Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

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Mike Williams

International Development Consultant

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List of Acronyms

CB: Capacity-Building

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

DAC: Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MTE: Mid Term Evaluation

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSA: Organisational Self-Assessment

PCM: Project Cycle Management

RBM: Results Based Management

RF: Results Framework

SIP: Student Immersion Programme

SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound

ToC: Theory of Change

ToR: Terms of Reference

1. Context, Purpose and Scope of this Policy

This monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policy paper outlines the parameters and approach of Aidlink's programme monitoring and evaluation activities as key components of the broader organisational Project Cycle Management (PCM) system.[1] The policy covers all programming interventions, including individual development projects and programmes[2] implemented by partner agencies at field level; Aidlink's Student Immersion Programme; its specific capacity-building (CB) approach with partners; and its overall programme of work at global level. As Aidlink takes a rights based approach to its work, the M&E approach covers both rights / advocacy work and service provision initiatives.

The policy is guided by and implemented in coherence with the following key organisational documents and policies:

- The Aidlink Strategic Plan (2013-2015) - as the ultimate guiding document for all organisational interventions;
- The organisational Theory of Change (as defined in the Strategic Plan);
- Aidlink's Partnership Approach to Development (2012);
- Aidlink's Partner Capacity-Building Approach and Plan (2014).

Aidlink has developed a **results based management (RBM) system** to monitor and assess the performance of its programmes. The monitoring and evaluation processes are an integral part of the RBM system, and are the key mechanisms through which the tracking, assessment and analysis of results is recorded.

2. Definitions of Monitoring and Evaluation

For the purpose of this policy, monitoring is defined as the *continuous and systematic assessment of the implementation and performance of a project or programme over the course of its implementation cycle*. The process involves ongoing collection and review of information to measure progress against programme plans and objectives. The monitoring process usually includes a number of specific monitoring interventions at prescribed intervals (e.g. six-monthly field monitoring visits or quarterly monitoring reports).

Similarly, an evaluation is defined as *a rigorous and in-depth and assessment of the progress of all aspects of a project or programme against its initial plan and objectives at a key point during its life cycle*. Evaluations are typically undertaken at or near the mid-point of the project (a mid-term evaluation) and at the end of the project cycle (a final evaluation), and may be undertaken as internal or external exercises.

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[1] The PCM system includes stages of project design / development, approval, funding, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation at the end of the cycle is intended to inform the design and development of a new phase of programming.

[2] For the purpose of this policy, a programme is defined as a coherent and integrated set of individual projects that may be implemented by one or more agencies in order to achieve significant and sustainable benefits for a defined target group, community or population.

3.   Purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation

The purpose of monitoring and evaluation activities within the organisation is two-fold:

- To ensure that Aidlink is fully **accountable** for the delivery of all of its programme and project activities;
- To ensure that Aidlink and its partners **learn lessons** from the implementation of projects or programmes, and utilise that learning in seeking to improve or enhance the implementation of programmes on an ongoing basis.

3.1   Accountability

Aidlink sees its accountability as having four dimensions:

a) **Primary ('downward') accountability** is to the intended beneficiaries of Aidlink projects i.e. to the poor marginalised and / or vulnerable people in the developing countries where Aidlink works. Downward accountability also includes transparency and openness in dealing with Aidlink's partner agencies that directly implement the projects for these beneficiaries.

b) **Internal accountability**: Within the organisation itself, the management and board of Aidlink need to assure themselves that the organisation is delivering to the best of its ability on its planned programming objectives and activities, in line with the organisational strategic plan.

c) **Donor accountability**: Aidlink is obliged to meet the commitments it makes to its donors and supporters. This includes the provision of adequate and timely information in relation to the use of funds raised from the general public.[3] It also includes delivery on specific commitments made to institutional donors that fund particular programmes or aspects of Aidlink's work.

d) **Accountability to other stakeholders** to which Aidlink is accountable may include government agencies in Ireland and / or in programme countries; other local agencies or institutions that are not directly involved in the projects;[4] and other (non-donor, non-partner) agencies that Aidlink may be collaborating with in the implementation of programmes.[5]

All Aidlink programmes and their related M&E processes are designed to address all of these dimensions of accountability.

3.2   Learning

Aidlink's approach to monitoring and evaluation includes a specific focus on learning, and applying the lessons from its experience in relation to the following areas:

- The **design** of the project or programme, with particular reference to its relevance, appropriateness and cost-effectiveness;
- The **delivery** of the programme or project, with specific reference to activities, outputs, outcomes, (both expected and actual) and objectives;
- The local environment and **context** in which projects or programmes are operating;
- The programming **approaches** or methodologies being used (e.g. advocacy, service provision, research) to deliver programmes;

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[3] Including (but not exclusive to) its obligations under the Irish Charities Act (2009).

[4] For example, some other some local communities that may not be directly targeted by projects, but may be affected by them.

[5] For example, other International NGOs or UN agencies or research institutions that collaborate with Aidlink in the delivery of programmes, or have a specific interest in these programmes.

- The **capacity** of Aidlink and its partners to deliver the programmes, and
- The **relationships** with various parties involved - including both partners and external stakeholders.

A key aspect of the learning process is that lessons are **formally and systematically documented** during monitoring visits and evaluation processes, and that this documentation is utilised to adapt or modify existing approaches and programmes, and in the development of new programmes or approaches.

3.3 Balancing Accountability and Learning

Within the development sector, monitoring or evaluation processes can sometimes place a heavy emphasis on either the accountability or the learning dimension, while downgrading or even excluding the other dimension entirely. As outlined above, both accountability and learning are integral dimensions of Aidlink's approach to monitoring and evaluation. Aidlink is committed to ensuring that, in undertaking monitoring exercises and designing evaluation processes, a balanced approach is applied, so that both of these dimensions are fully considered and explored, and that reports fully reflect both the accountability and learning objectives.

4. Adherence to International Standards and Best Practice

Aidlink's overall approach to monitoring and evaluation is guided by a number of key international standards and best practice approaches:

4.1 DAC Criteria

In developing Terms of Reference plans for evaluations and also for monitoring visits, Aidlink makes specific reference to the '*DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance*'[6] as widely used within the development sector:

- **Relevance**: The extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor;
- **Effectiveness**: A measure of the extent to which and aid / development activity attains its objectives;
- **Efficiency**: A measurement of the programme outputs in relation to the inputs (including the cost-effectiveness, timing and efficiency of process);
- **Impact**: The positive and negative changes produced by the intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended;
- **Sustainability**: Establishing whether the benefits of the activity are likely to continue after funding has been withdrawn or the programme has been completed (including both financial and environmental sustainability).

Evaluation questions and processes are specifically formulated with a view to assessing progress against each of these criteria, and evaluation reports are required to address each of these criteria.

4.1.1 Contribution and Attribution

In assessing progress against the DAC criteria, the degree to which progress (or lack of it) can be specifically attributed to the interventions of Aidlink and its partners may not be always clear, particularly where the interventions of a range of actors may be influencing the change processes in a particular area, or for a particular target group. Notwithstanding the complexities involved, **Aidlink evaluation processes attempt to look at both contribution and attribution aspects** of progress, as follows:

- The degree to which some or all of the changes (good or bad) may be **directly attributed** to Aidlink's interventions, and / or
- The degree to which Aidlink's actions **may have contributed** towards some or all of the changes, even if not wholly responsible for them.

4.2 The International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness

Given that effectiveness is one of the DAC Criteria that Aidlink utilises to assess its work, the ongoing evolution of the international development effectiveness agenda[7] is of particular relevance to all of Aidlink's work, and to its monitoring and evaluation approach in particular. The Istanbul Principles[8] for CSO Development Effectiveness form a key reference point for the evaluation of its development work:

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[6] As outlined in the Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Paris, 1991.

[7] As initially articulated under the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and further elaborated at subsequent international High Level Fora resulting in the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2011).

[8] As initially agreed at the First Global Assembly of the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness in Istanbul 2009 and subsequently endorsed at the Second Global assembly in Seam Reap in 2011

1. Respect and promote human rights and justice
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights
3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
4. Promote environmental sustainability
5. Practice transparency and accountability
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
8. Commit to realising positive sustainable change.

Many of these principles are already encapsulated in key Aidlink documents such as the *Strategic Plan*, the *Partnership Approach to Development*, and the *Organisational Approach to Partner Capacity-Building.* The principles are specifically referred to in developing Terms of Reference (ToRs) and plans for evaluations, and in evaluation reports. The *International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness[9]*, which incorporates the Istanbul Principles and provides guidance on how to achieve them, also provides a broader reference point for Aidlink's evaluation work.

4.3 Evaluation Tools and Methodologies

In addition to utilising the DAC criteria and being formally guided by the CSO Development Effectiveness Framework, the organisation also keeps abreast of the latest international developments in relation to monitoring and evaluation methodologies and tools. Aidlink does not prescribe a particular methodology to be used for all of its evaluations. Rather (and usually in consultation with the consultant or agency conducting the evaluation on its behalf), it seeks to **identify a process and methodology that is appropriate to each individual evaluation situation and context**.

4.3.1 Rainbow Framework Planning Tool

Given the wide array of evaluation methodologies and processes that currently exist, Aidlink will seek to use the recently developed **Rainbow Framework Planning Tool** produced by BetterEvaluation[10] as a guide in designing and managing its evaluation processes according to the following stages outlined under that tool:

1. Managing the evaluation
2. Defining what is to be evaluated
3. Framing the boundaries of an evaluation
4. Describing activities, outcomes, impacts and context
5. Understanding causes of outcomes and impact
6. Synthesising data from one or more evaluations
7. Reporting and supporting the use of findings.

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[9] Known as the 'Siam Reap Consensus' and agreed at the Second Global Assembly of the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness in Siam Reap, Cambodia (2011).

[10] BetterEvaluation (betterevaluation.org) is an international collaboration by a number of leading development agencies and donors to improve evaluation theory and practice by sharing and discussing evaluations and approaches. The Rainbow Framework Planning Tool was revised and updated in February 2014.

5.   Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Aidlink's organisational Theory of Change and its Results Based Management (RBM) system provide the overarching framework for its monitoring and evaluation processes. The monitoring and evaluation system operates at three levels: partners, programmes and organisational.

5.1   Theory of Change

Aidlink's Draft Theory of Change (ToC)[11] provides the initial reference point in seeking to determine the degree to which its programmes and projects are delivering on the expectations of its intended beneficiaries, of the organisation itself, and of its donors and partners. The ToC is due to be fully re-assessed in 2014, potentially resulting in some changes to aspects of this M&E policy.

The current draft of the Theory of Change expresses the ultimate aim of ensuring that '*communities are fully participating in self and community development, and exercising their right to demand access to services*'. Individual projects and programmes are based on more specific change theories, as expressed through their specific programming activities, outputs, outcomes and objectives (see Section 5.2, below). Under the existing ToC, there is a specific focus on ultimately **achieving active participation in self and wider development on both an individual and collective basis, and with particular reference to a rights agenda**. All evaluation processes seek to establish the degree to which these aims are being achieved within the relevant project or programme.

5.2   Results Based Management System

The organisational results based management system provides the basis for all monitoring and evaluation activities. Within the RBM system, progress is measured at three levels: in relation to project outputs, outcomes and objectives.

Project Outputs are defined as the direct result of the basic project activities that are to be implemented. While some **risks and assumptions** have to be allowed for in the project design, and are identified in advance, the successful delivery of the stated activities should lead to the achievement of the outputs (e.g. the construction of a water borehole or well will result in the output of the well being in place).

Project Outcomes are defined as the further results that will accrue (particularly for the target community) as a result of the basic outputs being achieved, and subject to further assumptions and risks being allowed for at outcome level e.g. the availability of the borehole will result in a good clean water supply being available to the target community (subject to certain other assumptions).

The **Project Objectives,** as defined in advance, will be achieved if the combination of project outcomes is achieved, and subject to further assumptions and risks at this level (e.g. the availability of a good clean water supply should result in a reduction of waterborne diseases in the target population). The **impact** of the project, as defined under the project objectives will be articulated clearly in terms of **clear and sustainable benefits for target beneficiary groups**.

A set of **indicators** is established for the measurement of progress at output, outcome and objective levels. Indicators may be both quantitative and qualitative in nature, and a mixture of both types is often used. In order to make meaningful assessments of progress, and to facilitate rigorous and accurate evaluation processes, all indicators are required to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound).

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[11] Aidlink's Summary Theory of Change, Aidlink Strategic Plan, Page 8.

The establishment of formal **baselines** at the beginning of every project is mandatory. Baselines are developed in relation to each area of activity so that progress can be measured accurately later on. Key targets are set at output and outcome levels, with specific reference to the baselines, and to be achieved at specific time intervals within the project cycle. Timeframes for the achievement of targets may vary, so that all indicators do not necessarily have an annual target for each year. However, care is required in setting targets overall, in order to ensure that sufficient data is being assimilated for the production of meaningful annual reports, and for undertaking rigorous interim and final evaluations.

The **means of verification** for each indicator and target is also expected to be clearly elaborated at the design stage, so that progress can be accurately measured during M&E processes.

Specific consideration is given at the design stage to the development of indicators and targets in relation to **rights based or advocacy work**, which may, in some cases, require more qualitative indicators (e.g. in relation to community awareness levels or attitudinal change) than might be the case for direct service provision activities (e.g. water supply or healthcare services).

5.3   Three-Level Monitoring and Evaluation System

The Aidlink Monitoring and Evaluation System operates on three levels:

Level 1: Monitoring and Evaluation of projects and programmes by **Partner Organisations**.
Level 2: Monitoring and Evaluation of the **Aidlink Overseas Programme**, including:
  ➢ The development programmes (as comprised of individual partner projects);
  ➢ The Partner Capacity-Building Programme; and
  ➢ The Student Immersion Programme.
Level 3: Monitoring and Evaluation at **Organisational Level** - including the oversight role of the Aidlink Board.

The policies and processes relating to M&E at each of these levels are outlined in Sections 6 - 8, below. The three-level monitoring and evaluation system is illustrated in Figure 1 (Appendix 1).

6.   Monitoring and Evaluation by Partners (Level 1)

As a partnership based agency, all of Aidlink's field programmes are implemented by local partner agencies in Africa. Hence, the partner organisations have the initial responsibility for monitoring and evaluation at field level as part of their own project cycle management systems. Partner programmes generally operate to a **four-year cycle**, but may have shorter or longer cycles in some cases.

6.1   Targeting

The identification of the target beneficiary group for each project is a basic requirement at the initial stage of project design, and is an essential step in facilitating the development of a results framework. The target population is clearly defined both in terms of numbers and categories of people. A clear distinction is made also between the intended **direct beneficiaries** of projects, and other **indirect beneficiaries**. Specific baselines and targets for each category of beneficiaries are included in the results framework, with a particular emphasis on particularly marginalised or vulnerable groups that may have been identified in advance. The process for identification and targeting of beneficiaries is guided by Aidlink's Targeting Policy (2014) and the targeting policy of the implementing partner.

6.2   Baselines

All partners are required to develop a results framework for each project at the beginning of the project cycle. Ideally, the baseline study should be conducted before the project begins, but in practice it may not be always feasible to do so. **A maximum period of three months from the project start date is allowed at the beginning of a project for the completion of the baseline study and establishment of all target outputs and outcomes for the full project cycle**. Partners are encouraged to utilise external expertise in the establishment of targets and baselines where necessary, with financial support for this being included in the project budget. Local communities and other local development agencies are expected to be consulted and / or directly engaged in the identification of priority beneficiaries.

6.3   Monitoring by Partners

Partner organisations are expected to visit each project area on a quarterly basis at a minimum and to provide monitoring reports (to a standard format) to Aidlink on a quarterly basis. The project results framework is utilised as a guide for checking progress against each activity area (but recognising that there are unlikely to be specific quarterly targets in many areas of the RF). Partners are expected to include beneficiaries in the project monitoring activities and discussions. Apart from reporting on activities, outputs and outcomes (where possible), partner monitoring reports will also include reference to specific accountability and learning issues, as referred to in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 above. Additional funding is released by Aidlink on receipt of satisfactory quarterly reports from partners.

6.4   Role of Partners in Evaluation

Mid-term and final evaluations will normally be conducted in the context of Aidlink's overall programme of work i.e. evaluation of several partner projects may well be taking place as one part of one exercise. Hence, details of this process are outlined in Section 7, below, but partners will have a key role to play in agreeing the Terms of Reference for the evaluation with Aidlink, facilitating the evaluation itself, and ensuring full and objective participation of beneficiaries in the evaluation process.

6.5   Partner Capacity-Building for M&E

Under the Partner Capacity Building Approach, Aidlink provides specific support to partners in relation to the development of their overall Project Cycle Management (PCM) capacity, including their ability to monitor and evaluate programming work. As for other aspects of capacity support, the specific PCM support to be provided to a partner is based on organisational needs and priorities, as identified under the Organisational Self-Assessment (OSA) process described in the CB approach document.

7.   Monitoring and Evaluation of Aidlink's Programme (Level 2)

Aidlink's overseas programme has three components:

- The Overseas Development Programme (as comprised of individual projects / programmes implemented by local partners);
- The Partner Capacity Building Programme;
- The Student Immersion Programme.

The M&E approach relating to each of these three components is described in Sections 7.1 to 7.3, below:

7.1   Monitoring & Evaluation of the Overseas Development Programme

Aidlink has developed a composite results framework (RF) for all of its programme work in a similar manner and format as for the individual project results frameworks developed by partners. This framework is used for internal accountability and learning purposes (as described above in Section 3) and specifically for reporting to institutional donors e.g. Irish Aid. Aidlink does not envisage developing separate types of results frameworks for each institutional donor. Rather, **the single organisational RF is adapted or modified to meet the reporting requirements of each institutional donor, as necessary**.

7.1.1 Field Monitoring Visits

Field monitoring visits to each partner are conducted by Aidlink staff on a **six-monthly basis**. These visits include monitoring of both project and capacity-building initiatives. During these visits, the project results framework is utilised to assess progress against each of the activity areas in the project. In addition to monitoring of outputs and outcomes, discussions with partners and reports from monitoring visits (in standard format) include specific reference to the accountability and learning issues referred to in Section 3 above. Six-monthly monitoring visits will usually be conducted by a Programme Officer or the Director.

7.1.2 Final Evaluations

Aidlink commissions a final evaluation of each partner project at the end of the four-year cycle. In order to ensure full objectivity, **final evaluations are always external in nature** i.e. they are undertaken by an external consultant or agency to a specific Terms of Reference as agreed between Aidlink, the partner and the consultant. Evaluations are conducted with specific reference to the DAC criteria (Section 4.1) and the Istanbul Principles for CSO Aid Effectiveness (Section 4.2)   The Rainbow Framework Planning Tool (Section 4.3) is used as a guide in designing and managing the evaluation process and methodology.

Ideally, evaluations are conducted on an *ex-post* basis i.e. after the completion of the full four year implementation period. In practice, interim funding is often not available to allow for the *ex-post* evaluation to take place before a new cycle begins, in which case it may be necessary to conduct an *ex-ante* evaluation, just before the programme cycle is completed, so that the new cycle can be designed and implemented without delay.

Evaluations will address both accountability and learning issues (as detailed in Section 3) with each evaluation recommendation being formally considered by partners and Aidlink under a formal written 'management response' process. The rationale for adoption or non-adoption of each recommendation under the management response is recorded for future reference by Aidlink and its donors. Key lessons are also formally recorded, and are referred to in the design of the next programme cycle.

7.1.3 Mid-Term Evaluations

Interim evaluations generally take place around the mid-point of the four-year cycle. Aidlink aims to conduct mid-term evaluations (MTEs) for **at least 60% of all programmes**. An MTE may be conducted internally by Aidlink and / or partner staff (potentially using staff from another Aidlink partner) or by an external consultant. Recommendations from an MTE are considered in a similar manner to those from a final evaluation, with a written management response, including a clear rationale for the adoption or rejection of recommendations. Lessons learned from an MTE are also formally documented and considered in how to change / adapt the programme as it progresses.

7.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Partner Capacity-Building Programme

Partner Capacity-Building (CB) is a key aspect of Aidlink's overall approach to development work. The *Organisational Approach to Partner Capacity-Building* (2014) describes Aidlink's 'triple approach' to partner CB in detail. The process for monitoring the implementation of partner capacity-building plans is detailed in Section 3.8 of that document, and the process for evaluating CB plans is outlined in Section 3 10, so they will not be outlined in detail here. In summary, partner CB is normally based on a two-year cycle with six-monthly written updates from each partner to Aidlink; six-monthly CB (and programming) field visits by Aidlink staff; and 12-monthly in-field review of CB plans. As for programme work, specific targets are set for CB outputs and outcomes.

- During evaluation of CB work, the measurement of **outputs** relates to additional **capacity** that has been provided or built in various ways;
- Measurement of progress on **outcomes** relates to improvements in **organisational performance** that (should) arise from the additional capacity.
- The **impact** of the CB process is measured in terms of how increased capacity and performance enables the partner organisation to **deliver on its strategic plan** to a higher level that before.

Hence, there is a clear parallel between the measurement of progress on CB work and the measurement of programme progress, and the former is also captured in a results framework format.

7.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Student Immersion Programme

The Student Immersion Programme (SIP) has operated on a bi-annual basis to date, and is about to be expanded in 2014. In future, a **results framework** will be developed for each programme, under which specific targets will be set and progress measured in relation to outputs (in terms of activities completed), outcomes (in terms of changes in knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes of both Irish and African students) and ultimate impact (in terms of positive action taken by students resulting from the experience) can be measured. Hence, the progress of the SIP will be measured in a similar manner to that of the development projects and the partner CB initiatives, in assessing the overall impact of Aidlink's work.

Participating schools in Ireland and facilitating schools in Africa will play a key role in both the design and evaluation of immersion projects, as will the **participating students** from Africa and Ireland. A review of basic activities / outputs and early outcomes will be undertaken annually following each immersion visit. An in-depth evaluation of the SIP will take place on **a four-year cycle**. In addition to assessing the achievement of basic outputs, this evaluation will also review medium-term outcomes and impact of the programme in line with targets set under the results framework.

7.4 Linking with Audit and Financial Management Review Processes

All programme monitoring and evaluation process include basic reviews of expenditure against budgets, with particular emphasis on the rationale for variances in expenditure. The assessment of cost-effectiveness of interventions is a key aspect of the evaluation process, as described under the DAC 'efficiency' criterion (Section 4.1). Specific audits of Aidlink's own programmes and those of partners are conducted as a separate process in line with the Aidlink Financial Management and Audit Policy. Partner financial management capacity is addressed as one of the seven institutional capacities under the Partner Capacity Building Approach.[12] **Audit and financial management reports are utilised in conjunction with programme monitoring and evaluation reports to make**

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[12] See Section 3.2 of the Aidlink Organisational Approach to Partner Capacity-Building.

judgements in relation to the performance of Aidlink itself, and of its partners, from both learning and accountability perspectives.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation at Organisational Level (Level 3)

Building on the monitoring and evaluation work that takes place at partner and programme levels, Aidlink also conducts a number of M&E exercises at organisational level to obtain a macro-level overview of programming progress both on an annual and long-term basis. These processes include the following:

- An annual field review of partner capacity-building and programming work
- An annual internal review of all programming work (including the Student Immersion Programme)
- Long-term studies of all programmes over a ten-year period.

8.1   Annual Field Review of Partner CB and Programme Work

An annual workshop with the five Aidlink partners takes place at field level each year following the individual meetings and project visits with partners. Provision is made for some Aidlink board members (in addition to the Director and POs) to participate in these meetings on occasion (and subject to budgetary constraints) in order to improve their overall understanding of Aidlink's field programming, thus enabling the board to improve its oversight function as the governing body of the organisation. The three-day workshop reviews progress in relation to four areas: programmes, partner CB, RBM and the rights approach.

8.2   Annual Internal Review of Programming Work

The annual partner field workshop is followed by an **annual internal review at head office level by the Aidlink board, director and staff**. The purpose of the review meeting is to consider **progress in relation to all aspects of relationships with partners, both organisational and programmatic**. The review includes the following activities:

- Consideration of how issues arising during the previous year's annual review have been addressed in the interim period;
- A discussion of key issues arising from the annual field workshop with partners, both in relation to programming work and partner capacity-building;
- A systematic review of recommendations from programme evaluations undertaken during the year, and the management responses to these recommendations, from both accountability and learning perspectives;
- A discussion of issues emerging from reviews or formal evaluations (where available) of the Student Immersion Programme (as described in Section 7.3) that have taken place during the year.

The annual programme review process is an important source of information and discussion for the Aidlink board, in enabling it to address key aspects of its oversight function in relation to organisational governance and strategy.

8.3   Long-term (longitudinal) Programme Reviews

In recognition of the long-term nature of the development process, Aidlink is also committed to conducting 10-year reviews of all of its work so that it can make longer-term assessments of its overall effectiveness and impact. Ten-year reviews will be conducted across the entire range of

programming, including the Student Immersion Programme, the Partner Capacity-Building Programme and the field development programmes. As for annual reviews, the long-term reviews will be used to inform organisational strategic planning and review processes.

9. Oversight and Resourcing of Monitoring and Evaluation Work

9.1 Responsibility for M&E

All partner organisations have responsibility for ongoing monitoring and reporting on their own projects and programmes (Level 1 M&E) in line with approved proposals to Aidlink and or other donors. They are also responsible for facilitating and managing the local aspects of evaluation processes in line with the requirements of Aidlink and donors, and for ensuring the full participation of beneficiaries in M&E exercises.

The relevant Aidlink Programme Officer (PO) is responsible for overseeing field monitoring activities and the commissioning and management of evaluations (Level 2 M&E), in consultation with the Director, and the development of reports for donors. An Aidlink PO will take responsibility for organising the annual field-level review workshop with partners, in consultation with the Director.

The Aidlink Director has overall responsibility for ensuring that all monitoring and evaluation initiatives are delivered in line with this policy. The Director is specifically responsible for organising the annual internal review process conducted by the board (under Level 3 M&E), in conjunction with the Chairperson of the Board, who will chair the review workshop.

9.2 Staffing Capacity

Steps are currently being taken to develop Aidlink's own internal capacity in relation to M&E through increased PO staffing and training, and with one PO to have a specific focus on RBM. Further training and development in relation to the RBM system will continue over time.

9.3 Budgeting for M&E

Given the critical importance of M&E activities to overall programme quality, Aidlink will ensure that **adequate provision is made in all programme budgets for monitoring and evaluation activities,** including the cost of monitoring visits by Aidlink staff, and specific budgets for mid-term and final evaluations. A sum in the range of 7% to 10% of the overall budget will be included for this purpose. The percentage of the programme budget to be allocated may vary by project as, for example, an advocacy based project might have a much smaller budget that a service related project (as the latter may often include the provision of goods, equipment or infrastructure) but might well require a similar level of resourcing for M&E activities.

10. Updating and Review of the Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

This Monitoring and Evaluation Policy is operational from April 2014, and will be updated on an ongoing basis as required to incorporate new developments or changes in other policies, strategies or processes within the organisation. A full review of the policy will take place after four years, in April 2018.

Annex 1:   Figure 1 - Aidlink's Three-Level Monitoring & Evaluation System

Level 3: Monitoring and Evaluation at (Macro) Organisational Level
- Annual Field Review with Partners
- Annual Internal Review by Board
- Long-term (10-Year) Programme Reviews

Organisational Level Learning and Accountability (governance / strategy)

Level 2: Monitoring and Evaluation of Aidlink Programmes
- M&E of Overseas Development Programme
- M&E of Partner Capacity-Building Prog.
- M&E of Student Immersion Programme

Programme Level Learning and Accountability

Level 1: Monitoring and Evaluation by Partners (incl. Beneficiaries)
- M&E of Project
- M&E of Project Z
- M&E of Project A
- M&E of Project
- M&E of Project

Project / Partner Level Learning and Accountability

Accountability to:
1. Beneficiaries (primary)
2. Organisation (internal)
3. Donors
4. Others

Learning on:
1. Programme Design
2. Programme Delivery
3. Context
4. Approaches
5. Capacity
6. Relationships