IRC Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Handbook

Standards, Practices and Guidance
October 2022 External Version

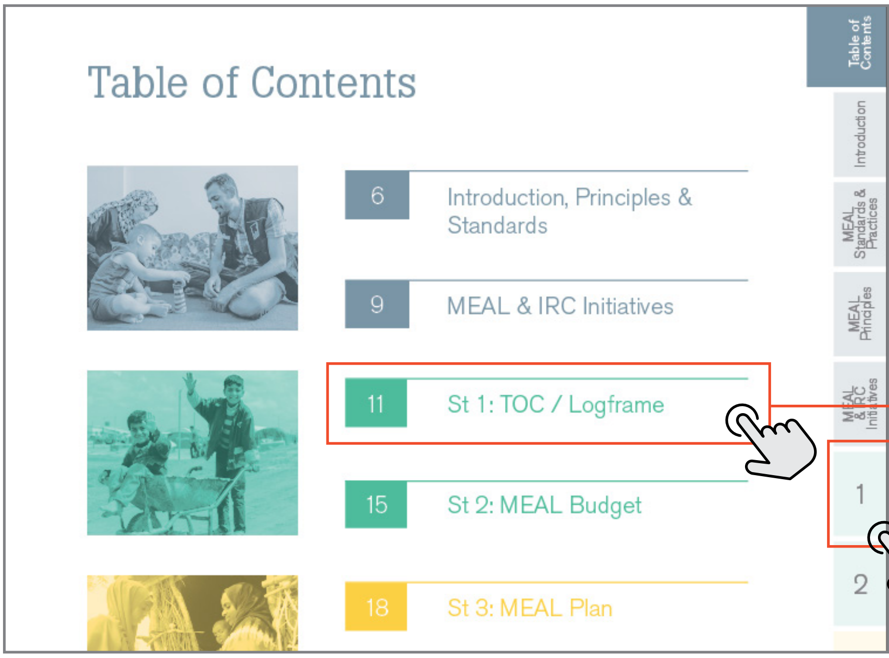
Led by Genevieve Chicoine

A BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED CREATE THE IRC MEAL HANDBOOK

Albert Kadha
Albino Luciani
Andrew Meaux
Anne Langston
Brian Kule
Chloe Whitley
Dora Abdelghani
Elena Wallraff
Emmanuel Sitok
Geke Kieft
Hazem Salama
Issiaka Traore
Julio Noguera
Justina Ojom
Kristine Tuban
Laura Miller
Lauren Emerson
Laurence Leclercq
Leila Younes
Lilian Kasina
Marie France Guimond
Mark Montague
Muhammad Rashid
Nasir Khan Yousaf Zai
Nick Jones-Bannister
Nicolas Avril
Nicolas Seris
Omolola Adewunmi
Pasteur Ruberintwari
Pauline Thivillier
Rebecca Samaha
Sadate Soumahoro
Sarah Muffly
Shane Scanlon
Simon Fuchs
Thupten Norbu
Tom Joseph
Valentina Shafina
William Ratcliffe
Wycliff Odera

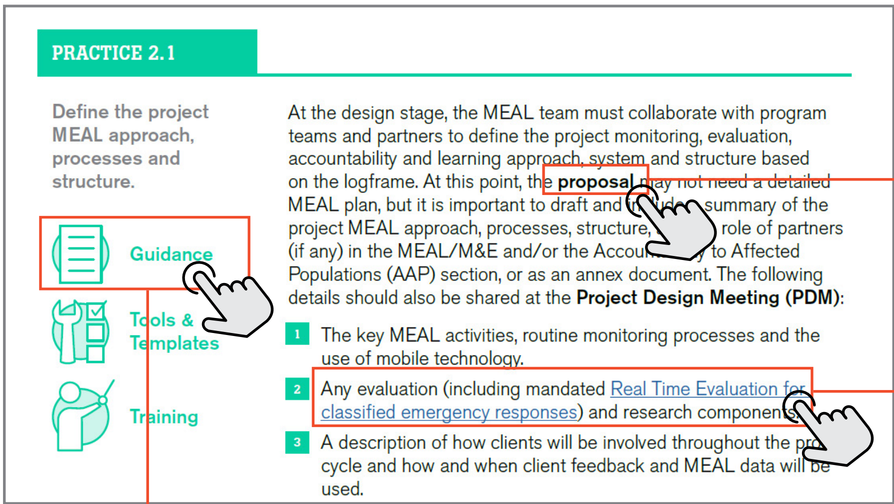
How to Use this Document

This PDF is designed to be interactive and contains links to sections within this document and Box files.



Navigating the document

- The PDF is enabled with in-document links that will make jumping from chapter to chapter as simple as one click.
- There are two options for navigating to different chapters: 1) Clicking on the chapter name in the **table of contents page**; 2) Clicking on the chapter in the table of contents **side bar**.



Words in bold

- If you encounter words in **bold black color** within the PDF, it means that the term contains a definition in the glossary section
- If you are interested in learning about the definition, click on the word in bold. This will bring you to the relevant section in the glossary.

Accessing resources

- MEAL handbook resources have been categorized into 3 types: Guidance; Tools & Templates; and Training.
- **Resources in dark colors:** it means this resource type is currently available for this standard/practice.
- **Resources in pale colors:** it means this resource type is not currently available for this standard/practice.
- Click on the type of resource you are interested in, for example "Guidance". This will bring you to all relevant resources for this particular practice on RescueNet.

Hyperlinked words

- If you click on a word that is hyperlinked in blue, it will take you to the relevant file in Box. Please make sure that you are logged into your Box account.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This handbook articulates the standards and practices which support a comprehensive approach to Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) to improve our programming and ultimately the lives of our **clients**. It also includes MEAL principles which run through all the standards. All IRC programs are expected to meet these standards, practices, and principles throughout the project lifecycle.

MEAL

The "A" in MEAL stands for Accountability. At the IRC, this refers to the organization's Client Responsive Programming Framework, which implies that we collect, analyze and respond to client feedback and support client participation in project design, implementation and close-out.[1]

The IRC MEAL Handbook is aligned with IRC's key program initiatives including the Strategic Action Plan (SAP), IMPACT Standards, Partnership Excellence for Equality and Results System (PEERS) and Project Cycle Meeting (PCM) approach and processes. It will be updated yearly as approaches, initiatives and resources change. Most resources are available in all of IRC's working languages; translations will be added as they become available.

The MEAL standards and practices described in this handbook are aligned to the project life cycle, but they equally apply at the country and program level in order to facilitate a coherent country-wide approach to key organizational priorities, such as systematically collecting client feedback, transitioning to digital data collection, the adoption of standard indicators, and routine data quality assurance, which will together help IRC meet our Strategy100 ambition to *achieve greater impact by powering our program delivery decisions with data.*

This handbook provides technical guidance, tools, templates, and training resources to enable IRC to meet each of the MEAL standards. The handbook supports:

1. **A shared understanding of IRC MEAL standards and principles** across Crisis Response, Recovery, and Development (CRRD) Program Delivery and Technical Excellence, and the Measurement Unit.
2. **Onboarding** for new MEAL/M&E staff and those working closely with them.
3. **Professional development** for MEAL/M&E staff through self-directed learning, mentoring and/or coaching.
4. **Clarification of MEAL requirements and staff responsibilities** for the SAP, its programs, and projects.

This handbook is intended to engage staff members in the critical thinking required to design and implement MEAL strategies and processes within their programs. It is also a resource for IRC partners. Consistent with Strategy100 and PEERS, IRC staff partner first and as equals. MEAL and program teams must strive to maximize collaboration with partners throughout the standards and practices; share learning based on complementary expertise and elevate each other's knowledge and practices to enhance MEAL work. Each project is unique, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning practices may vary across contexts. Staff members should contact Regional Measurement Advisors (RMAs), Client Responsiveness Technical Specialists, and Technical Unit (TU) M&E Focal Points for questions, support, and feedback in implementing the standards and guidance provided. Sector Specific Technical Advisors (TA), Emergency Advisors, Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisors and Partnership Specialists should be contacted for advice with regards to their respective expertise.

For general questions please contact Measurement.Unit@rescue.org.

For a strong foundation in MEAL fundamentals, and prior review of MEAL standards and practices, we recommend the MEAL DPro course on Kaya and IRC training on Client Responsiveness.

1 In some Country Programs, the Client Responsiveness function sits outside of the MEAL/M&E Unit (for instance with the Protection Mainstreaming Team). In that case, the relevant practices listed in this handbook are the joint responsibility of the MEAL/M&E and Client Responsiveness staff in-country.

MEAL Standards & Practices

1 A theory of change and a logframe are developed using client feedback, data, evidence and learning

1.1 Ensure client feedback, monitoring data, research and learning from past implementations and partners are incorporated into project design.
1.2 Collect primary data on client priorities and preferences when more information is needed.
1.3 Create a theory of change (ToC) to define how outcomes will be achieved.
1.4 Develop a logframe using IRC core and donor indicators.
1.5 Determine baseline, define disaggregation and set a target for each indicator.

2 Requirements, costs and staffing for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning are defined in project proposals

2.1 Define the project MEAL approach, processes and structure.
2.2 Define staff and resource requirements for all MEAL activities and include them in the project proposal.
2.3 Formulate a MEAL budget to finance required equipment, processes and staff.

3 A monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning plan is created to guide the collection, management and use of data

3.1 Select and design proactive and reactive client feedback channels.
3.2 Develop the MEAL plan for the project.
3.3 Assign MEAL responsibilities to country staff and agree on technical support functions and project partner roles as required.

4 Data collection and management systems are established using IRC approved tools in consultation with relevant sector and program teams and partners

4.1 Select, adapt, develop, and pilot (as necessary) data collection tools based on the latest guidance.
4.2 Establish database and report structure and map data flows for all logframe indicators.
4.3 Develop and set up procedures to safely and ethically collect, store and share data for all logframe indicators.

5 Data is collected ethically using the appropriate disaggregation and methodologies and is checked to ensure quality

5.1 Conduct monitoring and data collection activities.
5.2 Manage IRC's client feedback channels.
5.3 Ensure all MEAL data is systematically entered and updated into database, reports and dashboards.
5.4 Conduct data quality checks at least monthly, share findings with programs and take remedial actions as necessary.

6 Data is analyzed and presented to understand performance, make decisions and adapt programming

6.1 Analyze and interpret disaggregated data on clients reached, outcomes and client feedback.
6.2 Generate programmatic and client feedback dashboards and reports.
6.3 Present key monitoring & client feedback findings and priority issues for discussion.
6.4 Document learning from monitoring data and feedback mechanisms.

7 Findings and resulting adaptations are captured, stored and shared to maximize learning, and to provide evidence for past, current and future programming decisions

7.1 Conduct a review or evaluation as per project commitment to maximize learning.
7.2 Plan for close-out of the project's monitoring and feedback mechanisms.
7.3 Finalize and safely store all MEAL reports and products for access by current and future programs.
7.4 Share final project indicator results and knowledge with stakeholders.

MEAL Principles

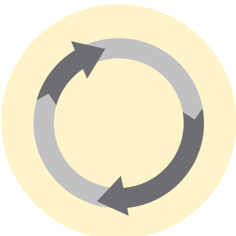
The five principles below run across all the MEAL Standards and Practices.

FOCUS ON CLIENTS

We focus on clients' rights, priorities, preferences and feedback when conducting MEAL activities. We engage respectfully with clients at all stages of the project lifecycle--starting with obtaining informed consent from clients before collecting data--and we understand, value, and incorporate their perspectives into decision-making. We recognize that the primary objective of MEAL work is to provide quality data to improve program performance and outcomes for ALL of our clients. We must remember that collecting, utilizing and storing data about individuals carries ethical and legal obligations. We understand the additional risks related to data on sensitive issues such as gender identity, sexual orientation, or displacement status.

USE STANDARDIZED TOOLS & PROCESSES

We use IRC standardized tools & processes to strengthen and harmonize MEAL results. By using standardized data collection tools and practices such as the IRC Data Toolkits, Indicator Selection Tool (IST), Client Responsiveness and MEAL resources and other tools listed in this handbook together with standardized analysis techniques, we save time and improve the efficiency of our work and the validity and value of the data we collect. Adhering to standard indicator definitions also gives us the ability to compare results across field sites, projects, grants, sectors, countries and fosters a more comprehensive understanding of data.



INTEGRATE WITH PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

We integrate MEAL activities with program activities to ensure the coordination, efficiency, and appropriateness of our work. MEAL must not be viewed as a siloed/disconnected activity but a core component of project management. This approach will ensure that all MEAL efforts are truly and systematically geared toward improving program quality for our clients. In day-to-day activities, the program teams' priorities, milestones and decisions must feed into the MEAL work plans and the MEAL data must inform project performance and adaptation. At a strategic level, the MEAL strategy and activities must be rooted in the country's SAP and program goals to foster wider portfolio understanding and learning.

SUPPORT CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

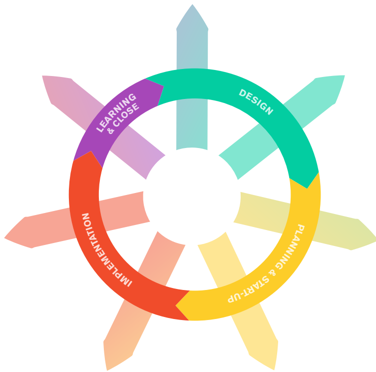
We support continuous professional development to foster competencies and motivation. Staff are expected to learn and practice the skills necessary to carry out their duties and improve the quality of their work. Managers are expected to encourage staff (and include in performance goals) to devote time and energy to learning and practicing new skills and competencies. All MEAL standards have associated practices that are necessary to meet the required standard. For each practice, there are learning resources, some of which serve self-directed learning and some of which can be used for group trainings.

PROMOTE GEDI

We promote the values of gender, equality, diversity, and inclusion in all MEAL work. These values must be fully integrated in the way we conduct our day-to-day activities, the way we lead our teams when learning and practicing skills to carry out our work, and in hiring MEAL staff. It is also essential to prioritize gender, equality, diversity, and inclusion (GEDI) when disaggregating and analyzing data in order to understand and improve program quality, safety and equity in outcomes for our clients especially those marginalized because of characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, or age. Read the Gender Sensitive M&E Practices for a complete overview on how to ensure gender equity and inclusion across all MEAL activities. Visit the Equality page on RescueNet and the Gender Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan document for more information about gender, equality, diversity, and inclusion.

MEAL & the Project Cycle

The MEAL project standards are organized into four project cycle phases aligned with the Project Cycle Meetings (PCM) Approach (including the colors of the MEAL standards as per PCM phase). They indicate when each of the standards apply during the project lifecycle and outline the practices required for meeting each standard. The PCM M&E Staff R&R Memo is also an essential read to gain an understanding of MEAL/M&E team responsibilities in the PCM cycle.



The MEAL standards and practices should be applied to all new projects and need to be reviewed for project revisions and extensions to meet MEAL expectations and requirements. The MEAL standards at each of the four project cycle phases are listed below:

Phase	No.	Standard	No.	Standard
DESIGN	1	A theory of change and a logframe are developed using client feedback, data, evidence and learning.	2	Requirements, costs and staffing for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning are defined in project proposals.
PLANNING & START-UP	3	A monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning plan is created to guide the collection, management and use of data.	4	Data collection and management systems are established using IRC approved tools in consultation with relevant sector and program teams and partners.
IMPLEMENTATION	5	Data is collected ethically using the appropriate disaggregation and methodologies and is checked to ensure quality.	6	Data is analyzed and presented to understand performance, make decisions and adapt programming.
LEARNING & CLOSE	7	Findings and resulting adaptations are captured, stored and shared to maximize learning, and to provide evidence for past, current and future programming decisions.		

MEAL & IMPACT Standards

IMPACT
Raising Program Quality

IMPACT is the Crisis Response, Recovery and Development Department's (CRRD) Program Quality Framework. The acronym of the word 'IMPACT' defines program quality through six Principles: Informed, Measure, Partner, Adapt, Client-centered and Transformative. The IMPACT Framework is comprised of eighteen standards for programming across the three IMPACT phases: Prepare, Design and Implement. Prepare relates to country program-level preparation and strategic thinking. Design and Implement relate to the project cycle.

Where the three IMPACT Measure Standards provide high-level guidance, the MEAL handbook articulates IRC's step-by-step approach to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning to improve our programming and, ultimately, the lives of our clients. By meeting the MEAL standards, Country Offices are also meeting the expectations articulated in the IMPACT framework. The MEAL handbook also supports key elements of the IMPACT Client-centered Standards. The table below shows the IMPACT Measure Standards, the corresponding Recommended Programmatic Practices and the MEAL Standards required to meet them.

PREPARE

IMPACT STANDARD: MEASURE 1

We put in place standardized tools, procedures and routines to measure outcomes, scale, quality and client satisfaction.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE 1 — M1.1

We develop MEAL standardized tools and procedures to harmonize data collection and management across projects for SAP priority outcomes.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE 2 — M1.2

We analyze and visualize data (disaggregated by gender, age, and where possible disability and other contextually relevant characteristics) at the program level to inform adaptation and future designs.

DESIGN

IMPACT STANDARD: MEASURE 2

We plan and budget for the measurement and analysis of IRC core and donor indicators.

MEAL STANDARD 1 — M2.1

A theory of change and a logframe are developed using client feedback, data, evidence and learning.

MEAL STANDARD 2 — M2.2

Requirements, costs and staffing for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning are defined in project proposals.

MEAL STANDARD 3 — M2.3

A monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning plan is created to guide the collection, management and use of data.

MEAL STANDARD 4 — M2.4

Data collection and management systems are established using IRC approved tools in consultation with relevant sector and program teams.

IMPLEMENT

IMPACT STANDARD: MEASURE 3

We collect and analyze data disaggregated by gender, age, and where possible disability and other contextually relevant characteristics.

MEAL STANDARD 5 — M3.1

Data is collected ethically using the appropriate disaggregation and methodologies and is checked to ensure quality.

MEAL STANDARD 6 — M3.2

Data is analyzed and presented to understand performance, make decisions and adapt programming.

MEAL STANDARD 7 — M3.3

Findings and resulting adaptations are captured, stored and shared to maximize learning, and to provide evidence for past, current and future programming decisions

DESIGN

Standard 1

A THEORY OF CHANGE AND A LOGFRAME ARE DEVELOPED USING CLIENT FEEDBACK, DATA, EVIDENCE AND LEARNING.

PRACTICE 1.1

Ensure client feedback, monitoring data, research and learning from past implementations and partners are incorporated into project design.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

At the start of project design, the program team is responsible for the following steps with the MEAL team in a support role:

1. Identify the information relevant to the particular project design (or the emergency response[2]), including the sectors, geographical areas, etc. Consult partners on what they believe is relevant information.
2. Gather and summarize preexisting **monitoring** data, Do No Harm analysis, gender analysis, reviews, research studies, **client feedback**, **needs assessments**, situation reports, and **evaluations** across sectors from ongoing and previous IRC and partner projects & programs to inform project design and implementation. If there are concerns about the quality of any of the available data, the MEAL team should inform the program team, and partners where relevant.
3. Search for and review additional secondary data. This includes information and reports from local governments, the UN and other national and international organizations that would allow us to better understand the context and inform project design and potential partnerships.
4. Identify if there are any critical information gaps on key aspects of the context and of the target population (e.g. often data is lacking for specific groups such as women, children, and other marginalized populations), and define the resource requirements to collect primary **data** as needed.
5. Store a summary of findings and lessons learned and the bibliography of the reviewed documents and data in the project design folder in **Box**.

2 For an emergency response, the emergency lead would be responsible for the design with the support of the MEAL team.

PRACTICE 1.2

Collect primary data on client priorities and preferences when more information is needed.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team usually leads on primary data collection with **clients** and potential clients based on the following steps:

1. Ensure that a thorough secondary literature review has been conducted and completed as per **Practice 1.1**. Primary data collection can be time-consuming and expensive and can lead to client fatigue. It is important to research first what is already available with the IRC, partners, and other organizations since funds may not be available for primary data collection.
2. Pursue primary data collection after the data gap is narrowed down based on the secondary literature review and under the following conditions:
    - The information is not available from partners or other organizations, government, IRC past projects and programs as it is in a new sector or location or a rapidly evolving emergency context.
    - The primary data needs are identified, and they are specific and essential to the project design. They focus on key aspects of the context that are unknown, clients' needs, priorities and preferences.
3. Plan for and lead the collection of missing data on clients' needs, priorities and preferences and on the identified key aspects of the context and the population groups that are unknown. In emergency responses, an assessment of new locations is likely to be required. Where we work with partners, consider the possibility for joint or delegated data collection as local actors are often better placed to gather this data.
4. Conduct an information validation meeting with clients, partners and other **stakeholders** as required.

PRACTICE 1.3

Create a theory of change (ToC) to define how outcomes will be achieved.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The program team is responsible for creating a **ToC** with the MEAL team in a support role. The key steps are:

1. Use the IRC Outcomes and Evidence Framework (OEF) as a primary resource.
2. Include **client priorities** and feedback.
3. Consider available data, evidence and context-specific learning.
4. Involve staff, partners and stakeholders where possible.
5. In an emergency context, the emergency response team leads the design of the Response Strategy, with the support of MEAL staff. Consult the Emergency Program packages in the guidance folder and reach out to the Emergency MEAL coordinator for more information.

PRACTICE 1.4

Develop a logframe using IRC core and donor indicators.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

While the final selection of indicators rests with the program team, the MEAL team, as well as project partners, plays a critical role in helping the program team make an informed decision. The MEAL team must provide guidance and support to the program team on **logframe** design and the appropriateness and feasibility of proposed indicators. When partnering, local actors should collaborate in the selection of suitable indicators. The key steps are:

1. Construct a logframe based on the ToC and using the IRC logframe template or the donor template as required by the proposal.
2. Select indicators for the logframe. A short overview of the critical steps is provided below:
    - The selection of each indicator should be discussed with the program team before including it in the logframe. The indicators must inform program improvement and decision-making. When selecting indicators, consider capacity and financial means, together with their usefulness for programs. Use the guideline Why we monitor and how we select indicators to guide your selection.
    - Make sure that project indicators are selected from the IRC **core indicators**, and if the donor requires specific indicators, use the IST **donor indicator** list to check if they are equivalent to any IRC core indicators. For emergency responses, simply filter for "emergency only" indicators.
    - If the MEAL coordinator or the program coordinator cannot identify suitable IST indicators, they should reach out to the RMA and TA for guidance.
    - Include at least one client satisfaction indicator.
    - Partner organisations should work with IRC to develop elements of the logframe relevant to their role in the project. Where partners seek to use indicators outside IRC or donor indicators, these should be reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate and feasible.
    - If the project is programmed to achieve one or many SAP prioritized **outcomes**, include the relevant IRC SAP Scale Indicators Guidance and include the relevant Component Core Indicators.

PRACTICE 1.5

Determine baseline, define disaggregation and set a target for each indicator.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

Once indicators are selected, the MEAL team together with the program team, and partners where relevant, must follow these steps for each of the indicators in the logframe:

1. **Determine baseline:** If the baseline value is not known, the MEAL team must advise the program team when and how this **data** can be collected as well as the budget required to collect it (see **Practice 3.1** and **Practice 5.1** for M&E work plan and actual data collection).
2. **Define disaggregation:** Disaggregation should be planned from the start as it requires modification of **data collection tools** and is likely to increase the cost and effort of data collection. The MEAL team supports program coordinators in making the final decision on the disaggregation required for each indicator considering the following steps:
    - Refer to the guidance in the IST for recommended disaggregation for programs based on specific indicators, data collection methods and target groups. Note that all individual level data should be disaggregated at a minimum by gender and age (above/under 18) and where possible by disability.
    - Refer back to the discrimination matrix done during program design to ensure disaggregation categories reflect the systems of inequalities and affected groups identified.
    - Ensure that the budget and data collection methods and sources are adequate for a sample design that will allow for any planned activities, especially disaggregations.
3. **Set targets:** Targets should be set for each of the key agreed disaggregations where possible. While the program team leads the target setting, the MEAL team should provide all available data and information to support the program team to make an informed decision. Below are the key data and information that should be considered and provided to program teams to set indicator targets:
    - Previous performance, baseline assessment, donor requirements, and project budget.
    - SAP scale targets for the SAP prioritized outcomes.
    - Program, situation and geographical context, information and knowledge from local actors, partners and Technical Advisors.
    - Global established targets for some indicators, the most relevant being SPHERE standards for humanitarian response and INEE standards in education.

Standard 2

REQUIREMENTS, COSTS AND STAFFING FOR MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING ARE DEFINED IN PROJECT PROPOSALS.

PRACTICE 2.1

Define the project MEAL approach, processes and structure.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

At the design stage, the MEAL team must collaborate with program teams and partners to define the project monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning approach, system and structure based on the logframe. At this point, the **proposal** may not need a detailed MEAL plan, but it is important to draft and include a summary of the project MEAL approach, processes, structure, and the role of partners (if any) in the MEAL/M&E and/or the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) section, or as an annex document. The following details should also be shared at the **Project Design Meeting (PDM)**:

1. The key MEAL activities, routine monitoring processes and the use of mobile technology.
2. Any evaluation (including mandated Real Time Evaluation for classified emergency responses) and research components.
3. A description of how clients will be involved throughout the project cycle and how and when client feedback and MEAL data will be used.
4. Overall MEAL staffing structure that will support the project.
5. How this project's MEAL activities and processes will be rooted in the country program's MEAL strategy, system and structure.
6. When working with local actors, the MEAL team discusses and agrees on the MEAL approach, system and structure with IRC partner(s). The team should support and reinforce partner MEAL approaches in a collaborative manner, and is responsible for integrating the PEERS and IRC partnership principles of equality and complementarity in routines.

PRACTICE 2.2

Define staff and resource requirements for all MEAL activities and include them in the project proposal.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for determining the requirements and new resource needs based on the overall Country MEAL strategy, system and structure, in collaboration with partners and the program team. The steps to determine the resource needs are listed below:

1. Decide whether new MEAL staff will be required or not. If we do not need to hire new MEAL staff, it is important to define the proportion of current staff time required for the project. For this, the MEAL team needs to consider the time that monitoring, client responsiveness and learning activities will take, and ensure that the project is appropriately staffed. Consider the identity of MEAL staff/enumerators and whether a more diverse team is needed for data collection to match the gender and demographic of our client groups (i.e. women data collectors for engaging women clients). If any new staff is required, use the standard M&E/MEAL job descriptions and Client Responsiveness & Accountability (CRA) job descriptions.
2. Where IRC will work with partners, ensure that resources for partner MEAL activities are included, along with additional IRC MEAL resources to support partner work and facilitate capacity sharing support where needed.
3. Assess the needs for technology-based resources, especially phones, tablets, computers, and software as IRC is moving towards electronic data collection and feedback recording.
4. Based on the project MEAL approach, processes and activities (**Practice 2.1**), ensure resources and requirements are sufficient to cover enumerators, consultants and fieldwork for routine monitoring, surveys, baselines, evaluations, feedback mechanisms.
5. Identify learning and training opportunities for staff and partners (as required). Discuss key needs with the program team, such as materials, tools, learning and discussion events and assess if and how these can be financed.

PRACTICE 2.3

Formulate a MEAL budget to finance required equipment, processes and staff.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for formulating a sound and appropriate budget that corresponds to the planned MEAL activities. Refer to the MEAL IRC budget template to ensure that all MEAL spending are included and consider the following:

1. Budget allocation to IRC and partner MEAL activities must be sufficient to finance the following as needed: staff (salaries, benefits, equipment); training for staff and partners; field visits; communication costs (mobiles, credit, posters, banners), surveys, learning events, evaluations, hardware and software.
2. Client Responsiveness activities must be included in the IRC and/ or partner **MEAL budget** or must be allocated separately (see MEAL plan template, “MEAL budget & staff” tab) as relevant. The budget could include, but is not limited to, dedicated staff (if not included in the MEAL job descriptions), training for staff and partners, capacity sharing and learning events, field visits, software for feedback mechanisms and data management, tablets/ smartphones, and communications costs to report back to/inform clients.
3. MEAL budgets will vary depending on technology, geography, and **interventions**. However, as a guideline, a country can estimate a MEAL budget at about 5% to 10% of total project cost. The cost can increase if you set up feedback mechanisms with new technology (hotline, SMS, social media, etc.), conduct baseline and endline surveys, other representative surveys and/or include independent evaluations.
4. If a budget cannot cover all planned M&E/MEAL activities, gaps should be highlighted to the project lead (as defined by the PCM) and Deputy Director Programs (DDP) (or the M&E/MEAL supervisor) and the MEAL approach, indicators, etc. should be revised as necessary.

Table of Contents
Introduction
MEAL Standards & Practices
MEAL Principles
MEAL & IRC Initiatives
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Glossary

Table of Contents
Introduction
MEAL Standards & Practices
MEAL Principles
MEAL & IRC Initiatives
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Glossary

Standard 3

A MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING PLAN IS CREATED TO GUIDE THE COLLECTION, MANAGEMENT AND USE OF DATA.

PRACTICE 3.1

Select and design proactive and reactive client feedback channels.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team, together with the program team and IRC partners where relevant, must review existing processes, and select and design the client feedback channels. Where we partner with local actors[3], the MEAL team and partners should implement client feedback channel collaboratively, including leveraging existing partner feedback channels where they exist. A joint approach can strengthen the responsiveness not just of IRC assistance, but of services delivered by the broader array of actors we partner with, beyond IRC's engagement. There are two main categories of client feedback channels:

1. Proactive channels such as surveys, FGDs, community meetings, etc.
2. Reactive channels such as a hotline, SMS line, WhatsApp group, suggestion boxes, feedback desk, etc. Note that the same reactive channels can be used to cover several projects/set up per location/for a country program.

3 Local actors and government partners rooted in the context often have strong community connections, networks and cultural competency that support strong client feedback.

PRACTICE 3.2

Develop the MEAL plan for the project.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team must complete the detailed IRC MEAL Plan Template once the project is approved together with involved program staff and IRC partners where relevant. The complete MEAL plan will be based on the MEAL key elements and will include:

1. Final logframe.
2. Indicator matrix, which also specifies: i) the SAP scale indicators and ii) the three selected PCM indicators per project outcome area to inform course correction for tracking in the PCM Dashboard when in use.
3. A clear outline of the roles and responsibilities of MEAL, program and partner staff for collecting, analyzing and reviewing the client feedback throughout the implementation of the project including the frequency of data collection.
4. MEAL budget and staffing.
5. Data collection tool (this will be finalized during **Practice 4.1**).
6. Data workflow (see also **Practice 4.2**).
7. Monitoring work plan.

PRACTICE 3.3

Assign MEAL responsibilities to country staff and agree on technical support functions and project partner roles as required.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The project MEAL lead must ensure that the following steps are completed:

1. Define clearly and assign new tasks and responsibilities regarding the MEAL activities of this project (or emergency response) to specific MEAL and program team members. Include tasks and staff members' names/designations in the monitoring work plan.
2. Assign specific staff to the PCM to support the project lead in ensuring that MEAL information, data analysis, and dashboard (such as the PID) are prepared and reviewed for quality and presented in a timely manner.
3. Include and review key measurement goals in staff annual performance goals.
4. Identify, document and communicate any anticipated technical support concerning MEAL activities in the monitoring work plan, including the specific names of the HQ/Regional support staff.
5. Before the start of the project, agree on and share the final monitoring work plan, including staff accountability and support roles with the project team lead and concerned staff and relevant support functions such as the Regional Measurement Advisors (RMA), Client Responsiveness Specialist, TAs, and TU M&E focal points.
6. Where partners have a MEAL role, IRC and the partners need to define and agree on the partnership's ToRs and the respective roles for the collaboration to be successful. All key responsibilities, accountabilities, and timelines related to data collection, quality assurance, and reporting should be clearly spelled out in the document. A column can be added to the MEAL work plan to further clarify the activities and roles of partners. The IRC MEAL team should also plan for capacity sharing activities based on the respective strengths of IRC and its partners.

Standard 4

DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ARE ESTABLISHED USING IRC APPROVED TOOLS IN CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT SECTOR AND PROGRAM TEAMS AND PARTNERS.

PRACTICE 4.1

Select, adapt, develop, and pilot (as necessary) data collection tools based on the latest guidance.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team selects, adapts and pilots **data collection tools** for the logframe indicators in consultation with the program teams, relevant sectors, and partners. These are the key steps:

1. For all Core Indicators, definitions, tools and methodologies, must be derived from the indicator guidance in the IST. Often donor indicators are loosely defined or similar enough to be mapped directly onto IRC Core Indicators. If not, consult donor guidance and the TA to ensure it is measured correctly. Read the Data Collection and Sampling Guidelines to understand the key IRC data sources and data collection strategies.
2. IRC Data Toolkits should be used where they exist for the planned interventions. If partners have appropriate tools that meet IRC standards for quality and security, they can be adopted.
3. Where feasible, digital data collection is recommended over paper-based data collection. CommCare Software is the IRC recommended web-based mobile data collection platform. If it is not feasible to use CommCare for cost or capacity reasons, the use of **Kobo** Collect as a transitional solution is recommended.
4. If you are required to develop tools, review first the IRC Technology for data management guidance and the IRC CommCare and Kobo courses. You should also contact your Regional Senior Technology Specialist (RSS) for further guidance. In the guidelines and training folders, supplemental resources are available to guide you on building ODK XLS forms. In all mobile forms make sure to include adequate constraints, relevance and calculated fields to enhance data quality in your mobile data collection tool.

Continued

PRACTICE 4.1

Continued

Select, adapt, develop, and pilot (as necessary) data collection tools based on the latest guidance.

5. Ensure that all tools for individual-level data include at a minimum the client's gender and age, and when possible, disability status, along with any other disaggregation categories agreed on in **Practice 1.5**.
6. Review all the individual-level data collection tools and make sure that they include these ethical considerations: voluntary participation, do no harm principles, confidentiality, anonymity, data minimization, etc. Consult and use the relevant guidance, training and templates to ensure you meet this practice.
7. Critically review and finalize proposed data collection tools jointly with the program team to ensure that they include the data necessary to calculate every logframe indicator in the latest validated logframe (if any indicator changes in the logframe, tools must be adjusted accordingly). Consult the Regional Senior Specialist - M&E Technology (RSS) for the guidance on the use of technology, and reach out to the TAs and RMA to ensure that the content is adequate, especially with regard to strategic projects.
8. Before deploying any tool for the first time or after significant changes, field test it and readjust as required.
9. Select enumerators carefully for data collection to ensure the team speaks the same languages and includes members of the same gender, ethnic groups, nationalities as the respondents. Selection of enumerators should be based on their skills. Similar demographic and ethnic attributes make respondents much more likely to share relevant, unbiased information openly.
10. Train data collection enumerators on ethical collection of data and GEDI considerations (see **Practice 5.1** for more information).

PRACTICE 4.2

Establish database and report structure and map data flows for all logframe indicators.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team leads the establishment of a sound database and report structure and map the data flows for all the project logframe indicators. The key steps are:

1. Set up all databases in a machine-readable format to facilitate analysis across projects. Consult the machine readable template as a generic example and follow the IRC Data Structuring Guidelines.
2. When local actors lead data collection, share experiences and agree together on an appropriate database structure, operating procedures and data flows.
3. Document and map each step of the data workflow for each indicator, including source, collection, method, collation, storage, analysis, reporting and use. The documentation should include the person responsible and timeline using the IRC data workflow template (tab 6 of the MEAL plan).

Table of Contents
Introduction
MEAL Standards & Practices
MEAL Principles
MEAL & IRC Initiatives
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Glossary

PRACTICE 4.3

Develop and set up procedures to safely and ethically collect, store and share data for all logframe indicators.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for developing and setting up procedures to safely and ethically collect, store and share all data in line with the IRC Data Protection and Security Guidelines before the start of data collection. When partnering, all the procedures should be thoroughly discussed with our partners to mitigate any ethical and safety risks in collecting, storing and sharing clients' data. The key steps are:

1. Use the Data Protection Checklist to check, adapt and ensure that the systems and procedures to safely and ethically collect, store and share data for projects meet the requirements. If not, adjust the procedures and systems as needed before the start of data collection.
2. Develop or update procedures as needed for the **client feedback mechanism** (including related safeguarding) to ensure that the processes for recording, analyzing and responding to client feedback are clear and in-line with the data protection checklist and that all relevant members of staff are familiar with their roles and responsibilities.
3. Store and maintain all project measurement information, tools, and data (including any updates and changes) in Box (unless otherwise noted) and ensure that the appropriate level of access/restriction is given to each kind of data (online and paper form) in line with the Data Protection Checklist and guide above. The use of the Measurement Box Protocol across all projects is recommended to better support knowledge management.
4. Ensure that all relevant members of staff involved with data (at any stage) are:
   - Familiar with their roles and responsibilities based on the data workflow and/or client feedback mechanism Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These should include the IRC Safeguarding principles and how to deal with breach of those.
   - Trained on the appropriate Data Protection and Security Guidelines and the Data Protection Checklist.

Table of Contents
Introduction
MEAL Standards & Practices
MEAL Principles
MEAL & IRC Initiatives
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Glossary

Standard 5

DATA IS COLLECTED ETHICALLY USING THE APPROPRIATE DISAGGREGATION AND METHODOLOGIES AND IS CHECKED TO ENSURE QUALITY.

PRACTICE 5.1

Conduct monitoring and data collection activities.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for either collecting the data themselves, or ensuring program staff or partners have the knowledge and tools they need to safely and ethically collect good quality data, following these steps:

1. Plan, sequence and organize the logistics of routine monitoring data collection and activities as per the MEAL plan (**Practice 3.2**) and the finalized data collection tools (**Practice 4.1**).
2. Plan and pay particular attention to requirements of i) key data collection events such as baseline, midline, endline, client-based surveys requiring a specific methodology and sampling approach and ii) qualitative data collection requiring focus group discussions and/or key informant interviews. Each of these data collection methods needs careful planning and must be technically sound to ensure high-quality data. Always refer to the IST for guidance and reach out to TAs and RMAs for additional support.
3. Select enumerators based on skills, ensuring they speak the same languages and include members of the same gender, ethnic groups, and nationalities as the respondents (see **Practice 4.1**).
4. Train all agents, enumerators and partners involved in data collection on the collection tools, methods and ethical and sensitive aspects of the data collection considering the culture and key characteristics of the communities served. Ensure that all parties involved understand the meaning and importance of each question in the tools and the importance of following the standard methodology.
5. Assign specific staff to the core responsibilities of data collection such as supervision of piloting and training of enumerators, review of questionnaires for completeness and data quality, and mentoring and supporting enumerators on an ongoing basis.

Continued

PRACTICE 5.1

Continued

Conduct monitoring and data collection activities.

6. In instances where partners lead portions of the monitoring and data collection, the MEAL team, together with the partners, should review the Monitoring capacity and risks based on the Partnership Project Review and Reflection (Monitoring) Tool (find in Tools and Templates) agree on solutions and organize support and training where relevant using this MEAL handbook.

PRACTICE 5.2

Manage IRC's client feedback channels.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is usually responsible for managing IRC's **reactive client feedback channels** with strong support from the program team. Where we work with local actors, they may have their own feedback system, or one shared system depending on the context. IRC and partners should collaborate, share information (without breaking confidentiality), and share capacity as needed. The key steps are:

1. Ensure that clients are informed about the feedback channels. Consult with the program team, partners and community to develop contextualized information, education and communication (IEC) materials for clients as required.
2. Ensure that all reactive feedback channels are functional, accessible and confidential. Ensure that feedback is collected as defined in the country specific SOP. Note that there can be a channel that covers several projects (for example, a hotline).
3. Record and categorize feedback received through all reactive channels (hotline, suggestion boxes, feedback desks, etc.) in the feedback registry. It is recommended to use one single feedback registry for all projects and "tag" the specific project to be able to disaggregate, interpret and analyze clients' feedback per project.
4. Refer the feedback received to the relevant member of the country program team as per the roles and responsibilities and referral pathways highlighted in the SOP.

PRACTICE 5.3

Ensure all MEAL data is systematically entered and updated into database, reports and dashboards.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The M&E lead is responsible for ensuring that monitoring and client data are systematically and timely entered and stored as per Standard 4. The key steps are:

1. Ensure that routine data is regularly entered as per the agreed schedule and dataflow (see **Practice 4.2**). Identify and address any issues with timeliness and regularity of data entry. Modify dataflow and procedures as needed.
2. Make sure that the data is checked and validated at the data entry point to ensure quality from the start and that individual-level data is "de-identified" to ensure client anonymity (see **Practice 5.4** for detailed info on data quality check).
3. Ensure that updated and verified data is systematically available to users, especially for key meetings that are part of the PCM and SAP processes.

PRACTICE 5.4

Conduct data quality checks at least monthly, share findings with programs and take remedial actions as necessary.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for ensuring that data is valid and reliable and is useful to the program team. Errors can still occur despite employing best practices such as the correct data methods, sampling and tools, training enumerators and having strong SOPs. It is critical to conduct systematic data quality checks monthly and data audits periodically to ensure the reliability and quality of the data. When partners are responsible for data collection, these quality assurance processes should be planned and conducted collaboratively. The key steps are:

1. Ensure that staff entering data are fully aware of and apply the "3 C's" criteria: Completeness; Correctness and Consistency in their day-to-day work.
2. Use the Data Quality Checklist on a monthly basis.
3. Perform data audits periodically using the Data Audit tool.
4. When gaps or errors are found, identify the source, find a thorough and long-lasting solution with your team, document and take corrective actions.

Standard 6

DATA IS ANALYZED AND PRESENTED TO UNDERSTAND PERFORMANCE, MAKE DECISIONS AND ADAPT PROGRAMMING.

PRACTICE 6.1

Analyze and interpret disaggregated data on clients reached, outcomes, and client feedback.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for planning and conducting data analysis to allow for a strong shared interpretation of results with the program team. The program team and MEAL team, along with project partners provide the contextual knowledge while the MEAL team provides the analysis and visualization skills to support them. When partnering, IRC must involve local actors in data review and interpretation. In the context of an emergency response, the MEAL team works with the broader response team.[4] The key steps are:

1. Lead a discussion with the program team, and partners, where relevant, to agree on a detailed analysis plan based on the IRC IST/donor guidelines and the work already completed in **Practice 1.5**. The MEAL team must ensure that it fully understands what the program team would like to know and learn from the analysis. With this information, the MEAL team can focus on the specific analyses that will best inform the program team and lead to a better, more tailored understanding of the project performance and decisions. When partnering, use the Partnership Project Review Meeting Note to guide analysis, interpretation and discussion.
2. Conduct analysis on routine data, **outputs**, **scale**, clients reached, client feedback and outcome data as per the logframe, MEAL plan and agreed analysis plan. Make sure to include progress against baseline and target as well as differences between genders, age groups, locations and other agreed key disaggregations (e.g. client nationality, ethnic group, language) to understand and improve equity in outcomes for our clients. When available, use the **Program Indicator Dashboard (PID)** to identify and analyze the most meaningful results.

Continued

4 The composition of the broader response team can vary from response to response but typically it includes an emergency response coordinator lead and a MEAL focal point which will works with the SMT, the relevant program coordinators and operational coordinators (supply chain, security, HR and finance).

PRACTICE 6.1

Continued

Analyze and interpret disaggregated data on clients reached, outcomes and client feedback.

3. Include any known weaknesses, concerns or limitations regarding the quality of the data, analysis and results in reports and presentations.
4. Document the sampling approach used for survey results (sample size, confidence interval, precision and p-value when used to determine if the difference is significant) as part of the analysis and results. This can be in a short paragraph in the methodology section of a report/presentation.
5. Complement quantitative data analysis with qualitative data analysis, success stories, and challenges received from our clients and partners, where available.
6. Draft initial interpretation of the results from analysis or/and dashboard to support a discussion and further interpretation with the program team to ensure the best understanding of project performance and jointly explore possible reasons for results. Cooperation is key where the MEAL team leads analysis and the program team and IRC partners provide the context, the barriers and factors that may have influenced results. For emergency responses, collate data from all relevant implemented projects to enable discussion about the entire response.

PRACTICE 6.2

Generate programmatic and client feedback dashboards and reports.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for leading the following key steps:

1. Use standard dashboard templates such as the PCM, the program indicator dashboard (PID) and the dashboards in the IRC Data Toolkits, when available.
2. Ensure that graphs, reports and dashboards are available (including to partners) and can be understood, and check for quality, on time for key decision-making events and meetings such as the PCM, SAP Implementation Review, Senior Management Team (SMT) and program learning meetings.
3. Construct appropriate graphs and tables to present and visualize the results in a way that best highlights the key findings and disaggregations as per the Tips for data presentation guidance and PowerBI training, or if using the PID, identify the key results to present and discuss.
4. Produce written reports as agreed with country leadership and program teams, consistent with **Practices 6.1** and **6.2**.

PRACTICE 6.3

Present key monitoring & client feedback findings and priority issues for discussion.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for providing key available MEAL results (via the PID when available) at appropriate meetings that may include (but are not limited to) the below country processes:

1. PCM, where the MEAL team collaborates in the identification and presentation of key issues, reviews progress against targets and baselines of key indicators and identifies any issues of data completeness and correctness as well as key client feedback to address and follow up. They also help to problem solve.
2. Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings, where the MEAL team may be asked to present results at program, sector, or emergency response level as per SMT needs.
3. Strategic Action Plan (SAP) review meeting where the MEAL team may be asked to present progress of SAP scale indicators against baselines and targets.
4. Partnership Project Review Meeting, where the IRC MEAL team can discuss and learn about project performance, results and interpretation with the partners.
5. Other sector, portfolio, project and/or regional data review learning meetings and events.

PRACTICE 6.4

Document learning from monitoring data and feedback mechanisms.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The program team leads the preparation and organization of **Project Implementation Meetings**, **Project Learning Meetings**, and if required, the Partnership Project Review Meetings (PPRM), with the support of the MEAL team. In emergency contexts, the Response Lead organizes the response level learning exercise with support from the program leads, operational leads, and MEAL team. The key steps are:

1. Select learning topics, identify learning questions, and gather the necessary information to inform discussion at the PCM or the PPRM.
2. Analyze if any changes are needed to the ToC resulting from new evidence, research, and/or cost-efficiency data.
3. Document learning resulting from MEAL data and agree on adaptations and practices in the PCM learning tracker. Track follow-up on the progress of adaptation and practices in the same tool.

To support learning, the MEAL team will lead the two following steps:

1. Prepare analysis on the progress and risks to achieving client outcomes based on analysis conducted in **Practice 6.1**.
2. Bring attention to the different feedback received by the relevant members of the country program team to decide how to respond as per the roles and responsibilities and referral pathways highlighted in the Country Client Responsiveness SOP (see **Practice 4.3**).

Standard 7

FINDINGS AND RESULTING ADAPTATIONS ARE CAPTURED, STORED AND SHARED TO MAXIMIZE LEARNING, AND TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE FOR PAST, CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRAMMING DECISIONS.

PRACTICE 7.1

Conduct a review or evaluation as per project commitment to maximize learning.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The activities conducted in this practice will include one, two, or all of the key next steps depending on the project commitment and budget:

1. Conduct a representative endline survey to measure outcome indicators and final results. This should generally be complimented by focus group discussions, and/or client satisfaction surveys. This activity should be led by the MEAL team with strong inputs from the program team and partners, where relevant.
2. Commission a final project evaluation, including drafting the terms of reference, and budget, and initiating a procurement process if required. The program team should decide the objectives of the evaluation; however the MEAL team should strongly support technical aspects such as, the budget and methodology. The relevant Technical Advisor(s) and RMA should also provide support and approve the ToR before procurement begins.
3. Commission a Real Time Evaluation (RTE) for emergency responses based on RTE tool. This activity should be led by the Emergency Response lead, with support from the MEAL team. The ERT MEAL Coordinator should be contacted for additional technical support.
4. Collaborate with the program team and partners, where relevant, on a final project review and learning meeting and draft a final project review and learning report. This activity should be led by the program team with the MEAL team providing relevant MEAL data and analysis (e.g. routine monitoring data, CR feedback information, endline survey, needs assessments, GEDI continuum and/or GEDI marker, response strategy documents, situation reports etc.) to support discussion and learning (see also **Practice 6.4**).

Table of Contents
Introduction
MEAL Standards & Practices
MEAL Principles
MEAL & IRC Initiatives
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Glossary

PRACTICE 7.2

Plan for close-out of the project's monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

Near the end of the project, the MEAL team is responsible for planning the close-out of the monitoring and feedback mechanisms specific to the project. The key steps are:

1. Consult the country and program leadership to determine the timeline for the Project Learning Meeting and present it, along with any issues, at the Project Close Meeting.
2. Review and wrap up the project specific reactive and proactive feedback mechanisms.
3. Support the appraisal of MEAL project staffing and possible transitions to new responsibilities including the termination of contracts as required.
4. Support the review of the project technology assets and its redeployment to other projects.
5. When partnering, this practice should be incorporated into the PEERS partner project closure process.

PRACTICE 7.3

Finalize and safely store all MEAL reports and products for access by current and future programs.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for finalizing and storing all MEAL products. The key steps are:

1. Complete all monitoring, evaluation, client feedback and donor reports and documentation that are required by the grant agreement.
2. Compile and safely store on Box all measurement and client feedback documentation including all data, data collection tools, SOPs, data quality review and audits reports, notes from **data review meetings**, final evaluations, learning reviews, baseline, midline, endline, client feedback surveys, client feedback register, etc. As mentioned in **Practice 4.3** – it is also recommended to use the Measurement Box Standard folder structure for MEAL documents across all projects to support better knowledge management.
3. Ensure that any client data is de-identified, protected and safely stored in line with the appropriate Data Protection and Security Guidelines, and the Data Protection Checklist (review **Practice 4.3**).

PRACTICE 7.4

Share final project indicator results and knowledge with stakeholders.

Guidance

Tools & Templates

Training

The MEAL team is responsible for sharing the final project indicators, results and analysis with all relevant stakeholders. The key steps are:

1. Support the project lead in updating one last time the relevant Dashboard, especially concerning the project outputs, number of clients reached and outcome indicators.
2. Present and provide final analysis and results to the final Project Learning Meeting in the PCM including final endline, evaluation or review and learning results, its analysis and interpretation, proposed final mitigation and recommendations for future projects.
3. Ensure measurement and client feedback data and learning are captured for current and future project design.
4. Ensure partners also have access to the reports and data, confirming they have proper protection in place to protect client confidentiality.

Glossary

A - C

A

Accountability

The practice of being responsible for what we do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens. At the IRC, this refers to the organization's Client Responsive Programming Framework which implies that we collect, analyze and respond to client feedback and support client participation in project design and implementation.

Activity

Actions and processes undertaken by the program to deliver outputs. Examples include developing a communication campaign, providing technical assistance, running a health facility, or strengthening partnerships among the private sector.

Analysis

The aim of data analysis is to help turn raw data into knowledge, which can then be used for decision making and other purposes. Data analysis can take place at any stage of a project or programme cycle. There are many different types of data analysis. These include quantitative, qualitative and participatory analysis.

B

Baseline

Baseline data is collected before or at the outset of a project (or an activity) to establish the pre-project conditions before any intervention can affect it - against which future changes amongst a target population can be measured. Projects and programs establish a baseline as a comparison and planning base for monitoring changes in the target population.

Box

Is a cloud-based tool for document storage and management, used across all IRC offices to support collaboration. The consistent use of Box for monitoring data increases our efficiency and institutional memory by keeping information secure and accessible. Having Box as a system to store and access project files and data will avoid issues related to transmitting files by email or thumb drives and local storage on hard drives.

C

Client

Is a person for whom the IRC provides, or intends to provide, assistance or services. We use the term "client" instead of beneficiary, because it signals our belief that the people we serve have the right to decide what kind of aid and services they need and want.

Client feedback

Priority needs, preferences, request for information, request for assistance, complaints and compliments provided by clients and other members of the community.

Client feedback mechanism

Formalized process to collect, record, analyze and respond to client feedback.

Client priorities

Clients' perspectives on what their priority needs are and how they would like their lives to improve.

C - D

C

Client preferences	Clients' preferences for the type of services that they would like to receive to address their priority needs.
CommCare	CommCare is a more advanced mobile data collection and case management tool for desktop and Android devices. It includes basic data collection but, more importantly, has the ability to collect data over time - longitudinal data or case management data.
Context analysis	Analysis of local issues and dynamics to inform IRC programming and design.
Core indicator	Indicators that have been chosen by IRC Technical Units to measure the IRC's progress toward achieving the main sub- outcomes and outcomes in the Outcomes and Evidence Framework. They can be accessed through the Indicator Selection Tool (IST).

D

Data	A series of observations, measurements, facts or pieces of information.
Data collection activities	Include the collection of data such as service delivery data, client surveys, facility or organizational assessments, and data extracted from project records. And it may include: larger surveys such as baseline, midline, endline, client based survey based on representative Sampling as well as qualitative data collection through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, observations.
Data collection tool	An instrument that enables information to be documented or refer to the devices/instruments used to collect data, such as a paper questionnaire or mobile data questionnaire. It includes Case Studies, Checklists, Interviews, Observations, and Surveys or Questionnaires are all tools used to collect data.
Data elements	The smallest unit of data that conveys meaningful information. Data elements are often used to calculate an indicator.
Data management system	A series of related processes, tools, and databases that ensure the collection, aggregation, and sharing of data between stakeholders.
Data quality audit	An assessment of the validity, reliability, precision, integrity, and timeliness of data. A data quality audit enables a manager to identify and respond to data quality issues and determine the extent to which existing data can be trusted and used to influence project implementation decisions.
Data review meetings	A regular meeting that should be held throughout the project cycle to review monitoring data and assess project meeting progress, identify trends, and develop plans for course correction.

D - I

D	**Data Toolkit**	A Data Toolkit in IRC is a complete set of resources for a specific intervention to successfully monitor program activities and report against the relevant Core Indicators. It includes materials, templates and guidance to aid in proposal writing and planning, data collection, data analysis and training. The typical Toolkit will include an end-to-end data flow, from data collection to analysis implemented in CommCare and PowerBI, to be deployable by country programs with a low level of external training/support resources.
	Data workflow	Roles and responsibilities for data collection, data security, quality assurance, analysis and use.
	Disaggregation	It is the breaking down information into smaller subpopulations. For instance, breaking data down into grade level within school aged students, country of origin within racial/ethnic categories, or gender among student populations are all ways of disaggregating data. Typical disaggregations include age, gender, disability. See Indicator Selection Tool (IST).
	Donor indicator	An indicator that is frequently defined and requested by a donor. Any donor indicator that is included in a project design is required to be collected and reported on.
E	**Emergency Classification**	A system used by the IRC to rapidly assess emergency situations and inform response decisions. The classification stance (White, Yellow, Orange, and Red) indicate what resources become available relative to the severity of the emergency.
	Endline data	An Endline data, on the other hand, are collected near or at the end of the project/activities to measure the effects and final performance of the interventions, project or program. Endline surveys are based on the same indicators and data collection tools that those of the baseline survey to guarantee comparability of results.
	Evaluation	The process of collecting and analyzing information to assess a project or program's outcomes and the factors that influenced results.
I	**Impact**	A measurable change for the beneficiary population that can be attributed to an intervention or activity. The term impact is used in many different ways, but in the context of measurement it should be reserved for studies specifically designed to show impact with a control group as a comparison. For information the IMPACT Standards in MEAL work, see **this section**.
	Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative information that enables the measurement of a project's progress and achievements.

I - M

I

Indicator matrix
The Indicator Matrix describes the indicators that measure progress towards our outcomes, it determines what data needs to be collected, the disaggregation of individual-level data, its frequency, and the specific data collection methods to be used. When using IRC Core and donor indicators – this information can be downloaded from the IST. Frequency and disaggregation can be adjusted as per project requirement.

Indicator Selection Tool (IST)
The IST is a user-friendly interactive tool that hosts the revised Core Indicator List (CIL). It was designed to make it easier for users to identify and choose among relevant indicators for their interventions and outcomes. The web-based tool guides users through the process of filtering the indicator list and allows them to export a filtered set of indicators that can be included in a project proposal. Once users have logged on once, it will be stored in their cache and available for offline use. The tool is available in English, Spanish, and French.

Input
Resources provided for program implementation. Examples include money, staff, time, facilities, and equipment.

Intervention
It is a package of activities implemented in a fairly standardized way, designed to contribute to one or more outcomes. The IST uses "intervention" as the unit of program design and implementation. These have been defined by each technical unit. Definitions of the interventions can be found here.

K

Kobo
Kobo is a basic, form-based data collection tool for Android mobile devices. Kobo includes an intuitive form builder and ability to create a reusable question library.

L

Logical framework (logframe)
A logframe is a table or matrix that lists program activities, short term outputs, medium term outcomes, and long-term goal. It shows the logic of how the activities will lead to the outputs, which in turn lead to the outcomes, and ultimately the goal. It includes the indicators that will be used to measure progress, the source of data, and assumptions necessary for project success.

M

MEAL budget
It should consider elements such as: staff dedicated to monitoring activities, travel to support monitoring activities and supervision of data collection, equipment necessary to conduct data related activities, consultants, suppliers of monitoring related products, and costs associated to the dissemination of information.

Table of Contents
Introduction
MEAL Standards & Practices
MEAL Principles
MEAL & IRC Initiatives
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
Glossary

M

MEAL plan	A Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) plan is created to guide the collection, management, and use of data, including research requirements when relevant. It guides the monitoring processes throughout the life of the program or funding period. It should act as a central resource for documenting the indicators the program will collect, their source of information, the tools and correct approach for collecting them, timing and frequency, resources needed to carry out all the monitoring activities, and the processes that support the correct flow of data, from collection to use. The M&E plan should be developed by the M&E Coordinator, in collaboration with program coordinators and relevant TAs and RMAs, during project design or at the startup phase..
MEAL practices	A very specific monitoring-related activity that enables a program to meet the associated MEAL standard. MEAL practices are the building blocks of each MEAL standard.
MEAL principles	MEAL Principles: Core values that undergird and inform all MEAL work. The MEAL Principles provide a lens through which all MEAL activities should be viewed and subsequently carried out. MEAL staff can ensure that activities are informed by the principles by asking themselves questions such as, “Am I focusing on client feedback and priorities? How do I know” “Am I ensuring that client data is protected? How?” “Am I using a standardized tool or process for this work?” “Am I integrating my work with program activities? How do I know” “Am I taking advantage of the available learning resources to improve my skills and succeed in my work?” “Does this work promote gender equality, diversity, and inclusion? How do I know?”
MEAL standard	Monitoring best practices that all IRC programs are expected to meet.
Monitoring	The process of regularly and systematically collecting and analyzing information about a project to inform management decision-making. Project monitoring data may be used to adjust project implementation, enable internal and external reporting, inform project design and advocacy, and promote accountability to beneficiaries.
Monitoring work plan	The Monitoring work plan is a calendar that identifies all monitoring-related events and the person responsible for work plan conducting each event. The monitoring work plan is a management tool used on an ongoing basis throughout the project lifecycle to ensure that project monitoring activities are conducted and/or that changes to planned monitoring activities are documented.

N - P

N	**Needs assessment**	Needs assessment is the identification of priority needs identified through a systematic assessment of the context, risks to life with dignity and the capacity of the affected people and relevant authorities to respond (Sphere Core Standard 3). The needs assessment is the opportunity to ask crisis-affected persons what their priority needs are before providing assistance that they don't actually want or have already received from another NGO (IRC Emergencies & Humanitarian Actions Unit).
O	**Outcome (sub-outcome)**	A specific change to achieve improvements in people's education, health, economic wellbeing, safety, or power. These are the short-term and medium-term effects of a program's outputs, changes that contribute to the program's overall goal or higher-level outcome.
	Output	The products, goods, services and immediate results produced directly by the project that are required to achieve the project's outcomes. Examples include number of students attended, cash distributions delivered, facilities built, people trained. See result chain terminology here.
P	**Partnership**	A partnership is a formal collaboration towards shared objectives between the IRC and another organization.
	Program Indicator Dashboard	The Program Indicator Dashboard (PID) provides a standardized approach to measuring performance within country programs as well as IRC Core Indicators. It is designed to support routine data use for donor reporting, program management (including project cycle meetings (PCM)), strategic action planning (SAP) and compiling annual statistics. It is a data analysis platform that is supported by a standard excel template for data entry and management with visualizations in Power BI.
	Project Close Meeting (PCM)	Is an opportunity to ensure the effective transition and closure of projects. The PCM builds from the final Project Implementation Meeting (PIM), which has a focus on preparing for project close-out and transition.
	Project knowledge	Any learning that has been documented and shared/disseminated during a project life cycle. This may include reports, data analysis reports, situation analyses, briefings, stakeholder analysis, and more.
	Project Cycle Meeting	Project Cycle Meetings are a series of routines across the project lifecycle in which IRC staff and partners make critical decisions about how to best deliver the outcomes we intend for our clients.

P	
Project Design Meeting (PDM)	This is a meeting routine within the PCM that provides an opportunity to design projects that achieve the best outcomes for clients and to plan for proposal development. It should be held as early as possible after the Go/No-go Decision.
Project Implementation Meeting (PIM)	Should be held at agreed regular intervals throughout the implementation phase of the project. They are an opportunity to improve implementation through data-driven decision-making.
Project Learning Meeting (PLM)	Is a flexible routine that can be held at different points in the project cycle. It enables a team to analyze learnings from their project(s) in order maximize client outcomes by making adjustments to project implementation and improvements to future project design.
Project Lifecycle	A series of well-defined phases that every project will go through from beginning to end.
Project Opening Meeting (POM)	The Project Opening Meeting (POM) is an opportunity at the start of a project for the project team, partners (where relevant), and country leadership to jointly identify all programmatic and operational needs of the project. The POM will build on the outputs of the PPM (if this was held).
Project Planning Meeting (PPM)	Is a pre-award routine that should be held for reasonably assured and strategic opportunities. This routine aims to reduce project start-up delays by enabling Country Programs, and partners, where relevant, to advance key finance, procurement, staffing, partnership, and programs actions before the grant is awarded.
Power BI	Power BI is a data analysis and visualization platform. Power BI comes in two forms, Desktop and Online. The desktop version is free to use and allows for data cleaning, analysis, and visualization. The online version can be used to create and share dashboards with colleagues. Using the online version is subject to approval from IT and dependent on resources available to support it.
Proactive feedback channels	Mechanisms through which the IRC actively solicits feedback from clients, for example: a survey; a focus group discussion; an individual interview, etc. This means that we choose the clients and stakeholders to whom we want to ask questions and that we control the questions we are asking and the timing of when the information is collected.
Proposal	A document, typically created at the request of a donor, that will define an intervention, the anticipated outcomes, and the indicators that will be used for measuring those outcomes, among other information. A successful proposal will result the transfer of money to achieve the stated outcomes.

R - T

R	**Reactive feedback channels**	Mechanisms that the IRC provides to its clients and other stakeholders to communicate with us – about what and when at the time and subject they choose. This includes, for example: suggestions boxes, hotlines, email addresses, office walk-in, etc.
	Research evidence	Information that is systematically obtained and analyzed to determine whether, how, and why a given intervention works. Research evidence is generated using rigorous methods that answer the most critical questions for action.
S	**Scale**	For IRC, scale mainly refers to the number of people we reach through our different services and activities. In Strategy 100, our scale ambitions - means reaching more people, but also providing our clients with a more holistic set of services, and longer term support.
	Selection and design of feedback channels	It is used to identify appropriate client feedback channels. It helps IRC projects to establish systems to ensure accountability and responsiveness to clients' needs and preferences. The resource includes worksheets, templates, and project guidance.
	Stakeholder	A person or group affected by or having an interest in the project or program and who may affect or be affected positively or negatively by the implementation and outcome of it.
T	**Target**	A target specifies the desired numeric result (in number or percent terms) within a given timeframe for a specific project. All indicators should have a target in order to provide meaningful information about intentions and performance.
	Theory of Change (ToC)	A Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It pictures the pathways to achieve each outcome. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term outcomes and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (sub-outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the outcome to occur. In the OEF, a theory of change is defined as a type of logic model that defines the building blocks or "pre-conditions" required to bring about an ultimate long-term outcome, objective, or goal.
	(Data) Toolkit	A Data Toolkit in IRC is a complete set of resources for a specific intervention to successfully monitor program activities and report against the relevant Core Indicators. It includes materials, templates and guidance to aid in proposal writing and planning, data collection, data analysis and training. The typical Toolkit will include an end-to-end data flow, from data collection to analysis implemented in CommCare and PowerBI, to be deployable by country programs with a low level of external training/support resources.