

How to guide:

How to assess the results of a project:
Implement a monitoring and evaluation system

What is the J4A ‘How to’ series?

The guide is part of a series of products developed by J4A to communicate lessons learned from projects and pilots, to provide stakeholders with guidance on how to adapt and replicate the initiative in their own context.

Who is this ‘How to’ guide for?

Influencers and decision makers in the justice sector (police, prisons, judiciary and civil society).

Reference tools

Accompanying reference tools are available at www.j4a-nigeria.org or by request from info@j4a-nigeria.org

The problem

- Justice Sector Reform Teams (JSRT) need to be able to track progress of reform initiatives, as well as identify and address challenges arising during implementation.
- They particularly need to understand whether or not the intended changes and reforms have been achieved; and need to assess whether or not the time and resources spent were worthwhile.
- It is also important to gather evidence (feedback, data, information etc.) to confirm tangible improvements and that help to ensure the reform is sustained in the long term.
- Most projects face challenges during implementation, so it's important to learn lessons and use this learning to inform how future initiatives are planned and implemented.

Background

JSRTs are packed with highly committed individuals all of whom are seeking to improve the delivery of justice. Identifying issues to be addressed through reform activity is often fairly straightforward and after research and consultation has been carried out the JSRT are well qualified to come up with suitable solutions. However, this is only the first step. The most difficult parts of the process are ensuring that the necessary **actions** are taken to enable the reforms; illustrating what has been achieved as a result (**the objectives**) and demonstrating that achieving those objectives has made the desired difference to justice delivery (**the outcomes**). It is also important to assess the likely sustainability of the initiative and consider whether any changes it brings about will be continued and embedded in the justice sector and have a longer term **impact**.

What you can do

- **Introduce monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** to ensure that progress is monitored during implementation and the overall project approach and end results are evaluated to assess how successful it was.
- Use information and evidence gathered through monitoring and evaluation to **identify lessons** that can help improve future reform efforts.
- Have concrete **evidence of achievements** that can be used to publicise the JSRT's work.

A typical monitoring and evaluation framework

Monitoring

1. Clearly define (in an action plan) what **actions** are needed to move from the current situation to the desired end result, as well as what specific results individual project activities and the overall project are expected to achieve. Set timeframes and budgets for each activity and the overall project.
2. Nominate an individual who has **responsibility** for monitoring the progress of the project and ensuring adherence to the plan (activities/timeframe/budget).
3. Specify that the nominated individual must commit **time** to keeping track of project progress including ensuring that agreed activities are taken forward on time, within agreed budget, and that persons responsible for specific activities report back once completed and keep informed of any problems that arise which prevent or delay activities being completed.
4. Agree how regular **reporting** on project progress will be carried out. This is most likely to include a progress report (ideally including a written report) at the monthly JSRT meeting. It is important that the JSRT sets aside time in its meetings to discuss any issues arising and agrees how to respond to them.
5. All written progress reports should be kept as **a record** by the JSRT Secretariat, in addition to the discussion about the project progress being recorded as part of the meeting minute.
6. Ensure there is a **final written report** once the project is completed, confirming that all actions have been completed, when the project was completed and the overall expenditure on the project. This final report will also include information from 'evaluation' to confirm that the desired results (objectives) were achieved and the lessons learned.

Evaluation

7. At the beginning of the project, set out the objectives of the project (what the **immediate results** should be), what the desired outcome should be (the **difference** that will be made to justice delivery) and (if appropriate) what the expected impact will be on the wider justice sector.
8. Identify the **specific information** that will be used to evaluate the outcome of the project. This usually requires some research and consultation to fully understand the current status of the problem and identify what realistically you hope to achieve. It should include having an understanding of what the starting point is (the '**baseline**'). For example, if the reform is to speed up the time it takes for legal advice to be prepared by the Ministry of Justice then you need to understand the length of time it takes at the start of the project, and then measure the time again at the end.
9. Identify **specific evaluation activities** that will enable you to assess whether or not the project has been successful and measure the extent of the change (the outcome). Include when such activities must be carried out (usually at the start to set a baseline, and at the end to measure whether there is any change) and by whom (JSRT members, someone independent etc.) Examples of such activities include data gathering exercises (numbers of cases; length of time to complete an action, etc.); surveys, interviews and focus groups to gather information on experiences and perceptions (e.g. experiences of user of police stations or courts).
10. Don't forget to record what **lessons** have been learned during the project and also consider whether or not the change is likely to be **sustained** in the long term (e.g. have sufficient resources been allocated to sustain it? Is an instruction such as a practice direction or a new legal instrument needed to sustain it?).
11. Specify how the results will be **shared** with key justice sector providers and also how the results will be **publicised** and used to **promote** the role of the JSRT and its ability to influence and drive sector wide reforms.

Monitoring and evaluation case study

Awareness raising on the responsibility of citizens to appear as court witnesses.

Setting the scene

1. **The JSRT** has identified the non-attendance of witnesses as a significant cause of delays to justice delivery. The team has decided to implement a project to raise awareness amongst the public of their responsibility to attend court as a witness when called.
2. The team nominates the Chief Registrar to research the issue. The research includes collection of information on the number of cases adjourned through non-attendance of witnesses in five pilot courts in one calendar month (baseline data). The research also reveals that a major reason for non-attendance is lack of understanding of the system and what will happen when they are at court.
3. The Chief Registrar is nominated to lead the project for the JSRT and a project plan is drawn up.
 - The objective is to make citizens more aware of their responsibility to attend court.
 - The desired outcome is that more witnesses attend court when called.
 - The desired impact is to contribute to quicker and more effective justice delivery.
4. The project has one activity area – transmission of radio programmes that explain the role of witnesses, their importance to the judicial process and what witnesses should expect to happen when they go to court. The plan has sub-activities that each has a budget and a deadline.

Monitoring

The Chief Registrar monitors the start, continuation and end of each sub-activity (engagement with radio stations; agreement of format for the broadcasts; identification of speakers; agreement on timings; etc.).

The Chief Registrar reports progress each month to the JSRT, including whether on track in terms of time and budget. The Chief Registrar also reports on issues that have arisen with delivery.

One issue that arises is the difficulties in getting key potential influencers to agree to appear on the radio shows. The team discusses possible solutions and Chief Registrar agrees to take those ideas forward.

Six radio programmes are duly broadcast over a period of three months (including phone-ins and with guest speakers) and the project is concluded.

Evaluation

The Chief Registrar oversees a range of ‘evaluation’ activities, including:

- A one-month exercise in the same five pilot courts that captures up to date information on the number of cases adjourned because of non-attendance of witnesses (and compares it to the baseline).
- Interviews with Judges, Magistrates, Ministry of Justice and Police Officers on whether they have noticed any changes in the number of witnesses appearing and if they are showing any changed understanding of their role when they are at court.
- Surveys of witnesses leaving courts to ask them if they heard the radio programmes and whether that influenced their decision to attend court.
- The Chief Registrar prepares a final report summarising the project, including duration and total expenditure. The report mentions issues that arose during implementation and how they were resolved.
- The report displays the baseline information alongside the post-project attendance results, highlighting any change. A summary of the key messages from the interviews and survey of witnesses is included, noting any recurring comments or issues.
- The report draws conclusions on the ‘success’ of the project and makes suggestions as to whether the radio programmes were the right thing to do and how well they were done. The report also suggests what needs to be done to maintain any improvement in levels of witness attendance and mentions any lessons learned for how the project could be implemented differently if done again.
- The JSRT presents a summary at a stakeholder meeting to encourage follow on by key stakeholders.

Lessons learned

1. Adherence to an action/project plan, i.e. project activities/actions take place on time, within budget and in the manner they were intended, helps achieve the intended result (objectives).
2. People responsible for specific activities and actions need to play their part effectively.
3. Co-ordination and effective communication between stakeholders is essential.
4. Blockages or issues identified must be resolved quickly so as not to divert from achieving the desired results (objectives).
5. Results and lessons learned during implementation need to be documented (e.g. in reports) and shared with others as required (e.g. to encourage replication elsewhere).
6. Follow up actions must be taken quickly and within budget.



Contact

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+234 (0) 709 812 1548-9
info@j4a-nigeria.org
www.j4a-nigeria.org

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