# MEAL

## Monitoring & Evaluation for Organisational Accountability & Learning

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# Contents

- The MEAL

- Theory of Change

- The Big Question – Evidence

- Story of Impact

- A 'management system' of an organisation for the delivery of **change**

<div align="center">

Monitor Comprehensively

Evaluate Selectively

Feel Accountable

Learn Continuously

</div>

- MEAL provides a methodology to help an institution not only to monitor and evaluate its programmes and projects – but also in using these to help build culture of accountability and learning

- Programmes are regularly monitored and evaluated
- Beneficiary opinions are actively sought
- Quality of activities is assessed against a minimum standards
- Findings are shared with relevant stakeholders
- Findings are fed into programme decision-making for learning and accountability

MEAL methodology emphasises on data collection, information sharing and evaluation

All these components are **in-built** parts of the project design

# MEAL Stages

| | |
|---|---|
| Organisational Goals | All programmes and projects have understanding of their purpose and goals |
| Objectives and Indicators | Have clearly defined objectives and indicators – developed using frameworks |
| Plans and Budgets | Have appropriate resources budgeted to implement their plans |
| M&E Plan | Have an M&E plan – based on minimum standards and pre-defined procedures |
| Monitor | Regularly monitored |
| Baselines | Establish a baseline – to set the basis for M&E |
| Evaluation | Above a certain threshold, projects and programmes are all evaluated – appropriate manager signs evaluation action plans |
| Accountability | Suggestions, feedbacks and complaints of stakeholders are included in the monitoring systems |
| Learning | Evidences are collected, e.g. previous learning initiatives, minutes of meetings, feedback from accountability mechanisms – teams are provided access to this information |

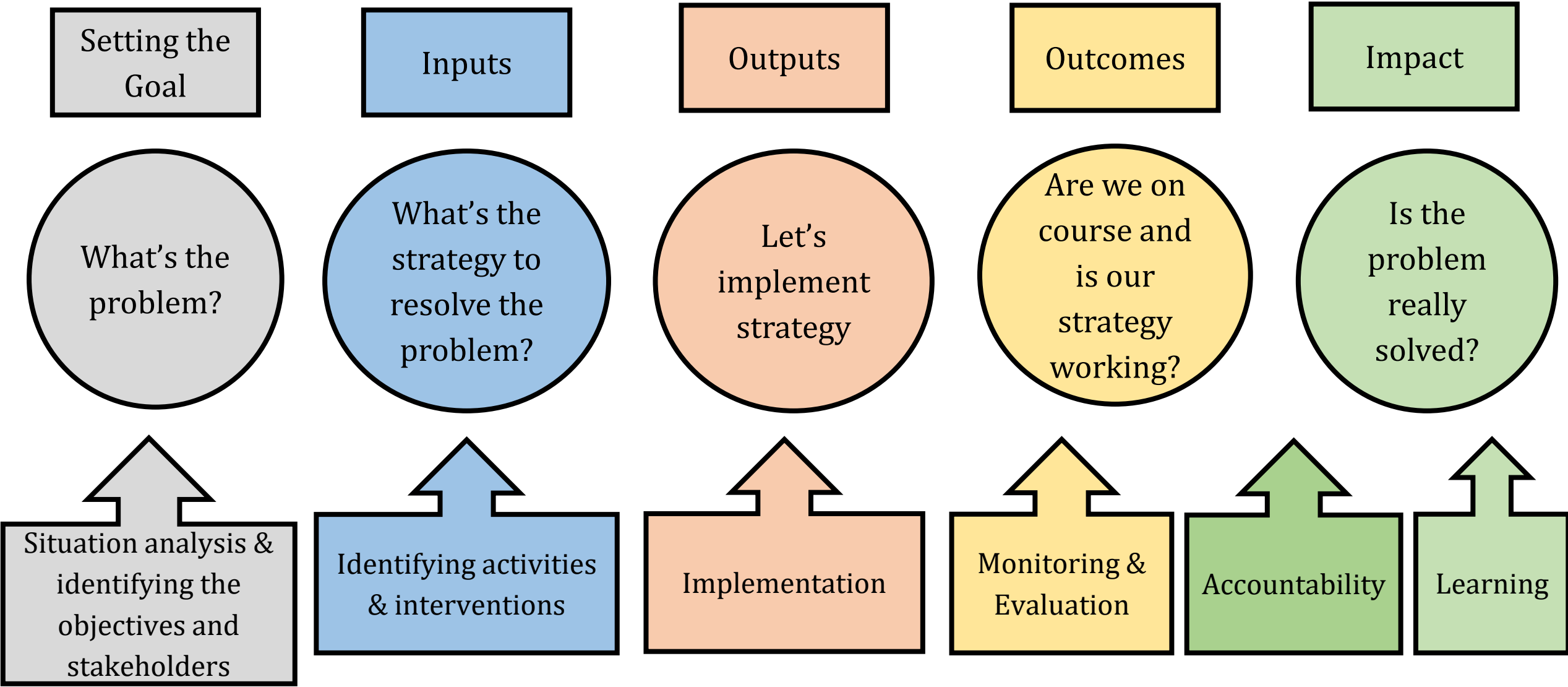| Outcome Framework | Logical Framework |
|---|---|
| (Theory of Change) | Results Framework |
| | Conceptual Framework |
| | M&E Framework |

- Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of HOW and WHY a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context

- Theory of Change links activities and outcomes of a programme to explain the change

- An illustration of causal pathway to strategise the envisaged change

- Explains the factors that lead to economic, social and political development (change) and how that influences the approach of the programme
- Complex programmes are difficult to evaluate without a clear framework on what is set out to do and why
- Increasing pressure from boards and donors to articulate long-term impact
- Focuses on change – rather than activities
- Helps in identifying interventions and highlighting assumptions
- Framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning throughout programme cycle
- Engages stakeholders in an institutional MEAL process

# Cycle of Theory of Change

| Setting the Goal | Inputs | Outputs | Outcomes | Impact |

**Setting the Goal**

What's the problem?

↑

Situation analysis & identifying the objectives and stakeholders

**Inputs**

What's the strategy to resolve the problem?

↑

Identifying activities & interventions

**Outputs**

Let's implement strategy

↑

Implementation

**Outcomes**

Are we on course and is our strategy working?

↑

Monitoring & Evaluation

Accountability

**Impact**

Is the problem really solved?

↑

Learning

- Analyse situation – understand the context/problem

- Layout sequence of expected results chains in a visual schematic representation

- Explicit assessment of the evidence supporting these assumptions of change

**Building a Theory of Change is about answering some: If-Then**

**While answering the if-then we identify the Assumptions and Risks**

Instruments → Observations → Insights from engagements platform → Prospective pathway (interventions) → Targeted change (impact)

## Key Questions

- What is the problem we are trying to solve?
- Who is our key audience?
- What is our entry point to reaching the key audience?
- What is the measurable effect of our work?
- What are the wider benefits of our work?
- What is the long-term change we see as our goal?

Identify If(s) and Then(s)

## Outcome Mapping

- A methodology for planning and assessing initiatives that aim to bring about 'real' and tangible change

- Focused on changes in actions of the stakeholders

- By using Outcome Mapping, a programme is not claiming the achievement of development impacts; rather, the focus is on its contributions to outcomes

| Outcomes (Change) | Partners (Stakeholders) | Contributions (Impact) |
|---|---|---|

**We can influence, but not control our partners**

**Think contribution and not impact**
**Think influence and not impact**

Theory of Change offers that a good way to convey the contribution to influence is storytelling. Why?

- To convey ideas of something new effectively
- To articulate the event of change in an innovative way
- Stories resonate with the audience/readers and stay in their mind

However, stories need specific content:
- Problem/challenge before the change of a situation
- Pathway to change that situation

**Finishing the sentences**

- Once upon a time there was …

- And every day …

- So one day …

- And then …

- And for that reason …

- Until finally …

- And since then …

# 7 Main Steps to Storytelling: An Example

| | |
|---|---|
| Once upon a time there was … | a think tank in Bangladesh named CPD who did policy research and activism. |
| And every day … | they were asked "where is the evidence that your research/activism brings about any policy change in your country?" |
| So one day … | they decided to write a story on one of their programme successes. |
| And then … | they drew a framework of theory of change for that particular programme. |
| And for that reason … | they described the programme activities sequentially – defining how those activities impacted various stakeholder groups of the process. |

| Until finally … | the story was shared with wider audience and everyone could explicitly see how CPD's research inputs were strategically used to reach to the key stakeholders who were the change agents on that particular programme agenda. The story and the framework also provided learnings for CPD on what could have been done differently or better. |
|---|---|
| | **The story of the programme journey was the piece of evidence of CPD's role in policy influencing** |
| And since then … | Story of Impacts were adopted as an in-built tool for CPD's programmes to feed into the MEAL process of the institute. |

# Thank You