

Hivos
Policy framework for improved result orientation
and result assessment

Table of Content

Part 1 Introduction and guidelines for use

Part 2 Background

I Context and rationale

- 1.1 Why assess results?
- 1.2 Why is this issue on Hivos' agenda now?

II Hivos' vision on result assessment

- 2.1 What does Hivos mean by result assessment?
- 2.2 Dealing with complexities
- 2.3 Points of departure

III The wider perspective: use of result information

- 3.1 The link with Hivos' processes
- 3.2 Use of result information

Part 3 Procedures for improved result orientation

I Improved result orientation in the partner relationship

- 1.1 Basis: match of vision and objectives
- 1.2 Procedure for result orientation in the relation with individual partners
- 1.3 What's new?

II Implementation

- 2.1 The transition to the new type of agreement
- 2.2 Diversity of partners and realistic expectations
- 2.3 Implications

III Follow-up and support mechanisms

- 3.1 Virtual information
- 3.2 Capacity building
- 3.3 Knowledge sharing and peer activities

Part 4 Programme design and indicators

I Introduction

II Programme design and theory of change

III Selection of indicators

3.1 What is an indicator?

3.2 Types and characteristics of indicators

IV Which indicators to propose to Hivos?

V Some examples

5.1 Output

5.2 Effect or outcome

5.3 Impact

5.4 Examples of indicators for results of lobby or advocacy activities

5.5 Some sector specific examples

Part 5 Annexes and references

- DAC Glossary
- References and websites: guidelines, methods, approaches
- Article: Measurement in Developmental Practice (CDRA)

Part 1 Introduction and guidelines for use

“Not everything that counts can be counted.

And not everything that can be counted, counts.”

(Albert Einstein)

I Introduction

Over the past two years, Hivos has been reviewing its practice of monitoring and evaluation with the intention of broadening its scope to an improved and integrated approach to assessing results at different levels of intervention. The reasons for this review are described in Part 2 of this document.

Thinking on increased result-orientation within Hivos has developed on the basis of our own and our partners experiences over the years and a range of external developments: increasing attention for the concept of 'the learning organisation', international research and debate on realistic and feasible ways of result assessment in the development sector, the experiences of other international organisations in the same field of work, and increasing demands on the public sector as a whole to account for subsidies with 'demonstrable' results.

The nature of development processes and the different needs and interests of different stakeholders make result assessment a complex matter. Therefore, we need to be clear on the points of departure and considerations underlying the choices made.

Hivos' aim to work towards structural poverty alleviation with a strong focus on civil society building and lobby, means we are dealing with objectives of social and political change. Change is not a linear process following a simple cause - effect model. Hivos and its partners are part of, and intervene in, ongoing societal processes that are dynamic and heavily influenced by a range of other actors and factors in the local and international context. Structural change takes place over long periods and impact can often be assessed only after many years. Attribution and aggregation of results of 'development efforts' are internationally acknowledged problems and inherent to the 'aid chain'. Considering this fact and the diversity of its partner organisations and their context, Hivos does not (c)aim to develop a result assessment system that is all-embracing and produces indisputable outcomes. The focus will be on methods and indicators that are meaningful and relevant for partner organisations and that contribute to learning processes of both partner organisations and Hivos itself. This document deals mainly with result-orientation in the relation with partner organisations. Hivos needs to improve the focus on results in its own organisation and activities also. Internal procedures and practices are being reviewed, in order to ensure the consistency and quality of the overall approach.

Partner consultations

In the first half of 2004 Hivos organised five partner consultations on the subject of how to improve the quality of result assessment processes within and between our organisations. The consultations were held in India, South-Africa, Costa Rica, Indonesia and Ecuador and offered Hivos the opportunity to exchange views with and receive recommendations from about 180 of its partners. The meetings were very valuable to Hivos and were in general highly appreciated by the participants.

During the consultations, Hivos presented its vision on the issue and the approach it proposes. The participants made good use of the opportunity to share their vision with Hivos and with each other, and to advise Hivos on the way forward. For more information on the consultations, reports of the meetings are available.

In short, partner organisations expressed a lot of interest in the matter. They were happy to be able to discuss the difficulties they experience with reporting on results directly with Hivos and in general showed a large commitment to improve their practices in this domain. Simultaneously, and understandably, a lot of concerns were expressed. Many partners are afraid that efforts to 'capture' processes of social change in systems and procedures for the sake of result assessment will lead to increasing uniformity and bureaucracy, to a loss of attention for the complexities of reality and less room for flexibility and diversity. Hivos shares these concerns and has the explicit intention to search for a result assessment process that is manageable and meaningful for both partners and Hivos, and that is supportive to the realisation of the goals we all work for.

Another concern that came up was the question if this increased attention for results will mean that Hivos' behaviour as a donor will change? Will it affect the relationship between Hivos and partners? Hivos' answer is that 'results' is not a new issue in the dialogue between Hivos and partners. Hivos is very much aware of the complexities inherent to result assessment and of the differences in capacities of partners in dealing with them. If the relation with partners changes as a result of this process, it should be for the better. There are two parties involved in a relationship, and Hivos invites its partners to take a pro-active stand in this issue: to share their experiences and to give form to processes of learning and accountability that suit their organisation and constituency.

This document is the first follow-up of the partner consultations and will provide background information for all partner organisations on the way Hivos intends to proceed in this matter. Questions raised during the consultations will be answered as clearly as possible, with the reservation that Hivos doesn't have all the answers either. The success of this process depends on the extent to which it will be a joint effort of Hivos and partners to search for realistic and feasible ways of dealing with some of the difficulties.

2 Guidelines for use

With the purpose of enhancing the accessibility of this document for users with different information needs, it is split up in 5 parts that are complementary, but can be read separately:

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Procedures for improved result orientation
4. Programme design and indicators
5. Annexes

1 Introduction

This is the part you are reading now.

2 Background

This part is meant for partner organisations and others interested in the background and rationale of the approach and the new procedures. The purpose of this part is to offer more elaborate information on Hivos' vision on result assessment and the arguments for and logic of the policy choices made. Reading this part should enhance the users' understanding of the approach.

3 Procedures for improved result orientation

This part outlines the procedures for improved result orientation and result assessment, and their implementation. All partner organisations are expected to read this part, as its content forms the basis for (new) contract negotiations and reporting requirements of Hivos.

4 Programme design and indicators

This part offers background information on result-oriented programme design and the selection of indicators. It explains more elaborately what Hivos means and expects from partners when asking for indicators and some examples are given.

5 Annexes

In the Annexes, the reader finds the DAC Glossary as a background document for the terminology used, and references to documents and websites offering guidelines, methods and approaches that might be of use to partner organisations in shaping their own policies and mechanisms for result-orientation and result assessment.

Reading guideline

- Basic reading consists of Part 1 and Part 3.
- Part 2 is recommended reading, for a better understanding of Hivos' approach.
- The need to read parts 4 and 5 depends largely on the user's need for more specific information.