BASELINE STUDY GUIDELINES

What is the purpose of these guidelines?

These Guidelines are to help activity managers and other key stakeholders plan a Baseline Study.

Key issues you need to consider before starting a Baseline Study are discussed, and links provided to more detailed resources. You’ll find a summary checklist at the end of the document.

The need for these Guidelines arose because baseline studies were often not providing key relevant information to stakeholders, tended to be slightly academic, complex, not easily replicated by the counterpart, involved resources that were disproportionate to the broader Activity and did not address important issues such as gender.

These Guidelines are the product of two workshops with Industry and AusAID staff.

Accordingly these Guidelines should now help you avoid common problems such as baseline studies which:

- are overly complex or theoretical;
- are unjustifiably expensive;
- are not readily replicable by local partners;
- duplicate existing data collection by counterparts or other donors;
- fail to focus on the information needs related to assessing activity objectives and impacts;
- do not to provide the basis for subsequently monitoring key risks to successful implementation;
- do not supply data that can be used in subsequent activity management;
- do not deliver the data wanted by local partners;
- do not adequately address different gender perspectives;
- have limited participation or ownership by local partners;
- do not provide an adequate basis for subsequent judgements about the higher order results achieved, especially at the outcome and impact levels; and
- neglect to draw on appropriate and cost effective Australian and local expertise.

The Guidelines are not prescriptive: ultimately the key partners in an Activity must decide how to proceed and what form the Baseline Study will take.
The Guidelines offer advice, resources and a practical checklist to help you plan and implement a Baseline Study. They are a work–in–progress. Development workers will contribute lessons and experiences to them over time.

It is important to note that the primary focus of these Guidelines is on socio–economic baseline studies. These are not a substitute for physical science or environmental baseline studies, though in many Activities a socio–economic Baseline Study will complement these. It is advisable to refer to all the other relevant AusAID guidelines for your activity.

Who should use the Guidelines?

Activity managers and key stakeholders will benefit most from the Guidelines.

A team designing an activity can also use them, particularly when considering the feasibility of a Baseline Study and its place in the Activity’s longer-term monitoring and evaluation framework.

A Baseline Study can provide the information required to enable robust conclusions to be eventually made about the impacts of the Activity.

The checklist at the end of the document is intended to be a practical tool for teams planning a Baseline Study.

What is the purpose of a Baseline Study?

AusAID supports high quality Activities that produce a beneficial development impact in partner countries. Hence the measurement of the results of an Activity is a vital responsibility of the Agency. Particular emphasis is to be given to measuring those results at the outcome and impact levels.

A Baseline Study gathers key information early in an Activity so that later judgments can be made about the quality and development results achieved of the Activity.

A ‘needs assessment study’, that gathers information during the design of an Activity, is not a ‘Baseline Study’. These Guidelines do not address the requirements of needs assessment studies.

Most activities have a logical framework matrix (a logframe) that is divided into levels of desired achievement or a hierarchy of objectives. The levels are usually called goal, purpose, component level objectives and outputs.

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1 The ‘quality’ of an activity means it has appropriate objectives and design, achieves those objectives, is professionally managed and likely to achieve sustainable impacts

2 In development cooperation work there are a number of synonyms for the word ‘results’ as it is used in Results Based Management. These synonyms include effects, achievements, benefits, outcomes and impacts. However, as the results of an Activity or intervention may not always be positive, or intended or occur directly, some of these words may be misleading. In development cooperation some of the synonyms have specific meanings in Activity designs using the logframe approach. In this case, ‘Impacts’ are results of a longer-term nature and ‘Outputs’ are the shorter-term results (products, goods, services) that contribute to outcomes. ‘Outcomes’ are defined by the DAC as short to medium-term results. Hence the word ‘results’ should be looked at in this context.
The activity’s monitoring and evaluation plan is closely linked to each (objective) level of the logframe and includes indicators of achievement and means of verification.

The Baseline Study is an early element in the monitoring and evaluation plan and uses the logframe structure to systematically assess the circumstances in which the activity commences. It provides the basis for subsequent assessment of how efficiently the activity is being implemented and the eventual results achieved.

Subsequent monitoring of activity progress also gathers and analyses data using the logframe and will be consistent with, but not repeat, the Baseline Study. Mid-term reviews, project completion reports and other evaluations will judge progress largely based on comparisons with the information from the Baseline Study.

A development Activity entails change, so a good monitoring and evaluation system will:

- show whether change is occurring;
- indicate the results of the activity, including eventual impacts, whether these changes are intended or not intended, direct or indirect, positive or negative, primary or secondary; and
- suggest how to improve the efficiency of implementation, the extent of the desired results achieved and their sustainability.

The Baseline Study is the first step in this important process.

**Is a Baseline Study necessary?**

A Baseline Study will not be warranted in some small–scale or short duration Activities. Also where activity design is incorporated into the inception phase, it might be preferable to collect data on a rolling basis before the commencement of major sub–components that require separate baseline studies.

However a Baseline Study will be necessary for most Activities.

It is important to find out what information is already available. The data needed to help measure the degree and quality of change during an Activity might already exist. In this case, the only task is to collate the data and ensure it can be updated in the longer term.

But more commonly, there will not be any existing data or it will be incomplete, of poor quality or need supplementation or further disaggregation.

For example, disaggregation of data related to gender and other marginalised groups is often essential for an adequate initial poverty analysis.

A Baseline Study will help overcome these problems but it should wherever possible maximise the use of good quality local data. New data collection should be confined to items that are essential for monitoring Activity implementation quality and measuring development results achieved.
A monitoring and evaluation system is also a useful management tool for allocating human and material resources in the most efficient and effective way to achieve the desired results.

If baseline information will not be used (or subsequently replicated) to improve the quality of Activity implementation or to measure development results, then the reason for collecting the data should be seriously questioned.

A Baseline Study should also meet the needs and interests of key stakeholders. If it does not, it is a strong indication that the Baseline Study is either unnecessary or the approach should be reconsidered. If the baseline information will satisfy the needs of only one stakeholder or group, this might signal the need to re–think the study to broaden its utility and relevance.

**What about different forms of aid?**

The term ‘Activity’ is used in these guidelines to refer to all forms of aid supported by AusAID.

Aid is provided through a variety of mechanisms, including projects, programs, facilities, sector wide approaches, policy engagement, analytical whole of government initiatives and financial transfers. Funding arrangements include budget support grants, flexible funding mechanisms, grants in kind and co-financing. Various delivery intermediaries can be used such as AMCs, Australian government departments/institutions, partner government departments, private sector, NGOs and multilaterals.

Other donors use similar, but not identical, terms. These Guidelines aim to apply to all forms of aid, but should be tailored to suit the particular Activity. The Activity should not be changed to suit the Guidelines.

**At what stage should a Baseline Study be conducted?**

A Baseline Study should take place as soon as practicable after an activity begins.

This does not necessarily mean that such studies must be conducted within the first few months of activity implementation. A study is better conducted once the main implementing agents have a reasonable understanding of the context of the Activity. This will enable thorough planning, and time to gain the commitment and involvement of local partners.

It is important to be able to confirm that the proposed Baseline Study will not duplicate research that has already been done, and to ensure all partners are familiar with existing data sources.

AusAID requires that genuine, critical thinking goes into establishing what information is really needed and to ensure that only the essential information will be collected. Time devoted to research and planning at the beginning will help to minimise the risk of squandered efforts and unhappy partners later on.
Contractors and consultants are responsible and accountable for thinking through and ensuring baseline studies are meaningful, relevant, cost effective and not overly academic.

**What should be considered when planning a Baseline Study?**

The Baseline Study should be strongly linked with the critical aspects of the Activity’s monitoring and evaluation plan. Data collection can be then replicated if necessary during later monitoring and evaluation. Opportunities to replicate data collection may include for a Mid Term Review, the Activity Completion Report and/or an Expost Evaluation.

Baseline data should provide only the minimum information required to assess the key aspects of quality of the Activity delivery and measure the development results (including the eventual impacts). Anything more than this is likely to be a waste of time, effort and resources and risks making the Baseline Study not replicable.

It is advisable to review the logframe with all partners to ensure that it is clear and well structured. Logical and precisely expressed outputs, component level objectives, purpose and goal will assist data collection because it makes clear what needs to be measured.

While contextual analysis is done during the design phase, circumstances can change significantly between design and Activity commencement.

Each partner needs to understand the current conditions in which the Baseline Study will be conducted.

For example, what season of the year is it? What political conditions prevail? What is the current state of the economy? What cultural divisions exist? Will the Baseline Study occur during, or follow on from, extraordinary events such as natural disasters, political upheavals or economic shocks?

If partners are not clear about such issues, then the meaning of the data generated by the Baseline Study might be misunderstood.

Assess the feasibility of the Baseline Study, both in terms of material and human resourcing, and in terms of timing and duration.

Each partner in an activity has competing workloads and differing capacities, and these must be clearly understood if planning for the Baseline Study is to be realistic. It is desirable to prepare and agree with partners a plan showing detailed resourcing and a budget before the study begins.

Training for those conducting the Baseline Study and provision for a pilot study should be considered. It is highly desirable that the pilot be satisfactorily completed and analysed before the full Baseline Study begins.

This will help to avoid common field problems such as inappropriate use of language, poor interview or observation techniques, teams that are too large or too small, logistical difficulties and how to monitor the quality of a team’s work in the field.
Try to minimise the extent to which key technical staff are tied up in data collection and supervision, and the extent to which the daily life of communities being studied are disrupted. This needs to be considered from the perspective of both men and women.

Where practicable, consider using appropriately skilled local or Australian research students to help implement the Baseline Study. Several Australian Universities are prepared to recommend appropriate Masters and PhD level students to help undertake baseline work. AusAID is comfortable with this approach assuming that the Australian and/or local students are appropriate and well supervised.

Some baseline studies demand specific and high level technical skills. In these situations it is important to ensure that these skills are available and that any necessary training takes place prior to commencement to fill identified skills gaps.

Where specific equipment is needed, this should be available early enough to enable staff to become familiar with its use and to ensure it can be delivered to the field on time.

If you are using survey forms, maps, photographs or other such materials, ensure there are more than a sufficient number of copies.

Planning should include adequate provision for data collation and analysis, including appropriate staff, materials such as computer software and recording forms, data storage facilities and a clear picture of who will need to access data and in what form.

A Baseline Study will require considerable commitment from all personnel involved. They will need to be flexible and willing to compromise. Local resources are often limited and time is precious for everyone. Again, this is an issue of particular importance for women who already have the ‘double burden’ of work and family.

Even after training, local capacity might not match all the needs of the original plan. Focus on key issues and the most significant data, and if you have to scale down your initial expectations, use lessons from the pilot study to help prioritise and allocate resources.

Consideration must be given to the cost of the baseline to ensure that it is proportionate to the total Activity.

The following links provide more detailed information on planning baseline studies:

www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/
IFAD’s *Guide for Project Monitoring and Evaluation*. Sections 4 & 5 provide advice on setting up a monitoring and evaluation system and deciding what to monitor, and Section 8 shows how monitoring and evaluation can be integrated into project management.

www.ifad.org/pub/bsf/cppe/cppe.pdf
IFAD’s *Comprehensive Participatory Planning & Evaluation Manual*. Section II contains information on setting up a monitoring and evaluation system.

www.undp.org/eo/Methodology/
How should change be measured?

When planning a Baseline Study, it is necessary to determine both what change needs to be assessed and what sort of comparison(s) will need to be made as part of that assessment of change.

There are two common ways to measure change:

- ‘with and without’ Activity – this seeks to mimic the use of an experimental control, and compares change in the activity location to change in a similar location where the activity has not been implemented;
- ‘before and after’ Activity – this measures change over time in the activity location alone.

The following table summarises the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>With and without activity</th>
<th>Before and after activity</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increases the likelihood of identifying causal factors in change.</td>
<td>Only need to collect data from Activity area, so demands fewer resources.</td>
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<td>Allows a clearer measure of the degree of change.</td>
<td>Allows combination of monitoring and evaluation functions.</td>
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<td>Provides a stronger motivation for participatory monitoring and evaluation.</td>
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<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to find truly comparable areas in terms of ecology, resources and capacities.</td>
<td>More difficult to identify causal factors in change, especially when other Activities are taking place in the same location.</td>
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<td>Can be compromised by new Activities of other donors, local government or community organisations in ‘without’ location.</td>
<td>Assumes that change will be a linear progression.</td>
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<td>Requires more advanced statistical skills and software.</td>
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<td>More expensive.</td>
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<td>Tends to give information that is only needed in impact evaluations, not monitoring.</td>
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Poses an ethical problem if ‘without’ groups are used to measure change and impact yet excluded from development opportunities.

What methods are appropriate?

Many research methods can be used in baseline studies. These Guidelines do not make mandatory choices. All social research methods have strengths and weaknesses. These should be analysed and matched against the needs of the specific Activity, the time and resources available, and the context in which the Baseline Study will be conducted.

Social scientists usually distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods, and a good Baseline Study will use both.

The following source provides some guidance on how to integrate the two:

‘Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches in Program Evaluation’ – a World Bank document arguing that combining these approaches will yield insights that neither can achieve on its own.


A range of computer software is available to analyse numerical and textual data, but these programs often demand high-level technical skills. This can reduce the likelihood they will be regularly used or locally adopted. Consider the most appropriate for the circumstances.

Visual items, including photographs, maps and diagrams are important pieces of data and are often neglected or under-used in baseline studies. It is often necessary to be creative and innovative about your data sources used.

The central issue in choosing a method is reliability.

All research methods have strengths and weaknesses, so it is desirable to combine methods in a way that maximises the strengths to increase the reliability of data.

Some methods will be more appropriate for measuring the progress and development impact that the specific Activity is seeking to achieve.

For example, an Activity aiming to increase school attendance will need to use methods for collecting and analysing statistical indicators; an activity attempting to change beliefs about the transmission of malaria will require participatory and observational methods that measure changes in thinking.

It is also important to be able to replicate, as appropriate, the Baseline Study during the implementation of the activity.

Whatever methods are used, an explanation of those methods and the justifications for using them should be detailed in baseline plans and subsequent reports. This will help others to assess the reliability and suitability of the approach taken, and also to reproduce the study in any future review, evaluation or extension of the Activity.
Before the Baseline Study begins, it is necessary to consider how the resulting data will be analysed and whether this requires specialist inputs, sub-contracting to research institutions or preparatory training.

If the process is overly complicated, this might indicate that data collection for monitoring will be difficult to sustain during the course of the activity or to replicate in any evaluation.

In some situations the beneficiary group will influence the method used. For example, it may be necessary to hold interviews with focus groups with women separate from men, and/or have same gender interviewers/facilitators. Similar implications may exist for different ethnic, age or socio-economic groups.

A quality control process should be built into each method used in the Baseline Study to ensure that the data is being collected according to the principles and criteria on which the study was planned. It is vital that the methods and quality control procedures are well tested during the pilot study to allow for any modifications before the full study begins.

**What indicators should be used?**

Indicators are items of information that help to assess the quality of activity delivery and measure the development results (including those at the impact level). However, indicators only help to *measure or monitor* change, they do not *explain* change.

Indicators are a first, but important, step in understanding the quality and effectiveness of an activity and thereby improving management of the activity.

For example, sex disaggregated indicators will not explain gender issues, but will provide data that allows gender issues to be explained and addressed. Similarly, information on ‘time travelled to markets’ does not explain participation in a local economy, but does provide data that will help to analyse issues in participation and more effectively target disadvantaged groups.

Indicators should be clearly linked to the various levels of the activity logframe – goal, purpose, objectives and outputs. A clear distinction should be made between indicators that:

- **monitor the quality of activity delivery** –
  - including assessing *progress in achieving objectives* and
  - *professionalism of activity management* – monitoring specific actions contractual deliverables and outputs; and

- **measure development results** –
  - including achievement of activity component-level *outcomes* and
  - activity goal and purpose-level *impacts* as specified in the logframe.

A Baseline Study should include data collection in all three fields.

Indicators should be SMART:
Specific – clear, simple, single items of information;
Measurable – items that can be reliably quantified;
Attainable – data that is easily and cost effectively gathered and available for the duration of the activity;
Relevant – to the goal, objectives and outcomes of the activity; and
Timely - the data can be collected and analysed quickly enough to be useful in activity management.

It is important that the indicators chosen are those most relevant to the activity. Too many indicators will increase costs and time demands, and reduce the likelihood that people will continue to collect them.

Keep things simple, but also consider which indicators are really important for the activity. While indicators generally only point to change, some will improve understanding of the change observed.

AusAID’s aid program is driven by an overarching framework of poverty reduction, and five Guiding Themes:

• governance,
• globalisation,
• human capital,
• security and
• sustainable resource management.

For detailed descriptions see sections 2.1 to 2.3 in http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/eleventh.pdf

The AusAID Guiding Themes relevant to a specific activity will normally be set out in the design document.

When selecting indicators for a Baseline Study, it is vital to include indicators for the Guiding Themes relevant to the activity. This will help to assess how the activity is contributing to the Themes, and help AusAID assess the overall impact of its aid program.

Considerable thought should be given to the appropriate level of disaggregation of the data by gender and major socio-economic, ethnic and/or age groups. If it is to be possible to track gender-related change over time amongst the affected population, then it will be necessary to determine baseline situation with relation to the stated needs of women and men, constraints to participation, access to basic services and the degree of empowerment of women in terms of status, involvement in decision making, mobility etc.

The following links provide help and further discussion on selecting and using indicators:

www.adb.org/statistics/poverty/glossary.asp
An alphabetical list of indicators to provide data on poverty and development, including health issues.

DAC’s indicator methodology sheets. These show suggested indicators and some recommended methods of collection.

www.minefi.gouv.fr/TRESOR/cicid/atelier/som_contrib.htm
Contributions to a workshop on evaluation held in March 2003. Paper 2.9 by UNDP’s Ruby Sandhu-Rojon discusses indicators.

www.dec.org/pdf_docs/pnaby214.pdf
USAID guide: ‘Selecting Performance Indicators’.

www.dec.org/pdf docs/pnaca927.pdf
USAID guide: ‘Guidelines for Indicator and Data Quality’.

This CIDA Guide to Gender Sensitive Indicators is a tool for practitioners wishing to strengthen the Women in Development/Gender Equality evaluation component of their project work through better use of gender sensitive indicators.

**What sampling techniques should be used?**

Sampling is a method of choosing limited sources of information when it is not feasible to collect all available information.

Sampling applies to a range of research methods, not only questionnaire surveys.

Good sampling helps improve the reliability and quality of data, and can save time and resources.

Good sampling generally requires specific technical skills. Most development workers are aware that sampling should try to be ‘representative’, but the key question is: representative of what?

Most data collection uses random sampling to gather indicators that are representative of the overall population supported by an Activity. This is often useful, but will not always give a clear picture of an Activity’s impact.

Activities are usually concerned with one or more general concepts, for example, access, gender, participation, discrimination, poverty or capacity.

Not only do indicators have to be developed for these concepts, but also the implications for sampling need to be considered.
An Activity to improve access to social services might require indicators of time, service delivery and communications infrastructure, but also sampling to compare indicators between ‘central’ and ‘remote’ communities.

Similarly, an activity to improve household wealth will need indicators such as cash income, seasonal employment levels and in–kind exchanges, but also sampling to compare indicators between different types of household or between households of different ethnic groups.

It is necessary to analyse the results of the pilot study closely to check that the indicators and sampling method are providing the kind of information needed to assess quality of activity delivery and to measure development results.

The following link provides a clear and brief explanation of sampling and basic methods:

http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/sampling.htm

**How important is data analysis?**

A common aim of many development activities is to help partner agencies improve the quality of their data collection and its use in planning and management.

It is a common complaint that partner agencies collect large amounts of information but do not analyse them to give direction to their resource allocation or policy development. Yet many activity managers fail to use their baseline studies in the same way.

Data collection provides numerous facts and figures, which are of little use if this data is not interpreted, or if this new understanding does not inform future actions.

Analysis is arguably the most important step in a Baseline Study, and it is important to ensure that adequate time and resources are allocated to it.

Analysis involves collecting and collating the data and interpreting the results in the broader context of the activity.

Methods of analysis range from simple aggregations to complex computer–based regression and network analyses.

The more appropriate methods of analysis need to be selected and then prioritised on the basis of those that will significantly help in measurement and management.

Research students in Australian and local institutions are often a good source of expertise in data analysis: consulting this expertise at the planning stage and using it during the analysis stage will save much wasted time and effort.

If improved systems of data collection and analysis are to be adopted in partner agencies, it is important that they can be sustained beyond the lifetime of the activity. A good activity will develop a practical model of data collection and analysis that partners find useful, relevant and affordable.
The analysis of baseline data should be followed by regular (usually annual) analysis of the data collected during activity implementation. This will inform planning and to guide the allocation of human and physical resources.

If data analysis is not informing activity management on how to improve quality and measuring development results, it is necessary to seriously question why resources are being used to collect the information.

**Can a Baseline Study build ownership and capacity?**

An Activity is a cooperative exercise with local partners and stakeholders. In most case, everyone involved should be able to make effective use of the baseline information to make informed management decisions, strengthen local systems and build capacity.

All partners should see the Baseline Study as relevant, useful and important.

Cooperative involvement from the outset is vital, and should continue through the stages of planning, piloting, collection, analysis and feedback into management.

All Activities should begin with a common vision of what is to be achieved, even if there are competing ideas of how to get there.

This common vision will largely determine the content and methods of the Baseline Study, and agreed measures of progress towards the common goal.

There are three major reasons why partners fail to become involved in a Baseline Study:

- **insufficient time or resources available to participate:**
  This issue should be addressed in the design phase of an activity, but if not, it should be considered and resolved during baseline planning.

  Sometimes provision of new materials, such as computers and software or transport will suffice, but not always. It is better to adjust the to available resources and time rather than exclude key partners.

- **Insufficient partner skills to participate:**
  This problem can be addressed by capacity building and training, or sub-contracting specific tasks. It might require ongoing support beyond the duration of the .

  However, if the skills gap is too great and cannot be closed, then the sustainability and relevance of the activity’s monitoring and evaluation framework needs to be questioned.

- **the Baseline Study is not seen as important or relevant to local needs:**
  This should have been addressed during the Activity design. It signals a possible flaw in the conception of the Activity. In this case, it may be desirable to consider whether this is symptomatic of a more serious lack of commitment to the activity.
If the analysis of baseline information is to improve activity management and development outcomes, then it has to be a shared activity. Consensus should be reached on what the analysis shows. Systems to share and disseminate information and analysis should be considered and agreed in the planning stage.

Most baseline results are reported in standard formats to AusAID and partner governments, but other stakeholders, donors and development workers are likely to be interested in the results. Consider the best ways to present information to them.

Reports should be clearly and simply written with a primary audience in mind, and available in relevant languages.

Other formats for reporting, such as exhibitions, workshops and slide shows, can spread key messages effectively and reach a larger audience. Sharing results and encouraging wider analysis and discussion will enrich the quality and impact of an activity, as well as contributing lessons and good practice to other activities.

**Other useful links**

A page of downloadable documents in various areas of monitoring and evaluation. The section *Performance Monitoring and Evaluation TIPS* has documents on preparing a monitoring plan, selecting indicators and some common field research methods.

Information on how to set up a poverty monitoring system, including choice of indicators, designing impact evaluation and feeding monitoring and evaluation results back into management. It is part of the World Bank’s *Poverty Reduction Strategy Sourcebook* [www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/sourcons.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/sourcons.htm).

A set of technical notes and case studies that can be read in conjunction with the previous link.

[62.189.42.51/DFIDstage/pubs/files/sdd_kothari.pdf](http://62.189.42.51/DFIDstage/pubs/files/sdd_kothari.pdf)
Paper by Uma Kothari of Manchester University that focuses on assessment procedures and measuring outcomes.

[sites.maxwell.syr.edu/intleval/readings/chapter6a-f.htm](http://sites.maxwell.syr.edu/intleval/readings/chapter6a-f.htm)
Academic notes on design and implementation of baseline studies from the course *Evaluation of International Programs and Projects* at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs in Syracuse University.

[www.consultpdm.com/publications.htm](http://www.consultpdm.com/publications.htm)
Downloadable version of *Bridging the Gap: A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Projects* on the site of PDM, a private consulting company in Australia. Chapters 2 and 3 on the principles and establishment of monitoring systems can be downloaded individually.

Schrevel’s 2002 paper on *The Socio-Economic Baseline Survey* focuses on how to conduct a survey in a rural development setting.

[www.foodaidmanagement.org/mne3.htm](http://www.foodaidmanagement.org/mne3.htm)
Page with links to useful documents, toolkits and indicator guides, with a bias towards health and nutrition issues.
Summary Checklist

Initial Considerations

- Is a Baseline Study necessary? Would improving the quality of existing data collections obviate the need for a Baseline Study? Is there adequate appropriate data gathered through the planning process? Would a Baseline Study duplicate existing information?

- Is it going to measure the right things? If someone unfamiliar with the Activity was to review the data collected, would it help them to understand what the Activity is intended to achieve? What is the core, minimal data needed to measure the Activity’s results achieved, including impacts?

- Are all partners committed to conducting the Baseline Study, providing the budget and using the results?

- Does the activity focus on socio-economic issues?

- Are there other AusAID guidelines you should consult before commencing the Baseline Study?

- Is the Baseline Study integrated into the activity’s monitoring and evaluation framework? Can it be replicated during implementation or at activity completion?

- Will all the results of the Baseline Study be used to assess activity progress and measure development results (including eventual impacts)?

- Does the activity have a clear logframe agreed with partners? Are all the indicators in the logframe to be measured in the Baseline Study?

- Is the current context in which the Baseline Study will take place clear? How will that context be accounted for in the planning?

- Have you considered what logistical preparations are needed for collecting, analysing, storing and sharing data?

- How will the activity’s monitoring and evaluation framework be incorporated into the systems of partner agencies? Can the partners replicate the Baseline Study?

- What are the financial and management costs of this study? Is that estimated cost proportionate to the overall Activity?

Broad-Brush Planning

- Will all key partners in the activity be involved in the Baseline Study? Are they agreed on the plan and the budget?

- What logistical preparations are needed to collect, analyse, store and share data?

- Does the team have all the skills needed to conduct the Baseline Study? If not, where will this other expertise be obtained from and who will provide the necessary training?

- Are all key partners agreed on what the activity is seeking to achieve, and is that reflected in the Baseline Study design?

- Is the Baseline Study feasible in terms of timing and resources?

- Will it be possible to gather similar data or replicate the Baseline Study during subsequent monitoring and a possible evaluation, respectively?
What is the approach taken to ensure that gender aspects are adequately addressed?

**Considering Method Options and Piloting**
- Have the strengths and weaknesses of the methods to be used been analysed?
- Will a variety of methods be used in the Baseline Study to improve reliability?
- Will the selected methods clearly measure progress and results achieved against the aims of the Activity?
- Will the selected methods enable subsequent assessment of quality of Activity implementation and measurement of impact?
- Is the methodology explicit and recorded?
- How will the data collected be analysed?
- What are the quality control procedures and are they in place?
- Has a pilot study been conducted to inform the method or scale of the Baseline Study?
- Are the methods cost effective and do they represent value for money when compared to the total size of the Activity?

**Adequacy of Indicators**
- Will the indicators to be measured in the Baseline Study assess quality of Activity implementation and measure development results achieved (including impact)?
- Are the indicators SMART (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Reliable and Timely)?
- Do the indicators cover each level of the Activity logframe?
- Will the indicators enable judgements about impacts on gender and marginalised and other important groups in society?
- Are there indicators on relevant AusAID Guiding Themes?
- Will the indicators help to explain the cause of observed changes?
- Are the means of verification for the indicators practicable?
- Are there too many indicators?

**Sampling Method**
- Does the team have sufficient expertise in sampling? If not, how will this expertise be obtained?
- What sampling techniques are suitable for this exercise?

**Analysis of the Data Collected**
- Does the team have the expertise to carry out the required data analysis? If not, how will the additional expertise be obtained?
- Will the analysis assess the quality of Activity management implementation and measure development results (including impact)?
How will data be collated and stored?

How will the results be shared among partners and with other stakeholders?

Has regular analysis of data over the course of the Activity been planned?

How will the analysis of data be fed back into Activity management?

**Partner Ownership and Capacity**

- How will the results of the Baseline Study be shared and disseminated among partners and other stakeholders?
- What adjustments need to be made to make them culturally appropriate and/or easy to interpret?
- Have all partners agreed on the formats for reporting on baseline results, and is there opportunity for criticism and discussion?
- Who will be able to access and use baseline results in the future?
- How will new procedures for data collection and analysis be embedded into local systems?
- Have appropriate opportunities and strategies for building capacity been considered and included in baseline planning, management and implementation with the partners?