

Outputs, Outcomes, and Impact (INTRAC for Civil Society, Nigel Simister, 2017)

This short resource outlines areas of overlap or debate around core components and terminologies in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and discusses the consequences of this on long-term programme management.

First, common definitions used across multiple M&E tools and approaches are provided including:

- Impact
- Outcomes
- Outputs
- Results
- Activities
- Inputs

The remaining resource is split into 3 sections:

1. **Potential Confusions:** Identifies three common areas that have varying definitions and describes why they are sometimes confused and how they can overlap.
 1. Activities and outputs
 2. Outputs and outcomes
 3. Outcomes and impact
2. **Working with Outcomes:** Provides further detail on how outcomes should be articulated, especially given their importance in M&E.
3. **Different Perspectives:** Provides guidance for complex programmes or situations in which it is difficult to distinguish between outputs and outcomes. It recommends M&E systems such as Outcome Mapping or the Most Significant Change technique, which are designed to support M&E in complex contexts.

The resource acknowledges that resolving variation in concepts and terminology is sometimes a matter of project or programme perspective, and provides an illustrative example of how these kinds of case can be resolved.

The resource also includes three useful visuals, such as a sample 'results chain' diagram to illustrate the progression and relationship from inputs to impact. These are valuable for those aiming to clarify how their M&E will reflect project progression.