

## Outline for MERL-structures

Some of the core objectives for Mimeta are capacity building and knowledge development. To this end, this short document will discuss Mimeta's MERL structure (Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning) which ensures both of these objectives. Implementing a MERL system helps Mimeta and its partners enhance accountability and demonstrate impact. The MERL system is also a measure for learning and improvement of internal structures, in turn reinforcing Mimeta and its partners' ability to contribute to sustainable development outcomes. The system also facilitates research, part of Mimeta's MERL strategy is conducting joint research with partners on specific topics which will hopefully strengthen the sector for protecting and defending artistic freedom and artistic rights.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring is the systematic collection and analysis of data which is conducted continuously throughout a project as a means to track progress and performance. Establishing quality monitoring systems is a necessity for both the MERL system and any quality assessment of interventions. Monitoring should always be connected to previously established indicators which are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. This is known as the SMART goals approach. Depending on the qualitative or quantitative nature of the indicators, the SMART or SPICED approach should be used.<sup>1</sup>

Data collection is at the heart of monitoring, collecting data through both qualitative and quantitative measures, for example through surveys, interviews, focus group

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<sup>1</sup> More details can be found here under the Civicus toolkit. <https://monitoring-toolkits.civicus.org/toolkit/indicators/>

discussions etc. Further, there should be established feedback mechanisms to incorporate input from beneficiaries, partners and other stakeholders during the implementation of the project or intervention.

Mimeta will engage serious attention and resources to its MERL systems, in particular in establishing digitalised monitoring and reporting systems for its partner. This will allow Mimeta, partners and stakeholders to observe the progression of a project by specific and predetermined measurements. These digital tools for data collection should generate data which responds to the established framework and indicators, like those connected to results.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is an in-depth assessment conducted at specific points during or after project completion. Evaluations are conducted partly to consider whether an intervention has been implemented as planned or whether the expected results have been achieved. An evaluation should go beyond the measurements of the monitoring and for Mimeta's interventions, be based on the OECD/ODA criteria. These points are especially beneficial in measuring an intervention.<sup>2</sup> These points are Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. For example, how has the intervention been cost-effective?

The evaluation should use both qualitative and quantitative monitoring data to measure, assess and assure quality and a comprehensive understanding of project outcomes. As part of the evaluation of a project, impact assessments should be

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.norad.no/evaluating/om-evaluering/>  
<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

conducted halfway through and after the intervention or project.<sup>3</sup> This should evaluate the broader and long-term effects of the projects on the target population and community. In some cases, counterfactual assessments might be necessary, given the often unstable settings of Mimeta's interventions. This entails assessing the region and considering the results if the intervention had not taken place. This is often utilised in instances where projects have not seen desired outcomes as a result of the environment of the project.<sup>4</sup>

Evaluations should include a risk assessment connected to the risk/threat analysis framework established at the start of the intervention. what risk factors materialised? How were they handled? A special emphasis should be placed on identifying risks related to climate/environment, gender equality, corruption and other financial mismanagement.

While evaluations may be conducted using internal resources, there should be an external evaluation conducted at the end of the intervention period contributing to an impartial assessment and added learning opportunities.

## **Reporting**

Reporting involves communicating findings and results to various stakeholders such as donors, beneficiaries, partners and the public. For both Mimeta and its partners, this means reporting on its work connected with the appropriate frameworks.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.devlearnlab.no/resources/learning-materials/>

<sup>4</sup> Those states which have ratified the 2005 convention submit quadrennial periodic reports on the policies and measures they have adopted, and challenges encountered in implementing the convention. These reports can have several functions for civil society in assessing progress made to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions. <https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/policy-and-monitoring/periodic-reports>

Accurate reporting during the project's lifecycle requires establishing frameworks and baselines. Such baselines and frameworks facilitate the measurement of the project's progress through progress reports, which should be conducted yearly and halfway through the project period. The progress reports should go beyond these points but need to include the following points. Firstly, a discussion of the results achieved so far, reporting according to established frameworks and connected indicators. Building on this use of indicators could also be used to show how the project is running according to plan, and if not, discuss predicted or unpredicted obstacles for the project's successful implementation. Secondly, the progress report should assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the resource allocation, connecting spent resources to specific targets. Thirdly, the progress report should include a consideration of the risks/threats to the project, connected to the frameworks established ahead of the project. This discussion should include how risks/threats have been assessed and mitigated and how they will be handled as the project progresses.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, risks related to the cross-cutting issues of Gender Equality, Climate and Environment, Inclusion and Anti-Corruption should always be accounted for, in addition to other financial mismanagement and human rights risks.

The final reporting for the intervention period should include the points of focus from the progress reports but assess the entire period. Secondly, a self-assessment of the project's effect/impact on society. Thirdly, a discussion on what lessons were learned from conducting the project and how it changed the project or future projects. Further, an analysis of the effectiveness of resource allocation for the project, connecting this specifically to results. Lastly, an analysis of how the project achieved

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<sup>5</sup> Norad have created guidelines for progress reporting, <https://www.norad.no/en/front/funding/reporting/guidelines-for-progress-reporting/> Specific instructions for progress reporting such as these can also be seen in the general conditions in Norad's contract with its grant recipients, for example here with Flyktningshjelpen <https://www.flyktningshjelpen.no/globalassets/pdf/transparency/part-ii-general-conditions.pdf>

sustainable results. Given the topics of the final reporting, it should include an audited financial report which substantiates the final report.

Further, reported conclusions must be linked to findings and findings to evidence, which again should be sourced appropriately. The evidence from the specific context and its relevancy must be highlighted. Evaluation design and methods must be discussed and justified, especially in terms of collecting and analysing data. The reports should also include details of the pertinent programme so the reader can read the report in its proper frame of reference.

## **Learning**

Learning is in many ways the goal of the MERL system, incorporating lessons learned into future programs and interventions. This cements a culture of reflection and continuous improvement in Mimeta and its partners' operations. This point encompasses both knowledge management and capacity building, which are at the centre of Mimeta's values and its theory of change.

Mimeta will arrange structures for learning with its partners, both on specific partner projects, but also within Mimeta's programs. Using insights gained from monitoring and evaluation to adjust strategies and approaches both during projects and when considering new interventions. Such measurement of monitoring and reporting should be connected to indicators and results framework. Feedback mechanisms should also permeate the projects and programs, providing new and valuable information which can often improve interventions.

The structures for learning should not be reserved for after the completion of a project or intervention. There should be arranged meetings during the project, in line

with progress reporting and evaluations. This will allow for adjusting methods and approaches if necessary, strengthening the probability of the success of the project.