

Key messages

- A “standard” is the ultimate goal to aim to achieve.
- An “indicator” is a measurable sign of change towards the achievement of results.
- Two levels of indicators exist:
 - Impact Indicators at the objective level; and
 - Performance Indicators at the output level.
- Monitoring objectives should be SMART – Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound.
- Introducing environmental standards and indicators requires a review of project-planning.
- Start introducing environmental standards and indicators into key implementation activities initially.
- Introducing environmental standards and indicators into existing monitoring frameworks requires additional time and resources.
- Environmental indicators should be:
 - simple to understand;
 - simple to use;
 - relevant to the situation and context;
 - require the minimum time;
 - readily interpreted; and
 - useful in programming.

ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

INTRODUCTION

Most organisations use standards and indicators for monitoring and evaluation. It is useful to define a number of terms relating to standards and indicators.

Standard – The ultimate goal / standard to aim to achieve.

Objective – A time-bound step forward, towards achieving the standard. Objectives should be SMART.

Indicator – A time-bound measure of progress towards achieving the objective or standard – a measure of change. There are two types of indicators that are used:

- *Impact Indicators* – A measure of whether the outputs are meeting the objectives, i.e. do the deliverables of a project result in the intended change?
- *Performance Indicators* – A measure of performance towards achieving outputs.

It is evident that using standards and indicators has implications for project planning, i.e. developing logical frameworks. When adopting or incorporating new standards and indicators, a project logical framework must be re-drafted, in order to reflect the standards, objectives and outputs.

Which standards and indicators to use?

There are a number of documents defining standards and indicators, some of which are specifically designed for humanitarian situations. These include Sphere, MDGs and UNHCR. Regardless of which standards are selected, it is important to remember that the related indicators are only suggestions. Organisations can either adopt suggested indicators or develop their own to suit the situation on the ground.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

Refugee / IDP operations affect the environment both directly and indirectly. Most organisations include reference to “environmental sustainability” or “do no harm” principles in their policies. It is essential that humanitarian organisations monitor their impact and those of refugee / IDP camps in order to measure whether they are indeed contributing to environmental sustainability or possibly the opposite.

The use of participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches often helps strengthen community concern for the environment and can enhance community involvement in environmental protection schemes. Local community members are also often most aware of their current environmental status and are able to provide pertinent information regarding recommendations for action steps to be undertaken.

How to incorporate environmental standards and indicators in humanitarian operations

The prospect of including environmental standards and indicators in the operations of a humanitarian agency can seem daunting. Ideally, every aspect of an agency's operations should be monitored using environmental standards and indicators. Initially, however, it may be prudent to begin with considering environmental standards and indicators for activities implemented in the camp, e.g. WatSan, energy, health, agriculture. Once environmental standards and indicators have been incorporated into field activities and used for monitoring purposes, they can gradually be included into non-implementation activities, e.g. procurement or logistics.

One of the most relevant and helpful references when introducing environmental standards and indicators is UNHCR's FRAME toolkit Module V – Environmental Indicator Framework. This module represents environmental standards set by UNHCR and includes "core" and "optional" environmental standards and indicators for each sector's activities. In addition, it includes how to record monitoring data, interpretation and presentation.

It is important to remember that incorporating environmental standards and indicators into existing monitoring regimes requires additional time and effort.

CHECKLIST

- √ Identify an activity and the corresponding environmental standard in the FRAME toolkit –or another source.
- √ Is the standard realistic in your setting? If not, identify an alternative standard or develop a new standard.
- √ Identify the core indicator relating to the standard decided on (modify if necessary).
- √ Select optional indicators – bear in mind time / resources needed for data collection.
- √ Do a trial for the collection of monitoring data. Is it simple, relatively easy to collect? If not, consider using alternative optional indicators or modifying existing ones.
- √ Continue through the process of recording, analysing and reporting based on the indicators.
- √ Are the results helpful – monitoring change, assisting in project planning and so forth?
- √ Once you are satisfied with the environmental standards and indicators for this activity – extend the process to other activities.

Further reading and resources

Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere Project, 2004).

<http://www.sphereproject.org/>

Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Tips (USAID, 1996).

http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/usaid_eval/pdf_docs/pna_bs539.pdf

Who are the Question Makers? A Participatory Evaluation Handbook (UNDP, 1997).

<http://www.undp.org/evaluation/documents/who.htm>

Monitoring and Evaluation (GSDRC).

<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/gateway-guides/monitoring-and-evaluation>

Monitoring and Evaluation NEWS.

<http://mande.co.uk/tag/humanitarian-aid/>

Priority Indicators in Humanitarian Emergencies.

<http://fex.enonline.net/37/priority.aspx>

Including the Environment in Humanitarian Assistance (Kelly, 2004).

<http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?ID=2638>

Darfur: Relief in a Vulnerable Environment (Tearfund, 2007). <http://www.tearfund.org/webdocs/>

Working for People and the Environment (UNHCR, 2007).

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