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# FOREWORD

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**Never discourage anyone...who continually makes progress, no matter how slow. - [Plato](#) (427 BC - 347 BC)**

People often feel overwhelmed and confused by monitoring and evaluation (M&E) due to the many ways to undertake it, and also because it is often assumed that only professional M&E experts can undertake such an endeavor.

The ideas in this Guide are not a mandatory M&E system with which all projects must comply. The Guide describes what is considered - and has proven to be - good practice in project M&E, with examples from your own experiences in many different contexts. Everyone can manage monitoring and evaluation; and often, everyday skills such as cooking, managing a bank account, and running a household provide you an opportunity to apply to concepts of monitoring and evaluation.

You will not find, for example, a set of common categories of impact, fixed sets of indicators or a list of indispensable methods. It is up to you as a project manager to develop these as part of your overall project development process so that they adequately reflect your local context. Having options is critical, as each HIV/AIDS project is unique. Nevertheless, good M&E does need to meet a minimum set of requirements and standards. This Guide will discuss these requirements and standards, while indicating where options are possible.

This Guide is about using monitoring and evaluation to improve the impact of your HIV/AIDS community-based interventions. The focus is on a learning approach to M&E that uses achievements and problems for better decision-making and accountability. It requires creating an M&E system that helps primary stakeholders, implementing partners and project staff learn together in order to improve their interventions on a continual basis.

Because the ultimate objective is to ensure the maximum possible benefit for communities, they are the ones best placed to assess project impact. The Guide suggests ideas for implementing this and other forms of participatory M&E.

No document, including this Guide, can hope to provide everything you need to know about M&E. Other supporting measures are needed, including training, technical assistance, incentives and adequate resource allocation. However, we hope that you find this document a useful and powerful tool for improving your work and the lives in the communities you serve.

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