



**American
Red Cross**

DMERL Framework: Project Management Doctrine

Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning

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Cover Photo: February 21, 2020. Morelos, Mexico. Two years after a powerful earthquake struck Mexico, the American Red Cross, in partnership with the Mexican Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross, continues to support communities affected by the disaster. Through a series of resiliency activities made possible through financial support from the American Red Cross, people living in disaster-prone communities in Mexico are empowered to learn skills that prepare them for future disasters. From providing hygiene and sanitation education to offering trainings on how to administer first aid, the Red Cross is actively involved in helping to build stronger, more resilient communities across the country.

This Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (DMERL) Framework provides the principles, guidelines, common definitions, tools, and resources for comprehensive DMERL practices for those working with or through the American Red Cross.

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Acronyms

ALNAP.....	Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
CLA.....	Collaborating, Learning, Adapting
DM.....	Data Management
DME	Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation
DMERL.....	Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning
EAG	Evaluation Advisory Group
ECOS.....	Project and Grant Management System
HQ.....	Headquarters
IFRC.....	International Federation of the Red Cross
ISD	International Services Department
KM.....	Knowledge Management
KPI.....	Key Performance Indicator
LOE	Level of Effort
MEL.....	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MRP	Management Response Plan
NS	National Society
PGI.....	Protection, Gender and Inclusion
PMER	Plan, Monitoring, Evaluation and Report
PM	Project Management
PMI.....	Program Management Institute
RACI.....	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed
ToC.....	Theory of Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollars
ODL	Quality, Data and Learning
WBS.....	Work Breakdown Structure

Preface

Successful projects are predicated upon competent project management: design that logically connects desired outcomes, detailed project planning, implementation that is routinely monitored by project teams, and outcomes that are studied for their effectiveness, sustainability, and impact. Over several decades now, significant humanitarian system resources have been invested in improving design, monitoring, and evaluation. However, efforts have often resulted in disconnects between project management, design, and monitoring. Look across organizations and you'll see technical experts, including DME teams, consulting to projects, rather than being part of projects. DMERL practice has improved, but those improvements have not always been leveraged into project teams and their work.

This revised version of American Red Cross' Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Framework aims to imbed design and planning, monitoring, and learning into project management, ensuring our project understand their responsibilities in the project management cycle and have the necessary resources at hand. The objectives are to remove the silos that have formed, ensure that projects are planned realistically, not theoretically, and for project teams to monitor their own implementation. In this revised iteration of our DMERL Framework you'll find DMERL streamlined back into the program management cycle. This is a strategic decision as we mature our culture of project management, signaling a shift to planning and monitoring processes as quality control mechanisms of strong project management, not as standalone practices by a separate DMERL team.

At the same time, evaluation and research requires independence, rigor and quality, and specialized skills, and as such, project teams are not necessarily expected to lead studies, but actively participate so that findings can be integrated into our practice.

Our goal with this framework is to provoke thinking and evolution of portfolio project management practice in International Services and the American Red Cross, while at the same time contribute to improving practice in the wider humanitarian system. Please enjoy using the many excellent resources that have been curated into this practical framework. Remember to give the Quality, Data and Learning team of the American Red Cross your feedback, so that we can continually evolve and maintain this important set of resources. Thank you.

Bernard Vicary, Snr. Director Strategy, Quality and Learning

Introduction

Effective change comes from identifying the right problem, responding with the most relevant solution, and adapting as you learn what works the best. This is easier to do if design, monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (DMERL) are integrated into program design and management, from start to finish.

To make this possible, the American Red Cross has developed this DMERL Framework as a resource for those working in international humanitarian work.

Through the Framework, American Red Cross aims to:

- **Create shared language, practices, and goals:** The purpose of the Framework is to create a common vision and shared language for DMERL practice in humanitarian work, clearly articulating why we engage in specific areas of work and what we hope to achieve.
- **Serve as a one-stop shop for resources:** The Framework provides practical guidelines, tools and templates to help with your DMERL activities throughout the project management cycle. It is a knowledge management repository for the proven approaches and strongest tools already available in the industry, including from the International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent (IFRC), USAID and other leading sources.

Therefore, the Framework is a starting point for American Red Cross staff to build their competency in DMERL, serving as a launching pad for staff to access and adapt tools, templates, and other resources. The Framework may also serve as a useful reference to the IFRC, partner and host national societies and other partners.

July 2013. Campêche, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. GIS training in Haiti. American Red Cross staff members Odile David (left) and Daphney Richemond look at information on the screen of their mobile devices during a GIS training in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The American Red Cross is using phones and tablets to map the GPS coordinates of project locations and collect information about the people benefiting from its programs in Haiti, so progress can be tracked more accurately. Photo by Vanessa Deering/ American Red Cross.



How to Use the DMERL Framework

The Framework is intended to help you make your work effective and meaningful, not create more work. To this, we made four important decisions when we designed it:

1. LINKING DMERL TO THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT CYCLE

The Framework supports the entire project management (PM)¹ process, from concept to close-out. DMERL is essential to good PM, because it gives you the knowledge you need to build, implement, and improve your project.

The Framework is designed to make it easier to find the relevant information at the right time. In Part Two, we have organized concepts and tools based on which phases they are most useful within the PM cycle. We have identified a role for DMERL in four PM phases — or as we are calling them: Design, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.²

In each section of Part Two, we will provide a process map showing the DMERL actions for that PM phase, with a brief explanation. See, for example, the process map for the Plan phase of the PM cycle.

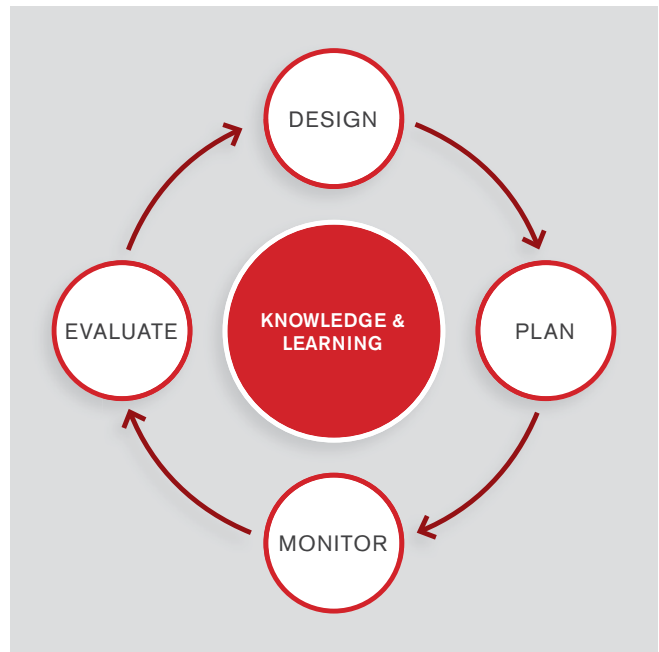


FIGURE 1: DMERL IN THE PM CYCLE

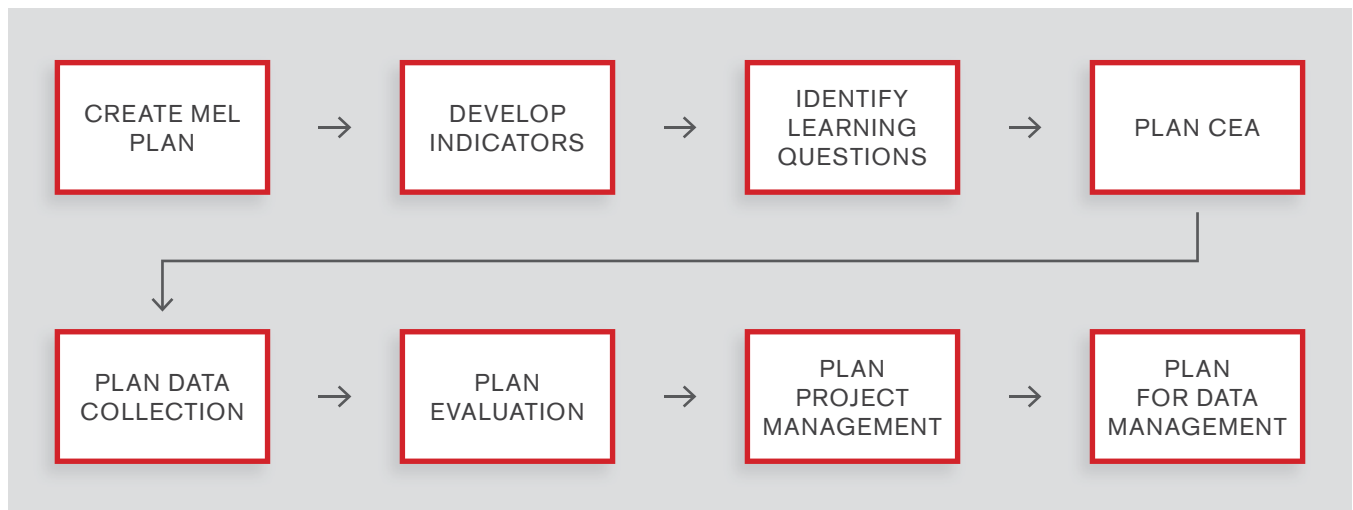


FIGURE 2: 8 CRITICAL DMERL ACTIONS IN THE PLAN PHASE

¹ The PM process was first defined by the Program Management Institute (PMI) as five phases (conception and initiation, planning, execution, performance/monitoring and project close), with many iterations made since (in naming and number of phases). Our version of the PM process is designed to make it easy to see how DMERL is used in each PM phase while also still aligning with larger PM models (such as the PMI). For instance, while the DMERL Framework starts with the Design phase, this assumes the earlier phase of concept initiation and approval.

² In most depictions of PM cycles, the third phase (after design and plan) is known as “Do” or “Implement,” because that is the phase in which the project work occurs. In the DMERL cycle (which runs in parallel to the normal PM cycle), this phase focuses on monitoring project work and is — therefore — called the “Monitoring” Phase. Similarly, the Framework’s “Evaluation” phase is known in the PM cycle as “Close-out” or “Transition.”

At the heart of our DMERL PM cycle is Knowledge and Learning because we believe that, along with getting the right knowledge, it is essential to share and learn from that knowledge—and then contribute it back to others working in the same area. In Part Three, we explain why and how to manage knowledge and learning to support and improve your humanitarian work.

2. HIGHLIGHTING WHAT MATTERS MOST

Throughout the PM cycle, our DMERL actions should be aligned with American Red Cross core values. As shown in Part One, the DMERL Framework is influenced by four key principles:³

1. Our programming should be **relevant** to affected populations
2. We should be **responsible** partners both as a member of a multilateral movement and as a partner to host national societies.
3. Our humanitarian work should be **right sized** to resources and goals.
4. We should ensure our data is **trustworthy** and our results should be shared **transparently**.

Additionally, the Framework integrates two foundational and cross-cutting concepts:

1. Our programming must be **accountable** (by engaging communities in all PM phases) and **inclusive** (by responding to all people in need).
2. We should practice **data-based decision-making**, backed by relevant analysis, effective reporting and strong linkages between data and action.



November 21, 2019. Abaco, Bahamas. Since the storm struck, the Red Cross has committed to being there for people affected for the long-run, distributing relief to more than 6,000 families across the Bahamas. This relief includes unrestricted, multi-purpose financial assistance that can be used to meet the needs of families however they wish—whether that's for temporary housing, meals, utilities or even sending their kids back to school. Photo by Brad Zerivitz/American Red Cross



November 9-12, 1998, Hurricane, FIX ME. Photo by Daniel Cima

³ The principles are adapted from the Institute for Development Impact's Balanced DMERL Framework and tailored to the American Red Cross context.

3. WORKING TO THE BEST STANDARD POSSIBLE

The American Red Cross believes that to deliver relevant, effective humanitarian assistance, there are best practice Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (DMERL) actions that should be done for every project. The Framework clearly identifies these actions within each project management (PM) phase. These ten actions are known as the DMERL Best Practice Standards.

PM Phase	Best Practice Standard
DESIGN	1: Design is informed by evidence, including Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) analysis. 2: Design is based on clear logic and includes program assumptions and Theory of Change (ToC).
PLAN	3: A comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan is developed based on a ToC. 4: Every new project has a comprehensive project plan.
MONITOR	5: Milestone and key performance indicators (KPI) data is collected, reported and used for project management. 6: Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) activities are implemented according to the project plan, fit for purpose and responsive to the needs, perspectives, and concerns of the community. 7: Project risks are mitigated, issues are managed, and all change requests are documented. 8: Learning activities are completed as per the MEL Plan, documented and projects are adapted.
EVALUATE	9: All projects must be evaluated using a common evaluation framework or justification documented as to why not. 10: Every evaluation has a Management Response Plan (MRP) addressing evaluation results and they are acted upon and documented.

FIGURE 3: BEST PRACTICES: THE DMERL STANDARDS FOR HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING BY PM PHASE

In Part Two, we will explain how the Best Practice Standards should guide your DMERL actions in each of the PM phases.

4. CREATING A FOUNDATION AND A PORTAL TO MORE RESOURCES

This document is not the entirety of the DMERL Framework. It is the foundational document that is offered as part of a learner experience on a user-friendly website. We designed this document to be a source of knowledge and practice that you can access and apply, quickly and as needed. The website offers ways of diving deeper into tools and practices that interest you by providing supporting resources that are routinely updated. The resources available on the website include toolkits, additional guidance notes, templates, and e-learning courses. This document grounds the dynamic resources offered through the website portal and offers an introduction to why and how to do DMERL, with an emphasis on understanding key concepts and best practices.

January 25, 2018. Danao, Leyte, Philippines. On the island of Leyte, in the Philippines, Red Cross teams and community leaders use crowd-sourced maps to verify evacuation routes, respond to disasters, and ensure that every household is cared for in case of emergency. This map hangs outside the city hall and contains drone imagery.



Part One: Doing DMERL Right

Guided by DMERL Principles

Four principles inform and guide how the Framework supports our team to engage in the program management actions of design, planning, monitoring, and evaluating.⁴

Relevant to Affected Populations

Program management is relevant when it is informed by the characteristics of the local operating environment and the people affected by disaster. Therefore, ensure that your design, planning, monitoring, and evaluation actions are accountable to affected populations, fostering communication and engagement amongst American Red Cross, its partners and affected populations.

What does this look like: Relevant PM actions are inclusive of all groups, regardless of race, nationality, gender, religion, cultural or political affiliation, age, disability, recognizing all groups provide different perspectives.

Responsible Partnership

Program management is responsible when it engages respectfully, ethically, and sensitively with the primary intended users and partners. Ensure that you work in partnership both as a member of a multilateral movement and as a partner to host national societies.

What does this look like: Responsible PM actions recognize the power dynamics introduced through our role as a funding partner and affirms that we will approach design, planning, monitoring and evaluation in partnership with host national societies with respect to the autonomy and interests of the national society as a partner organization with agency and voice in the program cycle.

July 9, 2019. Kim Chaung village, Bago, Myanmar. Thin Thin Khein, a resident of Kim Chaung village, Myanmar discusses a community map hanging in the town center. Developed with help from the Red Cross, the map can be used to mitigate disaster risks. Communities like this one work together to identify their risks — such as flood zones — as well as resources they can utilize during disasters. Maps show homes, high-risk areas, evacuation routes, locations of handicapped residents and the elderly (who may need help evacuating), and safe spaces to seek shelter. This rural community — dotted with rice patties and farmland — experiences regular floods and is at-risk of earthquakes and strong storms.



⁴ The principles are adapted from the Institute for Development Impact's Balanced DMERL Framework and tailored to the American Red Cross context.

Right Sized to Programs

Program management is right-sized when there is a match between resources (people, time, and money) and goals. Right-sized processes and data are non-duplicative of each other and meet program management and compliance needs.

Considerations in a Programming Context: Right-sizing also holds that lighter processes and procedures may be most appropriate in the early days of an emergency operation, balancing the need for information with the need for speed in decision-making.)

What does this look like: Rightsized PM actions match available resources (people, time and money) to goals and balances need for efficiency with need for rigor.

Trustworthy Data & Transparent Results

Program management is trustworthy when it is conducted according to standards of rigor appropriate to context, constraints and/or intended use of the data. Trustworthy data and methods are appropriately valid, reliable, and objective, ensuring integrity of both the process and results. Trustworthy design, planning, monitoring, evaluating, and learning is conducted by competent staff and supported by leadership. Trustworthy data also means that affected populations and participants in data collection exercises can trust that their data will be protected, and their rights will be respected.

What does this look like: Trustworthy PM actions are internally and externally valid, reliable, and objective, ensuring integrity of both the process and the results. It is motivated by a spirit of transparency and results are shared appropriately.



March 6, 2017. Kaule, Nuwakot, Nepal. Staff members from Build Change — an organization funded by the Red Cross to work in Nepal — discuss home designs in Kaule, Nepal. The rural area was heavily impacted by the 2015 earthquake and many people lost homes. The Red Cross-funded architects and engineers consult with families who are rebuilding their homes to ensure they are following government construction guidelines; help people design their homes so they better withstand natural disasters; and visit construction sites a minimum of 15 times to ensure people are rebuilding according to safety guidelines. In addition to this assistance, the Red Cross has also trained and certified 1,000+ masons to oversee construction and is providing financial assistance to families can buy construction materials and/or hire labor to help with the rebuilding process.

Cross-Cutting Themes

The following concepts shaped the development of the DMERL Framework and are essential to understanding the spirit and principle behind each of the activities described below:

- Ensuring Accountability And Inclusivity
- Making Data-Based Decisions

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Why should we make our humanitarian work accountable and inclusive?

- Projects remain relevant to the needs and priorities of the community.
- Project activities reach those who need support the most.
- The principle of 'do no harm' is upheld.
- Community resilience is strengthened.

Programs are stronger and more relevant because they are guided by principles of transparency, participation, inclusion, and dialogue with the communities we serve. In line with the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement,⁵ American Red Cross is committed to ensuring that Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) is integrated into our work. PGI aims to ensure we provide dignity, access, participation, and safety to all affected (or targeted) people. CEA puts communities at the center through intentional communication and engagement throughout all phases of the project.

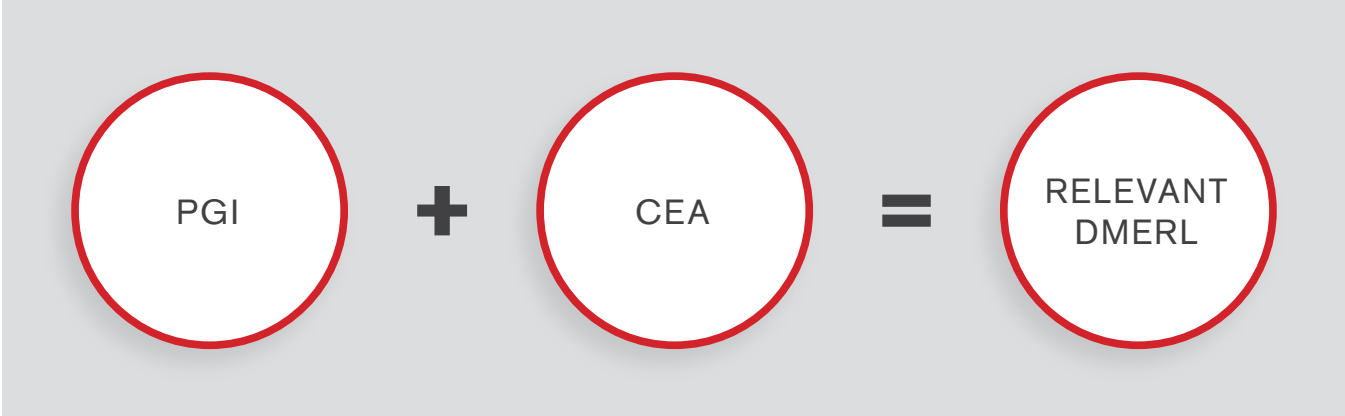


FIGURE 4: LINKAGE WITH DMERL PRINCIPLES

PGI and CEA relate to the first Framework principle: Relevant to Affected Populations: There is a natural overlap between the two areas of work that experts in both areas highlight. Both PGI and CEA seek participation from the community, both emphasize accountability to the community, and both strive to ensure safety and protection of the community.

⁵ The seven Fundamental Principles are humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. These principles are at the core of the Movement's approach to helping people in need.

PGI and CEA must be integrated into the project cycle so that humanitarian work reaches the people who need it most, is responsive to their priorities and upholds the humanitarian principle of 'do no harm'.⁶

Therefore, DMERL systems support programs to intentionally strive toward community engagement and accountability for all affected people in a community, including marginalized groups. Participatory methods of data collection, analysis, and feedback support community engagement. Targeted methods of data collection are sensitive to the needs of marginalized groups and inform inclusive program design and implementation. Beneficiary feedback systems improve program quality and provide a mechanism for marginalized groups to reach program staff. Programming reaches the people that need it the most, is responsive to their priorities and upholds the humanitarian principle of do no harm.

Applying PGI and CEA approaches is essential to making our work relevant. ALNAP⁷ defines relevance as “being in-line with the priority needs of affected people.”⁸ By applying a CEA approach to programming we can understand what people's priority needs are and by conducting inclusive programming we can know who the affected people are. The risk in not including all people in the community in our design and monitoring is that we'll either provide them with inappropriate or inadequate services or they will get left out altogether. Remaining relevant requires sustained community engagement. It is common practice to conduct needs assessments and context analyses prior to designing programs, but those practices should not end there. Through CEA, we remain engaged with communities so we know instantly if the context has changed, or if priority needs have changed and we can make programming adjustments to remain relevant. In pursuing a CEA approach to programming, it is important we apply the principles of PGI to ensure we are engaging and learning from the whole community, including marginalized people. This is critical to having relevant programming.



February 16, 2020. Two years after a powerful earthquake struck Mexico, the American Red Cross, in partnership with the Mexican Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross, continues to support communities affected by the disaster. Through a series of resiliency activities made possible through financial support from the American Red Cross, people living in disaster-prone communities in Mexico are empowered to learn skills that prepare them for future disasters. From providing hygiene and sanitation education to offering trainings on how to administer first aid, the Red Cross is actively involved in helping to build stronger, more resilient communities across the country.

What does it look like in action? Projects are stronger and more relevant because they are guided by principles of transparency, participation, inclusion, and dialogue with the communities we serve.

⁶ The importance of PGI and CEA is recognized throughout the Movement, as evidenced in the policies, guidance and tools available such as the Strategic Framework on Inclusive Programming, the PGI in Emergencies Minimum Standards and related toolkit and the Community Engagement and Accountability Toolkit, among others. The importance is recognized by ISD leadership as well—there is a commitment to CEA in the ISD Strategic Framework 2023, which states we will “ensure all programs adopt good practices in Community Engagement and Accountability”. Additionally, ISD’s principal donors—OFDA and MACP—have expectations that PGI is mainstreamed and measured throughout our projects, as evidenced in OFDA’s proposal requirements, which include a section on PGI and a required standard indicator from MACP regarding meeting the priority needs of all groups in a community.

⁷ ALNAP is a global network of humanitarian actors dedicated to learning for improving the quality of humanitarian response.

⁸ Swithern, Sophia. More Relevant? 10 ways to approach what people really need. ODI/ALNAP, 2019, www.alnap.org/help-library/background-paper-alnap-32nd-annual-meeting-more-relevant-10-ways-to-approach-what. Accessed 19 March 2020.

MAKING DATA-BASED DECISIONS

Why should we opt to make decisions using data approaches?

- Decision makers can be more proactive.
- There is greater accountability and transparency.
- You can identify opportunities for effective and efficient programs and operations.

Decision-making is an essential part of our work in the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. Leadership, staff, and volunteers regularly make decisions that impact the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian operations and long-term programming.

There are myriad ways to make decisions, including from past experiences and expert recommendations, but industry standard demands these decisions be data-driven and evidence-based. Moving towards a more data-driven approach ensures that we will be better equipped to meet the needs of internal and external stakeholders. At the same time, we will continue to respect affected populations in our responsible use of data, be more targeted in our approach around data and use the best tools at our disposal to make informed decisions.

What does it look like in action? Decision-making process is backed by relevant analysis, effective reporting and strong linkages between data and action. Projects are better equipped to meet the needs of internal and external stakeholders. Projects respect affected populations in responsible use of data and the use of the best tools to make informed decisions.



August 28, 2018. Matram, Indonesia. It's easy for families to get separated during a chaotic disaster. On the island of Lombok, Indonesia families have endured more than 5 major earthquakes in one month and 1,500 aftershocks. During this time, some families lost contact. Many people have lost their homes and are moving in to new areas, which makes it difficult to stay in touch.

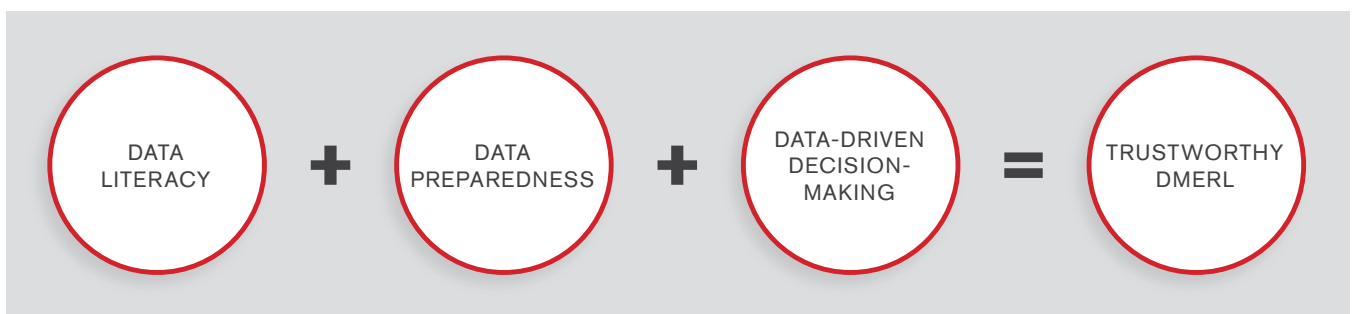
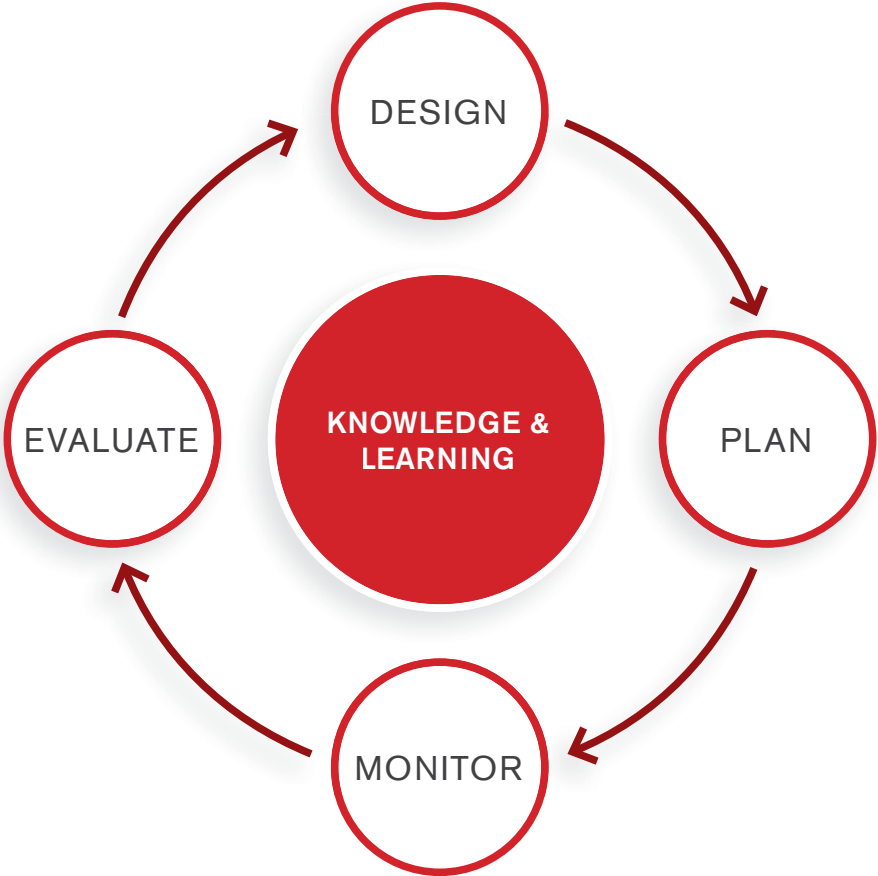


FIGURE 5: LINKAGE TO DMERL PRINCIPLES

Part Two: DMERL in the Project Management Cycle



1: Design

WHY DESIGN?

The design is a starting point for the cycle of monitoring and evaluating the project's expected outcomes. Humanitarian programs should be designed through a process that is informed by the capacities and needs of the affected population, the local context, industry leading technical practice and a sound logic and theory for why selected program activities lead to intended outcomes.

Well-designed projects are:

- More relevant to capacities and needs of affected populations.
- Responsible and respectful to national society partnerships.
- Based on a logic that can be tested over time.
- Are more likely to get funded.

UNDERSTANDING DESIGN

The design phase is foundational for making sure you are delivering the right response to the right people in a way that has a lasting impact. Before we explain how to do design, we want to highlight two key concepts that are critical for a well-designed project: developing the evidence base and then developing the project logic.

- 1. Developing the evidence base:** New program design should be based on an evidence base of data, evaluation and research conducted in the technical area of interventions both by your organization and by external organizations. This will ensure you understand the situation or need to which you are responding.

To do this, you need to identify the problems and their causes, as well as the needs, interests, capacities, and constraints of the different stakeholders. This assessment data must include a PGI analysis so that your project design can be inclusive and accountable. Based on this data, you can confirm what is required to provide support to the community. Possible evidence sources include technical sectoral evidence and research, evaluations, literature review, field assessments, stakeholder analysis and secondary country data.



June 29, 2019. Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. An American Red Cross and Bangladesh Red Crescent team walks across a bamboo bridge in Kutupalong — a displacement camp in Cox' Bazar, Bangladesh. Since August 2017, more than 700,000 people have fled Rakhine State, Myanmar to seek safety in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Many arrived injured, malnourished, and devastated. They speak of dangerous journeys — walking days on end to reach the border and losing touch with family members along the way. Once in Bangladesh, they crowd into camps on muddy hillsides and live in structures made of bamboo, plastic, cardboard and sometimes corrugated metal sheeting. Monsoon rains and dangerous cyclone seasons put migrants at risk of landslides, floods, and destructive wind. Despite harsh conditions — and because there's no possibility of evacuating the displacement camp during cyclones — migrants are volunteering to help their neighbors during natural disasters and other emergencies.

- 2. Developing the project logic:** There are two key questions that are critical for the design phase: the why and the how. Why is the project needed and how are we going to do it? A well-designed project will answer those questions using two basic logic tools: A Theory of Change (ToC) and a Logical Framework (or LogFrame).

TABLE 1: USING THE TOC AND LOGFRAME TO ANSWER KEY DESIGN QUESTIONS

Questions that the ToC answers	Questions that the LogFrame answers
“What’s the need that we are responding to?”	
“What’s the social change (impact, outcome and output) we’re trying to achieve?”	“How do I measure the social change we’re trying to achieve?”
“What is the approach are we going to achieve that change?”	“What are the steps to take to achieve that change? How will we know if those steps are working?”
“What risk and assumptions are we making about what will help us succeed or might make us fail?”	“How do we monitor them?”

Used together, these tools will provide both a vision (ToC) and a process (LogFrame) for how to achieve (and measure) the desired change. The ToC tool will help you think through the risks and assumptions, causal chains, and outcomes of the design process. Once you have developed your ToC, you use the LogFrame to manage and monitor the project.

While you will utilize knowledge to make sure your design is evidence-based, remember that a ToC is just that — a theory that must be tested and evaluated even as new programming is implemented to allow for continuous improvement. As a result, consider how to make your project design adaptive and not fixed. Choose to periodically review your ToC to respond to learning over the course of your project. (See Planning and Monitoring for more ideas on how to make your project adaptive.)

We will discuss ToC and LogFrame again in later chapters. While they are first introduced as design tools, you will use both the TOC and the LogFrame throughout the PM cycle, including for monitoring and evaluating your work.

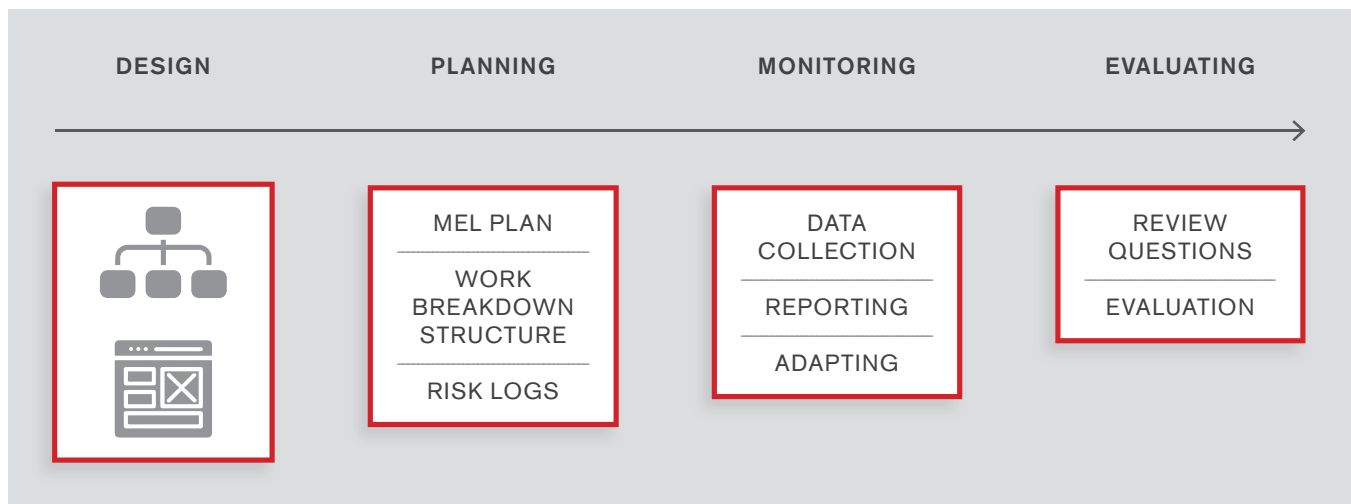


FIGURE 6: HOW THE TOC AND LOGFRAME ARE FOUNDATIONAL FOR PROJECT PLANNING AND MONITORING

HOW TO DESIGN

There are four main actions needed for a responsive and relevant project design: 1) understanding what is needed (evidence), 2) deciding how to do it (project logic) and 3) reflecting the priorities and strategies of those working alongside your project (coherence) and 4) ensuring sufficient budget for DMERL throughout the project life (resources).

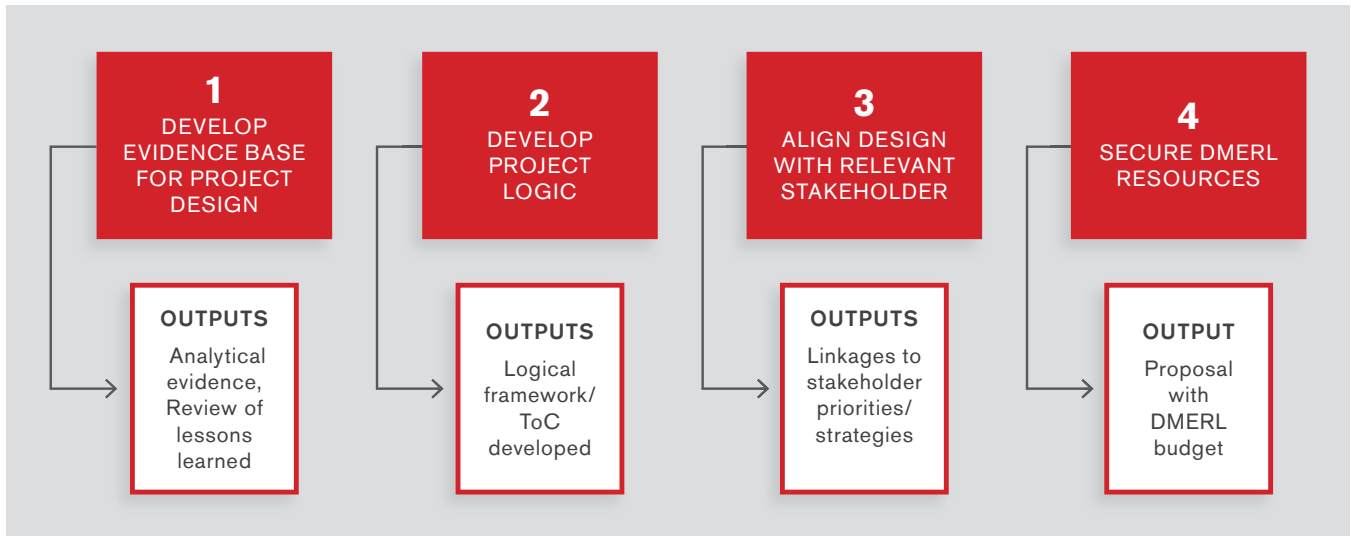


FIGURE 7: PROCESS MAP FOR THE DESIGN PHASE



February 20, 2020. Metepec, Morelos, Mexico. Two years after a powerful earthquake struck Mexico, the American Red Cross, in partnership with the Mexican Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross, continues to support communities affected by the disaster. Through a series of resiliency activities made possible through financial support from the American Red Cross, people living in disaster-prone communities in Mexico are empowered to learn skills that prepare them for future disasters. From providing hygiene and sanitation education to offering trainings on how to administer first aid, the Red Cross is actively involved in helping to build stronger, more resilient communities across the country.

TABLE 2: DESIGN STEP BY STEP

Step	How to do it (and relevant standard)
<p>1: Develop evidence base for project design</p>	<p>As the first step in design, program teams should access the knowledge needed to inform their decision making about what is needed by the target community/ beneficiaries, including in terms of PGI and what has previously worked well—and what hasn't. You can do this by looking at already existing evidence (secondary data) or evidence that you collect yourself (primary data).</p> <p>Secondary data is usually available from American Red Cross, National Society, and other stakeholders, such as technical sector knowledge, existing assessments (e.g., context analysis, PGI assessments, etc.) and lessons learned.</p> <p>If you have the resources, you can also collect primary data. You can do this by conducting your own field assessments (particularly PGI) and consulting a wide range of stakeholders (particularly the National Society and the community).</p> <p>This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standard 1: Design is informed by evidence.</p>
<p>2: Develop project logic with project risk and assumptions</p>	<p>Project logic (e.g., ToCs and LogFrames) help you understand what would make specific interventions successful in the right conditions to achieve the desired outcomes in the contexts in which you work—and identify the risk and assumptions in our logic so you can manage risk.</p> <p>The program design team lead the development of the ToC and LogFrame. Involving multiple stakeholders, including community and national society, in the development process will make your project logic more relevant and accountable.</p> <p>This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standard 2: Design is based on clear logic and includes program assumptions and Theory of Change.</p>
<p>3: Align design stakeholder priorities and strategies</p>	<p>Alignment ensures that you can build on the expertise and priorities of American Red Cross and other stakeholders and avoid duplication or conflict. Project design should align with American Red Cross's Strategic Partnership Plans (SPP), which guide programmatic decisions, such as the type of projects that are designed and funded.</p> <p>The design should be aligned with American Red Cross organizational strategy and donor priorities. Strong design also considers national society strategy, priorities, and other external partners and/or Movement strategy.</p>
<p>4: Identify resources needed to carry out key DMERL activities</p>	<p>You need to dedicate sufficient resources to implement your DMERL activities. You should use available data, reasonable estimates and defensible decisions in your calculations based on the DMERL Best Practices (Standards) and the program's specific needs and design.</p> <p>A budgeted basic MEL Plan is due at the time of submitting the proposal. It is recommended that any program over \$2 million have dedicated national society staff level of effort responsible for these tasks—ideally a Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) officer.</p> <p>Most donors today request that programs allocate 5-10% of program funds to monitoring, evaluation and learning functions. This may vary slightly from lower to higher, depending on the size of the program, the complexity and the expectations for learning or research.</p>

Focus on Learning in program design: Knowledge and Learning are part of every phase of the project management cycle. International Services applies Knowledge and Learning to the Design phase of the PM cycle at the sector level. One example of this in action in International Services is when staff develop funding proposals in the disaster preparedness sector, they are supported by the Preparedness team to refer to evidence-based technical guidance notes. These job aids utilize learning from past projects and other organizations in the preparedness field to inform new project design.

2: Plan

WHY PLAN?

A well-planned project has:

- **Clear objectives and scope:** Building on your ToC, your plan defines what you want to do (and what you don't) to achieve your goals. You can focus on getting there, without losing sight of your scope.
- **Better management of risks:** You watch and mitigate your risks.
- **More efficient resource allocation:** You will have sufficient resources to achieve your DMERL actions to enable project success.
- **Clearly identified roles and dependencies:** Everyone will know who should do what and when and what is required to make it happen.
- **Good communication:** Everyone will know how they need to contribute to achieving change.
- **Ability to adapt to change:** Humanitarian program teams often work in volatile contexts. Building flexibility into your plan helps you stay on course, even if conditions change.



Citizens of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, climb through the rubble of their city and search for lost belongings swept away by Hurricane Mitch.

UNDERSTANDING PLANNING

Planning is about turning the vision and process developed in the Design phase into action. Once you have identified the results you want to achieve and the approach you want to take, you need to plan how you will do.

TABLE 3: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DESIGN VS. PLANNING

	Design	Plan
What you focus on:	Identify the vision (the why)	Identify what to do (the how)
What you produce:	ToC and LogFrame, proposed approach	Project charter, MEL plan, PM approach, data management strategy



October 20, 2013. Binga District, Zimbabwe. As part of its Building Resilient African Communities (BRACES) program, the American Red Cross is working with the Zimbabwe Red Cross to implement disaster risk reduction efforts featuring water, sanitation and hygiene projects as well as clean cookstoves. Before projects begin, volunteers from the Zimbabwe Red Cross go house to house surveying residents to determine what needs are the greatest. Here, Volunteer Sikhathazile Mahlangu interviews resident Samuna Gabwa. Photo by Niki Clark/American Red Cross

DMERL actions are a significant part of the project planning process: a key part of the Planning phase is deciding how you will measure and learn from change, check accountability and responsibility, allocate DMERL roles and resources and manage challenges. Before we explain how to do planning, we want to highlight three key elements that are critical for a well-planned project: a MEL plan, program management tools and a data management strategy.

1. MEL plan: The initial, budgeted MEL plan was developed during the design phase. During the planning phase, you will need to develop a more comprehensive MEL Plan by the deadline set by the organization or the donor. An MEL Plan is essential because:

- Defines how you will do monitoring, evaluation, learning, and community engagement and accountability activities.
- Shows how to collect evidence of results (or lack of results!) that you can use to confirm your approach or adapt to do better.
- Ensures that MEL activities are properly resourced (enough staff and budget and time).
- Provides a tool to document any changes in the plan in response to new needs, adaptations, or other project shifts.

We have identified basic components that must be in your MEL Plan, including: ToC and LogFrame; key performance indicators (KPIs); learning activities; CEA activities; data collection activities; evaluative activities; and an MEL activity timetable.

2. Project management tools: As you get ready to implement your MEL Plan, you need to prepare your PM tools for this phase. We have identified key tools PM tools that you should use, including: a workplan; a RACI matrix; a risk log; and a project scorecard.

3. Data management strategy: Data management (DM) is about organizing the data to collect, process, store and retrieve it systematically. It allows you to have the right information in the right form when you need it.

HOW TO PLAN

There are three main actions needed for an efficient and effective plan: 1) developing an MEL plan; 2) developing project management tools; and 3) designing a data management strategy.

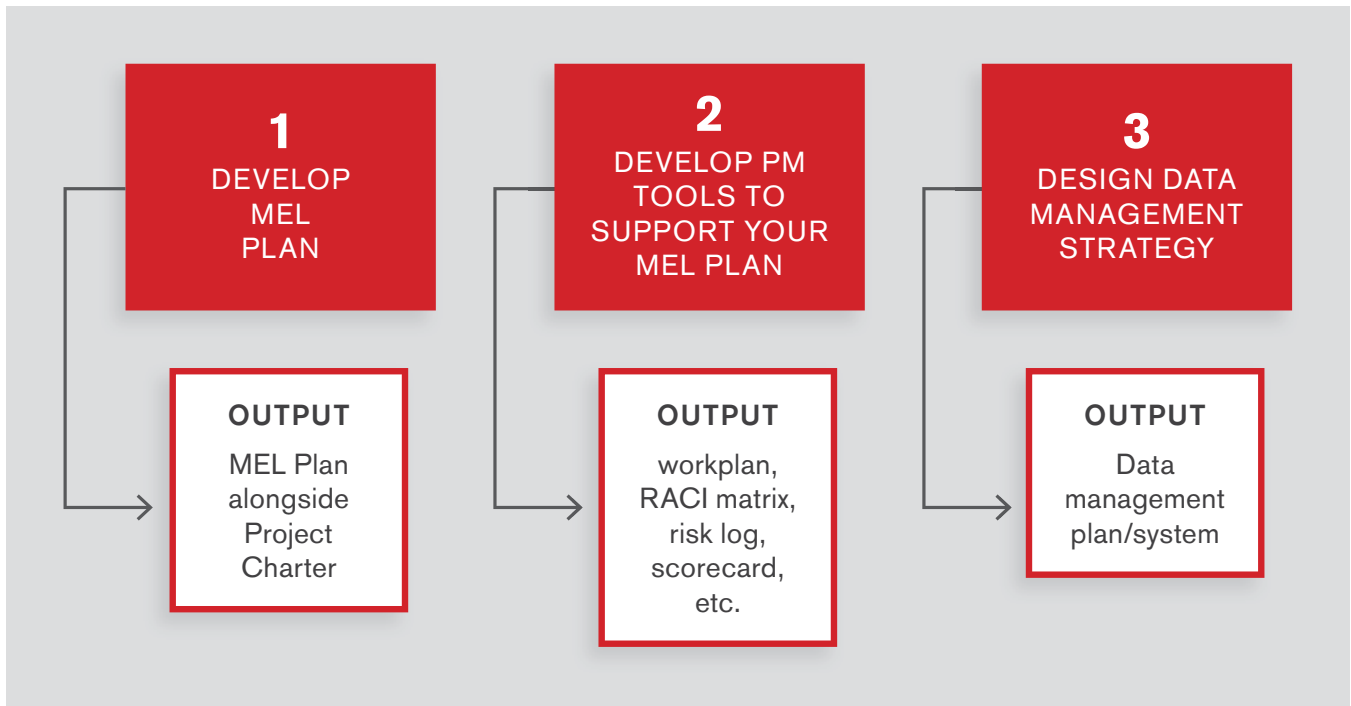


FIGURE 8: PROCESS MAP FOR THE PLAN PHASE



Widiawah (right) uses her cell phone to text friends and take photos. As of last month she can add something new to that list: buying essentials for her parents. Widiawah, 18, and her family don't have access to potable water at home, so they have to purchase jugs and bottles every week to stay hydrated. It's a big, but necessary, expense.

TABLE 4: PLANNING STEP BY STEP

Step	How to do it (and relevant standard)
<p>1 Develop MEL Plan through the following actions:</p>	<p>The MEL Plan should be based on TOC and LogFrame and meet basic criteria for indicators, data collection, CEA, Learning, Evaluative actions, as described below. Additionally, the MEL plan should have sufficient budget, timeline and clear roles and responsibilities, which are reflected in the PM planning tools (See Step 2).</p> <p>This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standard 4:</p> <p>Every new project has a comprehensive project plan.</p>
<p>1.1 Review your ToC and LogFrame</p>	<p>Your ToC and LogFrame are developed during the Design phase. But they are also the core of your MEL Plan, because your MEL activities should be based on your ToC and LogFrame. When developing your</p> <p>This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standard 3:</p> <p>A comprehensive MEL Plan is developed based on ToC.</p>
<p>1.2 Develop indicators to track outcomes and milestones to track outputs</p>	<p>The MEL Plan should include appropriate KPIs based on your ToC and milestones based on your work plan. You should use them to track your progress, with your milestones tracking your workplan outputs and your KPIs tracking your outcomes. You can also use indicators to monitor whether your assumptions remain valid.</p> <p>You can choose from “standard” indicators (developed by your organization and your donor) and come up with your own “custom” indicators (designed by you to fit your project). However, remember that we don’t want too many of them. We should never collect more data than we use for decision-making.</p> <p>The selection process for indicators should be participatory and driven by the national society. It should involve project managers and field staff, not only MEL staff and technical advisors, so that performance monitoring meets the needs of project implementers in the field.</p> <p>Remember: a good indicator should be “SMART” or specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. Your indicators should also be inclusive — and meet the standard of SADDD (sex, age, and disability data disaggregation). There should be a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators — so numbers and people’s experiences, feelings, and opinions. Indicators should be clearly defined to make it easier to collect and report on data. A useful template is the Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS), which is supported by the DMERL Framework and available online.</p>

<p>1.3 Identify learning activities</p>	<p>You should go back to the ToC to help craft the questions for evaluation and learning. For instance, use your learning questions to test your ToC assumptions.</p> <p>Once you have identified your learning questions, you can develop a schedule of structured learning that fits with your ToC and work plan. One of the greatest challenges you may face in cultivating a learning culture is finding the time for learning activities. So, you can start small: think of “landing strips” learning activities, such as talking about isn’t working (e.g., Fail Fest) or testing your assumptions. If you have more time or resources, you can develop bigger and more regular learning discussions with your team or stakeholders (e.g., After Action Review or Strategy Testing).</p> <p>The best learning activities are done with all those involved in the project (e.g., the project team, the target community, the national society, and the donor). See also Section Three: Managing Knowledge and Learning.</p>
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June 2006, Tsunami Relief Project, Indonesia. Photo by Colin Chaperon

<p>1.4 Identify CEA activities</p>	<p>CEA activities are critical to ensuring that the voices and experiences of target communities are solicited and responded to as necessary and possible. You can use your MEL Plan to organize your CEA activities. These can include community participation and feedback, providing information as aid, behavior change and social change communication and evidence-based advocacy. (For more information, see Part One.)</p> <p>Staff are also encouraged to explore opportunities to engage national society partners in strengthened CEA at an organizational level. Staff should be oriented to the IFRC CEA toolkit.</p>
<p>1.5 Develop data collection activities</p>	<p>You will be using data throughout the project to support decision-making and identify when you have achieved your objectives — or if you need to adapt to new conditions.</p> <p>Your MEL Plan should have a data collection plan for baseline and end-line data. Also consider having a data analysis plan to explain how you will interpret the data you collect and use it to track your progress against your LogFrame.</p> <p>Data collection starts with identifying the questions you are trying to answer (based on your ToC and LogFrame), how you will use the information (for management, KM and learning, feedback to stakeholders, etc. The data collection plan should identify what baseline data is needed (collected at the start of the project) and what end-line data is needed (collected at the end of the project). Based on that, you decide what sources to use (secondary or primary) and how to collect it.</p> <p>Data collection may be the most time- and person-intensive activity. Aim to be as efficient as possible by only collecting what is necessary for management use and purpose.</p> <p>Once it is collected, remember that you will need to check the data quality (e.g. conduct regular internal data audits) and store it safely (e.g. using a cloud-based system and/or physical servers) to ensure you have reliable and responsible data management. A data management strategy should be developed that supports the scope of work for your project, and also has strong linkages to other departments and programmatic change.</p>
<p>1.6 Design and schedule evaluative actions</p>	<p>Your MEL Plan should also include an evaluative action plan, when appropriate.</p> <p>Evaluative actions vary by need and project scope, but they usually include After Action Reviews, project reviews and evaluations. Even though evaluative actions happen during a project or after it ends, you need to make important planning decisions at the project start. Understanding the purpose and outputs will help you decide when to do the evaluative action, who should be involved, what its scope will be and what you will do with the results. Remember, evaluative actions are a great learning opportunity, so plan to respond to the evaluative action results (e.g., through a Management Response Plan).</p> <p>For American Red Cross ISD projects, evaluation decisions must be reviewed and approved by the QDL Director or designate. For more information, see the Evaluation chapter.</p>
<p>1.7 MEL activity timetable</p>	<p>All your MEL activities need to be captured in a timetable, so that you can plan when activities will take place. You will use your timetable to track progress against your overall MEL plan. Gantt charts are a good option, because they provide an easy-to-read visual representation of activities over time.</p>

1.8 MEL plan budget	Once your MEL Plan describes what and when DMERL activities will be done, you can make sure that MEL activities are properly resourced (enough staff level of effort (LOE) and budget). Review the proposed MEL budget developed during the Design Phase to ensure that there is sufficient budget for DMERL throughout the project life.
2 Develop PM tools to support your MEL Plan	You should use PM tools to plan out what you need to implement your MEL Plan, including the following:
2.1 Workplan	With a workplan, you can define the workflow of your MEL activities—and what or who you need to help you get them done on time. Your workplan can be a simple Excel sheet, but many in the RC/RC Movement are now adopting online tools to manage project tasks. A popular online option for a workplan is Click-up.
2.2 RACI matrix	With a RACI matrix, you can identify how to assign—and follow up on—responsibility for project management. A RACI matrix is usually a simple table that identifies which stakeholders on a project should be responsible (R), accountable (A), consulted (C) or informed (I).
2.3 Risk log	You can also use a tool to identify risks based on the assumptions in the ToC and other time, scope, and budget analysis. By developing a risks matrix, you can identify key risks to your work (and results) and how to manage each risk (including deciding what to do and who should be responsible).
2.4 Project scorecard	A project scorecard is like a MEL dashboard that you can use to check on your key performance indicators (KPIs). You can use this visualization of performance to quickly confirm progress and identify potential problems.
3 Design data management	<p>Your data management must be responsible: protect people's data rights by responsibly handling data at every stage of the data lifecycle. Ensure human data is de-identified when possible, strictly accessible only to relevant members of the DMERL or Information Management (IM) team and stored and shared securely. You should do this by developing ethical data collection protocols (e.g., informed consent) and do data impact assessment that identifies and plans for data issues. Also consider doing an ethical review of data-driven decision-making to support a “do no harm” data management approach.</p> <p>You should right-size your data management to your needs and resources: there is a wide range of tools and techniques in every data life cycle stage (e.g., data collection, processing, storing and analysis and visualization). Your data management can be a manual or use IT solutions (e.g., Excel, Google, SPSS). If you have the resources, you can create a management information system, using fee-based options (e.g., KOBO or Power BI).</p>

Focus on Learning in Planning: One way that International Services incorporates Learning into the Planning phase is by connecting knowledge nodes or staff across units through cross team collaboration processes. This helps us better understand the value of how different activities will help achieve design aims, often leveraging staff experience and tacit knowledge to plan future activities.

3: Monitor

WHY MONITOR?

Effective project monitoring ensures:

- Project economy through efficient management of time and budget.
- Productivity through adaptive co-management.
- Risks are mitigated before they become issues and change requests.
- Fidelity of plans, with greater quality assurance and adherence to technical standards.

UNDERSTANDING MONITORING

Monitoring is when the rubber hits the road. After designing and planning your project, you and your team are now implementing it. The reality of implementation is always more challenging than expected. You may be working in uncertain conditions or responding to an evolving humanitarian need. Therefore, you need to monitor how your project is performing and whether you are delivering the right (and quality) results. You want to keep an eye out for any risks and take advantage of successes. The Monitoring phase can be an intense and busy time — and because of this the Framework lists the most DMERL Best Practice Standards in this phase.

Ultimately, your goal of monitoring is to deliver the analysis needed for your team to take informed actions to improve your project’s design or implementation. That is why it is essential for your monitoring data and systems to feed into project decisions and learning.

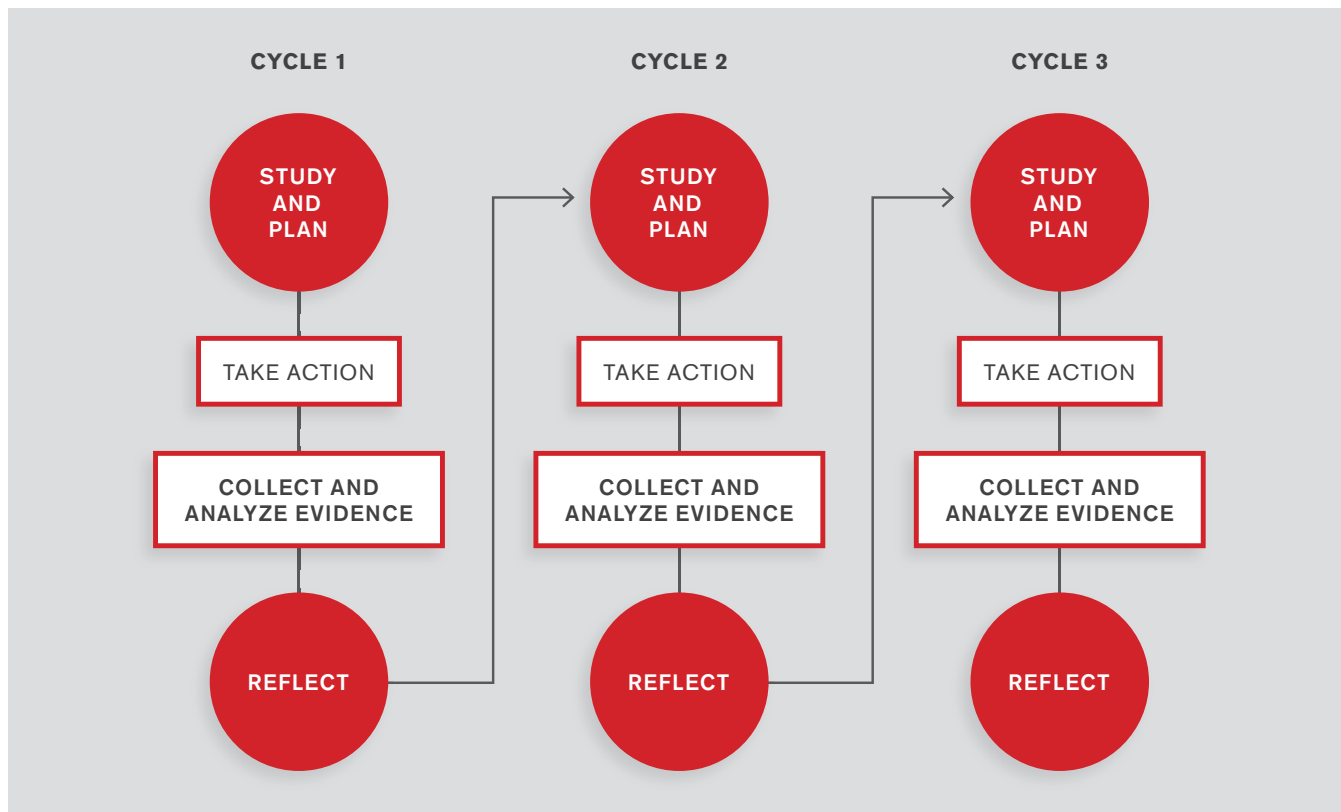


FIGURE 9: USAID'S PROJECT LEARNING APPROACH (USING PROGRESSIVE PROBLEM SOLVING)

There are three key Monitoring actions that channel information about your project and context into the good decision-making during this phase: data collection, analysis and reporting, and reflection and adaptation.



FIGURE 10: TRANSFORMING DATA INTO DECISION-MAKING FOR PROJECT ADAPTATION

- 1. Data Collection:** Reliable monitoring allows project teams to identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies and make decisions regarding human, financial and material resources to enhance project effectiveness. The data needs to be made available in a timely manner so that problems can be detected early, and changes can be made, or corrective actions taken without delay to minimize any damage.
- 2. Analysis and Reporting:** Your reports are a means to sharing information and reflecting on project progress to improve project performance. Consequently, an effective reporting system is one that produces information that is used for improving day-to-day operations. Reports may capture relevant information on project performance and achievements, use consistent units to enable comparisons over time and provide an analysis of challenges encountered and reasons for under- or over-performance. Beneficiary feedback from CEA mechanisms can be an important component of the analysis and reporting process.
- 3. Reflection and Adaptation:** Decisions are made to improve the project based on reflection and learning that emerges from information flows. Whether through regular reporting and team meetings or through more explicitly iteratively adaptive processes (like Pause and Reflect sessions), project teams that are involved in information-sharing and reflection are better able to respond in a timely and informed way to emerging challenges.



January 16, 2020. San Germán, Puerto Rico. Red Cross volunteers Mayra and Ezequiel talk with Rosa, a shelter resident. The Red Cross has more than 180 trained disaster workers on the island, supporting government shelters and helping to care for more vulnerable populations such as the elderly and children.

HOW TO MONITOR

There are seven main actions needed for a responsive and adaptive monitoring: 1) collecting the baseline data for 2) setting targets; 3) collecting and 4) reporting on indicator data; 5) conducting your CEA activities; 6) monitoring PM issues and risks; and — based on all the previous actions — 7) reviewing your performance and identifying whether (and how) to adapt your work.

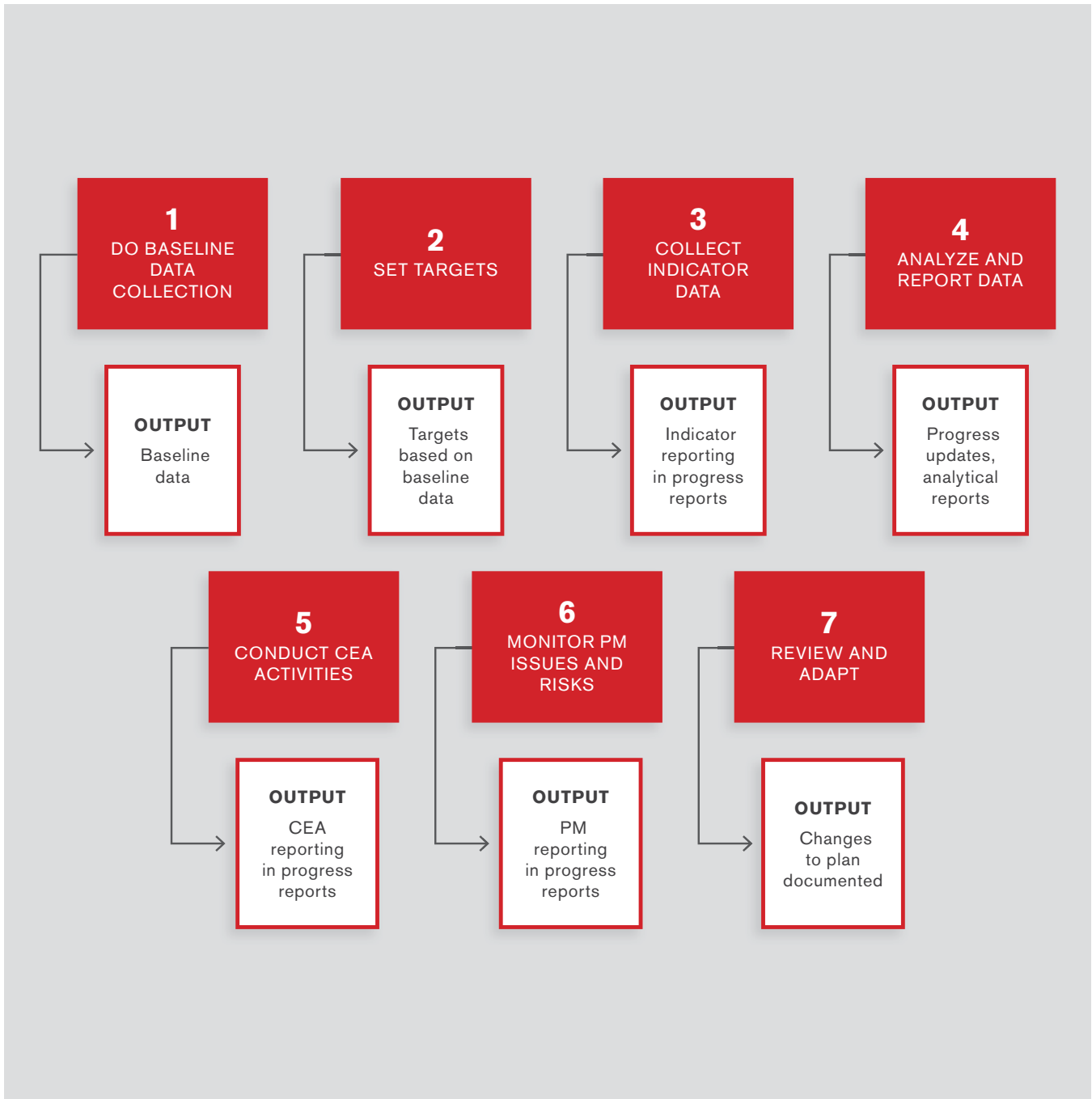


FIGURE 11: PROCESS MAP FOR THE PLAN PHASE

TABLE 5: MONITORING STEP BY STEP

Step	How to do it (and relevant standard)
<p>1: Do baseline data collection</p>	<p>Baseline data should be collected before your project makes changes in the target community (within the first 90 days of the project start-up). Your data sources can be secondary (existing data) or primary (data collected by you).</p>
<p>2: Set targets</p>	<p>A target is a specific, planned level of a result to be achieved within a specific timeframe. Targets should be set based on baseline data but also on project needs and resources (right sized). Targets should be ambitious but achievable within the timeframe of the project or reporting period. You should update your targets annually.</p>
<p>3: Collect indicator data</p>	<p>After you collect your indicator data, it should be reported into a centralized knowledge management system on a quarterly basis. Make sure the beneficiary counting is disaggregated by sex. Where possible, also disaggregate by age and disability, if appropriate to project design.</p> <p>This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standard 5: Milestone and KPI data is collected, reported and used for project management.</p>
<p>4: Analyze and report data</p>	<p>Regular reporting (e.g., monthly) enables you to do the ongoing monitoring needed to check progress against workplans, check risks and assumptions and identify lessons and successes.</p> <p>You should produce targeted reporting products for your various stakeholders at appropriate levels of “need to know,” targeting the audience with relevant information. When presenting or reporting information, it should be accessible, actionable, credible, relevant, timely and understandable. Consider using data visualizations and dashboards to present reporting data.</p>
<p>5: Conduct CEA activities</p>	<p>You should use CEA activities to ensure that national society staff or volunteers communicate directly with the target community at least once a quarter. Consider maintaining a functioning community feedback system in partnership with the national society.</p> <p>This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standard 6: CEA activities are implemented according to the project plan, fit for purpose and responsive to the needs, perspectives, and concerns of the community.</p>
<p>6: Monitor project management issues and risks</p>	<p>Monitor project risks during implementation and log issues. If you need to change your workplan to respond, make sure that you discuss with the project manager or accountable staff member(s), agree upon and document what the issues and risks were and why you needed to make the changes.</p> <p>This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standard 7: Project risks are mitigated, issues are managed, and all change requests are documented.</p>

7: Review and adapt, including revising targets if needed

Learning activities should be mainstreamed into project activities as per the MEL Plan and then documented.

You should conduct at least one pause and reflect session per year. You can also integrate other learning activities into your daily work. Good resources for learning activities are the IFRC Learning toolkit, or the USAID CLA toolkit.

You should go back to the ToC to help craft the questions for evaluation and learning. For instance, use your learning questions to test your ToC assumptions.

Use the evidence from your learning activities or your other MEL actions to check if your ToC and LogFrame are still relevant and revised if needed, with changes documented. You may also need to adjust your targets based on previous achievement and changes to the project.

This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standard 8: Learning activities are completed as per the MEL Plan, documented and projects are adapted.

Focus on Learning in Monitoring: Knowledge and learning is also incorporated into the monitoring phase of the project. The International Services scorecard monitoring tool includes a mechanism for adapting the plan throughout the implementation period if new knowledge is acquired about the context or there is learning that indicates an improved approach to project implementation. This mechanism is referred to as a “change request” and allows for a discussion with the project manager and mutual agreement of a change in plan, as well as space to document that change.



July 9, 2019. Kim Chaung village, Bago, Myanmar. Residents (Ma Sandar Win and Ma Han Thae Oo) of Kim Chaung village, Myanmar discuss a community map hanging in the town center. Developed with help from the Red Cross, the map can be used to mitigate disaster risks. Communities like this one work together to identify their risks—such as flood zones—as well as resources they can utilize during disasters. Maps show homes, high-risk areas, evacuation routes, locations of handicapped residents and the elderly (who may need help evacuating), and safe spaces to seek shelter. This rural community—dotted with rice patties and farmland—experiences regular floods and is at-risk of earthquakes and strong storms.



June 2006, Tsunami Relief Project, Indonesia. Photo by Colin Chaperon

4: Evaluate

WHY EVALUATE?

Evaluating enables projects to:

- Learn from past mistakes or gaps.
- Build on past successes.
- Be informed by the voices of a diverse set of stakeholders.

UNDERSTANDING EVALUATION

The Evaluation phase is critically important to any humanitarian program team or organization. Just as the Design phase is foundational for project impact, the Evaluation phase works to understand how we are progressing towards impact and whether we are achieving it. Evaluation enables you to track progress, examine possible changes in the context, explore impacts of the program(s) to date and consider potential course correction (for those programs still ongoing), or using the lessons and recommendations for future programs or strategies. Based on your Evaluation, you can decide what to do next, either in the project lifetime or for future projects. The Management Response Plan (MRP) is a planning document that is used to facilitate these conversations about what actions to take following an evaluation, so that your organization can improve its performance over time.

On the next page, we will present the key concepts, outputs, and tools for how to do evaluation right.

HOW TO EVALUATE

While every Evaluation has a different approach, they all have the same goal—to identify evidence and learning to make your work better. Therefore, once you do an evaluation, you need to share and act upon the results. Any of the evaluation actions discussed should result in an MRP. You should the MRP to document the recommendations, the program manager’s response to the recommendations (accepted, rejected, explained, modified), a timeline to meet the recommendations, and a staff person or team responsible for leading the action to address the recommendation.

First, let’s talk about the types of Evaluations that can take place during the PM cycle:

	Purpose	Scope	Stakeholder and Audience	Evaluators (Internal vs. External)	Timing
After Action Reviews	Process-focused. Quick debrief after an activity/event to capture lessons and improvements for doing the next (similar) activity/event	Structured review of what happened, why it happened, and how it can be done better	Participants in the activity/event and those responsible for the activity/event	Internal. Conducted by internal staff who know the context well and are well placed to provide actionable findings.	During an operation, particularly after a significant activity/event that will be repeated
Learning Review	Process-focused. Light, rapid learning process about what is working well and what could be done differently	Project-level or focused on activities and initiatives outside of the project cycle	Those working in and responsible for the project/activities	Internal. Conducted by internal staff who know the context well and are well placed to provide actionable findings.	During an operation
Mid-Term or Program Review	Accountability-focused. Mid-point check on progress against design/plan	Progress against plan	Those working in and responsible for the project/activities	Internal or external, depending on the resources and timeframe.	During an operation
Final Evaluation	Accountability-focused. Impact and outcomes; building rigorous evidence-base; value-judgment on the quality of work against the evaluation criteria	Outcome-focused; could also include process-aspects	Beneficiaries, donors, practitioners, other humanitarian organizations, partners, and academia	External	After the program has been implemented for a significant period, near the end or just after the completion of a program.

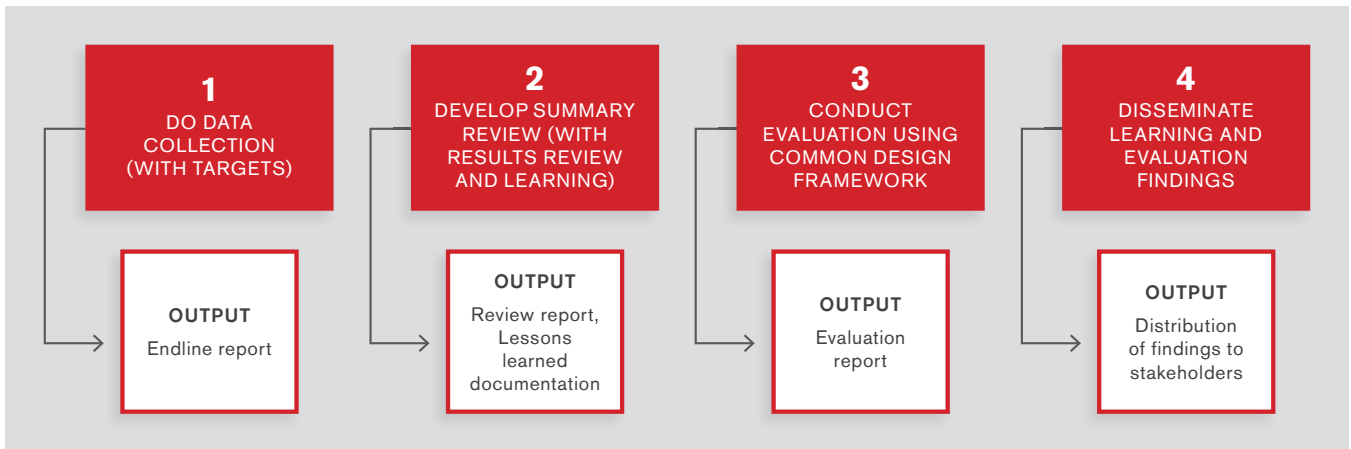


FIGURE 12: PROCESS MAP FOR THE EVALUATION PHASE



October 17, 2019. Freeport, Grand Bahama. Naomi quietly smiles as patiently approaches the Red Cross registration line. She wasn't home when Hurricane Dorian smashed into her home on Grand Bahama. Instead, she was visiting Nassau for a family funeral, watching from afar as the winds pummeled her neighborhood and flood waters rose to neck height. When the Red Cross volunteer asks gently if she has family to stay with, she replies, "I'm grateful I'm staying with a friend from my church. I might be alone right now, but listen, if I didn't have my friends and neighbors here with me, I'm not sure I'd be here at all." The water lines now permanently near her ceiling, she'll need to start from the ground up with repairs. One look in her wise eyes, and anyone will know her strength can weather any storm. Photo by Katie Wilkes/American Red Cross

Table 6: Evaluating Step by Step

Step	How to do it (and relevant standard)
<p>1: Do data collection (with targets)</p>	<p>End-line data should be collected to assess the changes at the end of the project. It should be collected as per the MEL Plan and then documented.</p>
<p>2: Develop summary review (with results review and learning)</p>	<p>All learning reviews should be followed by a MRP that is tracked by the evaluation manager. QDL staff time is allocated to conduct internal learning reviews as needed. After Action Reviews (AARs) are triggered by the Response & Recovery Unit guidance.</p>
<p>3: Conduct evaluation (if relevant)</p>	<p>If your project is above USD 2.5 million, you should set aside funds for external evaluation with the budget guideline of approximately 3% of the project budget (or minimum USD 30,000). If your project is part of a cluster of projects working in the same sector or is below USD 2.5 million in value, you may need to coordinate with the HQ QDL unit to determine an appropriate amount to contribute to a centrally managed evaluation.</p> <p>Evaluations are also driven by donor requirements. USAID requires every project to be evaluated. Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs (BHA) requires an evaluation for any project that is 18 months or longer. Additionally, BHA requires the evaluation of every project in a country where American Red Cross has previously implemented a BHA award but not yet conducted an evaluation.</p> <p>All evaluations are followed by a MRP that is tracked by the evaluation manager.</p> <p>For American Red Cross ISD projects, evaluation decisions must be reviewed and approved by the QDL Director or designate.</p> <p>This step meets DMERL Best Practice Standards:</p> <p>9: All projects must be evaluated using a common evaluation framework, or justification documented as to why not.</p> <p>10: Every evaluation has an MRP addressing evaluation results and they are acted upon and documented.</p>
<p>4: Disseminate learning and evaluation findings</p>	<p>A dissemination plan for Evaluation reports and findings is an important part of any Evaluation and the initial plan should be outlined during the development of the Terms of Reference. Your dissemination plan should focus on maximizing the utilization of the findings across a wide-range of decision-makers. Learning review and evaluation reports should always be disseminated internally within International Services and when appropriate externally.</p> <p>Dissemination plans can include plans for sharing written products as well as verbal presentations or workshops to communicate Evaluation results. Make sure that your learning review and evaluation reports are concise and accessible in presentation. Consider using multimedia communications tools such as podcasts, PowerPoint slide decks, infographics, and summary documents, if relevant.</p>

Focus on Learning in Evaluation: Learning is inherent to the Evaluation phase. When a major disaster hits, while an operation is standing up, a member of the DMERL team immediately revisits prior After Action Review (AAR) reports to curate lessons that would apply to the current context. For the COVID-19 pandemic, we looked closely at the Ebola AAR, noting the similarity of an epidemic disease while also acknowledging that some lessons did not apply: For example, those related to staff travel were not relevant given the COVID-19 operating context was one of remote support. Taking AAR results and applying them to a given context so that they are useful is one way that International Services excels in utilizing its Evaluation phase for Knowledge and Learning.

Evaluation & Research Beyond the PM Cycle

WHY EVALUATION AND RESEARCH?

Evaluation and Research can both take place within the project cycle and beyond it, leveraging learning across projects. For this reason, additional conceptual information on Evaluation and Research in support of organizational learning is described below.

Why evaluate and research humanitarian projects and programs:

- Evaluation measures outcomes and helps us to understand what has been achieved.
- Research supports innovation based on a logic that can be tested over time.
- Test ToCs and building an evidence base for program design at the project, program, or intervention level.

UNDERSTANDING EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

What do we mean by research and evaluation? One helpful way to define each may be in terms of the differences between the two. While both research and evaluation rely on rigorous social science methodology to collect and analyze data, the purpose of evaluation and research differ. Both are based on systematic inquiry, both use research methodology to address questions. However, research is intended to create knowledge and theory while evaluation is intended to inform decision making. Evaluation is driven by the interests of multiple stakeholders. Research enables program staff to innovate and test new opportunities in program design.

RESEARCH VS EVALUATION	
Research	Evaluation
Purpose is testing theory and producing generalizable findings.	Purpose is to determine the effectiveness of a specific program or model.
Questions originate with scholars in a discipline.	Questions originate with key stakeholders and primary intended users of evaluation findings.
Quality and importance judged by peer review in a discipline.	Quality and importance judged by those who will use the findings to act and make decisions.
Ultimate test of value is contribution to knowledge.	Ultimate test of value is usefulness to improve effectiveness.

Michael Quinn Patton, Evaluation Flash Cards for the Otto Bremer Foundation, 2014

As an organization, we recognize the importance of incorporating research into our programs and projects, in collaboration with other partners within the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. Research has played a key role in building an evidence base for innovative and effective approaches to humanitarian assistance that later have been improved upon and refined through an evaluation. Evaluation alone is limiting because it is only concerned with programming that has already begun or been done. Investing in research will allow us to develop new interventions that can help us to either deepen or scale impact. Both research and evaluation are important investments for improving the quality and impact of our work.

Types of Evaluation: There are also many types of evaluation. ISD most frequently engages in process and outcome evaluations at the project level, as described in the Evaluation section of the document. Given the right programmatic conditions and resources (time, financial and human), ISD may also engage in outcome and impact evaluations at the program or strategic level.

- **Outcome evaluation:** A type of evaluation that assesses the extent to which a program has achieved the desired outcomes. Strong outcome evaluations will also explore whether there were unintended positive or negative outcomes to the intervention. Outcome evaluations are usually conducted after the program has been implemented for a significant period, near the end or just after the completion of a program.
- **Impact evaluation:** A specific kind of evaluation approach designed to investigate causes and contributions to change by an initiative. Some definitions limit impact evaluation to designs that include counterfactual approaches⁹. However, this definition argues that there are a range of methods that can be used to investigate impacts caused by an initiative. Impact evaluations are usually conducted after a program has completed and can be conducted “ex post” or many months, even years, after completion if its aim is to study sustainability.



Yogyakarta, Indonesia Photographer: Bonnie Gillespie

⁹ A “counterfactual approach” typically requires the use of control groups to measure differences between groups that received the “treatment” vs. those that did not.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

The HQ DMERL team will take a leadership role in conducting outcome and impact evaluations, as well as developing the guidelines and design for implementing process evaluations, baseline, and end line studies.

Initiation of Research Projects: The decision to initiate a new research project supported by the DMERL unit will be made by the QDL Director in collaboration with other research stakeholders in the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. The project will be managed by HQ DMERL team with support from regional and country delegations when appropriate.

The Role of the Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG): Each evaluation should be commissioned and implemented by an EAG that is often comprised of a program representative, technical specialist and DMERL advisor. The EAG is responsible for guiding the design, implementation, dissemination, and utilization of the evaluation.

There may be times when evaluations are initiated by the HQ DMERL team, particularly those covering learning across a collection of projects or at the strategic level. In these cases, the EAG will be initiated and led by the DMERL HQ team.

The Management Response Plan: The evaluation manager is responsible for of the implementation of the MRP. A member of the DMERL team may help facilitate this process. ECOS, the International Services project management system, provides a tool for tasking and tracking MRP actions.

Process Steps for Quality Control on Evaluation & Research: All evaluation and research Terms of Reference and final products must be approved by the QDL Director or designate, as well as stored on SharePoint and ECOS. All evaluation plans must be logged in ECOS at the time of project design including timeline and budget. Management Response Plans must also be tracked in ECOS.



Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Photo by Bonnie Gillespie

Part Three: Managing Knowledge and Learning

WHY MANAGE KNOWLEDGE AND LEARN?

Managing knowledge and learning is about making sure you have the best evidence and knowledge to help you make decisions—and passing that knowledge and new experience onto others in a similar situation. Just as decision making is a constant throughout the PM cycle, having access to the right data and learning is always important. In other words, managing knowledge and learning is an integral part of each part of the PM phase.

When a project invests in and utilizes its knowledge management (KM) and learning, it yields multiple benefits:

- **Capturing and sharing knowledge improves decision-making:** Teams that capture and share data will have the right information at the right time for future decision-making.
- **Accessing knowledge leads to continuous improvement:** Learning from experience leads to future success. Likewise, experience from past success points to a place to continue to invest in.
- **Applying knowledge and learning results in an agile workforce:** Staff with learning “mindset” are able to anticipate and respond to a changing context with agility and meet “latent” needs of affected populations.
- **Knowledge and learning make for engaged and motivated teams.** Learning as part of work has been shown to decrease stress, increase productivity and improve employee engagement.

UNDERSTANDING KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING IN THE PM CYCLE

Humanitarian work usually comes with rapidly moving, highly challenging context. Capturing and sharing knowledge can seem a luxury when problems are piling up or events are moving quickly in a crisis. But often the solutions for our future problems can be found in what we—or others—have already experienced. A big part of KM is turning “tacit” knowledge (our own individual experience and skills) into “explicit” knowledge (formal knowledge that is openly shared with others).

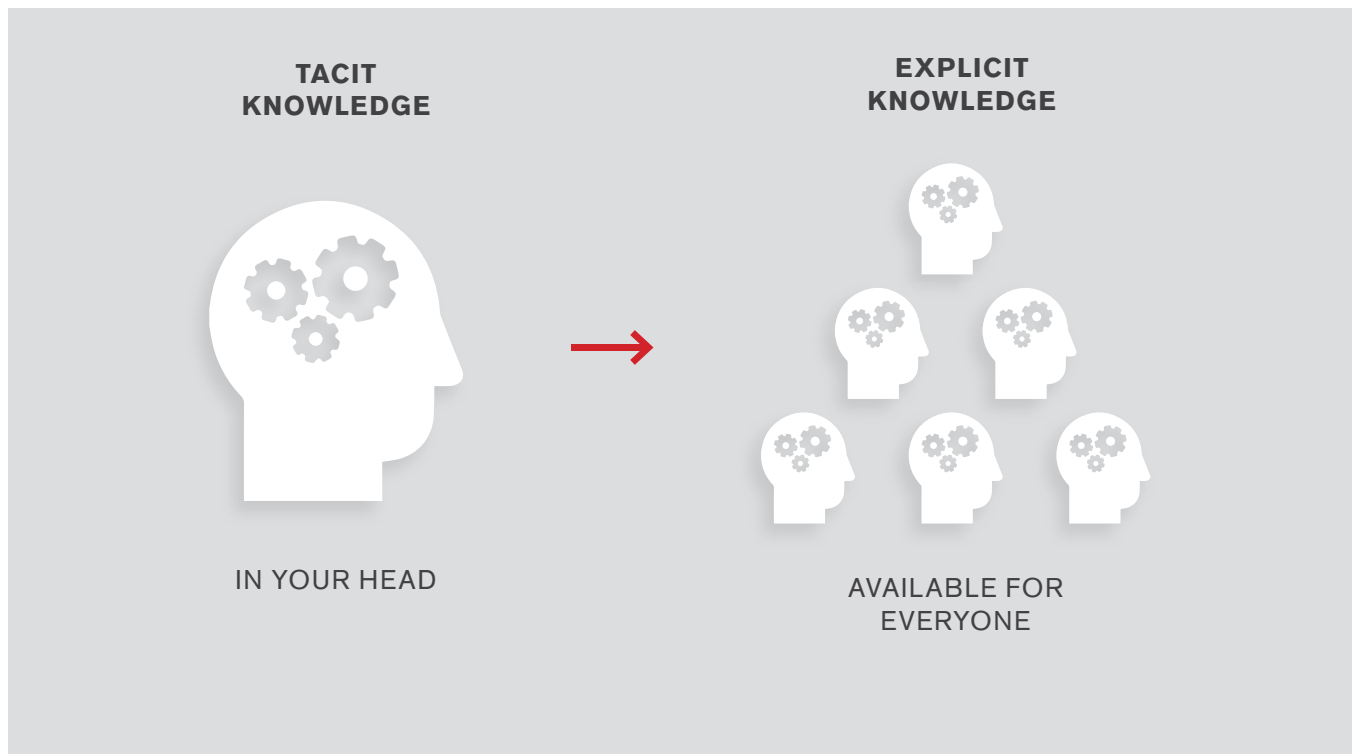


FIGURE 13: KM'S GOAL: MAKING (YOUR) KNOWLEDGE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

What matters most is building a KM culture that includes leadership and staff engagement. A KM and Learning culture must be cultivated by leaders who build a shared vision and must be nurtured by staff who actively participate in making that shared vision a reality.



FIGURE 14: HOW DO YOU MAKE A LEARNING SYSTEM



Garry Calixte/American Red Cross

Below, we will demonstrate how KM and learning is essential to every part of the PM cycle. In fact, learning is the engine that drives an effective project.

HOW TO MANAGE KNOWLEDGE AND LEARN

KM and learning are about creating the processes and culture that actively encourages knowledge exchange and exploration throughout our Red Cross/Red Crescent system. Throughout the Framework, we have provided practical examples of KM and learning steps International Services already takes to improve our own practice and the quality of our programming and service delivery to affected populations. There is, of course, more we can do. Below are key steps in a Knowledge Management and Learning process.

Possible tools are recommended in each of the steps; more information about these tools can be found on the DMERL Framework website.

1. Identify knowledge: The most challenging part of KM is recognizing knowledge. People often don't realize how valuable their experience can be to others or see it as someone else's job to come up with analysis or learning. Too often, tacit knowledge is lost, particularly when staff leave or projects end. Identifying knowledge requires: Seeing everyone as knowledge holders. This includes all program staff and representatives of stakeholders, partners, and community members. Everyone is a potential contributor to what is working and what is happening on the ground. Encourage your team to pause and reflect. Possible tools include journaling, moments of silence and reflection sessions.

2. Capture knowledge: A critical element of a KM and learning culture is the ability of staff to access and utilize existing knowledge generated from experience. That requires:

- **Investing in a KM system/process:** Keep it simple and encourage the flow. Make sure the right information gets to the right people at the right time and in the right format. Possible tools include easy-to-use templates or a shared drive or KM platform.
- **Collecting a wide range of evidence,** including what is collected through all the DMERL actions and hold regular meetings to hear about this evidence. Ask what is working and why, what isn't working and why and what changes is needed? Possible tools include stakeholder interviews, monitoring visits and project review meetings.
- **Building KM and learning into project design,** including putting it into the budget and including learning in the DMERL plan. Possible tools include a learning agenda.



Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Photo by Bonnie Gillespie

3. Share knowledge: Share your knowledge with others in your team or organization. This requires:

- **Creating space and opportunity for exchange of ideas:** This can be as simple as making time for knowledge sharing at regular meetings or after events or — more formally — through holding project or stakeholder review meetings. Possible tools include agenda items dedicated to reflection/learning, After Action Reviews, Strategy Testing workshops or Project Review meetings.
- **Building mechanisms for knowledge sharing:** Consider building a network or mentoring relationship with other DMERL specialists or people working in the same field or sector. Possible tools include: Communities of Practice, peer mentoring , or Sensing Journeys (learning exchange visits). Also consider sharing activities, like cross-learning visits, debriefings and lessons learned webinars.



November 15, 2012. Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Claudy Jean Louis (left) and Jean Daniel Henrius (right) review a map Campeche, a neighborhood targeted by the American Red Cross for a community regeneration project. Photo by Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

4. Apply knowledge: Ensure your decision making is data driven. The decision-making process should be backed by relevant analysis, effective reporting and strong linkages between data and action. This requires:

- **Know and weigh your options:** After developing strong situational awareness from the earlier steps, the decision maker should apply this information to answer a question or to make a decision. Possible tools include an analysis template, or a risk and issues log.
- **Test your assumptions:** Decision makers must be aware of any pre-existing assumptions or biases when making a decision.

5. Learn from knowledge: Learning is at the heart of the DMERL Framework. It is only through continuous and active learning that we can continuously improve our own practice and the quality of our programming and service delivery to affected populations.

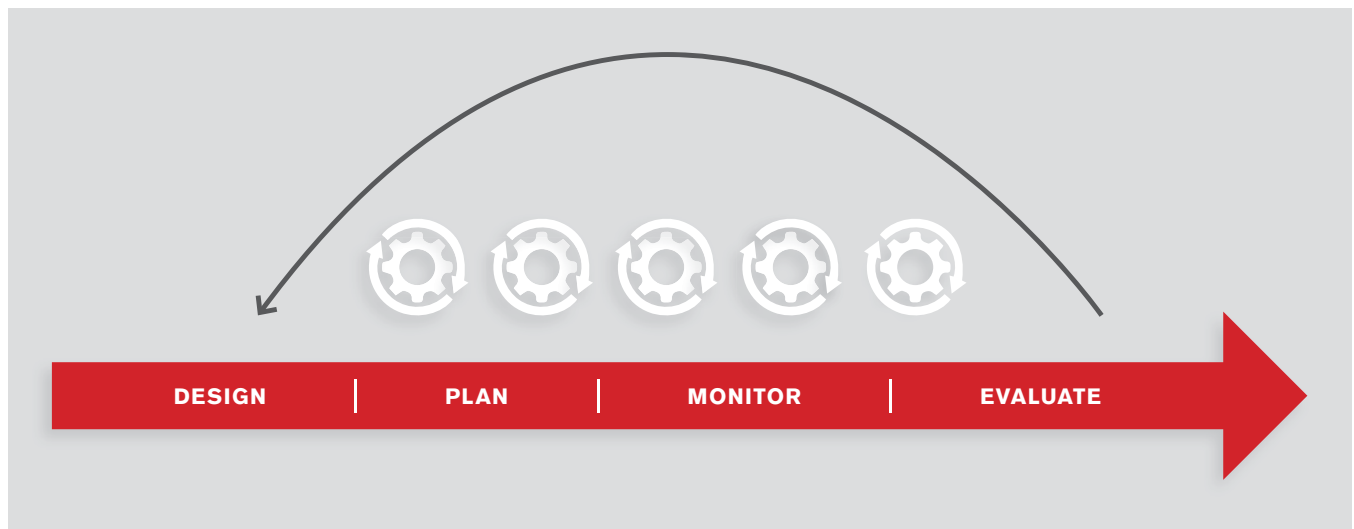


FIGURE 15: LEARNING LOOPS BUILT INTO THE PM CYCLE

This requires: Creating space and opportunity to learn from experience. When staff feel safe to take risks and try, then learn from trying, only then can failure result in later success. A learning project creates space for experimentation and innovation. In other words, being open about risk and failure leads to innovation and then success. Possible methodologies and tools include Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA), Progressive Problem Solving, Prototyping and Fail Fests.

6. Contribute knowledge: Disseminating knowledge is just as important as producing it if you are committed to KM. When you contribute the larger community (organization, sector or Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement), you can influence others' decisions and you will get access to others' knowledge. This requires:

- **Making your knowledge accessible:** When preparing to share knowledge, consider the audience to ensure the critical data gets across. Make it simple to understand, relevant to data needs and easy to share widely. Possible tools include easy-to-read briefs, information graphics, PowerPoint presentations and multimedia delivery (clickable websites or podcasts).
- **Communicating your knowledge:** Your knowledge is more likely to be used, if it is well communicated widely to stakeholders, such as communities and national society and other humanitarian actors. Possible tools include social media, mass emails, blogs, news releases or emergency systems.



Primary Health Care Project — Myanmar Red Cross Society. Photo by Thorkell Thorkelsson

HOW RESEARCH FITS INTO KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING

Research supports innovation, allowing us to imagine new interventions, as well as existing interventions in new iterations or contexts, testing ToCs and building an evidence base for program design.

Research is a key component of KM that supports the entire PM cycle. For example, research can:

- Test ToCs during the Design phase.
- Turn ToCs into action through workplans during the Planning phase.
- Help provide evidence to ground program in more than theory during the Monitoring phase.
- Provide a more rigorous approach to seeking knowledge and turning it into learning in the Evaluation phase and the other PM phases.

Note: The Managing Knowledge and Learning section of the DMERL Framework is aligned with the IFRC Learn to Change (LtC) Learning Toolkit, which is grounded in the theoretical and applied research of Peter Senge and his theory of a “Fifth Discipline” and Otto Sharmar of the Presencing Institute and his Theory U. The Learn to Change (LtC) initiative is led by the IFRC and supported with technical and financial resources from American Red Cross.



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