

## The Ying & Yang of M&E

The first step in defining a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is to identify what data is needed to judge the performance of the intervention.

The 'data identification framework' used by Aid-IT is aligned with a 'systems perspective' since it judges the extent and merit of changes fostered by the intervention by assessing each stage in the overall change process. Information about each stage of change fits together like a puzzle to provide a holistic picture of performance. Two broad classes of data underpin this 'puzzle':

- **Performance data:** data indicating the achievement of each stage in the overall theory of change, represented by the left-hand side of Figure 1. This class of data answers the question '*what happened?*'
- **Risk data:** data identifying the prevalence and consequence of risks encountered at each stage in the overall theory of change, represented by the right-hand side of Figure 1. This class of data answers the question '*why did it happen?*' As such, it provides a context for the performance data and hence, drives organisational learning<sup>1</sup>.

Performance data and risk data must be interpreted together to fully appreciate intervention performance<sup>2</sup>. The relationship between performance data and risk data is interpreted on the basis of 'conditional causality', or 'IF→AND→THEN' logic<sup>3</sup>.

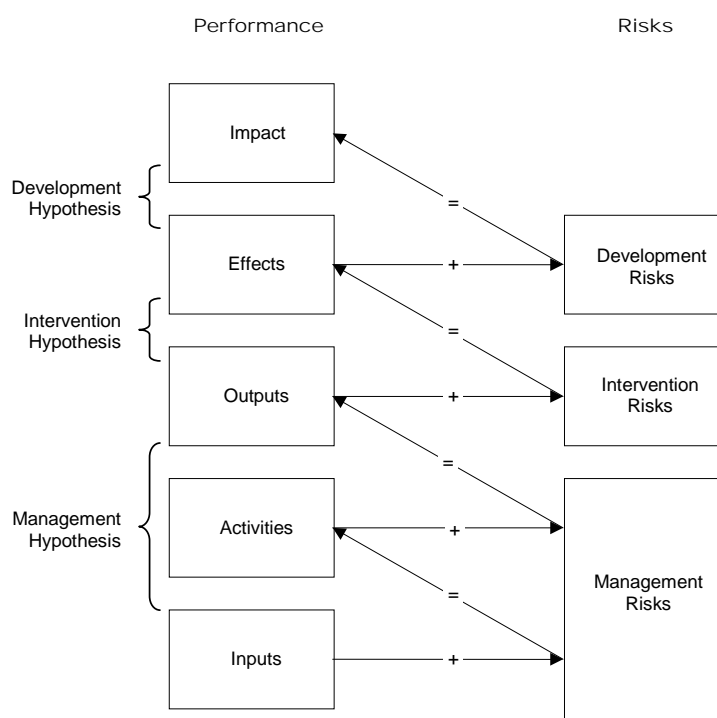


Figure 1: The 'IF→AND→THEN' conditional causality that underpins intervention design logic

As implied in Figure 1, the overall performance of an intervention may be affected by three classes of risk:

<sup>1</sup> "Learning results from being surprised: detecting a mismatch between what was expected to happen and what actually did happen. If one understands why the mismatch occurred (diagnosis) and is able to do things in a way that avoids a mismatch in the future (prescription), one has learned." (Gharajedaghi, J. (1999) *Systems thinking: managing chaos and complexity*, Oxford)

<sup>2</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher C.W.F.Hegel identified the value of articulating the 'thesis' and the 'antithesis' of important issues in pursuit of 'synthesis'—the ultimate resolution.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. 'IF budgeted inputs are invested, AND management risks are contained, THEN the planned outputs should be delivered. IF planned outputs are delivered, AND intervention risks are contained, THEN the anticipated effects should be realised. IF the anticipated effects are realised, AND the development risks are contained, THEN the impact should be fostered'.

- **Management Risks:** may affect the ability of the implementation team to manage the intervention *efficiently*—to deliver the outputs on time and within budget.
- **Intervention Risks:** may affect the extent to which the direct beneficiaries adopt changes in knowledge/attitude/practice (KAP) promoted by the implementation team. These risks erode the *efficacy* of the work of the implementation team.
- **Development Risks:** may affect the extent to which ultimate beneficiaries perceive any significant and lasting improvement in their circumstances (i.e. impact). These risks erode the *effectiveness* of the overall strategy.

Each of the three classes of risk described above may be further analysed in terms of five risk 'domains' (Social, Technical, Economic, Ecological, Political—'STEEP'<sup>4</sup>) that represent the logical possibility of inhibitors of social change:

- **S:** concerned with socio-cultural factors that affect each stage of the change process.
- **T:** refers to the quality or adequacy of resources (material, natural and human) required to realise a desired result.
- **E:** refers to the quantity or sufficiency of resources (material, natural and human) required to realise a desired result.
- **E:** concerned with natural resource externalities that impact on the change process.
- **P:** concerned with political and institutional externalities that impact on the change process.

The Aid-IT data identification framework brings together performance data and risk data (including the categorisation of risks at each stage of change using the STEEP mnemonic) as depicted in Figure 2.

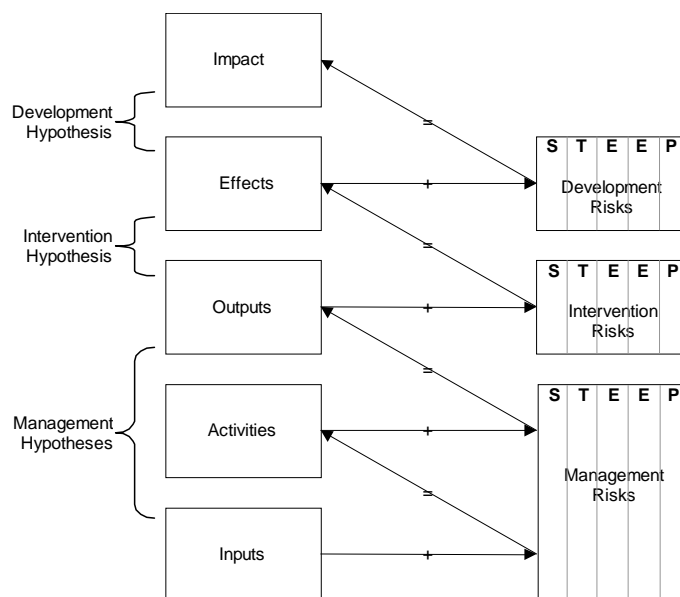


Figure 2: The Aid-IT Data Identification Framework (Source: Crawford 2004<sup>5</sup>)

By gathering performance data and risk data at each stage of the overall change process, it is possible both to *account* for performance achieved ('to prove'), and to *learn* about the drivers of success and the causes of failure ('to improve').

<sup>4</sup> Grant, D. (1999). Foresight and Innovation, The General Electric Company. (available at <http://www.atse.org.au/publications/reports/foresight1.htm>)

<sup>5</sup> Crawford, P. (2004) Aiding Aid: a monitoring and evaluation framework to enhance international aid effectiveness, PhD Thesis, Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology, Sydney (available at: <http://www.aid-it.com.au/Resources/tabid/109/Default.aspx>)