

ProPack III

The CRS Project Package

A Guide to Creating a SMILER M&E System

Susan Hahn
Guy Sharrock



ProPack III

The CRS Project Package

A Guide to Creating a SMILER M&E System

Susan Hahn and Guy Sharrock



Since 1943, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has held the privilege of serving the poor and disadvantaged overseas. Without regard to race, creed or nationality, CRS provides emergency relief in the wake of natural and man-made disasters. Through developments in fields such as education, peace and justice, agriculture, microfinance, health and HIV&AIDS, CRS works to uphold human dignity and promote better standards of living. CRS also work throughout the United States to expand the knowledge and action of Catholics and others interested in issues of international peace and justice. Our programs and resources respond to the US Bishops' call to live in solidarity—as one human family—across borders, over oceans, and through differences in language, culture and economic conditions.

Published in 2010 by:

Catholic Relief Services

228 West Lexington Street

Baltimore, MD 21201-3413

www.crs.org | www.crsprogramquality.org

Written by: Susan Hahn and Guy Sharrock

Graphic Design and Illustration by: Colin Byrd and Ashley Rytter

Cover Photos by: Hilary Roxe and Ashley Rytter, CRS; Martin Lueders and David Snyder for CRS

© 2010 Catholic Relief Services. All rights reserved. Any fair use under U.S. copyright law should contain appropriate citation and attribution to CRS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following CRS country programs participated in SMILER coaching sessions; staff contributed to this guide by engaging with determination and patience while SMILER took shape. This document is written with appreciation to those staff for their excellent work.

Cambodia	Madagascar
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mali
East Timor	Malawi
El Salvador	Nicaragua
Ethiopia	Honduras
Guatemala	Kenya
Indonesia	Sierra Leone
Laos	Uganda
Liberia	Viet Nam

The following people reviewed drafts of this guide and provided excellent input and feedback.

Abderahamane Bamba	Kevin Kostic
Sandra Basgall	Lori Kunze
Velida Dzino-Silajdzic	David Leege
Clara Hagens	Cynthia Mambo
Loretta Ishida	Bester Mulauzi
T.D. Jose	Daniel Selener
Mwikali Kioko	Valerie Stetson

Responsibility for any errors that remain in this document rests solely with the authors.

FOREWORD

This guide is the third in the Project Package (ProPack) series written to raise the quality of our work in relief and development projects. ProPacks I and II provide basic project and M&E information and tools to guide staff from the early design stage through the close of projects. Chapter IV of ProPack II provides guidance on setting up an M&E system. This guide, ProPack III, is an updated version of that chapter based on extensive use of the chapter materials with many CRS country programs.

M&E is important to CRS' work. M&E supports learning and decision making to improve program quality and impact. Project M&E systems are best when they balance the needs of project staff and donors for timely field-level information on progress and success with those of community members to manage their own information and influence project direction. Ultimately, such knowledge and learning can inform investment decisions on agency direction, policies and operations. These are critical elements of a high performing, dynamic learning organization.

The approach to M&E described in this guide is called SMILER. It is a comprehensive and practical approach to developing a project monitoring system that incorporates processes for learning based on robust evidence. It has been written for CRS project managers, technical, and M&E staff to guide their work with partners and communities by describing how to develop an M&E system in which data are systematically collected, reported and used to make project decisions.

We would like to thank those staff who worked with and tested earlier versions of the SMILER and those who contributed to the production of this guide. We take this opportunity to encourage CRS staff to adopt SMILER as the M&E framework for all of their projects.

With best wishes,

Sean Callahan
Executive Vice President
Overseas Operations

Dorrett Lyttle Byrd
Director
Program Quality Support Department

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
FFP	Food for Peace
IPTT	Indicator Performance Tracking Table
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IR	Intermediate Result
IT	Information Technology
LACRO	Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office
LAD	Learning to Action Discussion
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NTA	No Till Agriculture
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PQSD	Program Quality Support Department
RF	Results Framework
SMILER	Simple Monitoring of Indicators for Learning and Evidence-based Reporting
SO	Strategic Objective
SOW	Scope of Work
TOC	Table of Contents
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iii
Foreword	iv
List of Acronyms	v
Table of Contents	vii

CHAPTER I: Introduction to the SMILER Guide **1**

A. Background	1
B. The Basics	1

CHAPTER II: SMILER Defined **5**

A. The SMILER System	5
B. The SMILER Coaching Sessions	7
C. The SMILER M&E Operating Manual	9

CHAPTER III: SMILER System **11**

A. What to do before the SMILER Coaching Session	11
B. The SMILER Coaching Session	13
Component 1: Getting Organized	13
1.1 Table of Contents	13
1.2 Purpose Statement	19
1.3 Stakeholder Analysis	20
1.4 M&E Working Group	22
Summary of Component 1	23
Component 2: Setting Up	25
2.1 The Results Framework	25
2.2 The Proframe	25
2.3 Indicator Performance Tracking Table	26
2.4 Detailed Implementation Plan (including M&E)	26
Summary of Component 2	27
Component 3: Designing Forms and Reports	29
3.1 Data Flow Map	29
3.2 Data-Gathering Forms, Report Formats and Instructions	34
3.3 Focus on Community M&E	38
3.4 Data Management	38
3.5 Communication and Reporting Map	39
3.6 Learning to Action Discussions	42
3.7 Capacities and Resources	44
3.8 Reports and Evaluations	45
Closing the SMILER Coaching Session	45
C. Next Steps: After the Coaching Session	47
D. Conclusion	48

Further Resources

References	49
Appendix 1: Example SMILER Scope of work, CRS Malawi	51
Appendix 2: CRS M&E Standards	53
Appendix 3: Example M&E Plan Template	54
Appendix 4: Example IPTT, CRS Burundi	55
Appendix 5: Example Annual Work Plan Monitoring Matrix, CRS LACRO	56
Appendix 6: Example Abridged Quarterly Report, CRS DRC	57

SMILER Graphic	6
-----------------------------	---

SMILER Examples

SMILER Example 1: Table of Contents, CRS Sierra Leone	16
SMILER Example 2: Purpose Statement, CRS Malawi	19
SMILER Example 3: Stakeholder Analysis, CRS Liberia	20
SMILER Example 4: M&E Working Group, Liberia	22
SMILER Example 5: Data Flow Map, CRS DRC	30
SMILER Example 6: Data Flow Map, CRS Malawi	33
SMILER Example 7: Instructions Sheet, CRS Sierra Leone	36
SMILER Example 8: Communication and Reporting Map, CRS Zimbabwe	40
SMILER Example 9: Communication and Reporting Map, CRS Malawi	41

Tables

Table 1: SMILER M&E Operating Manual	9
Table 2: Template for SMILER Table of Contents	15
Table 3: Template for Detailed Implementation Plan	27
Table 4: Difference between Data Flow Maps and Communication and Reporting Maps	42
Table 5: Capacities and Resources – Illustrative M&E Concerns and Possible Actions	45
Table 6: Follow-Up Activities (adapted from the CRS Malawi roll out process)	47

Tips

The M&E SMILER Coaching Session	7
What to do Before the SMILER Coaching Session	11
Protocol for Naming SMILER Documents	18
Writing Instruction Sheets	35
Checklists for Data Package	37
Sample Prompt Questions for Learning to Action Discussions	43

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE SMILER GUIDE

A. BACKGROUND

This guide presents an approach to developing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for projects supported by Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The content is derived from guidance in ProPack (CRS, 2004 and CRS, 2007) and streamlined based on experience in CRS country programs in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The new approach is called **SMILER: Simple Measurement of Indicators for Learning and Evidence-based Reporting**.

While M&E is rarely thought of as simple, SMILER breaks down the development of an M&E system into easily understood parts. SMILER is a comprehensive and practical approach to develop an M&E system; the objectives and their indicators are linked to a system to collect, analyze, and report on data. SMILER includes mechanisms to turn data into useful knowledge that supports sound project decision making and ensures that all staff have a clear understanding of the project and their role in M&E.

The process of developing a SMILER M&E system is called the **SMILER coaching session**. The primary output is the **M&E Operating Manual** for the project.

B. THE BASICS

1. What is the purpose of this guide?

The guide helps CRS project staff use SMILER to turn M&E plans, described in their proposals, into M&E systems that produce relevant and reliable information for project stakeholders and encourages learning and sound decision making. Most M&E guides explain data-gathering methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other methods; they do not describe the process of developing an M&E system in which data are systematically collected, reported and used to make project decisions.

2. Who uses it?

CRS project managers, technical, and M&E staff will benefit from this guide in their work with partners and communities.

3. What are SMILER coaching sessions and who leads them?

These are learning events in which participants set up a SMILER M&E system for a project they are just starting to implement.

The session is usually led by someone who has already participated in a SMILER coaching session and is comfortable leading the process—a **SMILER coach**. Staff who have not yet participated in a coaching week but who want to lead a session can use this guide to organize it, but they may want to discuss the approach and practice with staff who have experience in leading one.

4. Who attends coaching sessions?

Staff who are working on the same project attend the coaching session. Partners can also be invited to join the work. Note that the sessions are most effective when participation is limited to five or six people, so while all CRS and partner staff have a role later on in implementing the M&E system, not everyone will participate in the SMILER coaching session.



5. How do participants and the coach prepare for the SMILER sessions?

The coach and team members should read through the entire guide and review the examples from CRS projects. **The SMILER coach, responsible for facilitating the work, should have a comprehensive understanding of the three components of the system and how they fit together. Equally important, the SMILER coach must understand all the documents in the SMILER system and how to develop them.**

6. Are all SMILER coaching sessions structured alike?

No, SMILER is a flexible approach. Each coaching session is different because it responds to the content and circumstances of a particular project. These differences depend on the clarity of the Results Framework (RF) and Profame, and the complexity of the project. (If the RF and Proframe are not clear or complete, they may be revised during the SMILER coaching session.) Because of these differences, the coach, in consultation with participants, decides daily on next steps and how the subsequent sessions will be managed.

SMILER is also flexible in the use of documents. Donors may have their own M&E proposal format to list objectives and indicators, so use the donor format for the SMILER exercise if it provides the needed information. If a country program or regional office has M&E forms that are commonly used in project design or implementation, they can be integrated easily into the SMILER approach. **Use your own experience and common sense to make the SMILER approach an effective, streamlined intervention.**

7. Can SMILER be used in emergency programs?

Yes, the SMILER tools can be adapted to help staff collect and report data during emergencies when projects are developing rapidly. As the program transitions to rehabilitation and development, the complete SMILER approach is applicable.

8. What does the guide provide?

It describes the content of a SMILER M&E system, the process used in a SMILER coaching session, and the steps to complete the design of an M&E system. Examples of documents produced in SMILER sessions with CRS projects are provided to help staff understand the approach and provide a possible model for their own projects.

9. What doesn't the guide provide?

The SMILER guide is not a facilitator's manual that details an agenda for each day with objectives and activities for each session. Instead, it supports the work of the coach and team members by describing components and documents in the SMILER system and providing examples from CRS programs that have such M&E systems.

The guide does not explain M&E data-gathering techniques; there are many books, manuals, and other resources that provide information and how-to guidance on these methods.

Except for a list of post-SMILER activities on pages 47-48, the guide does not furnish information on how to implement an M&E system, concentrating instead on how to develop an M&E system.

10. How is the guide used?

When you develop a SMILER M&E system for your own project, it is important to understand the whole system and how it works, and also to appreciate the details in each of the documents in the system. For this reason, anyone using the SMILER approach should first review the entire guide to see how each component is related to the other and second, look at the documents within each component to understand the role they play in the whole system.

A number of learning tools are included in the text:

Best Practices are useful activities to do during the SMILER coaching week. They are based on past coaching experiences in CRS country programs.

SMILER examples are from CRS country programs that have set up a SMILER M&E system. Some examples are amended to fit the available space or to be understood by a broader audience.

Tips boxes are based on experiences in past SMILER coaching sessions and are written to give suggestions on a particular topic.

The documentation icon pops up in several places in the text. It is a reminder to name and date the documents in the SMILER M&E Operating Manual and update them as needed.



CHAPTER II

SMILER DEFINED

A. THE SMILER SYSTEM

SMILER is a comprehensive and practical approach to develop an M&E system for your project that supports learning and decision making based on evidence. The approach enables staff to turn a project’s RF, Proframe and other M&E planning documents into a useful M&E system that can benefit all staff.

The SMILER system is the backbone of the project because the objectives and their indicators are linked to a transparent system to collect, analyze, and report on data. It includes mechanisms to turn data into useful evidence that supports sound project decision making and ensures that all staff have a clear understanding of the project and their role in M&E.



The SMILER graphic on the following page provides an overview of the major documents in a comprehensive M&E system. The elements are arranged into three components, organized in a rough chronological order for use in the SMILER coaching session: getting organized, setting up, and designing forms and reports.

The first component of SMILER is “Getting Organized.” You will set up a Table of Contents (TOC); write a purpose statement for the M&E system; and develop a stakeholder analysis. You will also discuss the value of an M&E working group, but would determine the members and purpose of the group at the end of the SMILER session.

“Setting up” is the second component in which you will gather the documents from the proposal such as the RF, Proframe, the Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT), other M&E planning tools, and specific donor-required documents. You will review and perhaps revise some of these so that you have a clear understanding of the project and a final list of indicators that will be used to design the forms to collect data and report analysis and findings.

In the third component, “Designing Forms and Reports” you will design the data-gathering forms and report formats. These tasks will consume most of the time in the SMILER coaching session. You also will develop the data flow maps that show all the forms and how they relate to each other; create data-gathering forms and report formats along with instructions on how to fill them out; and build your communication and reporting map.

GETTING ORGANIZED

Table of Contents

M&E Purpose Statement

1.
2.
3.

CRS M&E Standards

M&E Working Group

1.
2.
3.
4.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Info. Needs

Results Framework

```

graph TD
    A[ ] --- B[ ]
    A --- C[ ]
    B --- D[ ]
    C --- E[ ]
    D --- F[ ]
    E --- G[ ]
  
```

Indicator Performance Tracking Table

M&E Plan

Indicator			
Goal			
SO			
IR			
Outputs			
Activities			

Detailed Implementation Plan (including M&E)

Activities				

DESIGNING FORMS AND REPORTS

Data Flow Map

```

graph TD
    A[ ] --- B[ ]
    A --- C[ ]
    B --- D[ ]
    C --- E[ ]
    D --- F[ ]
  
```

Learning to Action Discussions

Communication and Reporting Map

```

graph TD
    A[ ] --- B[ ]
    A --- C[ ]
    B --- D[ ]
    C --- E[ ]
  
```

Data Management

Community-based M&E

Data Gathering Forms and Report Formats

Instructions for Forms and Formats

Capacities and Resources

Human Resources
Organizational Structure
Equipment
Financial

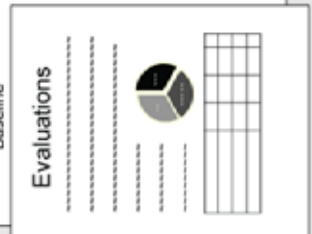
RTE and Other

Final

Midterm

Baseline

Evaluations



Reports

Final

Annual

Six Month

Monthly/Quarterly


Final

Annual

Six Month

Monthly/Quarterly

Reports



B. THE SMILER COACHING SESSIONS

A SMILER coaching session is time set aside to develop a comprehensive M&E system for your project and to build ownership of it. The system will be useful for project managers and technical staff who require reliable, timely information to manage the project, make decisions, and document progress and impact.

Many CRS programs have developed M&E systems using the SMILER coaching approach. The lessons learned from those sessions are noted throughout the text and are the basis of the following tips.

Tips: The M&E SMILER Coaching Session

1. **Each experience is different.** This guide contains basic steps to complete the M&E system, but different paths are taken each time the approach is used. These differences are based on the specific M&E demands of the project, the amount of work already completed, and the clarity of the M&E plans written during the project design phase.
2. **The SMILER M&E system is best developed in the early stages of project implementation.** The earlier the M&E system is developed, the better. It will take time to finalize the system, test the tools, and train staff, so it is important to start the process as soon as possible.
3. **Project staff must be familiar with the project before beginning the SMILER process.** If they are not, they will find it difficult to make meaningful contributions to the development of the M&E system.
4. **Practice has shown that a week is an appropriate amount of time for a SMILER coaching session.** A week, however, may not be sufficient for large, complex projects. In those cases, activities to finalize the system will be clearly spelled out by the end of the week. Small, short-term projects may take less time.
5. **A coach will manage the SMILER process.** A coach is someone who has been through a SMILER session and is comfortable managing the process. Speak with your Country representation to request a coach if your office does not have in-house experience managing a SMILER session.
6. **There is no fixed agenda for the week; it is a fluid and iterative process.** Other than a brief orientation to SMILER at the start of the coaching session, the agenda for the rest of the week is determined on a day-to-day basis. Though there are key steps to complete, the actual process will vary with each project.
7. **The coach engages fully with the work.** The coach is part of the working team. The coach will ensure the overall progress and determine the day-to-day activities in consultation with participants. In addition, the coach works with the team on forms, maps and other documents. The role is one of full participation, not just directing the process.

8. **The goals of the coaching session are to 1) develop the working documents of the M&E system, 2) compile those documents in a SMILER M&E Operating Manual, and 3) train staff.**

Developing the detailed M&E data-gathering and reporting system is the primary purpose; the learning takes place in designing the system. The role of the coach is to use the time efficiently to design as much of the detailed M&E system as possible and to ensure that participating staff have the knowledge and skills to complete the task once the coaching week is finished.

9. **SMILER coaching sessions involve small groups of five or six staff, perhaps fewer for small projects.**

While it is important to choose staff who hold key positions in the project, it is more important to engage staff who have an aptitude for this sort of work, i.e., staff who have some understanding of M&E, don't get lost in details, can see the big picture and are comfortable with flexible and iterative processes. **The M&E SMILER team should be composed of project management staff, technical staff and M&E staff. M&E staff alone cannot develop an M&E system.**

10. **Expectations of those staff not participating in the SMILER session need to be managed.**

There is a role for all CRS and partner staff in M&E, but not necessarily a role for all in the coaching session. By the end of the session, you will have a nearly complete M&E system, but it will still be a draft. Other CRS and partner staff can review and revise the draft, test out the forms, collect and analyze data, fine tune the system, and participate in the M&E working group; these steps increase the ownership of the system by all project staff. While the SMILER coaching session works best with a small group, there is a significant role for others to play once the initial work is done.

The SMILER approach works. Experience has shown that by the end of the week, the team will have a good understanding of the components of the M&E system and a fair level of confidence that they could manage a similar process for another project.

C. THE SMILER M&E OPERATING MANUAL

All of the documents developed for the M&E system will be organized into an M&E Operating Manual. The manual will be available in hard copy in a ring binder and electronically in one computer. Both hard and soft copies are shared with others when finished. (It is also possible to configure a page on CRS Global to mirror the Operating Manual.)



The following table lists the documents in the SMILER M&E system, organized by the three components. There is a brief description of the content of each of these documents and a note about when the document is produced. Part III of this guide describes each of the documents in detail.

Table 1: SMILER M&E Operating Manual

SMILER Document	Content	When this Document is Done
Component 1: Getting Organized		
Table of Contents	All of the documents in the Operating Manual will be listed in the TOC with the correct title and date of the last version.	Start before the coaching session. Set up format and enter names of existing documents with dates.
M&E Purpose Statement	Contains points that answer the broad question of why you are setting up an M&E system for this particular project.	First day.
Stakeholder Analysis	List of all stakeholders and their information needs. It is linked to the Communication and Reporting Map, listed below, which makes the commitment to communication explicit.	First day. If a stakeholder analysis was done during project development, bring it to the coaching session for review and possible revision.
M&E Working Group	List of people who agree to oversee the implementation of the M&E system along with a list of tasks they plan to address.	Discussed the first day, but membership and Scope of Work (SOW) usually dealt with at the end of the SMILER coaching week.
Component 2: Setting Up¹		
Results Framework	An easy-to-read diagram that gives a snapshot of the objectives of the project from goal through outputs.	Document should be in the proposal and reviewed early in the coaching week. If RF is not available, create one based on the project proposal.
Proframe or M&E Plan	Table listing objectives, indicators, measurement methods/data sources, and critical assumptions. M&E Plan also lists frequency of collection, person responsible, means of analysis and use of information.	At least one of these documents should be in the project proposal and reviewed early in the coaching week.

¹ Donors often have M&E tools that they require as part of their design or implementation process. CRS regional offices have also developed or adopted tools they find particularly useful for M&E. These tools tend to be in the "Setting Up" component and can be used in SMILER.

Indicator Performance Tracking Table	Table that shows indicator targets and accomplishments for each year of the project.	Document is often in the project proposal and required by some donors.
Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP), including M&E	Annual detailed implementation plan that lists activities for each output and who is responsible. Also contains detailed activities for the M&E system. Details months, if not weeks, of planned activities.	Documents are ideally done before the SMILER coaching session. May use activity plan from proposal if DIP is not yet done, but add rows for the M&E activities.
Component 3: Designing Forms and Reports		
Data Flow Maps	Diagrams that show the flow of indicators through the data-gathering forms and report formats, and how they are connected. Depending on the scale and complexity of the project, there may be several data flow maps.	This set of documents — the data package — will take time to develop; most of the coaching session is devoted to this work. During the coaching session, participants should complete one full set (map, forms, formats and instructions). With this experience, they will be able to complete the data package for the other objectives.
Data-gathering Forms	Forms to be filled out by project participants or staff to collect data.	
Report Formats	Reports to be filled out by project participants or staff to report data and information to the next level.	
Instructions Sheets	Sheets that give clear instructions on how to fill out each of the data-gathering forms and report formats.	
Communication and Reporting Maps	Diagrams that show the flow of reports and communications to all of the stakeholders; lists responsible persons and dates. If project is a consortium, there may be several communication and reporting maps.	Usually later in the coaching session.
Learning to Action Discussions	List of the kinds of questions that might be posed to prompt good discussion and analysis of the data at different levels of project operation. Also lists questions on the kinds of action required after analysis of data.	Usually developed later in the coaching session and linked to the communication and reporting maps.
Capacities and Resources	Review of human resources, structure, equipment, and budget for the M&E work.	Developed during the coaching session, usually the last day, and may result in follow up activities to plan training sessions, review budget, or solicit other support for the M&E system. Participants can keep a running list of issues during the week and summarize at the end.
Reports and Evaluations	Reports and evaluations are already indicated in the data flow maps and included with the data-gathering forms and report formats. These reports and evaluations are also noted separately in the SMILER graphic because they represent key outputs of the SMILER process.	Report formats are reviewed or developed as part of the SMILER coaching session (see Report Formats above). Evaluations are designed later in the process and entail further planning and a detailed scope of work.

CHAPTER III

SMILER SYSTEM

A. WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE SMILER COACHING SESSION

When you are planning a SMILER coaching session to develop a comprehensive M&E system for your project, use the following steps in advance of the session to ensure maximum success.

Tips: What to do before the SMILER Coaching Session

- 1. Engage Country Program management in a discussion on the plan for the SMILER coaching session.** The Country Representative, Head of Program, and other relevant management staff are important sponsors of the work and should be briefed throughout the process. The SMILER coach can meet with members of the management team before the coaching session to hear about their interests and support, and after the coaching session to discuss progress and next steps. Partner management staff are also included in this planning process for the M&E system.
- 2. Choose the SMILER coach and finalize the Scope of Work (SOW).** A coach will oversee the organization of the M&E SMILER session, ensure the daily work plan, and be an active contributor during the session. There are a lot of details to attend to in designing an M&E system so the coach should be someone who is well organized and keeps track of details without losing sight of the big picture. Write a SOW for the SMILER session, even if managed by one of your staff. It is helpful to lay out the purpose of the session and the roles and responsibilities. (See Appendix 1 for an abridged SOW from CRS Malawi.)
- 3. Choose participants for the SMILER session.** A small, selected working group of five or six people has proven to be a good size. Familiarity with the project and an aptitude for M&E are critical considerations. The project manager can choose among projects officers, technical staff, and M&E staff. Invite staff from partners if they meet your criteria and can contribute to the SMILER session, but keep the total number of participants small. Remember that other CRS staff and partner staff will fully engage in the M&E system during the life of the project. M&E staff alone cannot design the M&E system; it is a team effort with a balance of M&E and technical staff.
- 4. Select the site and request the needed materials.** Find a good-sized, quiet room to work in for the week. Some of the time you will be working around one table with a sheet of flip chart paper in the middle of the table. At other times, you will be working on a document projected on a screen using a computer and projector. You will need flip chart paper and a stand, marker pens and post-it notes (or slips of paper) and a large ring binder with a set of page dividers.
- 5. Select a document manager to handle the hard and electronic copies of all documents in the M&E system.** This person will keep the TOC up-to-date with the latest version of the documents produced and maintain the electronic and hard copy files. The appointee should be well organized and have a good eye for details.

6. **Gather up important documents.** Print one hard copy of all documents that are relevant for the coaching session. These include the proposal, RF and Proframe or M&E Plan, IPTT, and DIP. Also collect any existing data-gathering forms that you plan to use. These may be forms from previous projects or forms already developed for this project.



- **Work with the coach to develop a template for the TOC and start filling it in.** The TOC is described in on pages 13-16 below. Review that section and fill in the template with the documents that you have.
- **Work with the coach to set up hard copy and electronic folders for the documents.** Begin to organize the hard copies of documents into the ring binder with the set of dividers. Set up a parallel folder system in one computer for the electronic version. During the week, the document manager will collect all of the forms. All staff can copy the folder once completed at the end of the SMILER session.
- **Review the RF, Proframe (or M&E Plan), IPTT and DIP.** If the RF and Proframe are not clear and final, you will have to finalize them early in the SMILER session. It is very useful to have the final IPTT and DIP completed before the SMILER session.



B. THE SMILER COACHING SESSION

Component 1: Getting Organized

Each SMILER session is different and the coach is responsible for ensuring the continuity of the process and the completion of tasks. By the end of the week, an excellent draft of the M&E Operating Manual should be available in hard and electronic copy. If not complete, the coach will work with the team to list the missing documents and decide who is responsible for creating them.

Start the first day with an orientation to SMILER. The coach will present an overview of the SMILER system along with examples of SMILER documents from CRS projects. This presentation does not go into detail, but is rather intended to give participants a general idea on the contents of the SMILER M&E system.

Component 1 provides the springboard for developing the SMILER system. You put in place pieces of the system that will support your work later on. In Component 1, you will:

- set up a Table of Contents
- develop a purpose statement for the M&E system
- develop a stakeholder analysis
- discuss an M&E working group, although you will finalize this at the end of the session

1.1 Table of Contents

There are many documents in an M&E system and it can be a challenge to organize and keep track of all of them. While it may sound strange to set up a TOC as your first document, it serves a very useful purpose because it helps the group see which documents already exist and which will be created during the session. The coach or one of the participants can set up a format for the TOC before the coaching session and enter those documents that are available like the RF, Proframe or M&E plan, IPTT, or other documents in the proposal.

1.1.1 Develop a TOC using the three SMILER components

These headings “Getting Organized,” “Setting Up,” and “Designing Forms and Reports” organize the information in the manual. There are three columns in the TOC.

- Column 1 is the “**Name of Document.**” Be consistent—use exactly the same name on the form and the TOC. See page 18 for tips on a protocol for naming SMILER documents.
- Column 2 is titled “**Version**” to note the date of the latest version of the document. As documents are changed during the week, or updated after the SMILER session, the date on the form, (located in the footer and on the TOC) should be changed so that the latest version is in use.
- Column 3 is “**Status.**” It enables you to keep track of what action is needed to complete a document and who is responsible for it.

If you use the three major SMILER components as the basic outline for the TOC, everyone will have a good idea of where to find documents. You may have some documents, however, that are not in the SMILER graphic, and may not fit as neatly into one of the categories. Put these documents in a place that is useful for you. In the sample TOC format in Table 2 below, for example, the memo from the donor on reporting is listed in the “Setting Up” section.

Note the last section on “Important Project Documents” in Table 2. This section is not in the SMILER graphic but provides a place to store documents that provide background information for the M&E system such as the proposal, assessments, and award letters from donors, etc. Create other sections or subsections as you need them to organize all of the materials for your M&E system. The point is to **make sure that the M&E Operating Manual contains the latest version of all relevant documents and that they are clearly labeled, dated, and accurately listed in the TOC.**

Table 2 is a sample template that can be used by the coach when preparing for a SMILER coaching session. The template notes all of the documents in each component in the column marked documents. The coach can enter the dates of existing documents in the template in advance of the coaching week (e.g., RF from the proposal). In the sample below, the project proposal (dated August 12, 2009) included a RF, a Proframe and an IPTT. These are thus available for review in advance of the coaching session. Typically, Component 2 documents will be available because these are usually in the project proposal. See the notes at the bottom of the template for some helpful information on filling in the TOC when preparing for a SMILER coaching session.

Table 2: Template for SMILER Table of Contents

SMILER Table of Contents		
Name of Document	Version	Status
Component 1: Getting Organized		
Table of Contents		
M&E Purpose Statement		
Stakeholder Analysis		
M&E Working Group		
Component 2: Setting Up		
Results Framework	August 12, 2009	
Proframe	August 12, 2009	
Detailed One Year Action Plan (including M&E)	March 1, 2010	
Indicator Performance Tracking Table	August 12, 2009	
Donor Information on Reporting Requirements	Memo September 2009	
Component 3: Designing Forms and Reports		
SO 1:		
IR 1.1		
Data Flow Map IR 1.1		
IR 1.2		
Data Flow Map IR 1.2		
Report Formats		
Other Documents		
Communication and Reporting Map		
Learning to Action Discussions		
Data Management Plan		
Community-based M&E		
Capacities and Resources		
Important Project Documents		
Final Project Proposal	August 12, 2009	
Award Letter from Donor (with M&E comments)	January 15, 2010	

Component 1: There are no dates on the documents; they will be created and dated during the coaching session.

Component 2: These documents are typically available from the project proposal or work done during the early implementation of the project. The dates are filled in here to demonstrate that these documents are already available in this example and can be so noted as the coach prepares for the SMILER session. Note the donor memo on reporting requirements in this section; it is an important document and can be placed here although a document manager might decide otherwise.

Component 3: This component contains many documents so it is useful to make sub-categories. Data-gathering forms and reporting formats have yet to be designed. It is useful to organize them by SO or IR. Sometimes reports are listed in a separate section, as shown above; other times they may be listed in the related IR. There are “Other Documents” in Component 3 and these are listed in the TOC and done during the coaching session.

Important Project Documents: This section is useful for holding the project proposal or other documents for the SMILER process. Note that the project proposal is entered along with the donor award letter that contains specific M&E requirements. You might also include the original application form from the donor.

Status column: This will be filled in during the SMILER week and will indicate who will complete it.

The next example is an abbreviated TOC for a project in CRS Sierra Leone. Unlike the template above which shows the TOC at the beginning of the process, the following is an example of a TOC at the end of the SMILER coaching session. As you can see, most of the documents are completed, as noted by the version date. A few are left to complete and the responsible person and date due is noted in the “Status” column.

SMILER Example 1: Table of Contents, CRS Sierra Leone

Document	Version	Status
Component 1: Getting Organized		
Table of Contents	April 27, 2009	
M&E System Purpose Statement	April 25, 2009	
Stakeholder Analysis	April 25, 2009	
M&E Working Group	April 25, 2009	
Component 2: Setting Up		
Results Framework	November 15, 2008	
Proframe	November 15, 2008	
IPTT	November 15, 2008	
USDA Reporting Format	April 25, 2007	
Component 3: Designing Forms and Formats		
SO 1: Children in targeted schools benefit from improved educational support		
Data Flow Map, SO 1	April 24, 2009	
Student Enrollment Form	April 24, 2009	
Instructions Student Enrollment Form	April 25, 2009	
Attendance Register Male	April 25, 2009	
Attendance Register Female	April 25, 2009	
Instructions Attendance Registers	April 25, 2009	
FFE Tracking Attendance	April 25, 2009	
Instructions FFE Tracking Attendance	April 25, 2009	
Daily School Meals Transaction Sheet	April 26, 2009	
Instructions Daily School Meals	April 26, 2009	
Reports		
Monthly School Commodity Report	April 25, 2009	
Instructions Monthly School Commodity Report	April 26, 2009	
Field Agents Monthly Report		Field agents by end May
Instructions FA Monthly Report		Field agents by end May
Combined PO Monthly Summary Report	April 27, 2009	
Instructions for Combined PO report		Kanda by end May
Summary Report		Theresa by mid May
Instructions for Summary Report		Theresa by mid May
Other documents		
Communication and Reporting Map		Paul and Sarah by mid May
Program Officers Monthly LAD Guide	April 24, 2009	
M&E resources and capacities		Paul and Sarah by mid May

Important Documents		
Assessment Report for FFE Project	September 17, 2008	
Final FFE Proposal sent to USDA	November 15, 2008	
Award Letter from USDA	January 15, 2009	
Agreement USG and CRS-USCCB	March 28, 2009	
FFE Report on Baseline Survey	April 2, 2009	

1.1.2 Create the M&E Operating Manual

Use the same three SMILER components from the TOC to set up your electronic folder in one computer and to create a hard copy version using a ring binder and page dividers.



The document manager is well organized and detail oriented, and takes on the task of collecting and updating all of the documents in the manual. Forms and documents will probably be modified after the SMILER coaching sessions. Other CRS and partner staff may make changes during their review of the documents. Changes may also occur with the testing of the forms. The document manager must ensure that the entire manual is updated with these changes during the coaching session and over the course of the project.

Best Practice
When updating documents, change the date on the:

- footer in the electronic document
- version in the TOC.

Develop a standard protocol to name all of the documents that will be put in your SMILER operating manual. See the next table for suggestions on naming SMILER documents.

Tips: Protocol for Naming SMILER Documents

1. **Create a header for all documents.** Name the project and the form and other information using a specific format that will be a standard for the project. In the following example, the standard information includes: name of the project, donor, and dates of project.

**School Enrollment Form
USDA Food for Education Project
October 2009 – September 2012**

2. **Create a footer for all documents.** Use the name of the CRS country program and partner, “M&E Operating Manual,” and “version” with date of the form. This date is typed in the footer and you will change the date only when the form is updated. All the forms in the SMILER system do not need to have the same date (see CRS Sierra Leone example above); use the date you create or update the form. But the date in the footer on each individual document should match the date in the “Version” column in the TOC.

CRS & Caritas Sierra Leone, M&E Operating Manual, version April 24, 2009

3. **Name data-gathering forms with a unique, descriptive, short title.** There are a lot of forms in a typical M&E system, so it is important to name them with distinctive titles. If you have two intake forms, for example, name each of them so they can be easily distinguished. Example:
 - Clinic intake form
 - Community center intake form
4. **Name reports so they are easily identified.** If there are several staff or partners submitting monthly reports, name them so they can be easily distinguished from each other. “Monthly report” is not useful. Give the report a clear title that indicates who is responsible for submitting it and the reporting period covered, or other relevant information. Examples:
 - Field officer monthly report
 - Clinic manager monthly report
 - Program manager monthly report
 - Program manager summary quarterly report

If there are several partners using different staff titles who are submitting the same report, consider other naming systems or use a numbering system for the reports.

1.2 Purpose Statement

The purpose statement sets the overall framework for your M&E system and answers the broad question of why you are setting it up. The CRS M&E Standards² can help you think through the purpose of your M&E system. Though this task does not take long, perhaps a half hour, it is important to step back and reflect on the overall purpose for the work.

Some obvious reasons for an M&E system are to:

- monitor progress on activities and outputs on a regular and timely basis
- make adjustments as needed in project implementation
- ensure achievement of higher level objectives
- write reports for CRS and meet donor requirements

Other, not-so-obvious reasons are to:

- strengthen capacity of CRS and partner staff
- promote community M&E with feedback to those communities
- pilot new methods for M&E
- harmonize forms and reports formats among multiple partners
- contribute to policy dialogue
- build relationships among CRS, its partners and other stakeholders
- promote organizational learning with others in the region and agency

Think in general terms about the purpose of your M&E system. There is no need for a long list; four or five statements are sufficient to capture the key M&E objectives. See the example below from CRS Malawi. This is the purpose statement for a large-scale, multi-sector program in which CRS is the consortium lead with nine partners.

SMILER Example 2: Purpose Statement, CRS Malawi

1. Strengthen M&E capacity of consortium members
2. Establish a consortium-wide uniform M&E system with partner flexibility to complement
3. Pilot and learn from M&E innovations
4. Establish a knowledge management system and share lessons learned
5. Use data for decision-making and action—by consortium partner staff and volunteers

² See Appendix 2. CRS Standards are available in English, French and Spanish (CRS, 2009a; CRS, 2009b; CRS, 2010b).

Keep your purpose statement in mind as you develop your M&E system. If, for example, you list that one purpose is to build relationships among stakeholders, then you need to ensure that your M&E system does, in fact, support better relationships by incorporating sufficient opportunities for dialogue in the M&E process.

1.3 Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis will help ensure that the data gathered by the M&E system meet the information needs of the project stakeholders. When designing your project, you may have done a stakeholder analysis to identify who should inform the planning process. If that is the case, it can be reviewed and updated to ensure that you understand stakeholder information needs.

The SMILER stakeholder table has two columns: one for the stakeholder, and the second for the general type of information needed by that stakeholder. In Component 3, you will create a “Communication and Reporting Map” to show how and when these stakeholders will get the information.

SMILER Example 3: Stakeholder Analysis, CRS Liberia

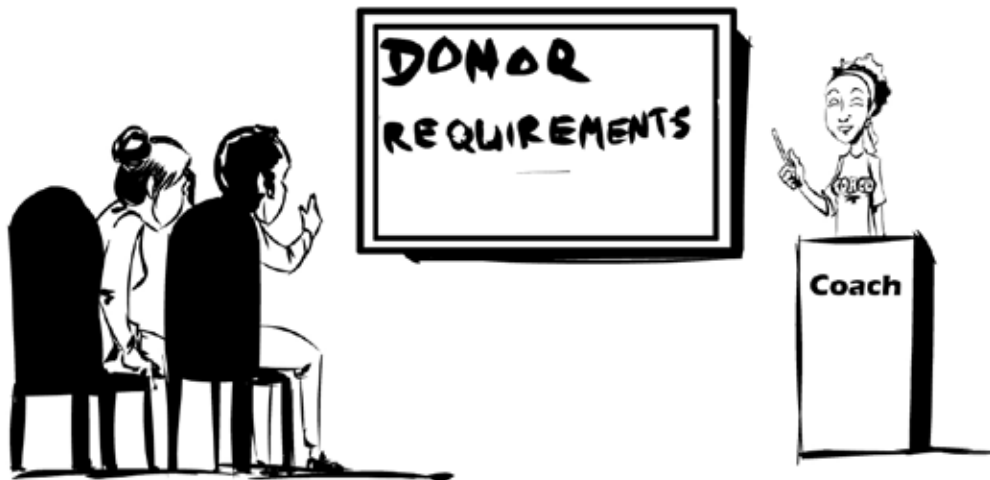
Stakeholder	Information needed
Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of farming and technology inputs • # of hectares and yields • # of farmer fields, by district • Process and implementation
Ministry of Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of infrastructure projects: roads, clinics, schools, etc.
Ministry of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General overview of LIAP health activities
Ministry of Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIAP reviewed as part of Poverty Reduction Strategy
Ministry of Internal Affairs (county administrators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIAP activities, progress and indicators shared with other government ministries. Data on commodity distribution
USAID/FFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandated FFP indicators • M&E Plan indicators
LIAP Steering Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&E Plan indicators • Qualitative data
Catholic Church – Bishops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General overview of LIAP activities
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand project, their contribution, and impact • View progress in their community compared with others • Identify issues, discussion and follow-up
CRS – Country Representative and Senior Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of project and progress • Annual impact using IR and SO indicators • Emerging issues, solutions, and follow-up • Specific interests as identified
CRS regional and HQ offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of project and progress • Lessons learned

In the above example from CRS Liberia, the **first column** lists all of the stakeholders who need information from the CRS Liberia Integrated Agriculture Program. The **second column** notes the kind of information of interest to stakeholders. Note that some of them, like the government ministries, have very specific information needs. Other stakeholders, like the local Bishop, are probably more interested in a general overview of project progress. CRS partners and staff also have specific information needs so that they can properly monitor progress and make adjustments as needed. These information needs can be checked against the list of indicators in your Proframe to ensure that you are collecting information that will respond to the needs of all stakeholders.

You will come back to this stakeholder analysis when you create the “Communication and Reporting Map” later in the process.

1.3.1 Check Donor Requirements

Donors often issue award letters that give specific information on M&E requirements. Some donors may have report formats that give instructions on the outline for the report, tables or other requirements. Thoroughly review these documents to ensure that all of the donor requirements are reflected in the M&E system. List all these documents in the TOC and file them in the ring binder and electronic folder of the M&E Operating Manual.



1.4 M&E Working Group

Designing and implementing an M&E system involves multiple activities. Even with a significant amount of work completed during the SMILER coaching session, there will still be tasks to complete and bugs to work out of the system. Is the M&E Operating Manual up to date and organized so that documents are easy to find? Are the data-gathering forms easily understood by those collecting the data? Are the reporting tables simple to fill out? Is the data management system built and working well? Are partners and CRS staff making good use of the data to make course corrections as needed? Are the reports timely and accurate? As you can see, you need to monitor and evaluate the M&E system itself — this is a key function of the M&E working group. **Expect the unexpected as you begin to implement your M&E system and be prepared to manage these issues with good insights and advice from your M&E working group.**

Think about a group of four or five people who are well placed to oversee the development and implementation of the M&E system. By the end of the coaching week, you will have a better idea of the challenges you will face in creating and implementing the system, the kinds of people who might be part of the group, and the specific responsibilities they might carry. The working group will probably draw from interested CRS and partner staff but can also include stakeholders who may have interest or expertise in M&E.

Below is an example of the objectives, structure and operating procedures of an M&E working group from CRS Liberia for a large multi-sector program.

SMILER Example 4: M&E Working Group, Liberia

The purpose of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Working Group is to oversee implementation of the LIAP M&E system as described in the Purpose Statement in the LIAP M&E Operating Manual.

Membership

1. Central Coordinating Unit M&E Coordinator (Chair)
2. M&E point persons from each of the three implementing partners
3. One representative from each of the three Technical Working Groups (one for each SO)

Community Member Responsibilities

Members of the M&E Working Group commit to ensuring that LIAP M&E activities address the information requirements of all stakeholders. Specifically, M&E Working Group members will:

1. Oversee the finalization of the SMILER system
2. Develop training agenda for partners staff and community members
3. Develop and roll out the upgraded M&E system, including
 - a. M&E data quality control
 - b. Ways to articulate, model and reinforce good M&E work
 - c. Systems and process for data management
 - d. Recommendations and requests to HoPs, PMs and CRs to ensure M&E system success

4. Oversee M&E information utilization, including
 - a. Use of data
 - b. Communicating and reporting system for M&E information, including lessons learned
5. Ensure good community member involvement in M&E
6. Develop scope of work for mid-term and final evaluation
7. Ensuring M&E direction and activities are communicated well to other project staff and partners

Frequency of Meetings

The M&E Working Group will meet on a monthly basis. This frequency of meeting will be periodically reviewed. M&E point persons will meet more frequently, as required.

Venue

The venue for M&E Working Group meetings will rotate between the consortium members. It is expected that meetings will be held in Monrovia and in project locations.

Knowledge Management

Minutes of M&E Working Group meetings will record issues addressed, decisions taken and follow-up action and responsibility. Minutes for each meeting will be distributed to M&E Working Group members.

Summary of Component 1

Good work!! You have finished the first component of your M&E system. You have organized the work and the documents using the TOC, clarified the broader rationale for your M&E system with the purpose statement, analyzed the information needs of stakeholders, and given some initial thought to an M&E working group. Importantly, you have checked for any specific donor requirements for your M&E system.



Be sure to date all of the documents in the footer, record them in your TOC, and file them in the appropriate place in the ring binder and appropriate folder in the electronic version.

Now let's turn our attention to ensuring that you are set up to monitor the objectives and indicators for your project.

Component 2: Setting Up

Component 2 ensures the foundational pieces of the M&E system are in place before you start to design forms and formats. In Component 2, you will

- review documents from the proposal³, such as the
 - Results Framework
 - Proframe and/or M&E Plan
 - Indicator Performance Tracking Table
 - Detailed Implementation Plan
 - M&E planning tools and specific donor required documents, such as the donor report formats or instructions from the Award Letter.
- review indicators and measurement methods, using the Proframe or M&E Plan, to ensure that you have a final list of indicators. The RF and the list of indicators (from the Proframe, M&E Plan or the IPTT) will guide your work in Component 3.

2.1 The Results Framework

The RF is an easy-to-read diagram that gives a snapshot of the objectives of the project, usually down to the output level. It provides an excellent overview of the project and is a valuable guide throughout the M&E coaching session. Create a RF before or early in the SMILER coaching week if you don't have one.

2.2 The Proframe

The Proframe is the CRS version of the logical framework, a tool used by some donors and other NGOs. In the project design stage, you used the Proframe to define your indicators and determine how you will gather the data. Critical assumptions are also likely to be tracked during the life of the project and these should be included in your discussions. You will use all this information, plus any other M&E planning documents from the proposal, to develop the M&E system.

An M&E Plan⁴ has more columns than the Proframe and includes more information about data collection (who, how and when), means of analysis, and use of information. Some donors require this framework in project proposals.

Some CRS staff find this a useful tool to complete before turning to Component 3 in SMILER because it gives additional information for each of the indicators. The information is used in the instruction sheets that accompany each of the data-gathering tools. (See Appendix 3 for an M&E Plan template.)

Take sufficient time to review all the indicators in your Proframe or M&E Plan. A thorough review of the indicators ensures that everyone gains greater knowledge of the details of the project and is prepared to design data-gathering forms in Component 3. Also review the list of indicators to ensure that the correct information is collected to meet the specific information needs of donors and other stakeholders.

Best Practice
In Component 3, you will be referring back to the indicators in the Proframe or M&E plan to ensure that data-gathering forms exist to collect all of the qualitative and quantitative indicators. The IPTT is also a good list of quantitative indicators.

³ See ProPacks I and II (Stetson et al., 2004 and 2007) and the Short Cut series (CRS and American Red Cross, 2008) for detailed information on these planning documents.

⁴ USAID FFP uses the term "Performance Monitoring Plan."

2.3 Indicator Performance Tracking Table

In designing your M&E system, the IPTT is useful because it lists all the quantitative indicators and enables you to determine:

- the indicators that require baseline or other periodic surveys
- a timeframe for collection, e.g., quarterly, annual, mid-term and final or some combination
- the level of detail needed for each indicator, e.g., disaggregated by region, sex, or age

The IPTT can be done before the coaching session by project staff or early in the coaching week. In addition to supporting the design of the M&E system, the IPTT is an excellent annual report format for your quantitative data. You can use the whole table, or cut and paste sections into your narrative report. (See Appendix 4 for an example of an IPTT from CRS Burundi.)

2.4 Detailed Implementation Plan (including M&E)

In your project proposal, you probably developed an action plan listing major activities for at least the first year, if not the life of the project. Early in the implementation of the project, you will develop a DIP that breaks down the activities to a level of detail that is useful for staff and partners, and used for reporting. It is CRS practice to engage key partners and stakeholders in this detailed planning process that not only lists activities but also timeframes, targets and responsible persons. At the end of the current year of the project, progress is assessed and another detailed plan is developed for the upcoming year.⁵

How does the detailed implementation plan help you set up your M&E system? Much of your reporting, particularly in the first phase of project implementation, will be on activities. In your quarterly and six month reports, you will verify whether these activities have been done on time and within budget. Project managers should be closely tracking progress. In your annual reports, you may summarize major activities completed during the year.⁵

Also, the DIP may contain additional activities that you want to track as part of your M&E system that are not in your Proframe or M&E plan. For example, perhaps you have a steering committee composed of government, local NGOs, and partners that meets quarterly to discuss the project. This committee is important because it reviews project progress, discusses problems and solutions, and will likely support post-project efforts. You might decide to add indicators on the number, frequency and attendance at these steering committee meetings if this indicator is not already in your Proframe.

Lastly, your DIP includes activities, timeframes and responsible persons for all of the M&E activities. If not already in the detailed plan, create rows in the table for implementation of the M&E activities and list those that are known such as baseline, annual reviews, mid-term evaluation, final evaluation, date of reports, etc. As other activities come up during the week, return to this calendar and list them. By the end of the week, your calendar of M&E activities should be fairly complete. The example below shows how M&E activities are part of the detailed implementation plan for the project.

⁵ See Appendix 5 for an example from CRS LACRO, the Annual Work Plan Monitoring Matrix (Selener, 2010).

Table 3: Template for Detailed Implementation Plan

Activities	Responsible person	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	etc.
Project Management						
Hire Staff						
Purchase project Materials						
Meetings with key stakeholder						
Launch meeting with partners						
M&E						
Reporting Schedule						
Quarterly reports from partners						
Quarterly report to donors						
Annual report to donor						
Monthly management meeting						
Baseline (staff should develop a more detailed plan when engaged in the base line)						
Draft SOW and select consultant						
Design survey tool						
Train data collection team						
Implement survey						
Data analysis						
Write report						
Design project M&E system						
Organize papers and select coach						
SMILER coaching week						
SMILER discussions with partners						
SMILER working group meetings						
ICT4D						
Appoint ICT4D lead						
Undertake assessment of cell phone network coverage and connectivity						
Meet with key stakeholders						
Analyze potential for ICT4D to add-value to SMILER M&E system						
Review CRS ICT4D solutions portfolio						
Activities by Intermediate Result IR 1.1						
Output 1.1.1						
Activity						
Activity						
Activity						

Summary of Component 2

In this component, you have reviewed your RF, Proframe and/or M&E Plan, IPTT, and reviewed your list of quantitative and qualitative indicators. You have added a section to the DIP to include the detailed activities for M&E. Finally, you have read and re-read any donor information that lists specific M&E requirements. Be sure to date all of the documents, record them in your TOC, and file the electronic and hard copies in the appropriate folders.



In Component 1, you organized to manage the full range of elements relevant to the M&E system. In Component 2, you identified the final list of qualitative and quantitative indicators. With this information, you have set up the foundation of your M&E system. It is now time to move to Component 3 where you will design forms and reports to collect the data you need and develop a plan to communicate with stakeholders.

Component 3: Designing Forms and Reports

Component 3 is the major work of the SMILER coaching session. In Component 3, you will use the list of indicators from Component 2 to design the data-gathering and reporting system and develop mechanisms to support good use of the data for learning, decision making, and reporting.

In this component, you will:

- complete the data flow maps
- create data-gathering forms and report formats
- write instructions for each of the data-gathering forms and report formats
- discuss ideas for community-based M&E
- discuss ideas for a data management plan, including Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions
- complete the communication and reporting map
- identify opportunities and list prompt questions for Learning to Action Discussions (LADs)
- identify opportunities for LADs
- review capacities and resources for the M&E system

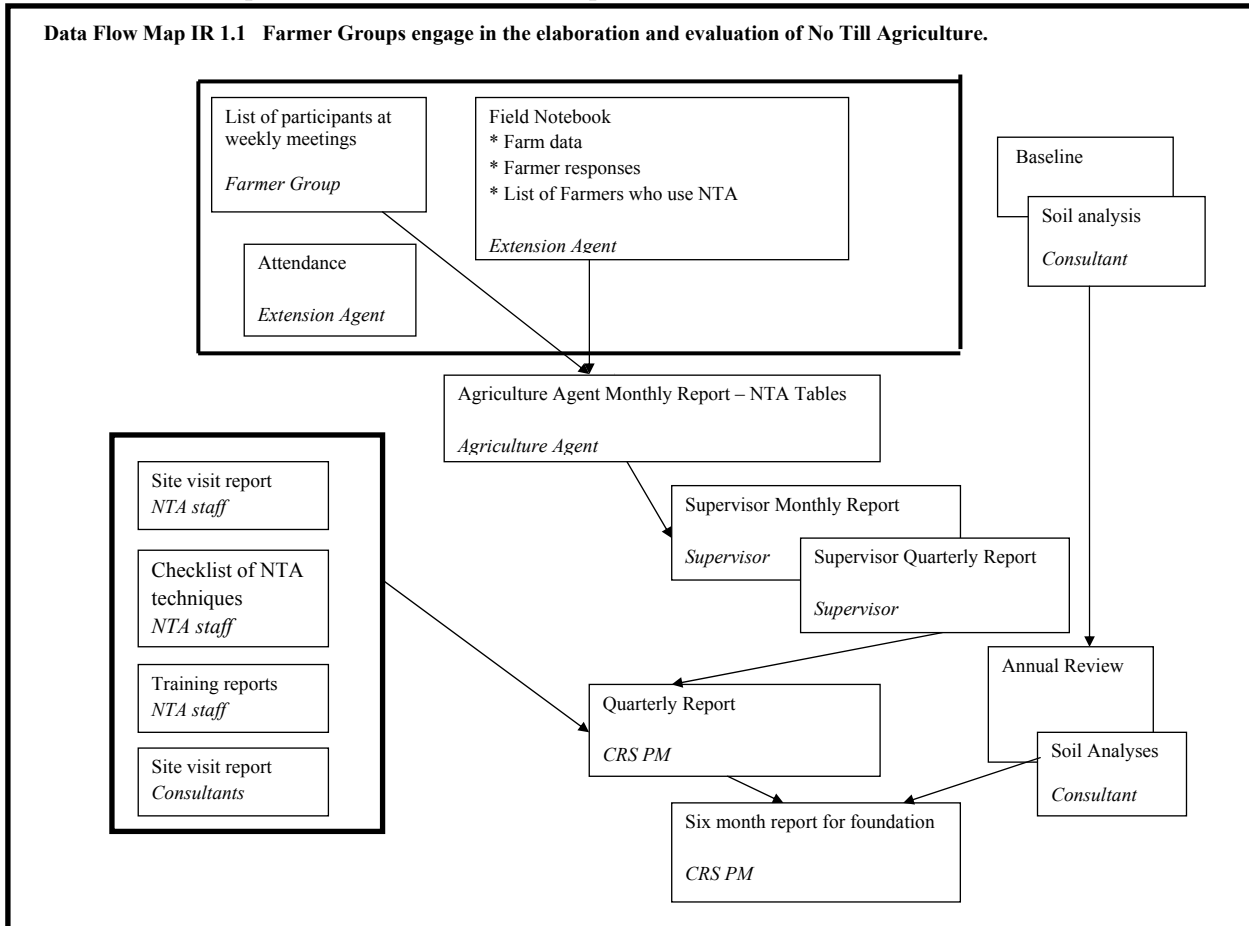
As you see from the list, there is a lot of work in this section and it will take most of the coaching week. You may not complete all so the coach will allocate time on the last day to discuss next steps. Let's take the documents one at a time starting with the data flow map to better understand what they are and how they work.

3.1 Data Flow Map

The data flow map is a diagram of all the forms and reports that will be part of your system. The map shows each form and report and how they are connected, i.e., the flow of data from the data-gathering forms to the various reports. All of the qualitative and quantitative indicators listed in your Proframe or M&E plan will be collected in one of the forms in the data flow map.

Use this example from CRS Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to understand how these data flow maps work.

SMILER Example 5: Data Flow Map, CRS DRC



This is a data flow map for the collection and reporting of data for the training and use of “No Till Agriculture” (NTA) by targeted farmers. The map shows where the data are first collected at the community level and how these data flow into the various reports – monthly, quarterly and six month reports. The boxes on the right hand side show the baseline and annual reviews and annual soil analyses. **Each of the boxes in the data flow map represent either a data- gathering form or report format that is part of the M&E system.**

Note the heavy border around some sets of documents. These borders contain forms and reports related to a particular aspect of the monitoring system. The box on top contains the forms that are used by the farmer groups and the extension agent at the demonstration site. The arrow from this bold-bordered box shows that these data are used in the monthly report of the agriculture agent. Monthly reports from all the agriculture agents are compiled by the supervisor who reports on a monthly and quarterly basis. The bold-bordered box on the left contains forms that are completed as these activities are done by CRS and partner staff, and by consultants; the arrow shows that these reports are used in the quarterly report.

The bold-borders around a set of boxes can bring a sense of order to the data flow maps although not all maps need them. Use your judgment in determining what goes in the box—there are no rules except that it should make sense to the project team and help communicate the M&E system to others.

3.1.1 Start with a data flow map

Can one map cover the whole project? Or does it make sense to have one data map for each Strategic Objective (SO) or each Intermediate Result (IR)? In the CRS DRC example above, the map shows the documents for one IR. **In general, data maps tend to work well when done by initiative or sector.** The project may have three SOs, for example, health, agriculture and education. In this case, you might have three data flow maps, one for each sector. But, if the agriculture component of the project has two distinct IR, (agriculture and irrigation), each of these may require its own data flow map.

Start with one initiative or sector and develop a data flow map. As you work on these maps it will soon become clear how many are needed and which ones. Remember that this part of the SMILER system is very iterative so don't be surprised if things change as you work your way through the system.

3.1.2 Develop the data flow map

Where do you begin? Let's imagine two opposite scenarios.

- Scenario 1: You already have many data-gathering forms and report formats for this project. They may come from a previous or similar project or you may have report formats from the donor. Perhaps the project is well underway and you have developed many forms, but have not developed the full system. For whatever reason, you have a number of forms and report formats and can begin to arrange them on the data flow map.
- Scenario 2: This is a new project and you do not have any forms or report formats. You will start the data flow map with a blank sheet of paper.

You may find yourself firmly planted in one scenario or somewhere in between. Regardless of your starting point, get a flip-chart size paper and place it flat on a table. You will all work at this table and develop your data flow map using post-it notes or small pieces of paper.



If you have data-gathering forms and report formats (scenario 1) write the name of each on a separate post-it note or slip of paper. As a group, discuss the various forms and reports and how they fit into a data flow map. It is likely that you have some but not all forms and reports, so this exercise will take some time to think through all that is required. Don't be concerned if it seems a messy process. **Experience shows that developing the data flow maps can take time.**

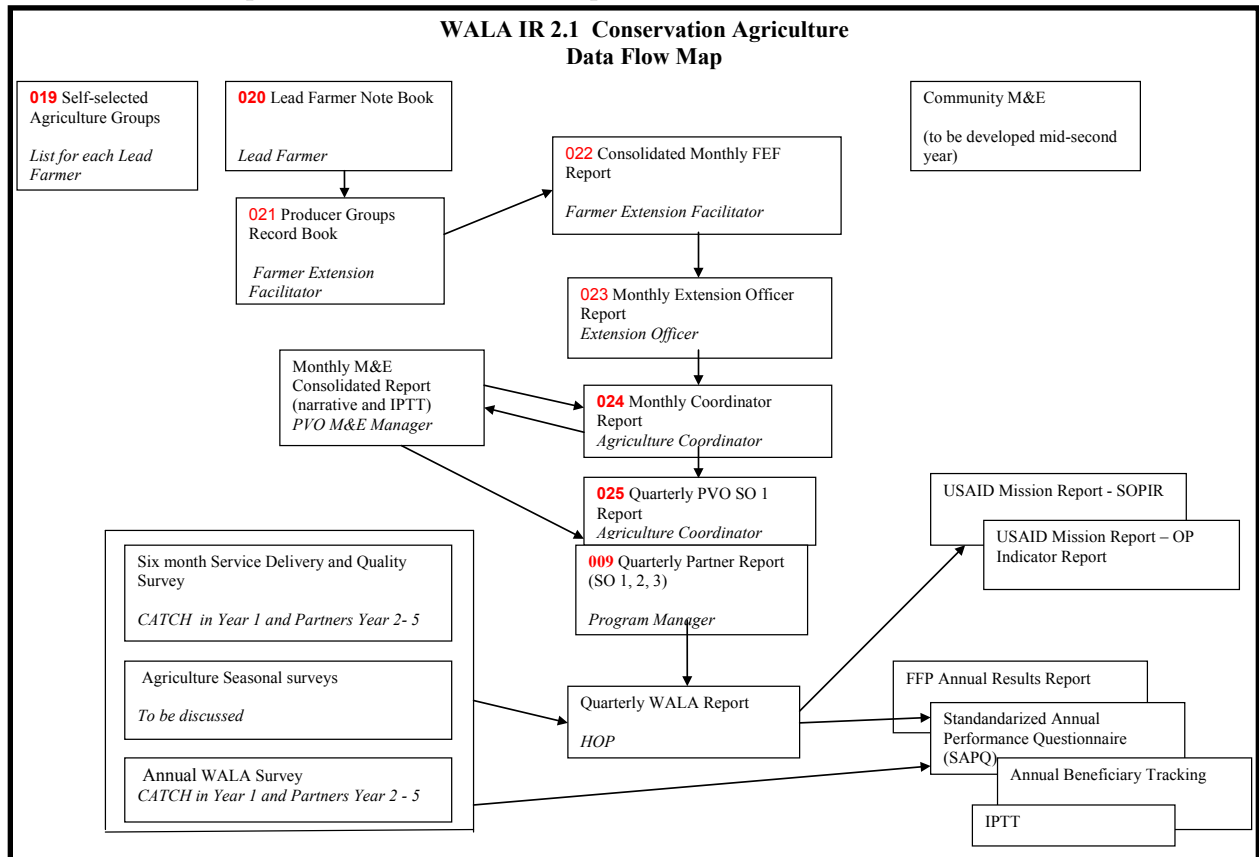
If your project is closer to scenario 2, you will be sitting in front of a blank sheet of flip-chart paper with no forms or report formats to place. Here are some ideas to get started:

- Figure out the source for the data. Farmer groups, school management committees, savings groups, and health clinics are examples of possible data sources. You will need data-gathering forms so that the information can be collected in an organized way. You may need several forms at these sites. See the CRS DRC example again. At the village site, there are several forms to collect data on the demonstration plot activities.
- Write the name of reports that are due on separate slips of paper. Do you have a monthly report from partners? A quarterly report to management? An annual report for donors? Write each of these on a slip of paper and arrange in the proper sequence.
- Review any evaluations cited in the proposal. Are there periodic surveys or a mid-term and final evaluation? Note those on a slip of paper and place on the flip chart paper.
- Review the indicators in the Proframe, IPTT, or M&E Plan. Are all the indicators represented in the data flow map? Keep the list of indicators close by because you will be referring to them often.
- Review data flow maps from similar projects to see if they are useful for your project.

As you discuss all of these data-gathering forms and report formats, note each on a post-it note or slip of paper and put them on the flip chart paper in front of you. Continue arranging them to show how they relate to each other until the entire map makes sense.

The first three bullets above are illustrated in the following data flow map of CRS Malawi. The source of the data (first bullet) for this IR on Conservation Agriculture is the Lead Farmer notebook, which is shown in the upper left hand corner. There is a cascade of reports (second bullet) due in this large-scale, multi-sector project. They can be seen starting with the Consolidated Monthly Extension Volunteer Report through the Quarterly WALA Report that is used for the six month and annual report to the donor. There are six month and annual surveys in the project (third bullet); these are seen in the box in the lower left.

SMILER Example 6: Data Flow Map, CRS Malawi



Once you start, you will find yourself in a dynamic discussion about forms and reports and how they flow. Allow the conversation to wind its way through a broad range of topics so that staff will understand the rationale of data flow maps and how they work. Through the data flow maps, participants develop a thorough understanding of the project and its M&E needs.

3.1.3 Review the map and indicators

As you review the data map and all of the forms drawn on it, are all the indicators that were listed in the Proframe accounted for? While you have not yet created these forms, you can review the indicators to make sure there is a place for them in one of the forms in your data flow map. You will verify this as you begin to design the actual forms.

Best Practice
Once a data flow map is complete, ask one participant to talk the other participants through the entire draft map. This is a good way to reinforce learning about the map and how it works.

3.1.4 Don't forget the qualitative data

Each project should have a balance of quantitative and qualitative data-gathering methods. You may, for example, plan to assess participant satisfaction with an annual focus group exercise. If this is the case, write a post-it note for this annual review and put it in your data flow map. Qualitative data-gathering is often part of the mid-term or final evaluation. If that is the case, you would not develop a

separate form during the SMILER week; collecting the qualitative data would be part of the SOW for the mid-term or final evaluation scope of work.

3.1.5 *Identify the responsible person*

This person will fill out the form or report during project implementation. In the three data flow maps above, the person responsible for that form is written in the box in italics. Roles and responsibilities are clarified and documented. In the two data flow maps above, the person responsible for that form is written in italics.

3.2 Data-Gathering Forms, Report Formats and Instructions

3.2.1 *Design the data-gathering forms and report formats*

Each of the forms and formats on the data flow map is a separate document and there should be a logical flow of information from one to the other. You will be referring back and forth between the map and the forms, perhaps making changes as you work to complete all of the forms and formats.

Develop the data-gathering forms. First, design the forms so they look consistent and easy to complete. Page 18 describes a protocol for composing the header and footer so that each of the documents in the M&E Operating Manual has the same information on each page. This guide recommends a header with the name of the form or report format, and the name and dates of the project. In the footer, note CRS and Partner, M&E Operating Manual, version (the date of the latest version of the document).

Second, each form will start with some basic information such as name of village, governmental district, month of data collection, name of person filling out form and other. Once that information is organized, write the questions to gather information in a manner that is clear and easy-to-use, bearing in mind the individual who will be filling out the form. Both M&E and technical staff are engaged in this process.

Best Practice
Time spent on carefully designed forms will be rewarded with improvements in the quality of data collected.

Develop the formats for reports. In your data flow maps, there is a hierarchy of reporting forms matching the supervisory hierarchy. Look again at the CRS DRC project on page 30, and track the reports from the Agriculture Agent through the six month report to the donor.

- Agriculture Agent Monthly Report
- Supervisor Monthly Report
- Supervisor Quarterly Report
- CRS Quarterly Report
- CRS Six Month Report to donor

CRS Malawi has found it useful to use a numbering system to identify each of the reports. (See the numbers on the data flow map on page 33.) The project is a consortium of nine members and each partner may use different titles for staff. The person referred to as “Extension Officer” in one organization may be called a “Field Supervisor” in another, so the number can clearly identify the exact report. The numbers also make it easy to find report forms in the hard copy and electronic version of the M&E Operating Manual.

Other projects may follow a similar stream of reports, starting with data-gathering at the project site, with consolidated data reports flowing up the system so the information can be used at different points along the way, in reports to field agents and managers, and in reports developed for donors. Each of these reports needs a format. The question to ask is “Which data are consolidated for which staff and which data are sent up to the next management level?”

Monthly and quarterly reports usually include tables of data and a narrative that explains the data, notes challenges and successes, and describes next steps. In the CRS DRC example, the extension worker has information in a notebook from which the Agriculture Agents create monthly reports that are then consolidated into the Supervisors Monthly report.

To create reports, look at the data that are collected at the project site level. Ask yourself which of those data stay at the project level for management decisions and which are consolidated for the next level report and discussion? Which data have to be consolidated for use in the IPTT? Work to streamline your reporting tables so that data are collected and reported on in a simple and useful way. The IPTT and M&E plan also help organize the data to be presented in the various reports.

3.2.2 Write the instruction sheets

Each of the data-gathering forms and report formats has an instruction sheet. Why is this important? Seemingly simple questions on these forms can be interpreted in different ways. “Household,” for example, can have different meanings in different cultures, as can “head of household.” For this reason, it is important to write an instruction sheet for each data-gathering tool in your system. The instructions sheets clarify terms (e.g., household), provide information on how to collect the data, and give formulas for data analysis. If you have an M&E plan, that information is useful as you develop these instruction sheets.

Tips: Writing Instructions Sheets

- Develop a format that you will follow for each instruction sheet so that the approach to collecting information is consistent. Contents of the instruction sheet could include:
 - purpose
 - who fills out the form
 - frequency
 - who receives the form
 - definition of terms in indicators
- Explain everything. Don’t assume that some questions are obvious because that may not be correct.
- Use simple, clear language that will be easily understood by those who will be trained to collect the data.

- If formulae are requested, write clear instructions on how they are calculated.
- Consider the respondents, who may be neither literate nor numerate, and ensure the questions and instructions are appropriate for them.
- Use the same header and footer on the instruction sheets that are used on the other documents.
- Consider the respondents, who may be neither literate nor numerate, and ensure the questions and instructions are appropriate for them.
- Use the same header and footer on the instruction sheets that are used on the other documents.

Staff find this exercise very useful and are surprised that they have such different interpretations of the questions in the form, or how they define terms such as “number of children.” While it can be time consuming to write instructions for all of the forms, it is time well spent. **The instruction sheets ensure that data gathering is standardized and consistent across sites and that errors are minimized.** The sheets are useful when training staff on data collection.

Below is an example of an instruction sheet for a Food for Education Project:

SMILER Example 7: Instructions Sheet, CRS Sierra Leone

Instructions for the Daily Attendance Registers	
General instructions for filling the form	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be filled out by the school teacher in charge • To be completed once daily in the morning (8:30am) • Note there is one form for girls; another form for boys • Field agent will summarize at the end of the month and put data in monthly report 	
Data to be filled out by school teacher in charge	
General information	
Month/year	Enter the month and year the form is filled
Page	If the number of pupils exceed the space on this page, add another form and give it a new page number
School Code#	Enter the school number provided by CRS
Class	State the class; one set of forms for every class
Data table	
Number	For the first time in attendance, copy the name form the attendance register
Name	Enter student name (Last Name and First Name) and use the same order for all the following months
Attendance	Write ‘V’ for present and ‘O’ for absent
Total	Add all the days pupils attended school
Dropout	Draw a line and write ‘dropout’
Transfer	Draw a line and write “transferred when a pupil moves to another school
Temporary Absent	Write zero (0)

New Intake	Draw a thick line after the current pupils' name. Write "New Intake" and write the names of new pupils below the line
Total Attendance for month	Add the total attendance for all pupils for the month and write answer in the last right bottom of form
Summary table to be completed by CRS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance average • Number attending less than 50% of school days in the month • Number attending under 12 days • Number attending less than 10 days • Female form only: No. attending at least 80% of school days in the month 	

3.2.3 Review data package: data flow maps, forms, reports, and instructions

Take a look at the entire package related to a data flow map including all of the data-gathering forms, report formats and instructions. Review them with the following questions in mind.

Tips: Checklists for Data Package

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the data flow map accurately represent what is expected to happen in the field? • Is the flow of data-gathering forms and report formats efficient and streamlined? Could anything be eliminated or combined? • Do all the data-gathering forms and report formats indicate who is responsible for completing each one? • Are all the reports noted in the data flow map? • Are there opportunities to group any of the forms and reports and draw bold-borders around them to make the data flow map easier to understand? • Check the list of indicators from the Proframe (or M&E Plan or IPTT). Is it clear that each indicator is being collected in either a data-gathering form or other type of data-gathering exercise such as a baseline and final evaluation, or annual review? • Are the data-gathering forms clear and easy to use? • Do the instruction pages contain clear, unambiguous guidance, including definitions of key terms, for collecting each piece of information in the data-gathering form or report format?
--

Remember that these data flow maps and forms will be reviewed by other CRS and partner staff and then tested in the field, so the products from the SMILER sessions are not final. Nonetheless, this checklist should help you develop the best possible product during that week.

3.3 Focus on Community M&E

Put in place a system for listening and learning from project community members and for responding to their concerns in a transparent manner. Individuals and communities are the primary stakeholders of the project and accountability to them is often overlooked in our efforts to be accountable to donors. Lives of individuals will improve, or not, based on the success of the project interventions. Community members have a pivotal role in guiding our work towards an outcome that is successful from their perspective. Much of the data for the M&E system is generated and gathered at the community level; an equal emphasis needs to be placed on shared analysis and subsequent learning and response.

During the SMILER coaching week, initiate a discussion about a plan to engage communities in M&E activities so that the final system is influenced by their needs, provides robust information to them on progress within their communities, and encourages mutual learning and good decision-making. Ensure that you allocate time and responsibilities after the SMILER session to fully develop the plan with community members. That conversation should consider what level of participation currently exists and what is feasible in the context of the project.

3.4 Data Management

In every M&E system, data flow through a series of forms and report formats. How will the data be managed in your project? How will they be gathered, validated, analyzed and consolidated? Do you envisage a paper-based data-gathering system with data transmitted to a spreadsheet or a database? Or will you use information and communication technology (ICT) solutions such as mobile phones, PDAs, or ruggedized laptops (CRS, 2010)? Will reports be distributed by email or will stakeholders have web access to reports? What are your plans for using CRS Global to sharing M&E information?

During the SMILER coaching session, review the plans for data management outlined in the proposal or begin the discussion on data management during the week. Depending on the sophistication of your planned system, you are likely to need other sessions to discuss the details of data management. Document your discussion during the SMILER coaching week and assign someone who will be responsible for follow-up sessions.

3.4.1 *Information and communication technologies*

ICT solutions are an increasingly important means to collect, analyze and report on data. Planning should have started in project design in collaboration with IT (Information Technology) personnel to ensure that the proposal includes a sufficient description of the use of ICT and an adequate budget.

If you intend to use ICT devices to support project M&E, you will need other sessions to develop a detailed plan for technological support to develop and maintain the system. Plan to:

- Contact others in CRS who can inform your plans on ICT
- Develop, upload and maintain the data collection forms and reports

- Train staff on the electronic devices and use for data capture and transmission
- Train staff on data validation, data analysis, and reporting tasks
- Develop and maintain long-term technological support for users

If you choose to use ICT solutions to collect, analyze, and report on data, design the full M&E process first. Technology is not a substitute for a well-designed M&E process. Data flow maps document how the data are collected and where the reports are generated; design the report for each level. This information is needed regardless of your choice of software or technology.

*I wish I had done
SMILER first...*

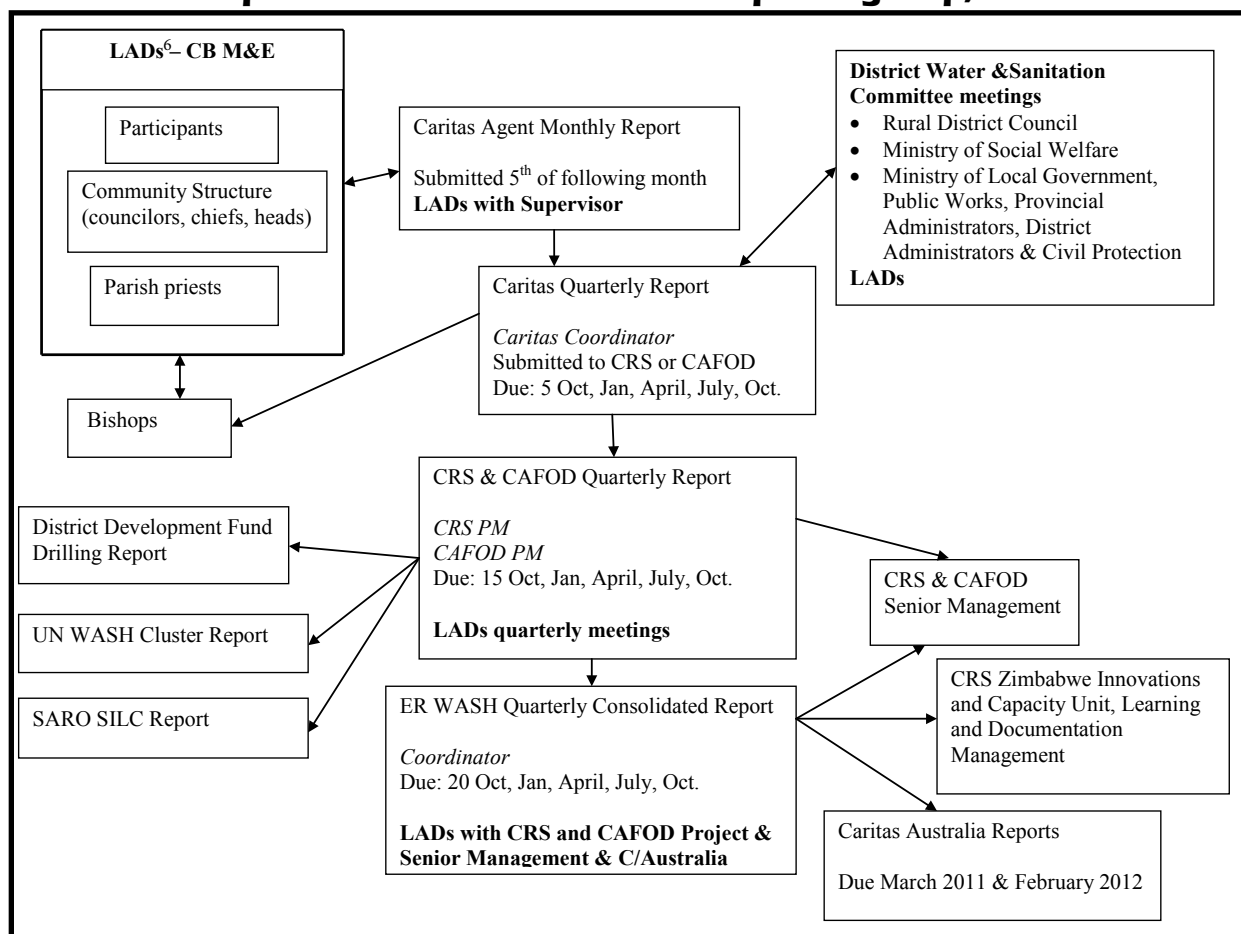


3.5 Communication and Reporting Map

In Component 1, you developed a stakeholder analysis that listed key stakeholders and their information needs. The communication and reporting map documents the flow of information and reports to all of these stakeholders: CRS, partners, community, and other external stakeholders. This map contains other useful information such as when the report is due and by whom, and opportunities for Learning to Action Discussions, which are discussed in the next section.

In the CRS Zimbabwe map below, you can see the links with the community actors in the box on the left, and the links with government departments in the box on the right. The boxes in the center show the flow of reports from the Caritas Monthly Report to reports for Caritas Australia. Data from the CRS & CAFOD Quarterly Report are also sent (see boxes lower left) to the district Development Fund, the UN WASH report, and a CRS regional report on SILC. You can see there are many stakeholders in this project; the maps clarify how and when they get their information.

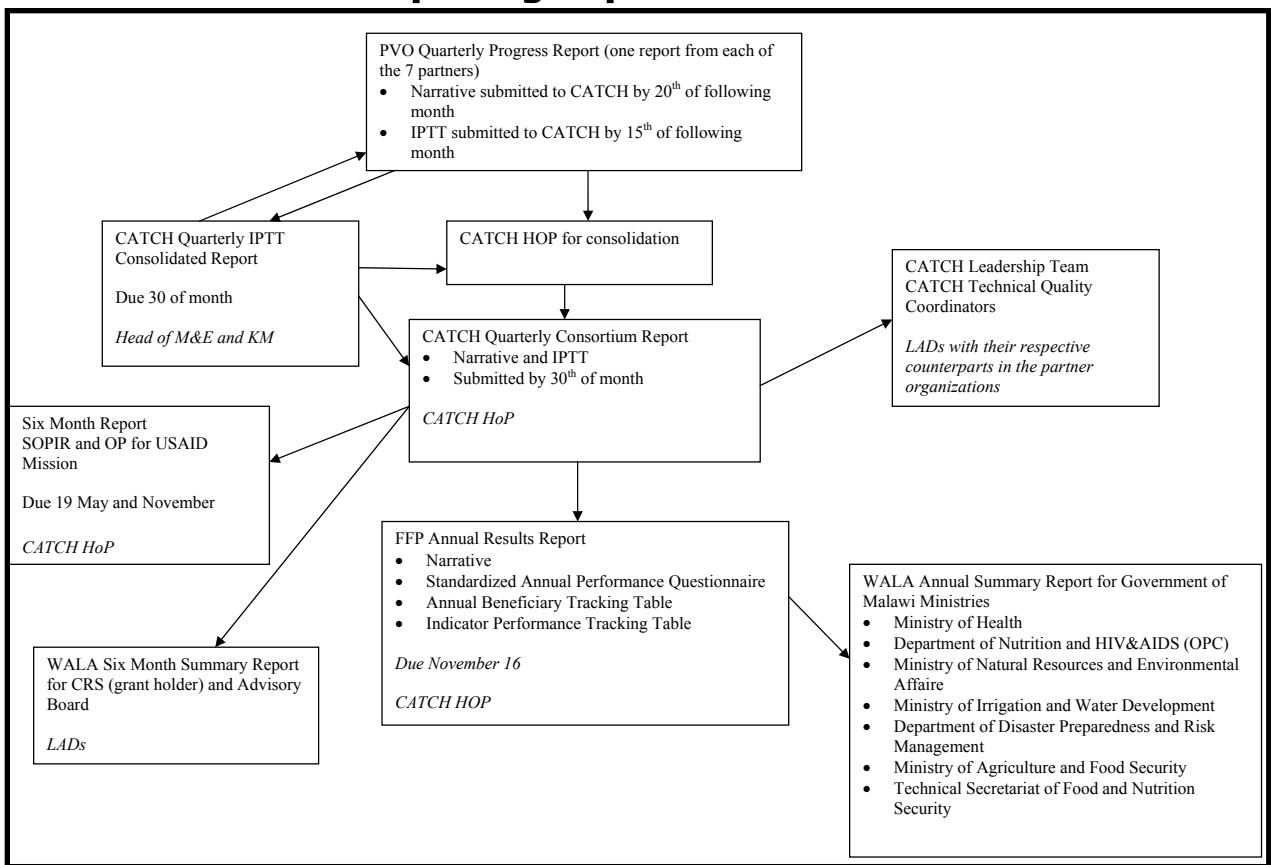
SMILER Example 8: Communication and Reporting Map, CRS Zimbabwe



⁶ LADs are discussed on pages 42-43.

In the CRS Malawi communication and reporting map below, you see the reporting map for CATCH, which is the CRS Consortium Lead office where reports are consolidated and sent to higher level stakeholders. This map starts with the quarterly report sent from each of the nine consortium partners to the CATCH office for consolidation. (Each partner has its own communication and reporting map that ends with the quarterly report submitted to CATCH.) This map is particularly interesting because it shows the role of M&E staff (box on left) in the review of data and their input into the reports. You can also see that the quarterly report is sent to the CATCH leadership team and the Technical Quality Coordinators for review and action (box on right).

SMILER Example 9: Communication and Reporting Map, CRS Malawi



There is some overlap between the data flow maps and the communication and reporting maps. The flow of reports is a common element, but each has a separate function. While you can put the two together in one map, experience has shown that combining these SMILER elements becomes unduly complicated so it is better to do them separately. The following table shows the difference between the two types of SMILER maps.

Table 4: Difference between Data Flow Maps and Communication and Reporting Maps

Areas of Difference	Data Flow Map	Communication and Reporting Map
Primary purpose	To represent how data are gathered and flow through the M&E system	To represent the plan for reporting and communicating project progress and impact to all stakeholders
Key information presented in map	Flow of data (indicators) from data-gathering forms through all the internal and external reports	Flow of reports to all of the stakeholders listed in the stakeholder analysis
Other information presented in map	Notes person responsible for completing the data-gathering form or report format	Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person responsible for completing form or format • Date the report is due • Opportunities for Learning to Action discussions

3.6 Learning to Action Discussions

Use of data to regularly assess progress and make agreed-upon changes is of major importance to the success of the project. Yet it is precisely this use of data that tends to slip by project staff. LADs are explicitly integrated into the M&E system.

What are Learning to Action Discussions? This is a time set aside to understand and analyze the data and to discuss their implications for the management of the project. While LADs can take place at any time in the project, it is a good practice to link the LADs to the communication and reporting map. With this map, you see excellent opportunities for discussing data, findings, and their implication for next steps in the project. Data findings should be on the agenda for regularly scheduled meetings with staff and partners and other stakeholders.

At what point do the communities review the data, discuss progress, and suggest needed adjustments to the action plan? When is the information about the project shared with government officials? See the communication and reporting map from CRS Mali above and note the various occasions for discussing this project with community groups and government officials.

Best Practice
Each time reports are submitted from field to management staff, it is a good time to review the data and agree upon an appropriate set of next steps.

With LADs, staff are encouraged to use the data they have been collecting to reflect on their own work. They also observe that supervisors and managers use the data to make decisions and agree on action. This active use of data serves to reinforce the collection of data and the appreciation staff have for M&E.

The LADs provide a structure for analyzing data and discussing their implications for responsive project management with all levels of stakeholders. Use the questions in the tips box below to promote the dialogue and make decisions about project progress.

Tips: Sample Prompt Questions for Learning to Action Discussions

Learning

1. What did we plan for the month? Quarter? Six months?
2. What did we achieve?
 - a. Review the data on the monthly data reports⁷
 - What do these data tell us?
 - What don't the data tell us?
 - Who do the data represent?
 - Who don't the data represent?
 - What else do we need to know?
 - b. Are these data consistent with our observations on field visits?
 - c. Review of successes and challenges. Focus on the facts!

Successes:

- What is going well?
- Why did it happen?
- So, what does this mean?
- How does it affect us?

Issues/Challenges:

- What problems/issues are we having?
 - Why is this happening?
 - So, what does this mean?
 - How does this affect us?
3. What happened (both good and bad) that we did not expect?
 4. How are these results contributing to our objectives?

⁷Hagens et al., 2009.

Action

1. What initiatives are successful?
 - a. How can they be reinforced?
 - b. Are there other places in the project area that might adopt these initiatives?
2. What initiatives are not going well?
 - a. What needs to change?
 - b. Should any activities be dropped?
3. If activities change, who needs to be informed and how do we plan this?
4. If activities change, is there a budget to support the work?
5. How best can community members be informed of our current thinking?
 - a. What is the best way to inform different members of the community?
 - b. What issues/questions are likely to surface?
 - c. How should we respond to opportunities and concerns — how much room is there for negotiation?
 - d. Which project staff and partners should be involved in follow-up discussions?

Remember that LADs are opportunities to reflect, discuss and plan based on an analysis of the collected data at all levels of the project. The LADs are not designed to be another form to fill out, **although information from these sessions will help staff write their required reports and plan for the next month or quarter.**

Structure reports to encourage staff to reflect on the data and report on their analysis. Appendix 6 is an example of a quarterly report of the NTA Project in CRS DRC. In this report, the partner supervisor is asked to analyze the trends and comment on project direction. These reports will provide the basis for meaningful LADs between the supervisor and next level of management for partners and for CRS staff.

3.7 Capacities and Resources

What are the capacities and resources that support your M&E system? A well-functioning system requires human resources, training, funding and material resources. CRS and partner staff with M&E responsibilities must have the knowledge, skills, tools and support to undertake their respective tasks. This is not something to think about at the end of the SMILER session but something to keep in mind as your M&E system is being developed, and discussed regularly as part of the LADs during M&E implementation.

Remember M&E capacity at the community level. Community members engage in both data gathering and data analysis. How will participants learn about their role and get training to carry out their responsibilities?

Develop a column of concerns that come up as you discuss these questions and then a separate one for actions.

Table 5: Capacities and Resources – Illustrative M&E Concerns and Possible Actions

M&E concerns	Actions
Partners have many new staff who are unfamiliar with the project and M&E	Plan for a session with partners to Review and further refine the Year 1 DIP Review the SMILER forms (M&E Plan, IPTT, data flow maps, data-gathering forms and instructions) Arrange to pretest the data-gathering forms
Extension workers have large amounts of data to collect on a monthly basis	Work with partners to oversee training and ongoing support for extension workers Review progress in quarterly meetings with partners Plan quality checks on data collected by extension workers Consider an ICT solution
Insufficient budget for planned ICT support	Discuss the project budget with the HoP and finance officer to understand the approved budget and line item flexibility. Review ICT plan as indicated

3.8 Reports and Evaluations

Reports show up in the data flow maps because those maps show the flow of data through the reporting cycle. Planned evaluations are also in the map⁸. See the CRS Malawi map above for a good example.

The reports and evaluations are shown separately in the SMILER graphic because they are important documents in the M&E system. Good data collection and analysis contribute to evidence-based reports that are submitted at regular intervals to supervisors, managers, donors and other stakeholders. Similarly, good monitoring and reporting will contribute to better evaluations.

Annual reviews or surveys and mid-term and final evaluations are part of the M&E system and are documented in your M&E Operating Manual. Depending on the size of these exercises, you may want to create another ring binder to hold this information.



Closing the SMILER Coaching Session

It is rare to complete all of the SMILER documents during the coaching week. Expect, however, that staff will largely complete Components 1 and 2 and make significant progress in Component 3. You should strive to complete at least one data package comprising a data flow map with all data-gathering forms and report formats and accompanying instruction forms. (Your project may have two or more data packages, depending on scope.) With this experience, staff should feel comfortable about the process and have confidence that they can complete all of the remaining tasks once the coaching week is over.

⁸For information on evaluations, see CRS and American Red Cross, 2008.

M&E Working Group. Remember the M&E working group that was discussed in Component 1? Now it is time to return to this idea and determine which CRS and partner staff would form a group to oversee the functioning of the system. The group’s SOW may include some of the concerns that arose when you reviewed capacities and resources to implement the system. The primary tasks are to help ensure that the SMILER design is high quality, complete, fully implemented, and stays on track, and that the data are useful and used. See again the SOW for the M&E working group for CRS Liberia, page 22, and capacities and resources, Table 5, page 45.

Appoint a person to continue to manage the development and implementation of the M&E system; there is still much work to do. Use the TOC to review the remaining tasks and assign responsibilities for them. See the TOC from Sierra Leone, page 16; note the forms that need to be completed. Use the “Status” column to add details to ensure that all understand what needs to be done to complete the tasks. There are also a fair number of activities in the implementation of the M&E system and they are briefly addressed in the next section.



C. NEXT STEPS: AFTER THE COACHING SESSION

Prior to closing the SMILER coaching session, you will want to allocate sufficient time to identify next steps to complete the system, such as finishing the data flow maps, forms and formats, instructions, etc. CRS and partner staff will be included in completing the next steps particularly the process to test, finalize and roll out the data-gathering forms and report formats. These steps are important to complete the M&E system and also build ownership over the final product.

Develop an M&E implementation plan with specific activities, responsible persons and timetable to complete the SMILER process. The finalization and roll out process may include many of the items in the table below. Include oversight of these items in the SOW for the M&E working group.

Table 6: Follow-Up Activities (adapted from the CRS Malawi roll out process)

Activity	Description
Communicate progress to date and plans for the short and medium term	Develop a communication plan to ensure that all who need to know are kept informed throughout the completion and implementation of the M&E system.
Review SMILER draft	The SMILER coaching session was done with a few staff. Set up meetings with management and CRS and partner staff to describe the work, to develop a plan to complete the system, and to further encourage buy-in to the proposed M&E system.
Set up small working groups to finalize selected parts of the system	Depending on the size of the project, you may want to set up small working groups, by sector, to work on their own data flow map, forms, formats and instructions. Each group should have its own list of activities to accomplish, responsible person, and timeframe. It is useful to have attendees of the SMILER coaching sessions participate in each of these working groups, at least one per group. The attendees are able to explain the big picture as they work on the details of the subset of forms.
Finalize and pretest forms	Review the data flow map, data-gathering forms, report formats and instructions with staff and partners who are responsible for the system. Set up a system to review, test and finalize this package of forms.
Update the SMILER M&E Operating Manual as new forms are generated	The review and pretesting of forms generates new versions. It is important to keep track of these and ensure that the M&E Operating Manual is always up to date.
Train data collectors – partners staff and community members	Set up sessions to thoroughly review the data-gathering forms along with their instructions. Ensure that all relevant staff and partners understand how to fill out the forms and their report formats.
Set up data management system	Set up a timetable to discuss the details of the data management system for your project. If there is an opportunity for an ICT solution, bring IT staff into the discussion early in the process.
Produce protocol to distribute new and updated forms	During the process to finalize the system, many forms will be generated. Develop a system to keep track of these updated forms. One person can be the point person and update the M&E Operating Manual and ensure that everyone is using the latest version.
Manage data	Develop a protocol on data management; include IT staff as needed.
Clean and enter data	Develop a protocol on data cleaning and entry; include IT staff as needed. Train staff and test to make ensure they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills.

Manage data quality control	Develop a checklist and accompanying guide to ensure that the data collection and processing system is assessed and passed for validity, reliability, timeliness, precision and integrity.
Analyze data	Develop a data analysis plan that is aligned with the project's reporting requirements
Ensure adequate resources	Ensure that implementation of the M&E system has an adequate budget; make revisions as necessary within the available budget.
Plan for community-based M&E	Develop and implement plan to engage community members in the M&E system.
Develop detailed plan for evaluation	Many projects have scheduled specific reviews such as baselines, mid-term and final evaluations, annual surveys and other. Set up a detailed schedule to ensure sufficient time to plan and implement these evaluations.
Complete annual detailed implementation plan	The detailed implementation plan is important to guide the day to day work of project staff. It is also an important part of the reporting process to ensure that tasks are completed on time and within budget. Schedule annual reviews of the activities and accomplishments and use this information to plan for the next annual period.
Use CRS Global	Consider how to use the project space on CRS Global to ensure information and learning generated by the M&E system is available to others.

D. CONCLUSION

Congratulations – you now have a good understanding how to design an M&E system that will serve CRS and partners, and the participants in the project. There is still a lot of work to finish the design of the system and to implement it. This is your opportunity to bring other CRS and partners staff into the work on the system to ensure they can provide valuable input and feel ownership of the final product. Engage the communities so they are an integral part of the system.

With the support of your M&E working group and the document manager, you will collect, analyze and use data to make better decisions about the course of your project. Your M&E system may be enhanced with ICT solutions to support more rapid transmission of data and reports. Your M&E system will balance the need to collect and use information for both upward and downward accountability, and you will review the system annually to see if it needs modification.

CRS strives to be an effective learning agency. Good project monitoring and reporting is the cornerstone for any learning organization. Your use of CRS Global to share information and experience will contribute significantly to agency learning.

REFERENCES⁹

CRS. 2010a. *Mainstreaming the use of ICT Solutions to improve CRS Programming Efforts*. Baltimore: CRS.*

CRS. 2010b. *M&E Standards Narrated Presentation*. Baltimore: CRS.

CRS. 2009a. *M&E Standards. Version 1.0*. Baltimore: CRS.

CRS. 2009b. *M&E Standards Support Tool: Using the Standards to Improve Monitoring and Evaluation*. Baltimore: CRS.

CRS and American Red Cross. 2008. A series of *M&E field-friendly modules* (and a corresponding set of briefer versions entitled *Short Cuts*) that CRS and the American Red Cross published under their respective Institutional Capacity Building grants. Baltimore: CRS.

The series includes:

1. Capacity-Building Guidance
2. Hiring M&E Staff
3. M&E Planning
4. Using Indicator Performance Tracking Tables
5. Writing Human Interest Stories for M&E
6. Success and Learning Stories
7. Preparing for an Evaluation
8. Managing and Implementing an Evaluation
9. Reporting and Communicating on an Evaluation
10. M&E and Ethics

Hagens, C., D. Morel, A. Causton and C. Way. 2009. *CRS South Asia M&E Guidance Series*. Islamabad: CRS.*

Schoonmaker Freudenberger, K. 1999. *Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): A Manual for CRS Field Workers and Partners*. Baltimore: CRS.

Selener, D. 2010. *LACRO DME Toolkit*. Quito: CRS. This is downloadable from the M&E community library at: <https://global.crs.org/communities/ME/Pages/default.aspx>

Stetson, V., G. Sharrock, and S. Hahn. 2004. *ProPack The CRS Project Package: Project Design and Proposal Guidance for CRS Project and Program Managers*. Baltimore: CRS.

Stetson, V., S. Hahn, D. Leege, D. Reynolds, and G. Sharrock. 2007. *ProPack II: The CRS Project Package*. Baltimore: CRS.

⁹ With the exception of those marked with an asterisk, all the publications can be downloaded from: <http://www.crsprogramquality.org/category/mande/>

APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLE SMILER SCOPE OF WORK, CRS MALAWI

Purpose

The purpose of the technical assistance (TA) is to provide M&E support to the CRS-led consortium project entitled Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement (WALA). Specifically, the purpose is to plan for and design the structure for WALA M&E systems and to develop the WALA M&E Operational Manual.

Background

The five-year CRS-led consortium project commenced activities in July 2009. A critical next step will be to set up a project monitoring system for WALA that will meet the needs of WALA project managers, USAID/FFP staff in DC and Lilongwe, and other stakeholders (e.g. the Government of Malawi).

Pre-SMILER Coaching work to be undertaken by WALA staff

1. The Head of Senior M&E will choose participants for the SMILER session, in coordination with the coaches.
2. A good-sized conference room has been selected. The following materials will be provided—flip chart paper, flip chart stand, markers, computer, projector, post-it notes, and a large ring binder with a set of page dividers.
3. The Senior M&E officer will serve as the document manager to handle the electronic and hard copies of all documents in the M&E system.
4. Project documents will be gathered and set to the coaches three weeks before the coaching session. They will include the proposal, results framework and the Proframe, the detailed first-year action plan, IPTT, and the Performance Monitoring Plan.
5. The Senior M&E officer will work with the coach
 - a. to develop a template for the ToC
 - b. to set up hard copy and electronic folders for the documents.

Work to be accomplished during the TA visit

The following tasks will be completed by the time the PQSD SMILER Coaching Team have departed Malawi at the end of their visit.

1. Facilitate a SMILER coaching session to set up the WALA M&E system, including identification of key elements of the M&E system. The SMILER coaching session will include the following key tasks
 - Identify the contents of the WALA M&E Operational Manual—during the SMILER session, the Manual’s “Table of Contents” will help organize our thinking and approach to documents that need to be worked on during the week.
 - Review and refine the WALA Performance Monitoring Plan, including IPTT and WALA internal performance indicators and targets set by each sector Technical Quality Coordinator and Technical Quality Working Groups, so that a complete list of indicators is available to complete the M&E system.
 - Complete monitoring forms, instruction sheets and learning and discussion prompts for each monitoring instrument

-
- Complete data flow and reporting calendar maps for the WALA M&E system
2. Draft a plan to complete any outstanding work on the M&E Operating Manual

Key Working Relationships

Head of M&E and Knowledge Management; Senior M&E Officer

Provisional List of Participants

Despite the best efforts of all concerned, baseline survey implementation will coincide with the SMILER coaching sessions. The following staff will attend the coaching sessions:

- Head of M&E and Knowledge Management and Senior M&E Officer
- 1 x CRS M&E staff member from Lilongwe
- 2 x WALA PVO M&E Officers

Place of Performance

The work will be undertaken at WALA's CATCH office in Blantyre, Malawi. Some pre-visit preparation will be required.

Key Working Documents

- The WALA project proposal.
- The current set of WALA project M&E documentation recently submitted to USAID/FFP.
- Any other relevant documentation.

Period of Performance

The period of performance is November 13-23, 2009. Coaches will work with Senior M&E officer on Friday November 13; the SMILER coaching session is scheduled for the following week.

APPENDIX 2: CRS M&E STANDARDS

The CRS M&E Standards define key elements of project design, monitoring and evaluation and an organizational environment in which M&E can improve program quality and learning. These standards reflect key characteristics of high quality programs and agency culture that promote better learning and strengthen accountability to stakeholders. Standards 4, 5 and 6 have particular relevance for establishing an M&E system; check the list of questions in the Support Tool to see whether your M&E systems meet the standards. How can the SMILER approach support improvement in your M&E systems?

CRS M&E Standards	
PROJECT PERFORMANCE	
Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CRS and partner staff jointly develop project proposals that include measurable objectives and an M&E plan, tailored to project scope and stakeholders' needs, to communicate progress and results. 2. CRS and partner staff ensure that M&E plans promote community participation and reflect diversity within communities, particularly gender. 3. CRS and partner staff budget sufficiently for M&E in all project proposals.
Monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. CRS and partner staff jointly set up and implement monitoring systems that generate qualitative and quantitative data that are timely, reliable and useful. 5. CRS and partner staff use monitoring system information for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tracking progress against targets; • assessing outcomes of interventions, including those that are unanticipated; • making decisions; and • producing evidence-based reports.
Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. CRS and partner staff jointly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design and implement evaluations that assess relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, and • use evaluations findings to improve program effectiveness.
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE	
Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Country Programs, Regional Offices, and HQ units have qualified staff with defined M&E responsibilities.
Agency Learning and Networking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Country Programs, Regional Offices, and HQ units contribute to agency and industry learning by sharing evidence-based reports and publications, exchanging M&E tools and techniques, and engaging in dialogue and critical reflections.

APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE M&E PLAN TEMPLATE

Performance Indicator		Data Acquisition				Analysis, Use & Reporting	
Performance indicator	Indicator definition and Unit of measurement	Data source(s)	Method/Approach and Instrument of data collection	Schedule/Frequency	Responsible person(s) & team	Method of analysis and Data use	Reporting deadline
Goal:							
SO1:							
IR 1.1:							
IR 1.2:							
SO 2:							

APPENDIX 4: EXAMPLE IPTT, CRS BURUNDI

CRS Burundi, Health Program -- Indicator Performance Tracking Table														
Indicator	Desired direction of change (+) or (-)	Baseline	Year 1 (FY 10)		Year 2 (FY 11)		Year 3 (FY 12)		Year 4 (FY 13)		Year 5 (FY 14)		LOA	
			Target	% met	Target	% met	Target	% met	Target	% met	Target	% met	Target	% met
SO1: Malnutrition in children under 2 years of age is prevented														
% of children 0-59 months of age with height for age Zscore < -2 S.D.(Stunting) disaggregated by 0-2 and 24-59 months	(-)	TBD					(-) 5%					(-) 10%		(-) 10%
% of children 0-59 months of age with weight for height Zscore < -2 S.D.(Disaggregated by 0-11, 11 to 24 an 25-59)	(-)	TBD		(-) 7%		(-) 20%	(-) 25%					(-) 25%		(-) 25%
% of children 0-59 months of age with weight for age Zscore < -2 S.D.(Disaggregated by 0-11, 11 to 24 an 25-59)	(-)	TBD		(-) 7%		(-) 20%	(-) 25%					(-) 25%		(-) 25%
% of newborn weight < 2500g	(-)	TBD		(-) 5%		(-) 15%	(-) 30%					(-) 40%		(-) 40%
Intermediate Result 1: Women and children under 5 access quality nutrition and health services.														
% of pregnant women completing package of prenatal visits	(+)	TBD		98%		98%	98%					98%		98%
% of mothers completing package of postnatal visits	(+)	TBD		(+) 35%		(+) 45%	(+) 50%					(+) 65%		(+) 70%
% of children 0-59 months attending growth monitoring at least once in a two-month period (as recorded on card)	(+)	TBD		(+) 15%		(+) 20%	(+) 35%					(+) 45%		(+) 45%
% of health providers (facilities/ CHW) accurately assessing a child using IMCI protocols	(+)	0		30%		40%	50%					60%		80%
Output 1.1: Pregnant and lactating women access pre and postnatal services														
% increase of women registered for prenatal services by the sixth month of pregnancy	(+)	TBD		(+) 7%		(+) 12%	(+) 20%					(+) 25%		(+) 25%
% of health facilities with 2 or more staff who completed in-service training in pre-post natal services	(+)	TBD		(+) 23%		(+) 40%	(+) 60%					(+) 75%		(+) 75%
Output 1.2: Implementation of National IMCI plan is supported														
% of health facilities with two staff members trained in IMCI protocol through MOH's IMCI office	(+)	0		30%		70%	100%					100%		1
% of trained CHW in IMCI in target areas through MOH's IMCI office	(+)	0		0.3		0.4	0.5					0.7		0.7
Output 1.3: Health facilities supported in providing GM.														
Number of communes with at least one functioning community based growth monitoring center after year 3	(+)	0		NA		NA	(+) 5					(+) 12		(+) 12
% of health facilities with upgraded growth monitoring equipment.	(+)	0		30%		40%	60%					75%		75%

APPENDIX 5: EXAMPLE ANNUAL WORK PLAN MONITORING MATRIX, CRS LACRO

Municipal Institutional Strengthening Project
EXAMPLE OF ANNUAL WORK PLAN MONITORING MATRIX
Monitoring Period: Jan-March 2005 Monitoring Date: April 4, 2005
Partner: Diócesis de Las Peñas

TOOL #7

ACTIVITY	INDICATOR	LEVEL OF PROGRESS OF ACTIVITIES												% PROGRESS	BUDGET MONITORING		
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC				
<p>Result 1.1. Staff of the Anti Corruption commission has the needed strategic and technical capacity to provide technical assistance in participatory and transparent public administration</p> <p>Result Indicator 1.1. By September 30th, the staff of four municipalities have the needed strategic and technical capacity to provide technical assistance in participatory and transparent public administration</p>																	
1.1.1. Conduct training in Citizen Participation in the process of municipal planning and decision making.	1.1.1. By June 30, 2005, 2 workshops will have been offered to at least 4 staff from 4 Municipalities: 1 by March 30 and the other by June 20.															50%	Budget: \$1000 (\$500 x workshop) Spent: \$550
1.1.2. Conduct training in values, ethics, and human resource development.	1.1.2. By June 30, 2005 at least 2 workshops will have been conducted in values, ethics, and human resource development: 1 by March 30, and the other by June 30.															5%	Budget: \$1000 (\$500 x taller) Spent: \$400
1.1.3. Training in financial administration and public contracting. ACapacitar en administración financiera y contratación pública.	1.1.3. By June 30, 2005, at least 4 people will have participated in 2 workshops: 1 by February in financial administration and 1 by April in public contracting.															0%	Budget: \$1000 (\$500 x taller) Spent: \$100
1.1.4. AKROS foundation will provide technical assistance to update and begin to implement the Information System "Citizen Social Audit".	1.1.4. By March 30, 2005 at least 2 municipalities will have the "Citizen Social Audit" system updated and functioning.															100%	Budget: \$1000 (\$500 x taller) Spent: \$900
1.1.5. Design a project proposal to raise funds to improve the municipal infrastructure.	1.1.5. By March 30, 2005, a proposal will be formulated and will have been presented to the Belgium Development Agency to apply for funds.															0%	Budget: \$1000 (\$500 x taller) Spent: \$0

APPENDIX 6: EXAMPLE ABRIDGED QUARTERLY REPORT, CRS DRC

No Till Agriculture 6834 697 0135
Supervisor Quarterly Report (abridged)

Report Number: _____ Period Covered: from ___/___/___ to ___/___/___

Name of Supervisor: _____

I. Progress on Plan of action

Planned Activities	Accomplished	Not accomplished	Challenges

II. Summary of Supervision of Agriculturalists and Extension Agents

- A. Improvements in the performance of field personnel
- B. Training and support needed by field personnel

III. Trends in weekly meeting attendance at demonstration sites

- A. Table on attendance

Site	# of direct beneficiaries	# of interested farmers	Total #

- B. Comments on trends on meeting attendance

IV. Application of NTA by direct participants

Name of site	# of Direct Participants		Size of family farm		# of other Farmers		Size of plot were NTA is applied		Total # farmers		Total NTA area
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	

- A. Trends in the application of NTA by direct participants
- B. Challenges faced by direct participants when applying NTA on their farms

V. Plan for next quarter

Planned Activities	Accomplished	Not accomplished	Challenges



228 W. Lexington Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-3413 USA
Tel: 410.625.2220 • www.crs.org

© 2010 Catholic Relief Services. All rights reserved. Any 'fair use' under U.S. copyright law should contain appropriate citation and attribution to Catholic Relief Services.