developed evaluation SOW includes the information summarized in Checklist 7.4.

Checklist 7.4: What to Include in an Evaluation SOW

✓ Brief overview of the project to be evaluated, including its objectives, activities, history and current status, partners or organizations involved, etc.

✓ Evaluation objectives, purpose, users and audience.

✓ Technical expertise needed for the evaluation team and a summary of the roles and responsibilities of team members. Ultimately, each team member will require an individual SOW detailing their responsibilities.

✓ Evaluation questions to be answered (general, sector-specific, etc.) and suggested methods for addressing them. Note that this may be more or less detailed in a first draft SOW.

✓ Suggested work plan (e.g., Gantt chart) that shows a calendar or timetable of evaluation activities with milestones for major evaluation deliverables.

✓ Final evaluation report format and the process for feedback and drafting of the final report.

✓ Budget and number of days required for team members and the consultant.

✓ List of key documents and information the Country Program will provide.

(Source: Adapted from McMillan and Willard 2006; Bonnard 2002)

Although the SOW may contain initial suggestions for the evaluation design, methodological approach and work plan, it is ultimately the responsibility of the evaluation team leader to take ownership of these matters. Any significant decisions related to the evaluation, however, must be discussed by the evaluation team and appropriate stakeholders.

From Theory to Practice: A Note on Final Surveys

> The final survey is usually separate from the final evaluation. In many projects, it is completed before the final evaluation. This allows the evaluation team to validate the data, compare before and after baseline information, and to focus on analysis rather than on detailed data collection. In other cases, the final survey may be part of the final evaluation team's SOW.
>
> The issue of what to do at final evaluation when there is no baseline survey was briefly mentioned in *Chapter IV, Section 2, pp. 103-104*. The recommendations made by Bamberger et al. (2006) focus on the following options.
>
> 1. Reconstructing baseline data using: 1) existing data; 2) documents from within CRS; and 3) documents from outside CRS (e.g., partners, other agencies working in the same area). All secondary data would need to be checked for reliability and validated.
>
> 2. Interviewing people for quantitative and qualitative recall data applicable at the time the project was beginning.
>
> 3. Working closely with key informants who may have useful reference data on baseline conditions.
>
> 4. Using RRA/PRA techniques to tease out the history of the community and its significant events.

Develop an Initial Work Plan and Logistics Plan

Make a list of major evaluation activities, and develop a work plan in the form of a Gantt chart, much like you did for your project's Activity Schedule. The work plan will list evaluation activities, the person responsible for each, start and end dates, and major milestones. You can then use this work plan as a tool for dialogue with the team and, once finalized, to help monitor and manage the evaluation.

Logistics are especially important for any planned evaluation site visits. Respect for partners and project participants is demonstrated when you take the time to make appointments with partners, community members, government officials and others. It is important to communicate clearly the dates and objectives of anticipated project site visits during the evaluation. Examples of other logistical planning include:

- providing country briefing and security information to the evaluation team
- organizing food, transportation and lodging;
- creating office space;
- ensuring accessibility to e-mail;
- setting up computer and printing facilities; and
- responding to other requirements of the evaluation team.

Finalize the Evaluation SOW

Your initial draft of the SOW should now be finalized. This should be done in collaboration with the team leader as she has overall responsibility for the process, quality and timeliness of the evaluation and its technical content. The team leader should be actively engaged in developing the specific evaluation questions and methods that are included in the final version of the SOW. The document should also specify how findings will be summarized and analyzed, by whom and when. (See the CRS One-year Tsunami Response Evaluation SOW for more information.)
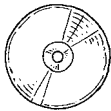
Phase Two: Implementing and Managing an Evaluation

Implement the Work Plan

The SOW has been finalized, your evaluation team leader has arrived and has read the documents, appointments have been made, evaluation questionnaires have been written, and everything seems "good to go." Now, all that is needed is for the evaluation team to put the SOW and work plan into effect, right? Well, yes—but as with project implementation, evaluation implementation may not be so straightforward. It requires monitoring and managing any difficulties that arise.

As the evaluation manager, along with other appropriate stakeholders, you need to monitor work plan progress. You will want to ensure that activities are on schedule, pay special attention to milestones, and ensure that deliverables are being produced. For example, if logistical problems hamper the evaluation, work with others to take action and resolve these problems early on.

From Theory to Practice: Using Traffic Lights to Monitor Progress
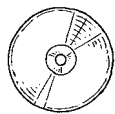
> CRS worked in one Country Program with consultants who used a simple, but very effective monitoring tool, the _Weekly Status Report_, to track progress of their assignment. The consultants sent out the _Weekly Status Report_ in the form of a summary e-mail with an attached MS Excel workbook comprised of three worksheets, as follows:
>
> - Task Status Worksheet;
> - Project Issues Log; and
> - Project Risks Log.
>
> The Task Status Worksheet contained each task and its scheduled end date. To make it easy to track progress, there was a color-coding system to show if a task had been completed (green), if it was due next week (yellow) or if it was incomplete (red). A comments column could be used for explanations, as appropriate.
>
> The Project Issues and Risks Logs each provided greater detail about issues and risks that could potentially affect project progress. An important element of each of the Logs was the allocation of responsibility to a specific individual (the "Action Owner") for managing an issue or risk, and the clear identification of the action to be taken to address the issue or to lessen exposure to the risk.
>
> An updated version of the Status Report was sent out on a weekly basis accompanied by a very short e-mail summarizing the highlights of the week, both progress and pressing issues and risks.

You will want to keep a close eye on the external evaluator's progress. For example, is he fully addressing the questions included in the SOW? Did he absorb the information about the project contained in the prepared documents? Do you sense that he is bringing other agendas to the evaluation? Regular and open communication with the evaluation team is vital. In this way, you can detect and address any problems in a timely manner. Such dialogue will also be in the interests of the evaluation team. It allows the team to keep you informed of what they are seeing, what they observe and possible evaluation findings. This dialogue, in turn, strengthens the team's final analysis and lessens any potential conflicts which might otherwise arise during the final presentation.

You will also need to manage the team involved in the evaluation. You may have to manage relationships among team members (although that is primarily the task of the evaluation team leader) or deal with emerging anxieties among CRS and its partner colleagues.

Lastly, you will need to manage stakeholders and decide what to communicate and how to communicate it. For example, you may be responsible for holding regular meetings to inform other stakeholders of evaluation progress.

> ### _Think About It …_ Being a Servant-leader during Evaluation
>
> An appropriate role for you as the evaluation manager is that of "servant-leader," a concept introduced in _Chapter II, Section 1, pg. 20._ A servant-leader asks, "How can I help you to do your work better?" and provides strong support to help a team achieve its goals. It is one of the tasks of an evaluation manager to ensure that the work of the invited evaluation team is valued and supported in a practical way by CRS staff.

Analyze and Understand the Data

The information in Table 7.8 clarifies this important step in any evaluation—turning the data into usable knowledge.

Table 7.8: Four Steps to Analyzing Evaluation Findings

1. Description and Analysis	• Organize raw data into a form that reveals basic patterns.

2. Interpretation	• Interpretations go beyond data to add context and determine meaning. This is done by answering the following questions:
	  o What do the results mean?
	  o What is the significance of the findings?
	  o What are some possible explanations of the results?

3. Judgment	• The following questions are answered:
	  o In what ways are the results positive or negative?
	  o What is good or bad, desirable or undesirable within the project outcomes?

4. Recommendations	• Describe what should be done. • Ensure recommendations can be acted upon. • Allow time to develop recommendations collaboratively with appropriate stakeholders.

(Source: Adapted from Patton 1997)

The IHD framework (or other appropriate conceptual frameworks) can be of great help in steps one and two of Table 7.8. You can use the framework's boxes to organize data into more meaningful categories that show linkages and influences. An IHD lens can be incorporated into the design of project evaluations, even if it has not been an explicit objective of the project. Some sample initial questions that can be asked include the following.

- How has the project strengthened household and community assets?
- Has the project increased household and community resilience to shocks, cycles and trends?
- How has the project changed attitudes or behaviors?
- Are households and communities better able to influence structures and systems?
- Have households or communities developed new or improved livelihood strategies?

Each one of these questions should trigger additional analysis; for example, when you refer to households and communities, do you mean all households, or are their differences within and between communities? If so, why, and how does it affect the evaluation's recommendations? How do concerns about gender affect the evaluation's findings?

Utilization-focused Communication

Evaluation reports may be used for a variety of purposes. They may:

- **promote dialogue and understanding** of the project among stakeholders;
- **demonstrate accountability** to donors and other stakeholders;
- **demonstrate results** in order to gain support from stakeholders;
- **assess the value-added** of the project's investment compared with other possible uses of those resources;
- **educate** readers by reporting findings to help organizational learning and
- **strengthen advocacy** by using evidence from findings.

(Source: Adapted from Kusek and Rist 2004)

Reflection Opportunity

1. In your experience, what other purposes are served by evaluation reports?

Evaluation Report Format

In the evaluation SOW, the draft report outline or format was included; this will need to be discussed with and agreed upon by the evaluation team. After all, it's their responsibility to write the report! First, check to see if the donor has a prescribed format. **Many evaluators like to develop an outline for the report as early as possible since it helps structure their approach to the conduct of the evaluation;** it acts as a checklist of topics to cover, helping them stay on course for delivering the final product.

Mid-term, final or ex-post evaluation reports should include the information listed in the Table 7.9. Ensure that you adapt this format to respond to your evaluation users' needs.

Table 7.9: Generic Evaluation Report Format

Executive Summary	• Include key evaluation findings and recommendations in the Executive Summary.
Introduction	• Clearly state the purpose of the report, evaluation questions, project background and objectives.
Evaluation Description	• Describe the purpose, methodology and any related considerations. • Note who did the evaluation and when it was implemented.
Presentation of Findings	• Depending on the context, organize the findings (and related data) around evaluation questions, major sectors, or IRs and SOs. • Use charts, tables and photographs whenever possible to communicate findings succinctly and clearly.
Conclusions and Recommendations	• Connect the conclusions and recommendations to the corresponding evidence. Recommendations should clearly follow from and be supported by the evaluation findings. • Be aware that the conclusions and recommendations may be the only things outside readers turn to in an evaluation report! • Differentiate between "major" and "minor" recommendations: those that require immediate attention (major) and those aimed at longer-term development of the project (minor). Avoid long, indiscriminate lists! • Offer multiple options with associated costs or risks. • Focus on actions that are within the control of intended users. • Think about how recommendations can be written so that follow-up action can be taken.
References	• Indicate the documents that have been consulted.
Appendices	• Evaluation SOW • PITT • List of team members • Sites visited • Lists of people and organizations consulted • List of acronyms • Map of project area • Other information that supports what is written in the main report (e.g., more detailed tabulations, a more comprehensive explanation of the sampling methodology, etc.)

Findings and recommendations from a diagnostic study (see *Chapter VII, Section 1, pg. 221*) may best be communicated by a problem diagnostic report. A sample format is shown in Checklist 7.5.

Checklist 7.5: Sample Diagnostic Study Report Format

✓ Short statement defining the problem and how it was identified.
✓ Description of underlying causes and the project context.
✓ Assessment of how the problem is affecting project implementation.
✓ Discussion of possible courses of action and recommendations.

(Source: Casley and Kumar 1987)

Lessons Learned

Many evaluations call for lessons learned. **A lesson learned is a general principle that can be applied in other situations to improve a project.** Identifying lessons learned helps share and promote successes and avoid errors or mistakes.

Strong and well-written lessons learned:

- **include a general principle than can be applied in other situations.** Do not write the lesson only as an observation, description or a recommendation that lacks justification.
- **explain the lesson in the context of the project**. For it to be useful to other people, they need to understand the situation in which it occurred. Relating the lesson to assumptions on which the project is based can help others understand what, exactly, has been learned. For example, you may write, "We assumed, incorrectly, that women would be able to participate in training workshops. We now know ..." This helps you avoid using generic, non-specific language.
- **justify the lesson with proof of why it is valid.** Clarify where it came from—monitoring data? Field observations? A project evaluation?
- **avoid extremes**—lessons learned should be neither too general nor too specific.

(Source: IFAD 2002)

Reflection Opportunity

1. Consider the following statement submitted as a lesson learned: "Partners should be more involved in the project design."
2. How would you rewrite this to be a "strong" lesson learned?

From Theory to Practice: Learning Lessons in Southern Africa
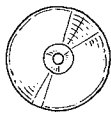
An excellent example of a lessons learned document is the *Top 10 C-SAFE Initiatives in Monitoring and Evaluation* (Owubah et al. 2005). It contains 10 short descriptions of M&E approaches, tools, and techniques that the C-SAFE program either developed or adapted in order to meet the information needs of the program. The aim of this document is to share better practices and lessons learned in M&E, with the ultimate goal of improving program quality both within the C-SAFE membership, as well as of other interested stakeholders.

Success and Learning Stories
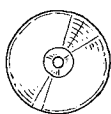
There is a growing interest on the part of donors and CRS to receive stories as part of regular reporting. These stories also support learning about the human impact of projects. CRS has developed guidance—*Success and Learning Story Package: Guidelines and Tools for Writing Effective Project Impact Reports*—on how to write clear, consistent, and well-documented success stories or learning stories. The Package offers suggestions and guidance to write stories that more consistently provide information on impact and highlight key accomplishments to partners, donors, CRS and other stakeholders.

Report Writing

Most evaluation reports are written by an individual or small team. Consider ways, however, to involve more people in the process. Undertaken in a creative and sensitive manner, report writing provides another opportunity to strengthen the capacity of partners and community members and, thus, existing relationships. For example, CRS/India documented best practices involving project stakeholders—some of whom are pre-literate— using an innovative technique called the "Write-Shop."

From Theory to Practice: Participatory Reporting—Write-Shop

Write-Shop is a way of helping project participants to be active information creators—not just passive information-providers. They help people overcome limitations, such as illiteracy that prevent them from telling and analyzing their own experiences within a project. Write-Shops are organized as workshops that involve a number of evaluation stakeholders, including:

- participants from the project site (individuals, community-based organization members or others) who are the authors of the stories;
- facilitators who provide additional input;
- CRS or partner staff who act as editors and help support the authors; and
- illustrators or artists who help to visualize the stories through drawings and sketches.

Authors and case studies are identified prior to the workshop. The author presents or reads her story to the facilitators, who highlight best practices or lessons learned. Next, the author works with the editors to refine the story. Illustrators prepare the drawings. The story is then typed into a computer, and the illustrations are scanned and placed in the text. The draft is presented once again to the facilitators, who examine it one last time for content, language, and appropriateness. Finally, the draft is completed and credit given to the author.
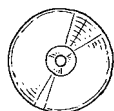
One Hand Can't Clap By Itself is an example of a Write-Shop product and is included on the ProPack II CD ROM.

Debriefing

Debriefing usually involves a series of short meetings. These are held according to an agreed upon schedule between the evaluation team, the evaluation manager and other key project stakeholders (e.g., CRS staff, partners, and project participants who have been heavily involved in the process). During these meetings, **the evaluation team shares its observations, findings, conclusions and recommendations**, as appropriate. It is also a good opportunity to raise any issues that the manager will need to resolve. The aim is to strengthen dialogue and joint ownership of the evaluation process. By doing this, it is more likely that all stakeholders will accept—and implement—the team's findings and recommendations.

With an ongoing dialogue, you will have a better idea of what will be presented at the final debriefing. The fewer surprises there are at this final meeting, the better it is for all parties. At the final debriefing, it is helpful to use visual displays of information whenever possible, such as pie charts, bar graphs or distribution maps. These help to communicate evaluation information quickly and clearly.

You may want to hold additional debriefing meetings with other key evaluation stakeholders—local government officials, the donor representative, other CRS program staff, etc. In these meetings, the evaluation team leader usually presents the methodology used and the findings and recommendations from the evaluation report before answering questions. The earlier ongoing process of dialogue between the evaluation team and the manager will help to ensure that a shared understanding, and a commitment to act on the recommendations, is presented to other key stakeholders at these meetings.

Evaluate the Evaluation!

Before your evaluation team disbands, evaluate the evaluation process. You can do this by using the learning review questions in *Section 1, pg. 222* of this chapter or with these three questions.

1. What went well, and why?
2. What was challenging, and why?
3. What would you suggest doing differently for your next evaluation?

You can also consult the list of evaluation standards noted earlier in this chapter (see *Section 1, pg. 218*). Select standards that the team decides are relevant to your situation and use them as criteria for assessing the quality of your evaluation.

Chapter VI, Section 2, Checklist 6.3, pg. 173 included a sample evaluation form for technical assistance. You can use this form to evaluate the assistance provided by the evaluation leader.

Assign someone to document your assessment of the evaluation, and to make it available to others in the Country Program, regional office, and in PQSD, so that your experiences can be shared more widely. It will be of great use to other CRS Country Programs and staff who conduct evaluations.

Phase Three: Using an Evaluation

You and your partner need to promote use of the evaluation findings by intended users. **Never assume that evaluation recommendations will be adopted without some action on your part!** Your aim is to maximize the likelihood that any follow-up interventions are informed by this new learning.

From Theory to Practice: How Did We Do? Using the Final Evaluation Findings

One CRS program had been implementing a Title II program in the north of the country. The project was scheduled to finish, and an externally-led final evaluation had been planned. At the same time, it was clear that the Country Program was keen to submit a proposal for a follow-on project, and assistance was sought from the regional office and headquarters to participate in a design team.

The project manager was intent on scheduling the final evaluation so that it would feed directly into the design process for the follow-on project. This was not an easy task given that this involved juggling the various work schedules of those involved in the two different processes. After much correspondence, however, they were finally able to synchronize their schedules. During the course of the project design workshop, the evaluation team leader presented his initial findings to the design team, which was composed of CRS and partner staff, and the donor. The findings included some important issues about project performance that informed and influenced their work.

If the project is ongoing, it may be harder than you think to help staff and partners make needed changes, because they are often very committed to the way they are already doing things. Although it is rarely straightforward, changing attitudes and practices is facilitated by the adoption of the utilization-focused approach to evaluations. As you have seen, this approach fosters ownership of the findings and recommendations among project staff. This is conducive to seeking change in practices after the evaluation has been completed and the findings disseminated.
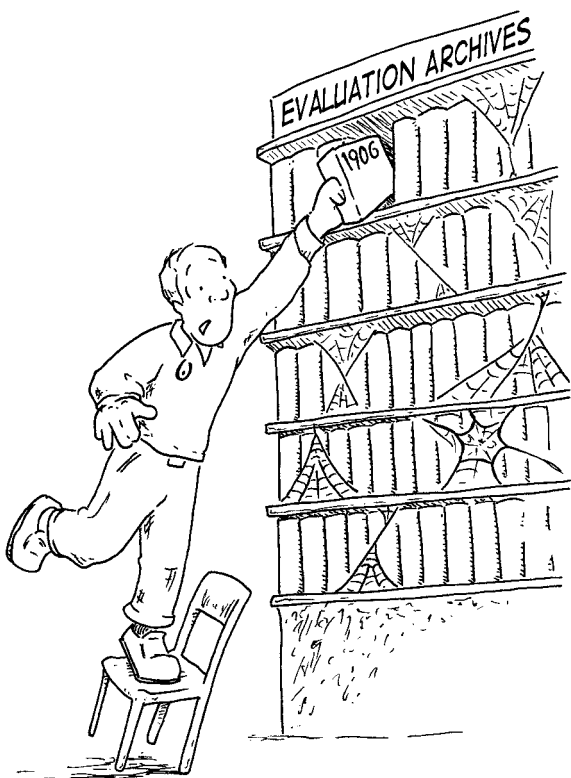
You may be in a situation where evaluation findings and recommendations are sensitive. In such cases, present them in a way that focuses on the interests of project participants and promotes problem-solving. This will help prevent project stakeholders from taking a defensive position.
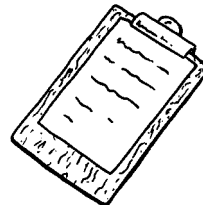
Don't Forget!

Review *Chapter II, Section 3, pp. 55-56* for information on conflict management.

Use Evaluation Findings

UFEs emphasize that "use" involves making decisions and improving projects, among other actions—not just writing up evaluation reports and disseminating them. These kinds of decisions and actions may take place immediately after the evaluation is complete or they may feed into longer-term project planning and design.

From Theory to Practice: Using the Findings to Get Back on Target

One CRS Country Program carried out a MTE of its DAP. The evaluation was critical of the project's slow pace of implementation, poor choice of methodologies, weak participatory approaches, and lack of progress in meeting the objectives of its PITT. Based on the results, the Country Program organized a workshop with all stakeholders to review the recommendations of the evaluation and plan activities for the remaining 2½ years of the program. The evaluation served as the impetus for all stakeholders to focus on how they could best apply their talents and energies to contribute toward accomplishing the program's objectives.

Using Periodic or Mid-term Evaluations

If the evaluation is a MTE or other kind of formative evaluation, consider holding a meeting or workshop where project stakeholders review the findings and recommendations and integrate these into the next phase of project planning. Spend time discussing the implications of the evaluation for the remaining time-period of the project. You may decide to revise targets on the PITT worksheet, revise the DIP Activity Schedule, or take other actions (within the parameters of the budget and project Award Agreement, of course).

From Theory to Practice: Using the MTE to Effect Change

> ***Introduction***
> PQSD administers an Institutional Capacity Building award from USAID/FFP. The objectives of this grant are to reduce food insecurity in vulnerable populations; build country, regional, and partner capacity to manage risk; and to address major food security challenges. Additionally, PQSD seeks to use the award to understand and influence policy and to measure and document impact.
>
> ***Original Design***
> The original submission included a PITT documenting the performance indicators (impact and monitoring) and associated targets for various levels of objectives.
>
> ***MTE***
> With significant changes in PQSD personnel and 2½ years of implementation experience, initial MTE discussions have highlighted the need to seek USAID/FFP's approval to amend the content and targets of the original PITT to reflect changes in the operating environment and implementation realities.

Below is an example of how a number of learning-oriented evaluations helped to shape the phases of a CRS education program in Vietnam. In this example, MTE and final evaluation findings were used to improve project design and scale-up program efforts to include advocacy and policy influence.

From Theory to Practice: Learning in Education

> In 1992, CRS and the Vietnamese National Institute for Education Sciences piloted small projects to promote inclusion of disabled children in education settings. Based on an evaluation of the pilot phase, models of Inclusive Education and community support were refined, including improved teacher trainings, integration with health, and involvement of community support groups. These refined strategies were implemented in three northern provinces. The MTE showed many positive trends, such as further inclusion of disabled children, increases in public awareness about disabilities, and improvement of education for all children in project areas. These results led to CRS and others undertaking joint advocacy efforts at the national level. In December 2000, the number of children with disabilities enrolled in schools in program areas increased by 25%, and the government made inclusive education a central component in the national 10-year education strategy.

Communicate Knowledge from the Evaluation

There are many ways to present evaluation report findings and recommendations besides simply disseminating the written report. You may wish to write up and distribute a one to two page **Executive Summary** that notes major findings and recommendations in a bulleted format and includes a very brief overview of the evaluation purpose, major questions and research methods.

Oral presentations can be made using whatever resources are locally available. More formal presentations might demand the use of PowerPoint slides, but other settings may demand less formality (e.g., flip charts). The RRA/PRA literature contains many ideas that can be adapted to different situations when making community-based presentations. As you prepare your presentation, keep in mind what kind of information your audience will be most interested in and how best to engage their attention. In oral presentations, speak simply and clearly, and avoid presentations of detailed data. Tell the audience what you will say, say it and then summarize what you said! Be flexible to allow for audience interest and questions.

Visual presentations can often convey information more effectively than written documents or oral presentations. Charts, diagrams, tables, maps, graphs or other tools can communicate key information at a glance, make it easier to show comparisons, illustrate patterns and trends and provide a welcome alternative to presentations that contain only narrative.
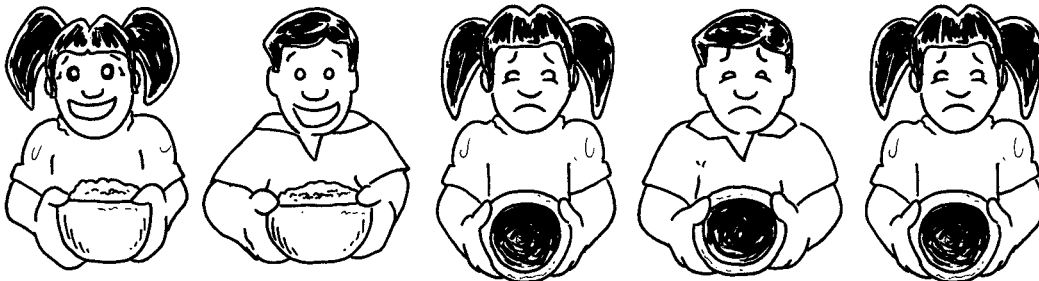
3 OUT OF 5 CHILDREN DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT

Finally, if appropriate, **look for ways to make evaluation presentations a learning event for those participating**. As you present the data, guide attendees through the analysis you undertook to reach your findings and recommendations; explain why one recommendation was preferred to alternative options; encourage audience feedback and participation and, thus, ownership of the outcomes of the discussion (Casley and Kumar 1987).

Update the PTS
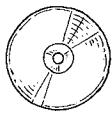
The PTS asks for evaluation abstracts for mid-term and final evaluations. There are three fields to complete for evaluation information, as described in the *Reporting* section of the Project Tracking System User Manual (CRS 2004). Note the maximum of only 2,500 characters in the Evaluation Abstract text field, so ensure that only the most important information is entered.

Input data into these fields using the guidelines below:

Mid-term Evaluations
There are three main things to report on:

1. Assessment of achievements to date on the key Activities, Outputs, IRs and, if possible, SOs. The inputted data should include any positive or negative unanticipated effects. Reporting should be referenced against the Activities, Outputs, IRs and SOs listed and numbered in the PTS Project Goal and Objectives field.

2. Any special problems and significant changes in project design (in relation to the project proposal).

3. Key recommendations for addressing problems/making course changes in project design and implementation.

Final Evaluations/Reports
There are three main things to report on:

1. Assessment of whether key mid-term recommendations were acted upon, why or why not and with what outcomes.

2. Assessment of achievement of the SOs—interpreting achievements or lack thereof in relation to the assessment and other factors the evaluators think are relevant.

3. Lessons learned for the design and implementation of such projects in the future, whether by CRS alone or the developmental relief community worldwide.

SECTION 3

PROJECT CLOSE-OUT

SECTION OVERVIEW

Figure 7.2: Close-out within the Project Cycle
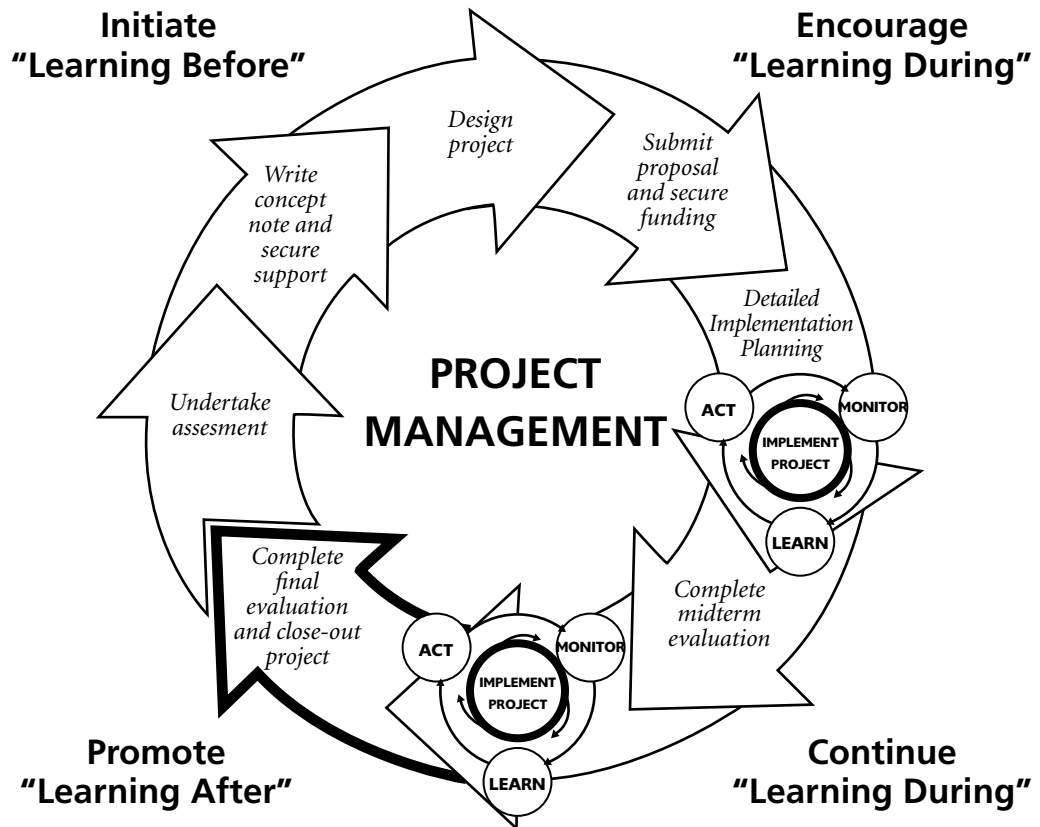
You may think that a final evaluation closes the chapter on the project you manage. This is incorrect—you still have important work to do! Projects have a specified end date, and you need to plan for close-out (as shown in Figure 7.2 above) since it is the crucial final stage of the project cycle. This involves a number of tasks related to program, financial and administrative closure. For example, all the required reports must be submitted, project staff and other resources must be re-deployed, and project documentation must be well-organized, on file and accessible for future use.

In Section 3, you will do the following:

- understand the importance of project close-out; and
- review close-out requirements for CRS.

INTRODUCTION

The "From Theory to Practice" Failure to Plan story illustrates what can happen when project close-out is carried out incorrectly. After reading the story, answer the Reflection Opportunity questions to look more critically at your own project close-out practices.

From Theory to Practice: Failure to Plan for the End from the Start

> David is a new project manager. An audit team is arriving in-country to examine a project that ended a year ago. David is responsible for preparing the reports and information the audit team will need because no one from the former project is still on staff. One week later, David is frustrated by his hunt for information—all of his current work has suffered, and he is not much closer to having the information the team will need. Progress reports were filed incorrectly, and many appear to be missing. Proper documentation to support project costs is also hard to find. The reasons for some cost re-allocations were not documented clearly, and the Country Program team is quite worried about unallowable costs.

Reflection Opportunity

1. What other problems may arise from the situation described in the Failure to Plan story?
2. How does your experience with project close-outs compare to this story? When have they gone well, and why? When have there been problems, and why?

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT CLOSE-OUT

The Failure to Plan story illustrates the importance of planning and carrying out close-out tasks before the end of the project. In the long run, an investment in good project management practices—from systematic filing to careful financial management—saves time and money! **Remember to plan for the end of the project from the very beginning of project design, planning, and implementation.**

Project close-out is a crucial process that helps identify any problems (such as costs that are not justified) before the end of the project, providing an opportunity to correct them. It involves activities that wrap things up in a well-planned, clear and accountable manner.

Think About It … **Audits Are Routine Business in CRS**

Audits usually examine whether financial operations and statements are in compliance with legal and contractual obligations. Most project audits are done by an external audit firm; your donor will tell you if one is required. The auditor will verify project expenditures by inspecting financial, procurement and human resource records at CRS and partners' offices. She will review the program and financial reporting to ensure it complies with the Award Agreement. She may also want to visit project sites to verify that reported activities occurred, e.g., that 50 houses were built. CRS conducts an internal audit of each Country Program at least once every three years. This is usually sufficient for USG-funded projects, which generally do not require a specific project audit.

CLOSE-OUT PART A: THREE MONTHS BEFORE PROJECT END-DATE

While you should always plan for the end from the beginning, **you should begin more intensive preparation for project close-out three months before the project award expires**. CRS project managers are often reassigned, so it is important to start this process before institutional memory is lost or inaccessible. Close-out plans for large or complex projects must always be developed with project stakeholders, especially when no follow-on activities are planned by CRS. Eight steps are described below for close-out three months before the end of the project.

Some donors funding complex projects may require you to submit a formal close-out plan. An example from USAID is available at the following web address:
http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/ffp/closout.htm

Step One: Set Expense Cut-off Date

Review the BCR and Award Agreement with the finance manager. You should clearly **establish a cut-off date after which no more expenses can be charged to the project,** and communicate this information to project staff and partners.

What should you do if an invoice or liquidation arrives after the end of the project? Expenses are generally allowable as long as the equipment, supplies, or services were delivered on or before the project end-date. The amount of time you have available to pay or liquidate depends, however, on the source of project funding. Table 7.10 describes the procedures for different funding sources.

Table 7.10: Liquidation Procedures According to Funding Sources

CRS	CRS allocation-funded projects end on September 30th. It is not possible to charge any expenses after this date. If an invoice will be delivered after September 30th (for goods or services performed on or before that date), ensure the Finance Manager accrues the cost. This will ensure the expense is recorded in the current fiscal year.
USG	USG projects allow a 90-day liquidation period after the end of the grant. Note, however, that all financial, performance and other reports, as required by the Award Agreement are due within 90 calendar days after the date of project completion. For example, you have up to 90 days to pay the costs for a training workshop that took place before the award completion date, but since all financial reports are due within 90 days, the actual amount of time available to settle such costs is shorter. Consult *OMB Circular A-110 Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations.* http://www.whitehouse.gov/omG/circulars/a110/a110.html
UNHCR	The Sub-Project Agreement indicates the termination date for the Sub-Project and the liquidation date for all Sub-Project disbursements. The liquidation date is usually one month after the termination date and is the last date on which the implementing partner can make disbursements against Sub-Project commitments. No new commitments are to be entered into after the termination date, and outstanding commitments must be declared in the Sub-Project Monitoring Report due a few days after the termination date.

Step Two: Review Planned Expenditures and Activities for Final Months

With the finance manager and partner, discuss plans for expenditures over the final few months. Equipment, supplies or services must be delivered or completed on or before the project end date in order for the expense to be allowable. (Audit expense is the one exception, because it can only be initiated once the financial report is completed.)

Discuss these questions with project implementers and finance and administrative staff.

- If you still need to order equipment, will it be delivered in time?
- Is a purchase at such a late stage in the project cycle defendable to the donor?
- If you are planning meetings or workshops, will there be sufficient time to process participant travel expense claims, hotel invoices, etc.?
- Can all the expenses for activities planned in the final months be paid within the liquidation period allowed by the donor?

Finance and administration staff can ensure that vendors submit documentation promptly if they know which expenses might have a tight timeframe for payment.

If your project is under-spent at this stage, you may ask the donor for a no-cost extension (i.e., an extension beyond the original end-date without an increase in funding). You can request this if you cannot meet the project objectives by the end-date or if you are considering revising the scope of activities to program excess funds. Any no-cost extension will require, at minimum, a consultation with the donor and may require formal written approval.

Step Three: Review Income and Expenditures

With the finance manager, go over Checklist 7.6 to assess whether your project's finances are under control.

Checklist 7.6: Project Close-out General Income and Expenditure Review Questions

✓ If funding is in installments, are you up-to-date with your requests?
✓ Has the donor sent the installments you requested?
✓ After currency conversion, do you have the same amount of funding that you projected?
✓ Are all project staff current with their timesheet submissions? For international staff, check the "Missing Timesheet Report" on the Intranet.
✓ Are you sure staff have been coding their timesheets correctly?
✓ Were all expenditures coded to your project accurate and allowable?
✓ Did you notify the finance manager of any errors or re-classifications? Were the changes processed?
✓ Are anticipated expenses missing (e.g., flight cost for a trip taken three months ago)?
✓ Have you exceeded the budget in certain areas? Is it within the levels permitted by the donor?
✓ If you are considering a no-cost extension, will you be able to complete project activities and have sufficient funding to cover staff and other costs for the duration of the extension?
✓ Are staff liquidating their receivables on time? Are there any old, large balances that require follow-up? Are any receivables that relate to your project coded elsewhere?
✓ Is equipment correctly coded to the project? If capitalized, are depreciation expenses recorded?
✓ Are partners liquidating advances within 90 days? Are there any old, large balances that require follow-up? What will be the impact on the budget line items?
✓ Are you on target to meet the cost-share requirement? If the cost-share spending rate is more, or less, than that of the award, do you need to re-classify costs to ensure that CRS meets its legal liability?

Step Four: Select an Auditor

If an external audit is required, **you should work with administrative and finance staff to appoint an auditor.** Usually this service will be contracted out after a competitive bidding process. **Again, take a look at your project agreement to see what is required by the donor!** It is also a good idea to contact the donor with these questions. The donor may:

- wish to be involved in the selection process;
- require that you use an international firm rather than a local firm; and
- have specific guidelines for auditors to follow.

If requested, your DRD/MQ and CRS' Internal Audit Department can provide advice on the SOW and audit firms. Be sure to provide all Audit Reports to headquarters as part of the financial "year-end close" process.

Step Five: Determine Use of Project Equipment, Supplies and Commodities

In consultation with your Country Representative, make plans for the use of project equipment, supplies and commodities when the project ends, subject to any disposition requirements contained in the Award Agreement.

Table 7.11: USG and UNHCR Guidelines for Disposing of Project Equipment, Supplies and Commodities

USG	If CRS wishes to continue to use equipment and supplies for the original project, or to transfer them to another federally funded project, then CRS is required to notify USG through the Disposition Report. If CRS wishes to transfer equipment or supplies to a non-federally funded project, then formal disposition approval is required as follows. • *USAID*—capital equipment with a unit market value of $5,000 or more, and unused supplies with an aggregate market value of $5,000 or more (22 CFR 226). This also applies if the equipment and supplies were funded with monetization proceeds. • *FFP*—Commodity Status Report and AER provide adequate information on unused commodities (Reg. 211). • *State Department*—must request disposition approval for all equipment, no matter what value.
UNHCR	Implementing partners are required to consult with UNHCR at least 90 days prior to the termination of the project. UNHCR decides on the eventual disposal of the assets, which can include re-deployment to another UNHCR office or operation, sale, transfer of ownership to the implementing partner or write-off.

Step Six: Discuss Deployment of Project Staff

Can staff be reassigned to a new project after this one ends, or will their contracts need to be terminated? If you haven't already, you need to discuss the future of your project staff with the Country Representative and the human resources manager at this time. This is important for staff morale and to ensure they have time to look for new employment if project staff will not stay with CRS.

Consult local laws and the CRS personnel manual in your country to ensure compliance with local practices and to protect the agency from future liability. For international staff, consult the CRS Personnel Policy Manual regarding termination. (See CRS Resignation/Termination policy on the human resources section of the Intranet.)
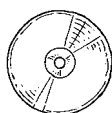
Step Seven: Review Fulfillment of Reporting Requirements

You should confirm that all reporting requirements, financial and narrative, are up-to-date and consistent with the requirements of the Award Agreement. This should be easy if a Master Project File was continually updated during project implementation.

Step Eight: Meet with Stakeholders

Stakeholders such as partners, governments, and project participants have a right to be consulted when a project comes to an end, especially if no follow-on activities are planned. For larger projects, you can involve them in the development of a formal close-out plan. For smaller projects, the close-out plan should address final payments, ownership of equipment and other issues. The closing of the project and handling of all assets should be clear to stakeholders. A well-managed project can turn sour at this final stage if the close-out is not handled well.

CLOSE-OUT PART B: AFTER THE PROJECT ENDS

There are other financial and administrative project close-out tasks that take place after the project end date, but these should be considerably easier now that you have completed the above eight close-out planning steps. The four steps to follow at the end of the project are described below.

Step One: Complete Financial Closure

Staff are responsible for the financial closure of all projects managed within the Country Program. The project manager and the finance manager must work together to ensure that all project expenditures are valid and complete, that cost-share requirements are met, and that no assets and liabilities remain coded to the project. In the case of projects funded by the USG, the Country Program must certify to the Overseas Finance Department in headquarters that all finance closure steps have been completed.

Go through Checklist 7.6 again in *Close-out Part A: Step Three.* Then, work with your finance manager until you can answer "Yes" to the additional six questions in Checklist 7.7, which are applicable to all project closures.

Checklist 7.7: Key Questions for the Financial Closure of Projects

✓ Has all permitted funding been received from the donor?
✓ Have all receivables (project advances, travel advances, and advances to vendors) been liquidated or transferred to another project number?
✓ Have all payables been paid?
✓ Have the balances on inter-fund receivables and inter-fund payables been cleared?
✓ Has all equipment been disposed of in accordance with donor requirements or transferred to another project?
✓ Has CRS met its cost-share liability?

The Final Financial Report is now ready to be prepared. For most projects, the Final Financial Report is prepared by the Country Program. For USG awards, the Final Financial Report (titled the SF 269) is prepared by the Overseas Finance Department.

The Final Financial Report must reconcile to the financial data on Sun Systems. You must review the reconciliation and approve the report. For project awards reported in USD, Sun Systems and the Final Report must show exactly the same figures. For project awards reported in local currency, or hard currency except USD, there may be some exchange differences. If the reconciliation lists any expenses that need to be reclassified, you must ensure that these corrections are processed and review a corrected reconciliation report.

If the project will be audited, the finance manager must prepare the reports and schedules required by the auditor, and ensure that vouchers are filed and that the other relevant documents, such as procurement files, are readily accessible. Following the audit, corrections to Sun Systems and the Final Financial report may be required. **Do not correct the Financial Report and assume that Sun Systems will get updated.** The corrections must be processed, and then you must review and approve the revised Final Financial Report and ensure it reconciles to Sun Systems.

If the final installment of funding is dependent on the donor's approval of the Final Financial Report, the finance manager must prepare the request for the final installment, present it to you for approval, and submit it to the donor. The finance manager then monitors receipt of the funds and informs you when they are received.

When these steps are complete and the donor has accepted the Final Financial Report, the finance manager will amend Sun Systems to ensure that no further expenses are charged to the project by mistake. Headquarters will post a "prohibit posting" notice for USG awards. The finance manager may prohibit posting for other projects on the country database.

Step Two: Prepare the Final Project Report

CRS requires a final report for each project from its partners. Some donors may have specific requirements and formats; check your Award Agreement. If the award is a centrally funded USG award, OSD in headquarters submits the final report and other administrative close-out documents. Ensure that financial information in the final narrative report is consistent with the Final Financial Report!

For CRS projects, see the format in Table 7.12. As with final evaluations, final project reports include information concerning the achievement of the project SOs and lessons learned for the design, development, management and implementation of similar projects in the future.

Table 7.12: Final Project Report Format

Final Project Report

1. **Cover Page:** title of the project, project number, time period of the project and date.
2. **Reference Documents**
   a. The Results Framework.
   b. Executive Summary taken from the proposal.
   c. Final PITT.
3. **Program Analysis**
   a. Organize this by SO.
   b. Write out each SO and answer, "Has the project achieved what was planned?"
     • Refer to IR successes to help explain SO achievements.
     • Ensure statements about progress are based on evidence from your M&E system.
   c. Comment on successes and challenges during the life of the project.
   d. Comment on unanticipated outcomes.
   e. Describe major lessons learned and implications for future programs.
4. **Financial Analysis**
   a. Present expenditures.
   b. Comment on variances in spending.

Step Three: Ensure Administrative Closure and Storage of Important Records

Ensure that financial information in the final narrative report is consistent with the **Final Financial Report!** Make sure you have the **external audit on file** and it has been submitted to the donor. If approval is required for **disposition of assets**, ensure that it has been received from the donor.
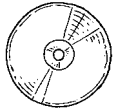
A final task is to review the project file and dispose of any unnecessary paperwork. CRS' policies on records retention can be found on the Intranet as an attachment to [Records Management]. The CRS records retention manual is entitled [Field Office Records Management Manual Procedures and Guidelines]. Relevant extracts are summarized in Table 7.13.

Table 7.13: Records Retention Guidance

Finance Files—General	• Keep for three years in the office; store for seven years; and then destroy if no longer needed. These files include grant documents (proposal, approval, final budget, financial reports, SF269s, closure documentation and property disposition records).
Projects/Grants/Development Files—General Administrative	• Keep in the office for two years and then destroy if no longer needed. These files include general project correspondence, project procedures, proposals under study and rejected proposals. • Each project should have a file with its complete history (ProPack II calls this the Master Project File), including feasibility studies; needs assessments; baseline studies; correspondence with partners and potential donors; correspondence with the regional technical advisor and/or technical review committee; correspondence with HQ/PQSD advisors; progress and financial reports from partners to CRS; progress and financial reports from CRS to the donors, HQ, and region; recipient status reports, etc.
Projects/Grants/Development Case Files	• Retain in the office until the project is closed, store for five years and then permanently archive closed grant information, scheduling all other documents for destruction review. • These files include project correspondence, financial reports, and other documents. A project case file is comprised of several types of records. Some of them are specified as permanent, while others are not. The permanent records should be filed in separate folders from the non-permanent records. However, all project file folders should be stored together until after the five-year period has expired.

Step Four: Update the PTS

Ensure the evaluation abstract has been included in the PTS. You will also need to enter the dates when reports were submitted. Tick the "inactive" field to indicate that the project has been closed.

RELATED READING

Following is a list of traditional and online resources available if you would like to read more about the information presented in Chapter VII. Resources for each section (where they were available) are presented separately. Please see the Reference List located at the end of the manual for a complete list of all the resources used to compile ProPack II.

Section 1— Evaluation—Definitions and Types

- Bamberger, M., J. Rugh, and L. Mabry. 2006. *Real World Evaluation: Working Under Budget, Time, Data, and Political Constraints.* California: Sage Publications.
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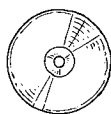
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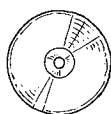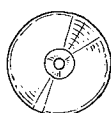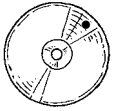
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Websites

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  An Operations Management Handbook for UNHCR's Partners (Revised Edition, February 2003) is available at the following address:
  http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/template?page=partners&scr=static/partnership_handbook/partnership.htm

FURTHER RESOURCES

SECTION 1

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SECTION 3

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Activities—a Proframe term for the tasks that need to be undertaken and managed to deliver the project's Output to targeted participants.

Activity Schedule—a format for presenting project Activities in a way that identifies their logical chronological sequence, and highlights linkages or dependencies that exist among them.

Award Agreement—an agreement made between CRS and the project donor. Award Agreements may also be called grant agreements, cooperative award agreements, or a Transfer Authorization (for Title II projects).

Baseline Survey—information on the pre-project status of project participant conditions against which Performance Indicators will be compared at mid-term and at the end of project.

Capacity Assessment—carried out as a part of project design and during detailed implementation planning to measure the ability of CRS, partners, and the community to implement a particular Project Strategy and related Activities.

Cost Application—the financial side of a proposal, which mirrors and provides justification for the Technical Application, the main text of the proposal for USG grants and contracts. The Cost Application includes a summary budget, detailed budgets, the SF-424, budget notes, Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) letter, Evidence of Responsibility statements and USG Certifications and Representations.

Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP)—a set of updated schedules, plans, targets and systems that have sufficient detail to permit smooth and effective project implementation. It is completed after a project proposal is approved and funded and before implementation begins. DIPs may be done on an annual basis or for the life of the project. If done for the life of the project, the DIP is still revised and updated annually.

Evaluation—a periodic, systematic assessment of a project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact on a defined population. Evaluation draws from data collected during monitoring, as well as data from additional surveys or studies to assess project achievements against set objectives.

Evaluation Summaries—written reports, lessons learned and program or management quality assessments of previous programs by CRS and partners that are relevant to the Project Strategy that should be reviewed in the project design phase.

Evidence-based Reporting—an approach to report writing in which statements made about the progress of the project are supported with verifiable information.

Implement—involves translating plans into performance. Project implementation involves carrying out the DIP. Implementation is more than simply following a plan or recipe—it requires much discipline, judgment and creativity.

Intermediate Results (IR)—expected changes in behaviors by participants in response to the successful delivery of outputs.

Leadership—knowledge, skills and attitudes that managers possess that help cope with change. Leaders innovate, develop, and motivate people; inspire trust, establish broad directions and maintain a long-term view. Project managers often play a leadership role.

M&E System—well-organized, inter-dependent activities or components and clear procedures that contribute to a well-defined purpose of M&E within a project. An M&E system integrates more formal, data-oriented tasks (collecting information on Proframe indicators for example) with informal monitoring and communication and ensures that people responsible for M&E can do their job. M&E provides important data to inform ongoing project planning, budgeting and other project management tasks.

Management—the accumulating body of thought and practice that makes organizations work. The underlying idea of the discipline of management is **optimizing performance**. Within project management, performance usually refers to quality in terms of impact (positive changes in people's lives) and implementation effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (IFAD 2002). It involves catalyzing organizations and people to perform—building on strengths and drawing from many disciplines.

Measurement Methods/Data Sources—The method for collecting data, or the source of data, that a project will use to track the indicator. This serves as a "reality check" on the feasibility of the proposed Performance Indicators.

Memorandum of Understanding—a general partnership document (different from a project agreement) reflecting the agency's Partnership Principals and the mutual understanding of the parties about why each has entered into the partnership, expectations and how the parties will engage one another, developed through a process of discussion and negotiation.

Monitoring—a continuous process of collecting, analyzing, documenting and reporting information on progress to achieve set project objectives. This information assists timely decision-making, ensures accountability and provides the basis for evaluation and learning. Monitoring provides early indications of progress and achievement of objectives.

Objectives Statements—the first column of the Proframe matrix. They provide a concise commentary on what the project is aiming to achieve, and how it intends to do so.

Organizational Culture—is the actual behavior and unspoken rules shared by people and groups in an organization. It is organically developed over time and may differ from ideal organizational values.

Organizational Development—is the long term process of improving the performance and effectiveness of human organizations to meet better their goals. This may involve incorporating new structures, systems, policies, capacities, tools and business practices, among other changes.

Organizational Learning—is the application and institutionalization of learning that comes out of organizational experiences, reflecting an organization's continuous quest to do business better-more efficiently and effectively-toward greater impact on the organization's strategic objectives, all to better serve those whom it exists to serve. For it to occur, it is necessary for the leadership to be purposeful in directing all organizational norms, resources and systems towards this purpose.

Organizational Values—are the ideals to which people in an organization aspire. They are captured in the CRS Values-Based Behaviors, expected of every CRS employee, as well as specific behaviors expected of managers and leaders.

Outputs—the goods, services, knowledge, skills, attitudes, enabling environment or policy improvements that are demonstrably and effectively received by the intended project participants.

Performance Indicators—something observed or calculated that acts as an approximation of, or proxy for, changes in the phenomenon of interest.

Problem Tree—a visual representation of reality. A tree is sketched with a problem statement written next to the tree trunk. This facilitates a discussion of possible causes and effects. Used in project design, it can also be used as an analytical tool to probe the reasons behind project implementation successes or challenges.

Proframe—the "Project or Program Framework," a planning tool to assist project design, implementation and M&E. It is derived from an older tool known as the Logical Framework or Logframe.

Project Agreement—a legal document that is used to transfer resources to partners. It may also be known as a Sub-Grant Agreement or Contract. A project agreement (like the Award Agreement with the donor) protects CRS from potential liability. Project agreements clarify institutional expectations and arrangements involved in project implementation.

Project Close-out—an important final stage of the project cycle. It involves a number of tasks related to program, financial, and administrative closure. For example, project staff and other resources must be redeployed and project documentation must be well organized, on-file, and accessible for potential future use.

Project Cycle—the set of actions (design, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluating, reporting and learning) in all phases of a project. These actions are inter-related and are roughly sequential.

Project Proposal—a structured, well-argued, and clearly presented document to CRS managers and donor audiences to obtain approval and funding for a proposed Project Strategy. It stands as the agreement among the relevant Stakeholders about the analysis of the situation and the resulting plan of action.

Results Framework—a diagram that gives a snapshot of the higher levels of a project's Objectives Hierarchy in a way that makes it simple to understand the overarching thrust of the project.

Situational Leadership—varying one's leadership style depending on the situation and the needs of subordinates on a continuum ranging from supportive behavior (facilitating, coaching and allowing subordinates greater autonomy in their work) to directive behavior (spelling out what, where, when and how to do things and closely supervising).

Servant-leadership—style of leadership that requires humility, focuses on building interdependent teams and emphasizes meeting people's priorities and needs.

Stakeholders—individuals, groups and institutions important to the success of the project.

Strategic Framework—the term used by CRS to describe its agency-wide, multi-year strategic plan.

Strategic Objectives (**SO**)—the central purpose of the project described as the noticeable or significant benefits that are actually achieved and enjoyed by targeted groups by the end of the project.

Telescoping—adjusting the breadth or depth to which you apply the concepts and materials in ProPack II to suit the context or the particular needs at hand in a given project in order to get the best result (similar to the concept of situational leadership).

Theory of Change—an articulation of how a proposed Project Strategy will lead to the achievement of the project's Strategic Objectives.

Utilization-focused Evaluation—an approach that emphasizes the importance of implementing an evaluation so that the learning from it will be used by stakeholders.

SECTION 4

LIST OF CD ROM RESOURCES

See the Detailed Table of Contents for a listing by chapter. See relevant chapter text for direct hyperlink.

- Accounts Receivable Policy
- AIDSRelief Point of Service Management Guide
- Baseline Survey Worksheet
- Budget Comparison Report
- Budget Maintenance Form (BMF)
- Budget Reconciliation Form (BRF)
- Budget Template
- Capacity Building Guidance: Guidelines and Tools for Getting the Most from your Technical Assistance
- Cash Forecast form
- Consultant Requisition form
- CRS Cost Application Guidance
- CRS Cost Share Policy
- CRS Guidelines for Effective Training
- CRS Implementation Guidance for the USAID Marking Regulation
- CRS One-year Tsunami Response Evaluation SOW
- CRS Partnership Programming Guidance
- CRS Performance Management System Guidance
- CRS Policy on Consultants (Independent Contractors)
- CRS Policy on Travel
- CRS Purchasing Manual
- CRS Resignation/Termination policy
- CRS Training Materials on USG Regulatory Compliance
- CRS Values-Based Behaviors
- CRS/Nigeria Partner Reference Manual
- C-SAFE Scope of Work
- Detailed Transaction Report
- Donor Source Worksheet
- Emergency Telecommunications: A Manual for the Management of Emergency Telecommunications
- Facilitator's Guide and Manager's Guide to Essential Finance
- Field Guide 1.2 Learning Conversations
- Field Office Records Management Manual Procedures and Guidelines
- Field Trip Report Template
- Finance Effort Reporting policy
- Finance In-kind Contributions policy
- Financial Projection
- Frequently Used CRS Account Codes
- Gold Star
- Guidelines for the Development of Small-scale Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Projects in East Africa
- Guidelines for the Preparation and Use of Performance Indicator Tracking Tables (PITT)
- Guidelines: Consultants vs. Employees
- How to Complete a Job Description
- Human Interest Stories: Guidelines and Tools for Effective Report Writing
- I-LIFE Handbook on M&E Essentials

- Kenya Budget Status and Advance Request form
- Learning Needs and Resources Assessment sample template
- M&E Calendar
- MAGI Planning and Assessment User's Guide
- Management Quality Assessment Tool
- Master Performance Indicator Sheet
- Measurement Methods/Data Sources Worksheet
- Monitoring Responsibilities Worksheet
- MorningStar
- MoU template
- Multi-rater Assessment
- New Donor Source/Project form (NDS/P)
- One Hand Can't Clap By Itself
- Overseas Operations Agreement Policy
- The Partnership Toolbox: A Facilitator's Guide to Partnership Dialogue
- Performance Indicator Tracking Tables template
- Performance Planning and Assessment form
- Preparing for the Evaluation: Guidelines and Tools for Pre-evaluation Planning
- Program Manager Orientation Guidelines for SARO
- Program Quality Assessment
- Project Agreement template
- Project Proposal Guidance
- Project Tracking System (PTS) User Manual
- ProPack I
- Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): A Manual for CRS Field Workers and Partners Recruitment and Hiring Overview
- Records Management policy
- Sample Completed Performance Indicator Tracking Table
- Success and Learning Story Package: Guidelines and Tools for Writing Effective Project Impact Reports
- Top 10 C-SAFE Initiatives in Monitoring and Evaluation
- USAID Award Agreement
- USG Agreement Review Checklist
- USG Resource Management Regulations Matrix
- Virtual Team Toolkit
- Weekly Status Report
- WFP Field Level Agreement

SECTION 5

LIST OF CHECKLISTS

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SECTION 6

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SECTION 7

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