



Practitioner Guide

A checklist for Progress Markers

The following tips come from the Accountability in Tanzania programme and relate to developing individual progress markers and sets of progress markers.



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For reviewing a set of Progress Markers:

1. Can you see progression between the levels?

This progression should **not** be by time, as in expect to see = short term, like to see = medium term and love to see = long term.

Rather the issue is that *expect to see* is largely in direct response to programme inputs (if you are doing training you would expect people to be better informed/have relevant skills) – some people prefer the term *start to see*; *love to see* is truly transformational of the attitudes, values, priorities, behaviour and so on; *like to see* is what you hope to see as the project gains traction and starts to take off if the programme has been well designed to address the important changes.

2. Is each marker in the right level?

Make sure you are not being too ambitious, or not ambitious enough, for example:

'CSOs working in partnership rather than opposing each other' is very ambitious to put at 'expect to see' level. Given how small CSOs often are, and usually see themselves as, in competition with each other, to expect them to suddenly start collaborating together at the start of a process may be unrealistic. Only after some years of working alongside might they start to see they have more interests in common than against each other – so depending on exactly what you are trying to achieve, this marker should be at like to see or love to see level.

'Government officials share relevant information' is more 'like to see' than 'love to see' as many of them share some information now, on request. What would be more transformational (and hence 'love to see') would be 'Government officials pro-actively making documents available to citizens and inviting feedback on it'.

3. Don't confuse 'expect to see' with a baseline. What we mean isn't 'expect to see' as in you went to that district/community/ministry tomorrow what would you find? It is 'expect to see as a result of your programme inputs'; some people prefer the term 'start to see', as it helps them avoid this mistake.

4. Are the progress markers only related to the boundary partner in question? You can only expect that boundary partner to be responsible for themselves. So, for example, if your programme is targeting making district officials more responsive to citizens, you can't put in any progress markers about citizens holding district officials to account – those ones would belong under the progress markers for citizens. All you can have for your district officials is what they themselves are doing – eg making information available, inviting relevant people to meetings, consulting citizens on...

5. Have you got the right numbers of each?

3-4 for Expect to see (because fairly easy to achieve – should be able to tick off quite quickly)

3-4 for Love to see (because may not achieve at all, but they are like a compass point to help assess if you are moving in the right direction)

6-8 for Like to see (because this is where your energies are likely to be concentrated and you need to have nuance and detail to help you pick up what is working well and where you might need to change a bit of what you are doing)

6. Are the markers sensitive to diversity? It's not always a relevant question, but if you are working on something like empowering communities to speak out, it is relevant to keep track of who is actually speaking out – women or men, young or old, rich and poor...

Similarly if you are working in two or more contrasting parts of the country (eg pastoralist and agricultural) will the same progress markers be appropriate to each?

For each single Progress Marker:

1. For each Is the wording specific enough? Not ambiguous or open to interpretation?

These progress markers will be translated into an outcome journal which will be used by officers in different parts of the organisation to record and assess the extent of the changes that they are seeing. Hence they need to be quite specific, and not leave too much open to the discretion of an individual, or it will be difficult to track change over time.

Avoid expressions like 'reasonable' or 'appropriate' because what one person sees as reasonable, may not be what another person thinks.

2. Is the marker trying to capture too much?

This point relates to the one above, for example:

'Blockages within the system at Ministry of Education and TAMISEMI level are identified and action is taken to address them at a Ministry level', is really too big and general – there is so much that could be included in this. It would be better to use the policy context mapping process to enable you to be more specific about the kind of change you are looking for.

'Effective livelihoods programme designed and implemented' referring to a line ministry is really too big – it could capture almost a whole MKUKUTA cluster.

3. Small additional point: just make the statement x or y happening. You don't need to say that it is 'increasingly' or 'decreasing' as you might do with conventional indicators, because the markers will be translated into a journal format. This will give you the space to fill in whether the observed behaviour is just starting, is fairly widespread, or pretty comprehensively observed.

This nugget was applied in: AcT Tanzania

Related Practitioner Guide sections:

Progress Markers

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