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**A Brief Guide
to Memory Work
Monitoring and Evaluation**

Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa

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1. Introduction

Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) provides donors, partners, community members and policy makers with better means for:

- ! learning from past experience
- ! improving service delivery
- ! planning and allocating resources
- ! demonstrating results as part of accountability to key stakeholders.

The purpose of this document is to assist management and staff of community-based organisations involved in memory work in monitoring and evaluating their programmes.

This document is based on the experience of the Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa, a Pietermaritzburg-based organisation involved in memory work for orphans and vulnerable children since 2000. Several workshops on monitoring and evaluation took place between 2003 and 2005 with the participation of Nokhaya Makiwane and Sibongile Mafu, programme coordinators, Armando Sontange, capacity building manager, James Worthington and Zandile Msweli, administrators, Zandile Dlamini, Clifford Madondo and Xolelwa Mshubeki, student workers. Philippe Denis, the Sinomlando director, and Radikobo Ntsimane, researcher, made use of the material gathered during these workshops to compile the present booklet.

2. Purpose of M & E

2.1 *Self-evaluation of programme results*

Community-based organisations have – or are supposed to have – clearly defined objectives. At the end of each funding period, M & E helps them to establish whether or not they have reached these objectives.

Example of objectives:

- ! to assist communities in looking after the emotional needs of their orphans
- ! to train local communities in memory work
- ! to give emotional support to the children of families to which a home-based programme is providing service.

M & E helps the organisation to verify that they have the capacity to meet their objectives. Sometimes the organisation has to adjust its objectives by either reducing them or modifying them.

M & E helps the organisation to remain focussed. Some organisations have the tendency to accept tasks which go beyond their stated objectives.

M & E also assists the organisation in identifying further needs in the community and to rephrase its objectives accordingly. M & E helps to identify gaps.

2.2 *Building up the organisation*

M & E contributes to the building up of the organisation. Knowing that one has been able to reach one's objectives (or that one is making progress towards it) gives a sense of fulfilment. It is very rewarding.

M & E is a learning experience. It contributes to the capacity building of the organisation.

Lastly M & E contributes to the sustainability of the programme. A programme cannot become sustainable if it is not properly monitored and evaluated.

2.3 *Accountability to the beneficiaries*

It is very frustrating for a community to be promised better services, eg orphans' support or access to grants, and to discover after some time that nothing has changed. Many meetings were held and speeches made but the children's needs are still not addressed.

In some cases it is recommended to involve the beneficiaries in M & E alongside the organisations which service them. This implies discussing together the goals and operational objectives of the organisation and the manner in which they will be monitored and evaluated.

2.4 *Accountability to donors*

Most if not all donors require from their grantees a M & E framework if they want to receive further funding. Given that memory work is a relatively new concept in the development world, it is particularly important to demonstrate that this type of intervention is effective.

If donors raise funds for a project, staff and management have the moral obligation to achieve the agreed-upon objectives. Money has been given to the organisation with the understanding that the tasks spelled out in the funding proposal would be carried out. The donors need to be able to report to their own funding base that the money they have allocated to the programme has been well used.

3. Object of M & E

3.1 *Memory-based interventions*

What is it that people involved in memory work monitor and evaluate?

M & E concerns, among other things, memory-based interventions. Here are some examples of such interventions:

- ! family visits with input on the importance of memory work and recording of family stories¹
- ! children's camps with life skills training and memory work²

¹For an example of a format for family visits fieldwork reports, see Appendix: Sinomlando Centre, Monitoring and Evaluation Tools, Section 8.

²For an example of a format for children's camps reports, see Appendix: Sinomlando Centre, Monitoring and Evaluation Tools, Section 9.

- ! sessions for people living with HIV/AIDS
- ! memory work training sessions for community workers and volunteers³

3.2 *Levels of M & E*

M & E envisages the work of the organisation at two levels:

- ! long-term objectives of the organisation
- ! measurable outcomes over a specific period.

3.3 *Clarifying the long-term objectives of the programme*

When doing M & E, the first task is to clarify the organisation's long-term objectives.

As far as memory work is concerned, two types of long-term objectives can be distinguished.

- a) enhancing resilience in vulnerable children.

The first long-term objective concerns the children themselves. They are the main beneficiaries of the project.⁴ The objective of an organisation committed to memory work is to enhance resilience in vulnerable children. Resilience is the ability some children (and caregivers) have to develop to their full potential in spite of adversity. One of the ways of enhancing resilience in vulnerable children is to do memory work. Children who know their history, however painful it may be, and try to make sense of it with the support of caring adults are more likely to become resilient.

- b) skills transfer to communities

The second long-term objective concerns the communities to which the children belong. The objective of an organisation involved in memory work is to transfer skills to community members so that they can do memory work with vulnerable children.

Over the past few years a variety of memory-centred programmes have been designed to enhance resilience in children at risk in eastern and southern Africa. The challenge is to train as many community workers and volunteers as possible and to ensure that the skills learnt during the training sessions are effectively used in community work.

3.4 *Defining measurable outcomes*

Once the long-term objectives of the organisation are clarified, *indicators* are to be defined in order to measure the programmes' outcomes.

Indicators enable the project managers to track progress, demonstrate results, and take corrective action to improve service delivery.

To be effective indicators need to be supported by data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Poorly defined indicators are not good measures of success. Indicators should be in limited numbers

³Several memory-work training workshops manuals are available in southern and eastern Africa. For an example, see www.hs.unp.ac.za/theology/sinomlando. See also Appendix: Sinomlando Centre, Monitoring and Evaluation Tools, Sections 4-6.

⁴Whether involved in memory work or not, any organisation needs to know its beneficiaries. For an example, see Appendix: Sinomlando Centre, Monitoring & Evaluation Tools, Section 2.

and always supported by accessible data sources.

Likewise it is not advisable to define too many indicators or indicators which cannot be supported by data sources.

Participation of key stakeholders (community leaders, donor agencies, field workers) in defining indicators is important because they are then more likely to understand and use indicators for the management of the project.

Examples of memory work-related indicators⁵:

! to monitor and evaluate resilience in children:

- school results
- presence or absence of behavioural problems at home or at school (aggression, withdrawal, instability)
- evidence that children can express their feelings (eg sadness, anger, fear, happiness)
- creation of memory boxes

! to monitor and evaluate skills transfer:

- number of community workers having attended the training workshops
- number of families having been told about memory work by the trainees who attended the workshops
- number of families having told their story to the children
- number of family stories recorded (in writing, by way of a tape recorder) by the family members with the assistance of the trainees (or as a result of their intervention)⁶
- number of memory boxes created by the children as a result of the trainees' intervention
- number of photographs taken or displayed as a result of the trainees intervention.

! to monitor and evaluate the state of the organisation:

- evaluation of staff performance (eg number of families visited during the past month).
- evaluation of the staff's emotional well-being (especially in emotionally draining situations as those encountered during memory work)
- evaluation of the staff's job satisfaction

4. How to do M & E ?

4.1 *The context of the intervention*

First clarify:

! *who* the beneficiaries of the intervention are (demographics)

! *when* the intervention takes place (time frame)

⁵The examples are drawn from the experience of the Sinomlando Centre. See Appendix: Sinomlando Centre, Monitoring & Evaluation Tools, Section 3.

⁶One way of recording the story of a family, is a booklet containing the edited version of the interview transcript and also, when they are available, scanned photographs of the family members. On these booklets, see Appendix: Sinomlando Centre, Monitoring and Evaluation Tools, Section 10.

! *where* the intervention takes place (geographical boundaries)

4.2 *Data collection techniques*

To measure the impact of an intervention a variety of data collection techniques can be utilised:

! **Direct observation**

A detailed observation form can be used to record what is seen and heard at a programme site. The information may be about ongoing activities, processes, discussions, social interactions, and observable results. Reference can be made to existing records (eg minutes of meetings, reports of activities, correspondence). Particular attention should be paid to memory-related material (eg memory boxes, memory books, memorabilia)

! **Questionnaires**

Structured questionnaires with a limited number of close-ended questions that are administered to a selected number of people (eg the participants of a training session) are also useful. Such questionnaires can be utilised at the end of the training sessions or during subsequent evaluation workshops (eg 1 month, 3 months or 6 months after training workshops).

! **Interviews**

A series of open-ended questions posed to individuals selected for their knowledge and experience in a topic of interest (eg caregivers, children, community workers) may be recommended. Interviews are qualitative, in-depth, and semi-structured. They rely on interview guides that list topics or questions.

! **Focus group discussions**

Focus group discussions are facilitated discussions among 8–12 carefully selected participants with similar backgrounds. Participants might be beneficiaries or programme staff. The facilitator uses a discussion guide. Note-takers record comments and observations.

4.3 *The best time for M & E*

! **before the intervention**

To measure the impact of the intervention on the children (or caregivers) it is critical to gather both at the beginning and at the end of the intervention. This will enable the staff compare the emotional state of the children (or caregivers) before and after the intervention.

Various tools (eg resilience questionnaire⁷, scales of feelings) can be used to measure the degree of resilience prior to the intervention

! **during the intervention**

During the intervention M & E is essentially informal. Community workers and volunteers are encouraged to note their observations in a note book.

⁷For an example of resilience questionnaire, see Sinomlando Centre, Monitoring and Evaluation Tools, Section 7.

! after the intervention

This the most important moment for M & E. At this stage data need to be recorded formally and systematically (see above).

4.4 *How to go about M & E?*

To do M & E properly one needs to follow certain steps:

- ! Clarifying the objectives and methodology of M & E prior to any intervention
- ! Phrasing the questions (questionnaires and interviews)
- ! Data collection (on paper, on computer or by way of tape-recorder)
- ! Data filing and preservation.
- ! Data analysis
- ! Report writing
- ! Dissemination (to donors, beneficiaries, other partners)

5. Who should be involved in M & E ?⁸

M & E involves all the members of the organisation, staff and management alike. It also involves, admittedly in a different way, the organisation's partners and beneficiaries. M & E is a collective task.

Each category has specific responsibilities:

5.1 *Management*

- ! designing of tools
- ! M & E planning
- ! data analysis
- ! report writing

5.2 *Administrative staff*

- ! filing of data
- ! compilation of a database

5.3 *Community workers and volunteers*

⁸For an example of working procedures at the level of the organisation, see Sinomlando Centre, Monitoring & Evaluation Tools, Section 1.

- ! recording comments and observations
- ! asking community members to fill questionnaires
- ! conducting individual or group interviews

5.4 *Beneficiaries*

- ! answering questionnaires
- ! taking part in formal interviews
- ! making informal comments and observations

5.5 *External evaluators (eg consultants, representatives of donor agencies)*

- ! assisting the management, the administrative staff and the community workers in their respective tasks.

6. Obstacles to M & E

M & E is no easy business. Here are some examples of difficulties which can be encountered during the M & E process.

- ! conflict between the short-term and long-term goals of the project. Tension between action and reflection.
- ! lack of qualified staff. Difficulty for community workers in analysing situations, collecting data and compiling reports.
- ! lack of resources (computers, transport, tape recorders, cameras).
- ! absence of a culture of observation and recording in the organisation;
- ! insufficient planning.
- ! community resistance. Some communities are over-researched. People feel exploited: there are asked to give time and energy without any material return. "What will you do with the information we give you?"

APPENDIX

Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Monitoring & Evaluation Tools

1. Sinomlando Centre – Working procedures

The Sinomlando Centres monitors, evaluates and reports as follows:

1. The director and the financial administrator liaise with the donors. The programme coordinators are consulted:
 - :
 - a) before the proposals are submitted
 - b) when problems arise during implementation
 - c) before the reports are submitted.
2. The director and the financial administrator ensure that the programme coordinators are aware of the:
 - a) time frames
 - a) budgets
 - b) ongoing state of expenditures
 - c) reporting requirements
3. The programme coordinators conduct regular review meetings with the staff of the partner organisations
4. Once a month the programme coordinators present a one-page quantitative report during one of the Sinomlando fortnightly meetings. Once approved, the reports are e-mailed to the financial administrator who stores them on a central database.
5. The programme coordinators compile the quarterly and yearly reports of activities. These reports are submitted to the director who revises them if necessary before sending them to the donors.

2. Memory Box Programme – Categories of beneficiaries

The Memory Box Programme targets four categories of beneficiaries:

1. Children exposed to the “full intervention” (family interventions with interviews and booklets + children’s groups)
2. Community workers attending workshops
3. Family members (and children) approached by the trainees
4. Other community organisations (eg Sunday schools, other support groups, schools) approached by the community workers as a result of the training workshops

3. Memory Box Programme – Measurable outcomes

The following outcomes are to be monitored:

1. Capacity building programme: number of trainees and number of hours
2. Number of awareness workshops (with number of trainees, their gender and, if possible, their age)
3. Number of 5-day training workshops (with number of trainees, their gender and, if possible, their age)
4. Number of family visits
5. Number of children attending children's groups (with their gender, their age and, if possible, the school they attend).
6. Number of memory boxes:
 - 6.1 Distributed
 - 6.2 Utilised

4. Memory Box Programme – Format for training workshop report

These guidelines are equally applicable to the five-day and the awareness workshops (half a day).

- ! date
- ! place
- ! names of facilitators
- ! name of host organisation
- ! involvement of host organisation
- ! quality of logistics
- ! numbers of participants
- ! demographic profile of participants (sex, age, profession, status)
- ! contents (with reference to the manual)
- ! highlights with regard to resilience
- ! highlights with regard to skills transfer
- ! highlights with regard to the workshop's evaluation
- ! any other comment

5. Memory Box Programme – Skills assessment questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to test the skills acquired during the training workshop. It is submitted to the participants on the fourth day of the workshop.

The questions are as follows:

- a) If you had to explain the memory box process to a family what would you say?
- b) How do you go about recording a family story?
- c) How do you go about assisting a family in creating a memory box?

6. Memory Box Programme – Format for training workshops evaluation sessions

This evaluation session (“fifth day”) usually takes place one month after the workshop.

Part 1: Learning evaluation

Method General discussion in plenary session

Objective: to assess what the community workers remember from the workshop held one month earlier

Part 2: Debriefing

Method Small groups (maximum five)

Objective: to establish if the community workers experienced emotional difficulties and if so to give them the opportunity to share their difficulties and challenges in doing memory work with the families.

Questions – Did you experience emotional difficulties when doing memory work?
 – How did you deal with your own emotions?
 – Did you encounter any resistance or hesitation on the part of the families? If it was the case how did you handle the situation?

Examples of resistance: monetary expectations; fear of family members or neighbours; sickness.

– Did you experience any difficulties or challenges on the part of your organisation?

Examples of difficulties: catering, tape recorders, transportation, work overload, recognition.

Part 3 Review

Method Plenary sessions. One of the facilitators interviews one by one the community workers; the other one takes note.

Objective to assess the work done by the community workers as a result of the training workshop.

Questions – How many families do you regularly visit?
 – To how many families have you introduced the memory box methodology?
 – How many families do you think are ready to start the process?
 – How many families have already created a memory box?
 – How many families have already started sharing family stories?
 – How many families have already started recording their stories (in writing or with a tape recorder)?

7. Memory Box Programme – Resilience questionnaire

Questions to the child about his/her sick/deceased parents:

1. Do you feel comfortable to speak to your friends about your parent(s)' sickness/death?
2. Do you know what happened to your sick/deceased parent(s)?
3. Do you feel comfortable to express your feelings about your parent(s)' sickness/death?
4. Do you know other children who have a sick/deceased parent like you? If so, are they your friends?
5. Do you think that there will always be somebody to look after you if/when your parent(s) are dead?

Questions to the caregivers about the memory box:

1. State of preservation
2. Feelings associated with the memory box
3. Development of the memory box.
4. Change of attitude/behaviour/school performance since the child has a memory box.

8. Memory Box Programme – Format for family visits fieldwork reports

The fieldwork report includes a separate section for each visit. The following should be used as a checklist:

- ! stage in the process (eg initial visit, interview, closure)
- ! name of host organisation
- ! dates and times of visits
- ! place
- ! name(s) of facilitator(s)
- ! any practical problem
- ! numbers of family members
- ! demographic profile of family members (sex, age, profession, health status)
- ! attitude of family members
- ! assessment of resilience in children and caregivers (see Resilience questionnaire)
- ! assessment of skills transfer
- ! memory box
- ! any other comment

9. Memory Box Programme – Format for children's groups reports

The children's groups include the following:

- ! date
- ! place

- ! names of facilitators
- ! name of host organisation
- ! involvement of host organisation
- ! quality of logistics
- ! numbers of participants
- ! demographic profile of participants (sex, age, school)
- ! contents (with reference to the manual)
- ! highlights with regard to resilience
- ! highlights with regard to skills transfer
- ! any other comment

In addition the facilitators will collect:

- a) a full set of at least three exercises (eg River of Life)
- b) the scales of feelings drawn up by the children on the first and last day.
- c) the responses given by the children to the resilience questionnaire on the first and last day.

10. Memory Box Programme – booklets

When compiling the booklets attention should be paid to the following:

- ! consistency in format
- ! spelling accuracy
- ! quality of photographs
- ! date and place of interview, names of facilitators
- ! correct and complete biographical details