GETTING RESULTS IN PUBLIC POLICY

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS' INVOLVEMENT IN POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION

MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

Evidence clearly demonstrates that implementation of public policies in Serbia leads to broken promises. Although the Government Annual Work Plan sets goals and planned activities, these goals are often left unattained in practice, while there is no mechanism to measure the activities' performance or impact. In contrast to Serbia, the decision makers in countries with more advanced political culture are under constant public scrutiny that asks for effective policies, credible and reliable data and evidence-based policy making in general.

How to get results in public policy? Is civil society in Serbia capable of contributing by getting involved in M&E processes?

CSO involvement in policy M&E process is a relatively new practice and therefore not well-known. It also represents an under-researched field in the current literature, which has been predominantly focused on CSOs' role in monitoring and evaluation of foreign donors' and international organisations' development programmes. The establishment of an institutionalised system at the state level is a precondition for systemic CSO involvement in policy M&E. However, in order to become a credible and reliable actor in the policymaking process, CSOs need to build their capacity, adopt adequate working standards and methods, in other words – they need to develop knowledge and skills necessary for an active involvement in this process.

This manual is therefore prepared for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Serbia that tend to be involved in policy monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process. The manual resulted from the work on a project entitled "Achieving Effective Policy Monitoring and Evaluation through Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society" funded by the European Union through the Civil Society Facility programme and the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society of the Republic of Serbia. The manual relies on a previously published study entitled "Getting Results in Public Policy: Monitoring and Evaluation with Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society" however, it is specifically tailored to offer practical and methodological knowledge to civil society organisations for a quality M&E performance.

At the time of the printing of this manual, policy monitoring structures in Serbia had not been systemically regulated. The Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy, adopted in January 2014, envisages the adoption of the Methodology of Integrated Policy Planning System,

that regulates the strategic planning process: from determining Government priorities and objectives, via the strategic plans of state administration bodies to the development of the Government Annual Working Plan. Moreover, it ensures the linkage between this process and the programme budgeting process.[1] In the context of creating structures for a systematic policy M&E, CSOs are expected to take up the role of corrective mechanism to the government by providing knowledge from their fields of expertise, delivering facts and arguments on policy performance, developing critical thinking and mobilising citizens.

STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

Key terms [2]

Context and assumptions	Refers to social, political and economic circumstances in the area of applied policy, and their potential impact. Assumptions are based on a thorough understanding of the contextual factors and evidence-based knowledge.
Subject of M&E	Characteristics of the problem/policy that should be resolved with intervention.
Goals	Should reflect the necessities of the intended intervention and the relationship between the problem and the circumstances that existed prior to considering the intervention.
Indicators	Qualitative or quantitative variables suitable for a reliable measuring of outcomes, assessing performance or detecting changes resulting from the intervention.
Inputs	Data/assets needed in policy implementation (e.g. material and human resources for road construction).
Activities	Based on inputs, actions taken towards policy implementation.
Outputs	Direct results of the intervention (e.g. number of km of constructed road).
Outcomes	Current or short-term results, defined on the basis of the specified intervention goals.
Impact	Broadly defined changes in a longer period of time, based on general intervention goals.
Monitoring	A systematic data collection towards gaining insight of the specific policy at a given time in relation to the targets and results.
Evaluation	A logical continuation of the monitoring process: based on the data and information collected during monitoring, evaluation analyses and measures the impact of the implemented policy.
Civil sector	Includes not only citizens' associations, but also media, trade unions and employers as social partners, as well as other relevant social actors who jointly participate in the reform process and in building a mutual trust in the overall democratization of institutions and society in general.

STEP 1

WHAT ARE POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION?

This chapter aims to clarify the basic concepts used in the manual. The chapter summarises key terms and concepts explained in more detail in our study – "Getting the Results in Public Policy: Monitoring and Evaluation with Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society"[3] where you can find further explanation.

The aim of this chapter is to understand the following questions:

- What is public policy?

- Who are stakeholders involved in policy-making processes?

- What problem or situation do you wish to change?

- What is policy monitoring?

- What is policy evaluation?

- What are the benefits of monitoring and evaluation process and who are its beneficiaries?

Improving country performance and effectiveness of public policies require continuous revisioning, measuring achieved vis-à-vis target goals, and their relation, as well as evaluating the results and success of realised activities. Today, governments are facing a constant pressure from citizens and are strongly influenced by public opinion to improve their administrative and economic efficiency. Among other reasons, the increasing number of complex and technical issues which require expertise compel decision-makers to seek assistance from external actors. In order to meet the constant demands of different stakeholders to deliver results, developed countries have gradually accepted result-oriented public management. Under such circumstances, M&E are a powerful tool and an integral part of a properly designed and implemented government policy.

The Place of M&E in the Policy Cycle

If policymaking is seen as a continuous cycle, starting from the policy formulation phase and continuing with policy implementation, policy M&E are conducted in the last stage of the cycle, when it is necessary to assess the effectiveness of the given policy and bring a decision on its future steps (Diagram 1).
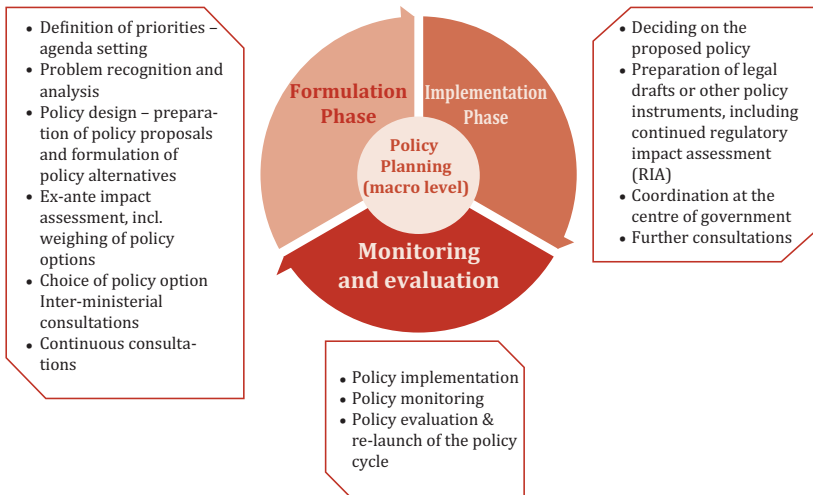

- Definition of priorities – agenda setting
- Problem recognition and analysis
- Policy design – preparation of policy proposals and formulation of policy alternatives
- Ex-ante impact assessment, incl. weighing of policy options
- Choice of policy option Inter-ministerial consultations
- Continuous consultations

Formulation Phase

Implementation Phase

Policy Planning (macro level)

Monitoring and evaluation

- Deciding on the proposed policy
- Preparation of legal drafts or other policy instruments, including continued regulatory impact assessment (RIA)
- Coordination at the centre of government
- Further consultations

- Policy implementation
- Policy monitoring
- Policy evaluation & re-launch of the policy cycle

Diagram 1: Policy Cycle[4]

All three stages of policymaking are inter-dependent and inter-linked.[5] For successful M&E it is important to predefine the desired results and indicators for measuring target achievement during the policy formulation phase. If policy foundations are well-laid, through proper policy formulation, the second stage – policy implementation – is also likely to be successfully realised. As each implementation has its flaws, the role of M&E is precisely to point out these limits. The indicators and targets, predefined in the first policymaking stage, as well as implementation experience, should serve as benchmarks, which will provide answers to the question of whether and to what extent it is necessary to revise and improve the existing policy. If properly carried out, M&E offers a constant source of feedback which helps policymakers to achieve the desired results.[6]

What is Monitoring and what is Evaluation?

Despite the fact that the two notions are most often being used jointly, as a syntagm, monitoring and evaluation are two separate concepts, with their own definitions, logic and methods of conducting.

Monitoring

Monitoring is one of the policymaking phases.

Monitoring is a systematic data collection for the purpose of gaining insight in particular policies at a given time in relation to targets and results.[7]

The task of monitoring is to continuously review the results of action plan and strategic document implementation, in order to make timely decisions for the purpose of improving activities and results of a policy/institution.

Monitoring:

- Provides a review of the policy objectives;
- Connects activities with objectives;
- Converts objectives into performance indicators;
- Collects data on indicators and compares achieved results with targets;
- Reports on the policy development and highlights the problems.

Data collection is performed by monitoring the developed indicators (when existing), which should be logically and content-wise related to the identified goals. When the indicators do not exist, they should be created by analysing the available information. Information collected in this way (based on monitoring of indicators) serves as a basis for the notification on the development of policies/programmes, which also gives an insight into the perceived problems during the intervention.

Evaluation

Evaluation is one of the policymaking phases.

Evaluation is a logical continuation of the monitoring process: based on the collected data and information from monitoring, evaluation analyses and measures the impact of the implemented policy.

Evaluation provides data which show if the desired effects are achieved and answers the question of why targets and outcomes are or are not being achieved.[8]

The main task of evaluation is to use the information gained through monitoring to determine the relevance and sustainability of the given policy by observing the impact it had, the achieved effects and reached goals.[9] In that regard, evaluation should provide credible and useful information for incorporating the lessons learned into decision-making and policymaking processes.[10] In the best-case scenario, evaluation will offer a comparative insight into *ex ante* and *ex post* situation and analysis of positive and/or negative developments during the intervention.[11]

An *ex ante* evaluation is conducted prior to the intervention implementation, when it is necessary to make sure that identified intervention requirements are in accordance with the objectives, that the envisioned means are adequately allocated, the envisioned strategy and activities are feasible, that the human resources intended for performing evaluations are sufficient, etc. This manual puts emphasis on *ex post* evaluation, which is conducted whether during or after the intervention implementation.

Therefore, an evaluation:

- Analyses why the planned results have or have not been achieved;
- Examines the process of intervention implementation;

- Explores the unexpected results;
- Provides insight into "lessons learned";
- Stresses out positive aspects of policy implementation;
- Gives recommendations for policy improvement/change.

By comparing the two definitions, it can be concluded that they are distinct but yet complementary. Unlike evaluation, monitoring is limited to the relation between the implementation and the outcomes of the accomplished activities.[12] While monitoring provides information on the situation and status of a policy at a given time in relation to the targets, evaluation aims to explain why targets and outcomes are or are not achieved. The complementarity is illustrated by the fact that if a monitoring system sends signals that the intervention going off track, then an information gained through evaluation helps clarify the reality and changes noticed.[13]

Table 1: Benefits and beneficiaries of Policy M&E

Benefits:	For whom:
Reporting (ethical purpose): • Informing citizens and policymakers on the outcomes of a certain policy: the way in which the policy has been implemented and the extent to which its objectives have been achieved. • This indirectly encourages decision-maker accountability, as well as an increased awareness and need for evidence-based policy making. **Better management (managerial purpose):** • Policy M&E provides answers relevant for the internal organisation and rational human and financial resources management of state institutions responsible for the given policy. **Decision initiation (decision-making purpose):** • M&E results serve as an engine for driving decisions about whether to continue, change or terminate the way in which a particular policy is being led. **Learning (development purpose):** • The M&E system helps public administration authorities to better understand the processes and goals of the policies in which they are engaged.[14]	**For public administration bodies:** • Information continuously acquired through the M&E system allows policymakers and civil servants to learn from their mistakes and improve their work and efficiency. **For external actors** - citizens, CSOs, business associations and others • Data obtained through M&E are used for assessing government work, as well as measuring its results, drawing conclusions and making decisions regarding future steps.

Who can (should) be involved in M&E process?

An M&E system involves a variety of relevant actors, who formally or informally assess and criticise the processes or outcomes of a certain policy.[15]

STAKEHOLDERS

Political subjects
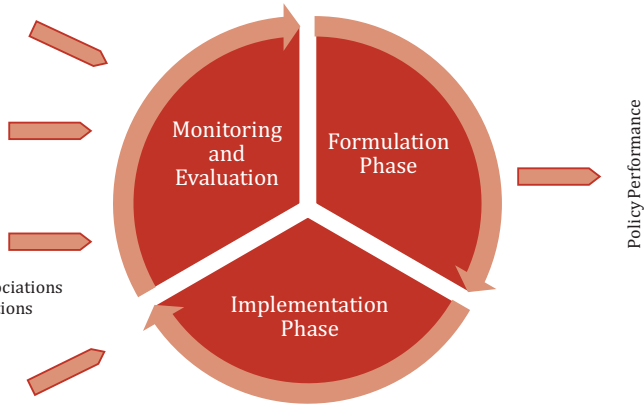• Government
• Oposition

Private sector
• Companies
• Foundations
• Research centres
• Institutes

Institutions
• Universities
• Chambers and associations
• Financial organisations and institutions

NGO
• Local and regional
• International

Monitoring and Evaluation

Formulation Phase

Implementation Phase

Policy Performance

Picture 1: Stakeholders and policy cycle

Policy M&E stakeholders are:

• Government;

• Opposition;

• Policy beneficiaries or intended beneficiaries who are interested in effective policy implementation;

• Those who are excluded from or negatively affected by policy implementation and who could benefit from its review and change;

• Public, public opinion, citizens – the ones who have the right to know about the government resource expenditure;

• Civil society organisations – as citizens' representatives, they are entitled to organise themselves for monitoring government policies;

• Media, as an essential stakeholder due to the ability to draw attention to the concrete information;

- Private sector may have stakes in policy implementation, especially if the policy has (or intends to have) effects on employment, economic stability and development of know-how;

- Donors and international financial institutions are powerful policy stakeholders.

The question of identifying the stakeholders in the policymaking process should be considered at the data collection stage, but also at the stage of presenting the findings. The evidence that emerged from M&E process should be presented or communicated to particular stakeholders, especially the ones who are powerful enough to influence policy change or improve the way a policy is implemented.

In general, actors involved in government policy M&E can be divided in two groups:

- *Data providers* – individuals or organisations who are a source of useful information for the purposes of policy M&E (statistical offices, institutes, civil society organisations, research centres, etc.).

- *Data users* – individuals or organisations who use the information obtained through M&E for drawing their own conclusions and making decisions about their future actions.

To ensure the successful functioning of the M&E system, data providers and data users need to work closely together. However, their co-operation is most often faced with various challenges.

Civil Society as a Stakeholder in an M&E Process

Civil society entails not only civic associations, but also media, trade unions and employers as social partners, as well as other relevant social actors who jointly participate in reform processes and in building overall mutual trust, both within the democratisation of institutions and society as a whole.[16]

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CSOs are "… organisational structures whose members have objectives and responsibilities that are of public interest and who also act as mediators between the public authorities and citizens".[17] This manual, however, perceives civil society in a narrower sense, by focusing on civic associations, non-governmental organisations and independent research centres/institutes.

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Civil society plays an essential role in preventing the growth of the gap between the voters and the elected: through their activism, exerting pressure on government officials and advocating and channelling requests through institutional mechanisms, they trigger an increased political and social engagement of citizens. Civil society activism, therefore, contributes to making representative democracy more participative.[18] One way of using social responsibility in order to enhance good governance is through civil sector participation in policy M&E.[19]

Bearing in mind the characteristics and differences between monitoring and evaluation, in terms of the skills needed to carry out these tasks, the contributions that CSOs can offer in this area are very diverse. In the policy M&E domain, CSOs can realise their roles in different ways:

Through monitoring. In this case, the primary role of CSOs is to *monitor* policies within their field of expertise and *raise public awareness* on these issues;

Through advocacy. In that case a CSO primarily deals with *advocating* a particular approach or solution to a problem;

Through research. In that case a CSO conducts *research activities and generates studies* useful for policy M&E;

Through reporting. In that case a CSO is engaged in providing *report writing services* for the purpose of policy M&E.

The question of whether a particular CSO would take up one, some or all of the mentioned roles depends primarily on its internal capacities and the scope of activity.

Policy M&E can be conducted by an individual CSO, particularly if it is a big organisation with different skills and a wide base of members/volunteers. However, in most cases, there is a need for cooperation between different organisations and individuals when conducting this process, especially if:

- individual CSOs do not have developed procedures and/or adequately skilled staff;

- individual CSOs do not have contacts or access to data, which is of a key importance for acquiring evidence on policy implementation and effects;

- it is necessary to involve more organisations/individuals in order to ensure an adequate representation of all the relevant groups in the M&E process.

Policy M&E activities nowadays more than ever require team work, where different organisations are able to contribute with different skills within the scope of their expertise, which results in developing formal or informal, permanent or temporary partnerships and networks aiming at conducting M&E.

Example 1: IDEAS Global Network

Globally, more frequent implementation of the evaluation and establishment of the evaluators' associations took place in the 1980's, first in Canada, Australia and the USA, and a decade later in Europe. Nowadays, there is quite an extensive network of evaluators' associations internationally, regionally and locally.[20] One of them is IDEAS (International Development Evaluation Association), formed in 2002 in Beijing (China) as an independent association of professional evaluators, those interested in evaluation and who believe in the importance of seeking credible data which can contribute to the realisation of development goals.[21] The mission of the IDEAS network is to improve and expand the practice of evaluation, contribute to the development of knowledge and capacity-building for evaluation through network expansion, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition. IDEAS functions as a network open for membership applications from individuals and organisations worldwide, including CSOs.

**Civil society organisations are considered as external evaluators.
External evaluators also include specialised private companies,
consultancies and audit firms.**

The advantages of external evaluations are:

- independence and
- neutrality of actions

Thus, they increase chances for producing more constructive and rich in content conclusions and recommendations for the further steps in policy implementation.

A possible limitation for external evaluators is a lacking responsiveness of the state authorities to provide official data, which means for instance irregular and outdated data delivery or refusal to cooperate. As a consequence, this can result in the lack of quality of evaluation reports or can postpone their planning, which can eventually lead to the untimely

publication of evaluation reports, when the further course of action has already been determined for a particular policy.[22]

CSOs can become involved in M&E either through joint working groups with government representatives, or independently. Both models have their pros and cons. On the one hand, by participating in working groups together with state representatives, CSOs have direct access to data and information that are often available only to public administration bodies. Since data availability and reliability are essential for conducting M&E, this is a way to increase the prospects of acquiring quality data. Additionally, involving CSOs in joint M&E through working groups allows the possibility of conducting peer evaluations as well as self-evaluations, which then creates a system of "checks and balances" and thus influences the quality of their work.[23] On the other hand, working jointly with state authorities can jeopardize the independence and integrity of CSOs, which is why these organisations often decide to perform these activities independently.

Summary

- Monitoring is a systematic data collection in order to gain insight of the specific policy at a given time in relation to the targets and results.

- Evaluation is a logical continuation of the monitoring process: based on the data and information collected during monitoring, evaluation analyses and measures the impact of the implemented policy.

- Civil society (citizens' associations, non-governmental non-profit organisations and independent research centres/institutes) can get involved in M&E during the policymaking through monitoring, advocacy, research and reporting.

- CSOs are external evaluators, whose main advantage is the possibility of an independent and neutral action. On the other hand, limitations might be unsatisfactory responsiveness of state authorities to provide official data, or refusal to cooperate, which infringes the dynamic and the quality of evaluation reports.

For the ones who want to know more – recommended literature:

Howlett, M., Ramesh, M. "Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems." Oxford University Press, 1995.

Imas, Linda G. Morra, Rist, Ray C. "Put do rezultata: Dizajniranje i provođenje efektivnih razvojnih evaluacija." World Bank, 2009.

Kuzek, J. Z., Rist, R. C. "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System." Washington D.C. The World Bank, 2004.

UNAIDS "Basic Terminology and Frameworks for Monitoring and Evaluation." UNAIDS, 2009.

STEP 2: MONITORING

This chapter analyses monitoring as a systematic data collection towards gaining insight of the specific policy at a given time in relation to the targets and results. Monitoring aims at continuous observation of policy implementation results in order to make timely decisions for the purpose of improving the activities and outcomes.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to understand:

- How to choose the topic – a desired policy to monitor;
- Policy hierarchy;
- What is data and how to differentiate it from information;
- Qualitative and quantitative research approach;
- What are the indicators and what advantages and what are the disadvantages of using secondary data;
- How to get the primary data.

Choosing the right policy to monitor?

When you decide to monitor certain policy, it is important to bear in mind that the problem you are interested in is at the same time affected by several other policies, differently ranked in the policy hierarchy.

Public policy can be most widely defined as the government action directed towards the achievement of certain goals. The actions can have several modalities: they can be formalised in the form of the law, strategy or a programme. However, the actions can be less formalised and reflect in, for example, the Prime Minister's or minister's speech, based on which the insights on the planned set of actions could be gained.

In the Example 2 you can find the poverty reduction policy hierarchy.

Example 2: Policy Hierarchy in the Poverty Reduction Domain

Hierarchy of policies that can have potential impact on the issue of poverty

Macroeconomic policies. An effective employment policy, reduction of regulatory framework and creation of an enabling environment for business directly affect the number of new employment opportunities on the market. Furthermore, monetary policy and, within its frames, the inflation policy, have a significant influence on the living standard of poorer citizens. Basically, macroeconomic policies affect the general economic environment and the possibilities of earning a fair income, therefore they indirectly have an impact on poverty.

Institutional policies. Through the legislative framework a state manages its own functioning: what number of servants to hire, how to regulate their promotion and rewarding, how to improve the evidence-based policymaking, and then how to involve civil society in these processes. These policies are exceptionally interesting to monitor because, for example, it is important to know how the state manages public revenue, as well as how it assesses the ones who work for the state (How it assesses the work of its employees.)

Sectorial policies. Sectorial policies that affect poverty are related to health, education, finance, security, agriculture and similar. Namely, if an appropriate quality of education and health care could be provided to a wider range of the population, the issue of poverty would be less likely to continue transmitting from one generation to another. Furthermore, the way in which public finances are governed is crucial in determining the number of the poorest citizens that will be able to meet at least the

minimum subsistence level. Therefore, sectorial policies directly affect the daily quality of life of the poor.

Regulatory policies. Regulatory policies are useful for setting the standards across a range of areas starting from the quality of food, medications, pollution, working conditions etc. By forming inspectorates, the state tends to secure the fulfilment of the standards set. However, CSOs can be interested in monitoring these policies. If we take a look back at the issue of policies that affect poorer citizens who often work within informal economy at underpaid positions, an additional CSO engagement in terms of improving the work of Workplace Inspections, for instance, could help this social group to fight for adequate working conditions.

National strategies. In the field of poverty, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003) represents the roof document. It expired in 2009 and no other strategy was adopted to replace it by 2020. Despite this fact, designing and monitoring of the indicators relevant for the social welfare field are still being conducted through SIPRU activities (Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/rs/). Consequently, in 2011 the Government adopted the First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia for the period of 2008-2010; in October 2014, it adopted the Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2011-2014. In this regard, the SIPRU team actively worked on defining new indicators for social exclusion, as well as on collecting data for these purposes, but above all on carrying out, for the first time in our country, the SILC survey (Statistics on income and living conditions). CSOs were always involved in these activities.

Global and regional policies. Considering the European Union association processes, policies relevant for our country are the ones made at the EU level, in a range of sectors including the ones with the impact on poverty issue. For instance, *Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth* contains guidelines for achieving several important objectives in the fields of employment, education, innovation, climate change and social inclusion. This strategy stimulated the creation of a similar strategic document in Serbia in 2010 – *Serbia 2020* – on the initiative of then President of the Republic of Serbia.

Furthermore, Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2000, have significantly shaped social care policies, and continue doing so.

In some instances, it may be useful for CSOs to monitor discrepancies or conflicts between national and international policies, and draw

public attention to these issues if they undermine progress in combating poverty in the country. Additionally, it is useful to monitor the policies of international organisations such as the World Bank or International Monetary Fund and other donors, since their activities have direct or indirect impact on the poverty reduction in our country.

Picture 2. Example of policy hierarchy in the poverty field

Although it would be very useful to monitor every aspect of the policy, it is not always practically possible. That is usually a challenge for CSOs who then have to carefully allocate their capacity and manage their activities in order to cover the entire scope of action. Therefore it is important to be selective and define the most important monitoring objectives. A crucial point in this task is to identify which aspects or parts of a policy it would be most purposeful and useful to monitor.

For accomplishing this CSOs need to:

- Precisely define all the questions they wish to ask;
- Know what they will actually achieve by getting the answers.

Advice:

It could be useful to:[24]

List all the questions you find worth asking about a policy, or

Think of:

Policy efficiency:	Policy effectiveness:
Efficiency is about "doing things right".	Effectiveness is about "doing the right things".
This means looking at whether something was conducted according to procedures, without wasting time and money, fairly and transparently, etc.	In this case the attention is on whether the policy is right, what questions it opens, what problems it concerns etc.

STEP 3

DEFINING RESEARCH APPROACH AND DATA COLLECTION

When researching policy effects, researchers can choose between qualitative and quantitative approach.[25]

Qualitative and quantitative approaches to research of a topic, i.e. of a socially significant issue, are not mutually exclusive nor contradictory. These are only two possible research methods – it is possible to take one or the other, depending on the problem to be analysed, the type of research and resources available. Both include requirements that must be strictly respected: that the method is compatible with the research objectives, that process of conducting research and drawing conclusions follows certain procedures, rules and logic.

Table 2: Quantitative versus qualitative research approach

Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach
Focused on measuring, applying quantitative techniques; Focused on variables, quantitative data; Devoid of value judgements; Focused on reliability of benchmarks; Sampling; Statistical analysis.	Focused on meaning and interpretation; Influenced by value judgements; Context is taken into account; Individual cases are relevant.

Quantitative approach provides the implementation of more extensive research through involving a larger number of respondents. Since it is based on the application of strictly prescribed standards, methods and procedures (e.g. precisely defined ways of performing some statisti-

cal calculation), quantitative approach has the potential to generate objective and accurate results. Since in this case protocols and procedures of data processing are strongly respected, this type of research can be consistently repeated (replicated) in the future, while data can be mutually comparable. Finally, quantitative approach provides the desired research "objectivity" in terms of both researcher's and respondent's influence on the research results. Of course, there is a range of deficiencies in the quantitative approach application, primarily the incompleteness of the data that is displaced from the real life context, so the problem complexity cannot be seen in the appropriate light.

Qualitative approach, on the other hand, leaves the possibility for the researcher to be flexible in real life conditions and to conduct research in the real context, in direct touch with people, reflecting the specificity and uniqueness of each research unit, each situation and data.

Regardless of whether qualitative or quantitative approach is applied, it is necessary to carefully consider the manner of choosing the respondents, i.e. forming the sample.
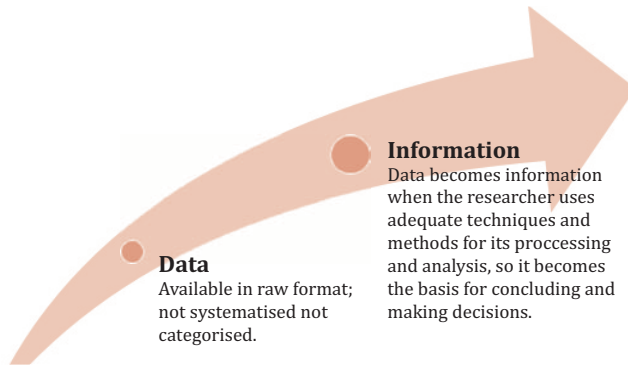
The quantitative research sample can be random (simple random sampling, stratified sample or cluster sample), intentional (quota sample, convenience sample, the sample according to the decision of the researcher or the chain reaction sample) and that of a mixed type.

The quantitative research sample can be based on the researcher's decision (sample of selected cases, homogeneous sample, heterogeneous sample), chain reaction sample, convenience sample, quota sample, a mixed sample (random or intentional stratified) or conceptually (theoretically) established sample.[26]

Data – the basis of the policy monitoring process

One of requirements for a quality M&E performance is to establish an evidence-base, i.e. to gather data that will, in a handful of information, be the most useful for creating an M&E system.

There is a certain difference between data and information. Data refers to facts from which information is derived. Data is rarely useful *per se,* seen individually and isolated from the context. To get the utility value, it needs to be placed in the proper context.

Information
Data becomes information when the researcher uses adequate techniques and methods for its proccessing and analysis, so it becomes the basis for concluding and making decisions.

Data
Available in raw format; not systematised not categorised.

Picture 3: Data and information

By its nature, data can be quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative data is given in the form of numbers, while qualitative data is provided in the form of words or patterns, illustrations and images.

Example 3: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia as a source of information

Statistical Office (SO) collects and publishes statistical information on the achievement of economic and social indicators set by the Government. It cooperates closely with the contact points in ministries and M&E units, in terms of data collection methods, in order to ensure data utility and credibility. Consultations with the SO are particularly required while designing the indicators in the four-year Government Work Plan, as well as long-term and medium-term indicators in strategic documents.

Besides the SO assistance, data is additionally collected by using different methods:

1. Analysis of the available documentation – this can include analysing semi-annual reports of AP implementation, financial reports on the use of funds, reports on the meetings of monitoring working groups, reports on consultations with relevant stakeholders, reports from relevant events (e.g. conferences), studies relevant for the given topic made by the external actors, etc.

2. Sending questionnaires or conducting interviews for the purpose of gaining necessary information.

3. Organising focus groups and holding meetings with inter-ministerial working groups, CSOs and other stakeholders.

Data sources

Data being monitored can come from different sources.[27]

Primary data sources are first-hand evidence – statements of witnesses to an event; documents, images and other information from a source with a proper knowledge on the observed/analysed event or topic.

Primary sources are described as those that are the closest to data origin. They can include original research or a new and previously un-published information, so they provide the researcher with the direct information on the researched subject.

Secondary data sources are based on the primary data sources. They include second-hand information that quotes, comments or analy-ses the primary sources.

Using secondary data can have a number of **advantages**:

(1) lower costs of data collection;

(2) availability – easier to get the information;

(3) saves researchers' time.

On the other hand, the use of secondary data reflects in a number of **disadvantages**:

(1) data might have been collected for a completely different pur-pose, so it can only partly fit the needs of the research;

(2) initial definitions or baselines of your research can be completely different in the secondary sources, without being explicitly evident;

(3) information may be outdated and not suitable to the actual situ-ation;

(4) information may be inaccurate or may not be as much detailed as you need;

(5) data may have another built-in error, that occurred during data collection and processing, and the researcher fails to spot it or find out.

Indicators – what are they and how to use them?

Indicators demonstrate the state of a certain phenomenon. They are helpful for the analysis of complex situations and processes in order to extract well defined, clear and comprehensive information. Indicators can be either descriptive or numerical by its nature, i.e. quantitative or qualitative. Some indicators such as unemployment rate (quantitative indicator) exist for a long period of time and their use is widely known. However, this indicator does not show the entire complexity (quality, characteristics) of the labour market and the labour in informal economy.

Certain indicators are well established, developed and acknowledged. However, not all traditional indicators are good – some are outdated, as they reflect a certain phenomenon they measure only partially and do not provide grounds for developing good quality recommendations for further action. Therefore, certain phenomena and problems of the contemporary society necessitate the development of new, suitable indicators. Please look at the examples that follow.

Example 4: Poverty Indicators

Poverty rate does not demonstrate the entire complexity of a situation and circumstances of the poor people. More precisely, nowadays the poverty is discussed in a wider context of social inclusion, that is to say, in addition to the financial aspect of poverty, the deprivation of the needs in the domain of education, healthcare and social protection, discrimination at the labour market and other similar aspects are observed. With the launch of the accession process to the EU, it became necessary to harmonise the indicators for monitoring the state of social inclusion in Serbia, as compared to the ones that exist at the EU level.

Nevertheless, the mere notion of financial poverty is no longer monitored via usual indicators such as the rate, the depth and the width of poverty. On the contrary, there is a wide array of additional indicators that ensure better overview of the position of a poor person. We provide an illustrative example below.

EU Indicators of Financial Poverty

Primary Indicators

The risk of poverty rate
• According to gender, age and housing type
• According to the intensity of work of the household members, under the most frequent status at the labour market

Secondary Indicators

• Dispersion around the threshold for risk of poverty
• Risk of poverty rate fixed at a certain moment
• Gini Index
• Risk of poverty for the employed population (working part-time/full-time)

National Specific Indicators

• Absolute poverty rate
• The level of household debt
• Share of social transfers (without pensions) in the household income according to the parts of income
• Subjective poverty rate

Image 4: European and National Specific Indicators for Financial Poverty[28]

Proper development of indicators requires following certain principles. Among them are:

Specificity: the indicator must ensure that the implementation of specific policy goals and objectives are properly assessed.

Causality: the indicators on different levels must be clearly and logically interrelated. In other words, the long-term results must be dependent on the realisation of the outcomes, while their accomplishment should depend on the achievement of the outputs. Implementation of different-level indicators equally must differ, whereby the outputs should be realised the most quickly, while the assessment of the long-term results is only possible after a longer period, normally no earlier than one year.

Usability: the indicators must ensure the assessment of operational results of an institutions that are of importance to the general public. The costs of collection and data processing should be considered when creat-

ing or improving the system of indicators, in the sense that the usability of information should be more valuable than obtaining the information per se. Thus, the use of indicators which do not provide useful information or do not provide the basis for decision-making should be avoided.

Measurability: the indicator's value should be measurable, i.e. a method that would unambiguously ensure the calculation of its value should be defined.

Reliability: the indicator has to be clearly formulated, so as to prevent diverging interpretations of its meaning. Its value should be based on a clear calculation method.

Achievability: the indicator's pursued value should be realistic and justified.

Periodicity: the information on indicators' implementation should be regularly collected, processed and submitted to a relevant institution, in accordance with the prescribed rules.

Finding a proper balance: During monitoring of a certain phenomenon, it is advisable to create an equal number of qualitative and quantitative indicators. Moreover, ensuring a balance between the indicators at the different levels is recommended – around 40% of indicators should be result and outcome indicators, while the remaining 60% should be at the output level. This share of percentage may vary depending on the specific circumstances of the policy/institution.

Competence: the persons in charge of developing indicators and its values need to possess required knowledge, experience and skills.

Cooperation: prior to the approval of strategic documents and corresponding action plans, holding consultations and discussions on the most important impact and outcome indicators with the civil servants from other institutions, experts, end-users and other relevant actors, is recommended.[29]

Types of indicators depending on goals and activities

Input indicators. These indicators measure the type of resources (financial, human and others) used to develop certain product or provide the envisaged service. They are important for measuring the ratio between the expanses and outputs. Input indicators are utilised for internal control within the institutions and for performance analysis.

Output indicators. They are formulated when measuring the achievement of a specific output, i.e. the product or service by employing

the envisaged resources. Its number should not be smaller than the number of outcomes. These indicators are recommended especially when it is necessary to monitor certain policy that requires the use of considerable financial resources. They ensure the insight into the efficiency in the usage of these resources.

Process indicators. These indicators entail the actions within the competent institution necessary to conduct the given policy. The use of process indicators is very useful when it is difficult to articulate quantitative values of products or services. They are equally used for internal analysis of performance of an institution. These indicators should be part of the annual action plans.

Outcome indicators. These indicators help to monitor the realisation of objectives specified in the strategic documents. Output indicators must directly reflect the implementation of general, strategic goal of the institution. It has to ensure the evaluation of activity results by which the envisaged goal is being realised.

Impact/result indicators. This indicator shows the benefits from the direct policy implementation on the end users. It is used for evaluating the activities of a policy and thus needs to demonstrate the content and direct results of the policy. Formulating impact indicators requires deep understanding of the objective of the policy, while its value must show whether the problem is successfully solved or whether the envisaged services had been successfully received. There should be a logical connection between the long-term results (impact) and outcomes. Impacts must be able to measure the most important factors that influence the realisation of the outcomes. Defining impact indicators which show the process but not the pursued results over a period of time, should be avoided.

Advice:[30]

How to treat the secondary data without making a methodological mistake:

1. Assess to what extent the data is suitable and adequate to the goals and research questions set at the beginning of M&E process;

2. Assess the suitability of secondary data from the aspect of envisaged methods, in order to be able to give answers on the defined goals and questions, i.e. in case of ordered external evaluations, of the methodology prescribed by the contractor.

3. Asses the economic dimension of data collection and their usability (cost-benefit analysis).

If the secondary data does not correspond to the defined goals and questions, and if they are not suitable to the methodology that should be applied or if the cost-benefit analysis shows negative economic effect of data collection, then other data collection methods should be sought: interview, questionnaire or observation.

Interview

Interview is one of the key means of getting quality results and relevant information on the desired policy that is being monitored. The choice of interview as a data collection technique is advisable in the following situations: (1) when it is necessary to collect interviewee's opinions and stances, (2) when it is necessary to assess people's understanding of the examined topic and discover the relevant actors' reflection on the topic (3) when it is necessary to understand the mutual relation between certain variables, that can afterwards be subject to quantitative analysis (4) when the topic is so specific that it requires direct contact with the interviewees (5) when there is enough time to conduct the research, since the interviewing requires time and/or (6) when other data collection techniques are not possible or appropriate.[31]

The ability to choose proper respondents and ask the right questions is crucial in the evidence collection process.

According to the level of formality and structuring, three types of interviews can be identified: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview. A *structured interview* represents the most formalised type of interview. It is used to collect clearly defined and precise information through a standardised and formalised procedure. This type of interview therefore has a precisely predefined aim, questions that are going to be asked and the procedure of interviewing. For this reason the interviewers are not free to conduct the interview on the basis of their own intuition or preferences, but to strictly hold to the listed questions and prescribed procedure. Since this type decreases the possibilities of interviewers' subjectiveness, this interview type has potential to gather data of high credibility and validity.

A semi-structured interview represents a less formalised interview type. This type entails less strictly defined questions and much more flexible manner of asking them, so the questions can be added, changed or omitted in order to follow the natural course of conversation with the

interviewee and adapt to the situation (the interviewer has the possibility to ask additional questions, change their order, spend more time on certain topics than on others, and similar). Since this interview type enhances the level of interviewer's subjectiveness, it has the potential to gather medium-level credible and valid data.

An unstructured interview is the least formalised interview type. It is used in the situations where the knowledge about the examined topic is insufficient, when the research aims at gaining general insight in a certain problem, and especially in the cases when the goal is to understand and properly express the opinions and views of the interviewees on the searched topic. The questions in this type are not predefined or there could be only broadly defined areas within which they should be asked. In addition, there is no strict procedure of conducting the interview, but the interviewer's skill to adapt to the situation is appreciated. Since this increases the interviewers' subjectivity, this interview type has the potential to gather data of the lowest level of credibility and validity, comparing to the previously mentioned two types.

Question form

Open questions: an interviewee shapes his/her own answer.

Example:

Does the general public in Serbia understand the importance of policy M&E?

Closed (multiple choice) questions: interviewee chooses one or several offered answers

Example:

According to your own belief, does the general public in Serbia understand the importance of policy M&E?

a. Yes, very clearly

b. It does, but not sufficiently

c. No, not in an adequate way

d. Not at all

or

Mark everything that corresponds to you:

Example: **What would be the primary role of your organisation**

in policy M&E?

☐ *Monitoring* areas within our field of expertise and *raising public awareness* of these issues

☐ *Advocating* a particular approach or a solution to a problem

☐ Conducting *research activities* and *producing studies* useful for policy M&E

☐ Delivering *reporting services* for the purpose of policy M&E

Combination: the interviewee choses one of the offered answers, but has the option to add his own answer if he finds it necessary.

The interviews can be conducted directly, face-to-face, or by using the information and communications technology tools.

Face-to-face interview

The advantages of choosing face-to-face interview:

- High rate of answers given;
- Possible to ask complex questions;
- Possible to ask a large number of questions;
- Possible to use helping tools: pictures, charts, video-material;
- Possible opservation of the interviewee's behaviour as well as non-verbal communication.

At the same time, there are several disadvantages:

- High costs: fees, travel expenses, interviewer's training expenses, time;
- Possible prejudice towards the interviewees: gender, age, race, social category, personality
- Interviewer's reliability and control of his work on the field;
- Suitable for a small, specific sample that is not geographically dispersed.

Today, with the advancement of the information and communications technology, telephone or Skype interviews are often used.

Skype or telephone interview

Advantages of a phone interview:

- Requires less time;
- Costs are lower than face-to-face interview because of no field-work;
- Interviewer's work is more easily organised;
- Interviewer's work is easily controlled (no fieldwork);
- High level of interviewee's flexibility and comfort: interview can be scheduled when it is the most suitable for the interviewee, they can stay at home during the interview;
- Easier follow-up interviewing
- It is possible to use geographically dispersed sample.

Disadvantages:

- It is more difficult to establish a relation of trust with the respondent, which increases the number of questions to which the answer is avoided (e.g. on income, health problems)
- More difficult to ask complex questions or those that require long answers
- More difficult to ask multiple choice questions since the offered answers have to be firstly read out loud to the interviewees.
- People are nowadays prone to avoiding phone interviews (due to modern day pace of life, a large number of research conducted like this causes the feeling of saturation; etc.)

Interviews can also be conducted within groups: as workshops, focus groups or discussions on a given topic. In this case the researcher has a moderator role, with the task of introducing the participants with the topic, encouraging them to take part in discussion and to manage the flow and dynamics of the discussion. The advantages of a group interview reflect in the fact that for a short period of time a large number of responses can be collected. Additionally, group conversation has the potential to launch some questions that would remain unmentioned in the individual interview. Finally, some topics are more easily discussed among the people of the same way of thinking, so the participants can be encouraged to be open about some issues that they usually avoid.

There are also some negative effects of this type of research approach. They are mostly seen, for example, in the domination of particular individuals – therefore the most open and talkative group members can take the lead and dictate the conversation course, while others, less communicative, withdraw. Additionally, group interviews are not suitable for asking delicate questions since there is no anonymity or secrecy in answering.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a set of questions related to a certain topic or a number of topics, aiming at collecting answers from specific respondents. Respondent are required to fill in previously prepared questionnaire. The quality of answers is heavily influenced by the form and style of the questions, the means of delivering the questionnaire to the respondent and the required way of filling them.[32]

Questions can be open, closed (multiple choice questions) or that of a mixed type and these categories have been elaborated on the page 26 (Question form). The questionnaire can be structured so that the questions are more or less organised and tailored to individual respondents, depending on the research protocol.

The advantages of using questionnaires:

- Usually respondents have sufficient time to answer the questions;
- It is possible to generate a large sample;
- Higher respondent availability;
- The highest level of anonymity;
- Respondents are free to choose the order, time and way of responding.
- The disadvantages of using questionnaires:
- Rigidity: a mistake once made during the question formulation cannot be corrected as in the case of interviews, some questions will not be suitable for some respondents, etc.
- Low response (around 50% is considered normal), it is important to motivate the respondents (e.g. a letter of explanation, remuneration for participation, etc.);

- It is not suitable in cases when the order of giving answers is essential;

- It limits the possibility of asking complex questions;

- Suitable only for multiple choice questions; open questions are possible but are avoided because of the difficulties in processing and possible misunderstandings of the respondent's view;

- Some questions might be left unanswered;

- Suitable for surveying a particular, specific group that is highly motivated for responding, when the budget is limited, when the low level of response is acceptable.

Researchers today increasingly use online questionnaires, which are either sent through e-mails with the request to be sent back likewise, or by using available internet tools for generating questionnaires.

The advantages of an online questionnaire:

- Significant cost reduction;

- Time spent on surveying is significantly reduced;

- Possibility of a very large sample;

- Easier quantitative data processing – they have already been entered in the base;

- Larger flexibility in terms of questionnaire design, comparing to the printed version, it is possible to use pop-ups, scrolling menus, images, sounds, video-materials, etc.

- The disadvantages of an online questionnaire:

- Coverage error: a part of the population is not connected to the internet;

- Sample error: values and stands of internet users are significantly different from those who do not use it;

- Low rate of responses.

OBSERVATION

Sometimes researchers choose to obtain primary data by applying observational methods. In that case they conduct a fieldwork and record events or information only through observing, without any questions for the participants of the observed event. An adequately conducted observation requires a well-trained researcher capable of carefully watching and listening to what is happening, as well as the one that is able to distinguish the important from obsolete information. Advantages of choosing observation lay in the fact that the events are recorded exactly as they happen, and that they can be watched as a whole, without missing any crucial detail.

However, this method can be very costly and time-consuming because it requires a trained researcher to be engaged in the field. Also, it is limited to recording the events in the present time. Finally, the biggest limitation of this method is the possible development of observer bias and the potential errors in observation (perception) of events.

Summary:

- Public policy can be most widely defined as the government action directed towards the achievement of certain goals. The actions can have several modalities: they can be formalised in laws, strategies or programmes. However, the actions can be less formal and reflect in, for example, the Prime Minister's or minister's speech, based on which the insights on the planned set of actions could be gained.

- When researching policy effects, researchers can choose between qualitative and quantitative approach. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Both include requirements that must be strictly respected: that the method is compatible with the research objectives, that process of conducting research and drawing conclusions follows certain procedures, rules and logic.

- Defining data based on which the M&E system would be developed in the abundance of information is a prerequisite for the proper conduct of M&E. Data can be either primary or secuntary, qualitative or quantitative.

- The use of secondary data has its advantages and drawbacks. If the secondary data do not correspond to the goals and research questions, if they are not compatible with the methodology to be applied or if the cost-benefit analysis shows the negative economic effect of its collection, then one should look for other data source though field research.

For the ones who want to know more – recommended literature:

Brymam, A. "Quantity and Quality in Social Research." Routledge, 1998.

Singleton, R. A., Jr., Straits, B. C., Straits, M. M., "Approaches to social research" (3rd ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Kerlinger, F., "Foundations of Behavioral Research," 3rd Edition. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1986.

Verčič, A. T., Ćorić, D.S., Vokić, N. P., "Priručnik za metodologiju istraživačkog rada u društvenim istraživanjima: Kako osmisliti, provesti i opisati znanstveno i stručno istraživanje," MEP doo Zagreb, 2011.

CAFOD, "Monitoring government policies: A toolkit for civil society organisations in Africa," http://www.trocaire.org/resources/policyandadvocacy/monitoring-government-policies-toolkit-civil-society-organisations

STEP 4: EVALUATION

This chapter aims to explain evaluation principles. Evaluation represents the logical sequence of monitoring, when the impact of the implemented policy is analysed based on the collected data and findings. Evaluation gives information that suggest whether the envisaged results have been achieved and tries to answer the question why the envisaged goals and results have or have not been attained.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to understand:

• What different types of evaluation exist;

• What are the preconditions for conducting evaluations;

• What Terms of Reference for evaluation entail.

As already mentioned, evaluation represents a logical continuation of monitoring process: based on the collected data and findings gained through the monitoring process, evaluation analyses and measures the impact of the implemented policy.

The first step in conducting evaluations should be WHAT we aim to ACHIEVE, what are its GOALS and the questions it seeks to answer.

Defining the evaluation type which corresponds to the needs and objectives in the early phases of its realisation is crucial for the conduct of the following phases.[33]

Question		Corresponding evaluation type
What changes did the implementation of the policy cause?	➔	IMPACT EVALUATION
How was the policy implemented?	➔	PROCESS EVALUATION
What changes did it induce and how was it implemented?	➔	COMBINATION OF IMPACT AND PROCESS EVALUATION
What mechanisms were employed for policy implementation?	➔	EVALUATION BASED ON THEORY OF CHANGE

Impact evaluation seeks to answer the question on the **impact of a policy on specific results to different target groups.** Moreover, it aims to provide the assessment on the effects of the policy, both in relation to the expected results defined in the planning phase, and in by comparing them to another policy.

Process evaluation seeks to provide answers on **how, why and under what circumstances a policy did or did not deliver the expected results.** Process evaluation usually inquires the information on contextual factors, mechanisms and processes that determine the success or a failure of a policy.[34]

In practice, these two evaluation types are usually **combined**. Combining them is necessary in order to understand what changes the policy implementation brought, why and how. Often, it is important that evaluation explores the unintended effects of a policy, which is possible only if the features of process and impact evaluations are used. However, this

decision would be made after defining an evaluation question, given that the resources available often do not allow conducting both types of evaluation.[35]

Evaluation based on theory of change focuses on exploring theoretical and logical sequence of policy effects. This approach aims to identify the policy mechanisms what can produce certain effects. This evaluation type provides many ways to extrapolate logical and theoretical consequences of policy implementation and can significantly improve the realisation of the defined objectives.[36]

Preconditions for Properly Conducted Evaluations

Adequate human and organisational resources

In order for CSOs to be constructively involved in policy M&E process, they need to have adequate capacities. By "capacity" we above all refer to organisational and human potential.

Organisational capacity (organisational skills, organisational potential) refers to organisational M&E systems. Organisational capacity includes previous experience, work techniques and technology, as well as a network of relations with other organisations and institutions which has been developed over time.

Human capacity (human resources) refers to the competence and expertise of the people involved in this process for conducting M&E activities – the knowledge and skills of employees and associates, but also of the network of volunteers which the organisation has and can rely on.

In assessing its organisational and human potential, an organisation (regardless of whether it represents the state or the civil sector), should answer the following questions:[37]

- Who possesses the technical skills to design and implement an M&E system?
- Who is skilled for managing such a system?
- What data systems currently exist and what is their quality?
- What technology is available for data support/analysis and processing?

- What funding is available for designing and implementing an M&E system?

- What is the organisation's experience with performance reporting systems?

Terms of Reference

Terms of reference is a document which states the key aspects of evaluation performance. It is often abbreviated as ToR.[38] It comprises tasks and results which an evaluator is expected to achieve. A clear and specific ToR, which precisely and unambiguously expresses what is expected of the evaluation, can have a decisive impact on the quality of the evaluation report. Therefore, it is essential that this document is well prepared.

ToR is made in the evaluation planning phase, prior to the process of hiring evaluators. In case of hiring an external evaluator (in our case CSOs), ToR represents a contracting basis between the evaluation contracting authority and the evaluator – a CSO.[39]

ToR for external evaluators[40]

Terms of Reference should provide necessary information on the reasons for the evaluation conduct, to whom it is directed, what it attends to achieve, the methods to be used, who will be involved in its production, what results it needs to deliver, when it will be conducted and what resources it will use.

This document should be as concise as possible, between five to ten pages long. It should be composed of the following parts:

1. Description of the situation and of the context

2. Evaluation purpose and target group

3. Aim and scope of evaluation

4. Evaluation questions and tasks

5. Approach and methodology

6. Timeline and deliverables

7. Evaluators' required qualifications

8. Roles and responsibilities of the actors involved

9. Budget

Here is what you can find in each of these parts:

1. Context and background

This part should provide information on the intervention – the policy, programme or activity to be evaluated. It should provide insight into the state of the policy implementation at the moment of evaluation planning, with particular focus on:

- The intended objectives of the intervention (policy) to be evaluated, together with its rationale and scale;
- The timeframe and the progress achieved at the moment of the evaluation;
- Key stakeholders involved in the given policy;
- Organisational, social, political and economic factors which have an influence on the intervention's implementation;
- Disclaimer if any previous study or evaluation was conducted on the same topic.

More detailed information (logical framework, indicators, etc.) may be included in the annexes.

2. Purpose and target audience

This section outlines why the evaluation is to be conducted and identifies the key users of its findings. Its main elements are the following:

- The reasons for conducting an evaluation;
- What the evaluation seeks to accomplish;
- Who will use the evaluation results;
- How the evaluation results will be used.

3. Evaluation objective and scope

The objective of the evaluation reflects what the evaluation aims to explore. It is advisable to analyse few issues thoroughly rather than examine a broader set of issues superficially. The scope delimits the focus of the evaluation. Details here could include the time period, the geographical and thematic coverage of the evaluation, the target groups and the issues to be considered. The scope must be realistic, in accordance with the time and resources available.

4. Evaluation questions and tasks

From this part, the evaluator should learn what he is expected to

undertake – what kind of tasks. The tasks and questions should be structured logically, so that each evaluation tasks builds on the next in terms of providing information on the subject being evaluated. Under each evaluation task there should be a specific evaluation question.

The evaluation questions should flow from the objectives and tasks of the evaluation. They should correspond to a real need for knowledge, understanding or identification of new solution. The conclusions of the evaluation must clearly answer these questions, based on the evidence presented and analysed, including the evaluator's judgment.

5. Approach and methodology

There are two possibilities: the contracting authority can indicate a preference for methods to be used, or it can leave it open and ask the applicants (tenderer) to propose the precise combination of methods to be mobilised in carrying out the evaluation.

6. Timeframe and deliverables

The evaluator needs to be informed on the deadlines for deliverables, as well as their lenght, structure and target groups. The main output is certainly the evaluation report, but prior to that the Inception Report needs to be produced, containing the detailed description of methodology, data collection procedure, data sources and broad activity plan. The Final Report should be composed of the following parts:

- Executive Summary
- Intervention (policy) description
- Evaluation purpose
- Applied methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions (answers to evaluation questions)
- Reccommendations (if required in ToR)
- Annexes (list of people interviewed, key documents consulted, data collection instruments)

7. Evaluators' required qualifications

ToR should describe the process of selecting evaluators or groups of evaluators. This section should also contain the required knowledge, skills and experience: previous experience in preparing and conducting evaluations; data analysis skills; knowledge of the local and institutional

context; technical knowledge in specific areas; management skills; and knowledge of required languages. To prove the necessary qualifications, sometimes the evaluators are asked to submit their references, for example some of their previous works.

8. Evaluation management

This section of ToR outlines:

- Requirements in relation to the specific role and responsibilities of each evaluator in the team. The tenderers should include a breakdown of the days input by task, by team member.

- Role and responsibilities of the evaluation client, such as providing comments on all the deliverables (inception report, draft of the final report) in a due time, assess the evaluation team in all the steps of the evaluation, providing contact and information, etc.

- Participation of other relevant stakeholders and their roles in the evaluation process.

This part should also contain explanations on the process of choosing deliverables, as well as logistical questions such as office space, equipment, materials, etc.

9. Budget and payment

This section should outline a total amount of financial resources available for the evaluation (consultant fees, travels, allowance, etc.). Generally, a breakdown of costs by tasks is recommended (eg. data collection, report preparation, fieldwork, etc.). Most often, the payment is made after the submission of the requested deliverables (inception report, etc).

10. Proposal submission

This part should include relevant information concerning the format, content of the application, deadlines for submission, criteria and timeline for the choice of evaluator and contact information for questions and clarifications.

Dissemination and use of evaluation results

Evaluations should be communicated to the decision-makers and stakeholders in the way that ensures the maximum use of its findings and results. Moreover, they should be available to the public via web pages.

Summary:

- First step in realisation of evaluations should begin with the question on the evaluation purpose, its goals and questions it needs to answer.

- For CSOs to be constructively engaged in public policy M&E processes, they are required to possess adequate capacities, primarily organisational and human resources.

- Terms of Reference represent a document outlining the key aspects of evaluation conduct.

- ToR lists the tasks and expected results from the evaluator. Developing clear and specific ToR that unambiguously and precisely outline the expected results of an evaluation can crucially determine the quality of the final evaluation report. Therefore, it is necessary that ToR is well-written.

- Evaluation results should be communicated to the decision makers and relevant stakeholders in the way that ensures the maximum use of its findings. Moreover, they should be available to the public via web pages.

For the ones who want to know more – recommended literature:

Rossi, H. Peter, Lipsey, Mark W., Freeman, Howard E. "Evaluation: A Systematic Approach," 7th edition, Sage Publications, Inc., 2004.

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European Commission, General Secretariat, "Evaluation Standards", available at <http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/docs/standards_c_2002_5267_final_en.pdf>.

Segone, M., "National Evaluation Capacity Development: conceptual framework," UNICEF. Available at: <http://www.slideshare.net/global-finland/evaluation-capacity-development-in-partner-countries-marco-segone-unicef>

STEP 5:

PREREQUISITES AND OBSTACLES OF INVOLVING CSOs IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The limitations and challenges CSOs face when conducting M&E can relate to both their internal restrictions and external environment and working conditions.

INTERNAL CONDITIONS AND OBSTACLES OF INVOLVING CSOs IN POLICY M&E

One of the primary challenges for CSOs is how to maintain the analytical skills of its experts at a high level and how to ensure their continuous improvement. This challenge is exacerbated by the need to ensure financial sustainability and to find long-term and stable sources of funding.[41] In particular, since CSO funding in countries in the Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region is predominantly based on time-limited projects, these countries experience complications in terms of organisational capacity, meaning they lack funding for training.[42]

State administration representatives take a clear stance that CSOs will be involved in M&E solely and exclusively on the basis of their expertise.

In this regard, in order to be on an equal footing with the other M&E stakeholders, CSOs should strengthen their own capacity and abilities to approach these activities in a professional way. Strengthening the human, organisational and financial capacities y of CSOs is particularly important bearing in mind the expected gradual withdrawal of the majority

of foreign donors, which are at the present moment the largest source of CSO funding in Serbia.

One of the ways of securing the funds could be if certain CSOs specialise in delivering services for the purpose of M&E, e.g. by preparing evaluation reports as external evaluators. In this regard, a special focus should be placed on research and analysis capacity, to make sure that CSOs will be capable of adequately participation in the M&E process.

EXTERNAL CONDITIONS AND OBSTACLES OF INVOLVING CSOs IN POLICY M&E

Building a feasible and effective M&E system in the country requires the fulfilment of certain technical and social preconditions.

Technical preconditions for establishing an effective M&E system include establishing structures, systems and processes for ensuring data collection, processing and data analysis that would enable converting data into information useful for decision-makers and other policy stakeholders.

The fulfilment of technical preconditions for generating and processing data is indispensable, but not sufficient. It is not rare in both national and comparative practice that data has been collected and turned into information, but had not been used in making new policies or improving the performance of the previous policy. That means that besides developing technical capacity, building an efficient and effective policy M&E system requires awareness-raising excercise among citizens and decision-makers.

Social preconditions. In order to stimulate the M&E process in a country and provide positive effects, it is essential that society as a whole believes that such practices are good, that they serve to its progress and thus need to be developed. In other words, that society promotes a culture of policy M&E.

Culture can be defined as a unique system of shared behavioural assumptions, beliefs, values and norms common to a certain group of people, organization or a society as a whole in a certain period of time.[43]

"Evaluation culture" is defined as a culture which decisively collects, analyses and processes data on policy performance for the purposes of using that information for better management of policymaking process and provision of better results/effects of implemented policies.[44]

A culture that highly values policy M&E (hereinafter evaluation culture) is characterised by the following:

(1) constant and systematic data collection with the aim of reviewing and questioning the actions taken,

(2) learning by doing and

(3) an investigative approach to problem solving.[45]

Constant and systematic data collection. A culture that values M&E has a positive attitude towards systematic data collection because this produces knowledge which is essential to examining its performance and actions. An evaluation culture, therefore, encourages self-examination and self-reflection. The emphasis within this culture is put on consistent and continuous revision of the actions taken by decision-makers; searching for credible and relevant evidence for drawing conclusions on policy effects/impacts; use of data on effects/impact to revise existing activities and find support for their continuation, or termination if their effects are inadequate; fostering continuous dialogue, based on tolerance and diversity, between all parties interested in policy effects.

Learning by doing. An individual, organisation or a state can learn on the basis of proper experience, but also from the experience of others, if those are available.[46]

A culture that highly values M&E encourages learning from its own experience as well as from that of others, systematically working to gather evidence that will substantiate the validity of certain actions, or confirm and prove that certain decisions were inadequate and therefore their implementation should be stopped. For this to be feasible, it is necessary: (a) to offer the possibility of analysing past actions; (b) to designate the time for learning from experience based on the performance monitoring of existing or previous actions taken by the government and competent ministries; (c) that information regarding poor results is made available for assessment and processing, so that useful recommendations for future actions can be provided; (d) to provide stimulus and support for the dissemination and transfer of knowledge; (e) to consistently develop mechanisms for the creation, transfer and retention of knowledge; (f) to provide the opportunity to learn from others (e.g. best practices benchmarking).

Openness in problem solving. A culture that highly values M&E encourages openness as an approach to solving problems and implementing changes. Openness includes problem solving through experimenting with new types of activities and procedures, taking risks and innovation.

On the other hand, societies with a weak evaluation culture are characterised with less determined data collection and processing, lack of clear commitment and lack of preparedness for a consistent policy performance M&E.

That means that even when data on policy performance is collected, it is not used for improving the performance and/or is not communicated to the public in a transparent way. The process of learning by doing based on feedback and data collection on particular policies is insufficiently structured so the exact time and method for such learning activities (analysing effects, drawing conclusions and implementing corrections) are not clear. Finally, even if evidence-based policymaking is advocated, in reality the *status quo* is maintained.

Finally, in the extreme case, there is the situation in which performance data is not collected at all, society does not show a defined awareness on the importance of questioning policy performance nor the need to use existing knowledge in order to learn something new and apply it to support evidence-based policy making.

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