Results-Based Management Tip Sheet 3.2
Outcomes, Indicators, Baseline, Targets and Actual Data: What`s the Difference?

Purpose: This tip sheet is a companion to the *Results-Based Management (RBM) for International Assistance Programming at Global Affairs Canada: A How-to Guide*. It provides and overview so that you can see the difference between outcomes, indicators, baseline, targets, actual data (indicator data) and actual results (outcomes).

Outcomes (results):
- Results are the same as outcomes.
- An outcome is a describable or measurable change that is derived from an initiative's outputs or lower level outcomes.
- Outcomes are qualified as immediate, intermediate or ultimate. Outputs contribute to immediate outcomes. Immediate outcomes contribute to intermediate outcomes, and intermediate outcomes contribute to ultimate outcomes. Outcomes are not entirely within the control of a single organization, policy, program or project. Instead they are within the area of the organization's influence.
- Expected outcomes are structured in a specific way. They start with an adjective describing the direction of change, followed by what will change, who will be affected by the change, and where[1] it will happen.

Indicators (performance indicators):
- Are a means of measuring actual outcomes and outputs to gauge performance of a project, program, etc.
- Can be qualitative or quantitative.
- Are composed of three elements: unit of measure, unit of analysis and context.
- Are neutral; they neither indicate direction of change, nor embed a target.
- Need to be disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic status or any other category relevant to the indicator.
- Global Affairs Canada recommends a maximum of two indicators per output and 2-3 per outcome; ideally, at least one indicator should be quantitative and one qualitative.
  - ❖ *Note*: The unit of measure should include the notion of proportionality, i.e., have both a numerator and a denominator, *for example: "#/total" or "%/total".*

Baseline data:
- Provides a specific value for an indicator at the outset of a project, program, etc.
- Should be disaggregated in the same way as its indicator.
- Is collected at one point in time and used as a point of reference.
- Is the basis upon which progress on or toward outcomes is measured or assessed.
- Is the foundation for setting realistic targets.

Targets:
- Specify a particular value, or range of values, for an indicator to be reached by a specific date in the future.
- Are projections or estimates; a target should be disaggregated in the same way as its indicator`.
- As a set, illustrate what the project would like to achieve within a certain period of time in relation to one of its expected outcomes or outputs.
- Add further specificity and provide an end state to outputs and outcomes from the logic model (or result framework).
- Provide tangible and meaningful points of discussion for implementers with stakeholders.
- Belong only in the performance measurement framework: they should not appear in the expected outcome and output statements.
- Are not necessarily a single numerical value; in some cases, they can state a range.

Actual data (indicator data) and actual results (outcomes): There is a distinction between actual data and actual results.
- Actual data is:
  - collected on the indicators identified in the performance measurement framework (PMF) (or equivalent) by the responsible person/organization, from a specific source, at a set frequency using the data collection method, all of which are specified in the PMF (or equivalent).
  - analyzed for all the indicators measuring each outcome and output (and the indicators' corresponding baselines and targets).

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[1] **NOTE:** In the context of a logic model**,** the "where" (or location), must be identified at the ultimate and intermediate outcome level. If the location is different at the immediate outcome level (e.g. specific village within the province or country identified in the ultimate or intermediate outcome) it should be included in the statement. If it is not different or the location is implicit in the "who" it can be left out

- Actual results (outcomes)
  - The analysis of the actual data (indicator data) and other information is used as the basis of the narrative assessment of progress on or toward each of the expected outcomes, and the actual data is used as evidence of this progress.
  - The assessment is also used for learning, evidence-based decision-making, and adjusting programming as required to optimize and improve the achievement of outcomes.

Example: Pulling it all Together[2]- A snapshot using one outcome and indicator from a five-year education project

Actual Data: Collecting data on the indicator as per the schedule in a PMF

Planning Stage Selected Elements/Columns of a Performance Measurement Framework				Reporting Stage (3rd year of a 5-year project)
Expected Outcome	*Indicator[3]*	*Baseline Data*	*End of Project Targets*	*Actual Data*
Intermediate Outcome Level				
Improved proficiency in math by girls and boys in primary school in District Y in country X	*%/total of District Y Grade V children (girls/boys) tested, who score a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test.*	*40% of District Y Grade V girls (out of 1,123 girls) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2010.* *50% of District Y Grade V boys (out of 1,245 of boys) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2010.*	*70% of District Y Grade V girls (out of total number of girls) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2015.* *70% of District Y Grade V boys (out of total number of boys) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2015.*	***50%** of District Y Grade V girls (out of 1,215 girls) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2013* ***60%** of District Y Grade V boys (out of 1,312 boys) tested, scored a minimum 60/100 on a standardized math test in 2013*

*Actual Result (Outcome): Using the analysis of the actual data above and other information as the basis of the narrative assessment of progress on or toward the **expected outcome above**, and using the actual data as evidence of this progress.*

Since the start of the project three years ago, there has been a significant improvement in math proficiency for both girls and boys in primary school in District Y in Country X. Out of **1,215** female Grade V students tested in 2013, **50%** scored a minimum 60/100 in math. This is an increase of **25%** from the baseline of **40%** in 2010. Likewise, out of **1,312** male Grade V students tested in 2013, **60%** scored a minimum 60/100 in math. This is an increase of **20%** from the baseline of **50%.** This means that more Grade V students are passing the standardized math test than was the case at the beginning of the project. This also means that there is a greater possibility that students will transition to lower secondary-school after successfully completing primary school.

Note: This is a five-year project. The improved proficiency in math by the Grade V girls and boys (intermediate outcome) stems from other results in this project's logic model, such as improvement in teachers' gender-sensitive pedagogical skills (immediate outcome) and their better use of the new, improved math textbooks and other teaching learning materials (intermediate outcome). While the girls' improvement is greater than that of their male counterparts (**25%** versus **20%** improvement in the math test pass rate of 60/100), the project will be challenged to ensure the girls catch up with the boys by the end of the project.

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[2] These examples were developed jointly with the Global Affairs Canada Education specialists in 2015.
[3] This is an example of one indicator disaggregated according to boys and girls. There are usually at least two indicators per outcome.