GLOSSARY OF SELECT M&E TERMS

NOTE: This glossary contains only select M&E terms used throughout this guide. Other important terms exist in the field of M&E, but are not dealt with in this guide. For a resource on more M&E terms, see: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). (2001). Tool No. 1, Glossary of Monitoring and Evaluation Terms. Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit for Programme Managers. Office of Oversight and Evaluation: http://www.unfpa.org/monitoring/toolkit/glossary.pdf

In any field, terms are sometimes used differently by various organizations and entities. Though the definitions of terms in this glossary are well-recognized and used in the field of M&E, other terminology can be used to describe similar concepts, and is not necessarily wrong or less effective than what is presented here. For select terms below, we have provided synonyms in bold italics to indicate other commonly used words by other entities in the field of M&E. French terms are also provided with these synonyms, also in bold italics.

Academic Research: Research that focuses primarily on hypothesis testing in a controlled environment. It typically attempts to make statements about the relationships among specific variables under controlled circumstances, at a given point in time.

Activity: A program proceeding/action such as a counseling session, material distribution, a workshop, a training, outreach, or specific technical assistance that alone, or in conjunction with other activities, will have identifiable outputs. Synonym: Step, Task. French: Activité, Sous-activité, Etape, Tache, Activité-intermédiaire.

Administrative Records: Various sources of information that are used to describe program inputs and program-related, project-level activities. Examples include: Budget and expenditure records and logs of commodities.

Analysis: The process of systematically applying statistical techniques and/or logic to interpret, compare, categorize, and summarize data collected in order to draw conclusions.

Annual Report: GAP-specific annual reporting document. The annual report summarizes progress and achievements of GAP-supported programs and serves a variety of audiences including Congress, external stakeholders, Country Program managers, GAP headquarters, National AIDS Programs, and other implementing partners.

Assessment and Planning: The collection of information and data needed to plan programs and initiatives. These data may describe the needs of the population and the factors that put people at risk, as well as the context, program response, and resources available (financial and human).
**Assumption:** (1) Presumptions or “educated guesses” that program planners make based on socio-political and economic issues that exist in the context of the respective program, as well as the limitations and facilitators that these issues have on the potential success of the program. (2) Hypotheses about conditions necessary to ensure the desired program results and the logical, cause-and-effect relationships represented in a program logic model.

**Baseline:** The status of services and outcome-related measures such as knowledge, attitudes, norms, behaviors, and/or condition prior to an intervention.

**Budget Plan:** GAP-specific budget request document.

**Case Study:** A methodological approach to describing a situation, individual, etc. that typically incorporates a number of data-gathering activities (e.g., interviews, observations, and questionnaires) at select sites or programs. In the GAP context, case studies are done in country to determine CDC’s overall “value added.” The findings are then used to report to stakeholders, make recommendations for program improvement, and for sharing lessons with other countries.

**Comparison Group:** In evaluation studies, a comparison group is not completely equal in all characteristics to the program group, but will have a number of similarities in terms of demographics and other factors that are relevant to the group members.

**Cost-Benefit Analysis:** A measure of inputs and outputs in monetary terms.

**Cost-Effectiveness Analysis:** An estimate of inputs in monetary terms and outcomes in non-monetary quantitative terms (e.g., reduction in HIV prevalence). *Synonym: Cost-Effectiveness evaluation. French: Evaluation cout-éfficacité.*

**Country Assistance Plan (CAP):** GAP-specific planning document. The CAP specifies annual objectives that are defined by GAP technical strategy in support of the country-specific national HIV/AIDS Program goals. The CAP also includes a listing of planned/ongoing M&E activities for each of the GAP-supported, in-country technical assistance strategies and a comprehensive M&E plan (*also see “M&E Plan”*).

**Coverage:** The extent to which a program reaches its intended target population, institution, or geographic area.

**Disease Surveillance:** The ongoing systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to describe diseases and their transmission in populations. These data can contribute to predicting future trends and targeting needed prevention and treatment programs.

**Discussion Group:** Discussion groups serve to gather information about programs from larger numbers of people or individuals representing a range of program stakeholders, but are less structured than focus groups. (*also see “Focus Group”*).
**Dosage:** Sufficient client exposure to the program to result in the intended outcomes.

**Economic Evaluation:** Economic evaluations use applied analytic techniques to identify, measure, value, and compare the costs and outcomes of alternative interventions. Types of economic evaluations include: cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness/efficiency evaluation. *French: Evaluation cout-efficacité/bénéfice.*

**Experimental Design:** A study comparing clients randomly assigned to a program (experimental group) with clients with similar characteristics who are randomly assigned to a control group.

**Evaluability Assessment:** An approach used to determine a program’s readiness to be monitored and/or evaluated.

**Evaluable Questions:** Monitoring and evaluation questions that are typically based on stated program objectives. These questions will determine what M&E data will be needed, as well as necessary data collection methods.

**Evaluation:** A rigorous, scientifically based collection of information about program activities, characteristics, and outcomes that determine the merit or worth of a specific program. Evaluation studies are used to improve programs and inform decisions about future resource allocations. *Synonym: Appraisal, Assessment. French: Sondage, Evaluation (Note: The term evaluation is a possible source of confusion because in French there is no word, per se, for “Assessment,” which is used differently than “Evaluation.”)*

**Facility-Based Management Information Systems (MIS):** Data management systems that facilitate the assessment of service uptake and coverage for facility-based interventions (i.e., PMTCT, VCT, Care and ARV provision).

**Facility Survey:** A site inventory of all elements required to deliver services such as, basic infrastructure, drugs, equipment, test-kits, registers, and staff trained in the delivery of the reference service. The units of observation are facilities of various types and levels in the health system and will normally include both public and private facilities in the sample frame of sites. May also be referred to as a service provision assessment. *Synonym: Inventory. French: Inventaire.*

**Feasibility:** The coherence and quality of a program strategy that makes successful implementation likely.

**Fidelity:** Actual program implementation matches intended implementation plan. This is determined via program monitoring or process evaluation.

**Focus Group:** A small number of individuals (e.g. 5-11 individuals per group) gathered to explore ideas, attitudes, experiences, and opinions about a program or service. A focus group is made up of a representation of a targeted demographic group.
Goal: A broad statement of a desired, long-term outcome of a program. Goals express general program intentions and help guide a program’s development. Each goal has a set of related, more specific objectives that, if met, will collectively permit program staff to reach the stated goal. (Also see “Objective.”) Synonym: Aim.

Impact Evaluation: Impact evaluations look at the rise and fall of disease incidence and prevalence as a function of HIV/AIDS programs. Impact on entire populations seldom can be attributed to a single program or even several programs. Therefore, evaluations of impact on populations usually entail a rigorous evaluation design that includes the combined effects of a number of programs on at-risk populations. Synonym: Impact assessment. French: Evaluation de l’impact d’un projet/programme.

Impact Monitoring: In the field of public health, impact monitoring is usually referred to as “disease surveillance” and is concerned with the monitoring of disease prevalence or incidence. This type of monitoring collects data at the jurisdictional, regional, and national levels (also see “Disease Surveillance”).

Impact: The longer-range, cumulative effect of programs over time, such as change in HIV infection, morbidity, and mortality. Impacts are rarely, if ever, attributable to a single program; yet, a program may, with other programs, contribute to impacts on a population. Synonym: Long-term result or effect, Long-term outcome. French: Impact, Résultat, Objectif a long terme.

Input: A resource used in a program. Inputs include monetary and personnel resources that come from a variety of sources, as well as curricula and materials. Synonym: Resource, Program materials. French: Intrant.

Input/Output Monitoring: Input and output monitoring involve the basic tracking of information about program inputs, or resources that go into a program, and about outputs of the program activities. Data sources for monitoring inputs and outputs usually exist naturally in program documentation, such as activity reports and logs, and client records, which offer details about the time, place, and amount of services delivered, as well as the types of clients receiving services. Synonym: Process monitoring. French: Le suivi de l’état d’avancement.

Interrupted Time Series: Similar to time-series, this design takes multiple measurements on the same clients before and after an intervention or service is received. This method uses one group as its own comparison at multiple points in time (also see “Time Series”).

Interview: Open-ended, conversation usually guided by standardized questions with program clients and other stakeholders and key informants.
**Logic Model:** A program design, management, and evaluation tool that describes the main elements of a program and how these elements work together to reach a particular goal, such as prevention of HIV in a specific population. The basic elements in describing the implementation of a program and its effects are: inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. A logic model graphically presents the logical progression and relationship of these elements. **Synonym:** Logical framework, Logframe matrix, Roadmap, Theory of action, Concept map, Model of change, Blueprint, Theoretic underpinning, Rationale, Causal chain, Program theory, Chain of causation, Program hypothesis. French: Cadre Logique, Paquet de Résultats.

**M&E Plan:** A comprehensive planning document for all monitoring and evaluation activities within GAP programs. This plan documents the key M&E questions to be addressed, what indicators are collected, how, how often, from where and why they will be collected; baselines, targets and assumptions; how they are going to be analyzed/interpreted and how/when reports will be developed and distributed on the evolution of these indicators. **Synonym:** Performance monitoring plan. French: Plan suivi et évaluation.

**Management Information System (MIS):** A data system, usually computerized, that routinely collects and reports information about the delivery of services, costs, demographic and health information, and results status.

**Monitoring:** The routine tracking and reporting of priority information about a program and its intended outputs and outcomes. **Synonym:** Tracking. French: Suivi, Monitoring, Monitorage.

**National-level Reports:** Various sources of information that are used to describe program inputs and program-related, project-level activities country-wide. Examples included: Reports of non-governmental agencies; and national reports on program progress, performance, strategies and plans.

**Non-experimental Design:** Compares clients before and after program participation or over a period of time during participation to learn more about the effects of the program on these individuals.

**Objective:** A statement of desired, specific, realistic, and measurable program results. (also see “Goal.”) **Synonym:** (Performance) Target. French: Objectif, Objectif visé ou spécifique.

**Operations Research/Evaluation:** Operations research or operations evaluation applies systematic research techniques to improve service delivery. This type of research and evaluation analyzes only those factors that are under the control of program managers, such as improving the quality of services, increasing training and supervision of staff, and adding new service components. Operational research is designed to assess the accessibility, availability, quality, and sustainability of programs. French: Recherche opérationnelle.
**Outcome Evaluation:** Type of evaluation that is concerned with determining if, and by how much, program activities or services achieved their intended outcomes. Whereas outcome monitoring is helpful and necessary in knowing whether or not outcomes were attained, outcome evaluation attempts to attribute observed change to the intervention tested; describe the extent or scope of program outcomes; and indicate what might happen in the absence of the program. Outcome evaluations are methodologically rigorous and require a comparative element in its design, such as a control or comparison group (also see “Experimental Designs” “Quasi-experimental Designs” and “Non-experimental Designs”). **Synonym:** Summative evaluation, impact evaluation. **French:** L’évaluation de la performance d’un projet/programme, Evaluation de l’impact d’un projet/programme.

**Outcome Monitoring:** Outcome monitoring is the basic tracking of variables that have been adopted as measures or “indicators” of the desired program outcomes. With National AIDS programs outcome monitoring is typically conducted through population-based surveys to track weather or not desired outcomes have been reached. Outcome monitoring may also track information directly related to program clients, such as change in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills, behaviors, access to services, policies, and environmental conditions.

**Outcome:** The effect of program activities on target audiences or populations, such as change in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills, behaviors, access to services, policies, and environmental conditions. **Synonyms:** Achievement, Effect. **French:** Résultat ; Résultat Intermediare

**Outcome Objective:** Objectives related to program outcomes. An outcome and its related objective say something about the effect of program services or activities on target audiences or populations (also see “Objectives” and “Outcomes”).

**Output:** The results of program activities. Outputs relate to the direct products or deliverables of program activities, such as number of counseling sessions completed, number of people reached, and number of materials distributed. **Synonym:** Product. **French:** Extrant, Objectif immédiat, objectif spécifique, Produit.

**Participatory M&E:** An approach that invites active involvement in data generation, interpretation, and use from stakeholders. Allows learning about local conditions, perspectives, and priorities to design or revise responsive and sustainable interventions. May be used to evaluate a project, program, process, or policy.

**Policy Evaluation:** Evaluation that focuses on assessing the application and effectiveness of policies.

**Population-based Surveys:** A large-scale national health survey, such as the Demographic and Health Survey.
**Pretest/Posttest Design:** A measurement is taken of clients prior to a program intervention (pre-test) and again after the intervention (post-test). This evaluation design is useful in measuring changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and self-reported behaviors before and after an intervention and allows for a comparison of indicators or measures of the same program participants at two points in time.

**Problem Statement:** A statement that describes the nature and extent of the problem to be addressed by an intervention, including factors that put a population at risk. These factors may be related to knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, skills, access to services and information, policies, and environmental conditions. The problem statement often results from assessment and planning activities.

**Process:** Program implementation involving the supply of inputs, carrying out activities, and achievement of outputs. A program’s “process” is the combination of its executed activities. *Synonym: Operations, Activities. French: Processus, Activités, Opérations.*

**Process Objective:** Objectives related to program outputs. An output and its related objective say something about the accomplishment of the “process” of delivering a service or activity, but not about the effect of these services or activities on clients (also see “Objectives” and “Outputs”).

**Process Evaluation:** Type of evaluation that focuses on program implementation, adding a dimension to the information that was tracked in input/output monitoring. Process evaluations usually focus on a single program and use largely qualitative methods to describe program activities and perceptions especially during the developmental stages and early implementation of the program. These assessments may also include some quantitative approaches, such as surveys about client satisfaction and perceptions about needs and services. In addition, a process evaluation might provide understanding about a program’s cultural, socio-political, legal, and economic contexts that affect programs. *Synonym: Progress assessment. French L’appréciation de l’état d’avancement, l’évaluation de l’état d’avancement.*

**Program Group:** Participants who receive an intervention or services.

**Qualitative Methods:** Qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, direct observation, and abstraction of written documents (such as program records) can provide an understanding about social situations and interaction, as well as people’s values, perceptions, motivations, and reactions (Also see “Interviews” and “Focus Groups”).

**Quantitative Methods:** Surveys and questionnaires used to systematically collect information for a carefully selected sample of individuals and households. Provides data for evaluating achievement of outcomes.
Quasi-experimental Design: Roughly replicates experiments by comparing those individuals who receive program services with those who, through a natural or non-randomly assigned process, do not receive the same services.

Rapid Assessment Process (RAP): An approach used for understanding perceptions, beliefs, practices, and behaviors of groups of individuals to plan or correct prevention activities mid-course. A combination of qualitative methods may be used instead of, or supplementary to, quantitative survey methods.

Reach: Sufficient number of clients (sample size) achieved to apply statistical tests necessary for data analysis.

Reliability: Consistency and dependability of data collected through repeated use of a scientific instrument or data collection procedure used under the same conditions; data reliability is independent of data validity; i.e., a data collection method may produce consistent data, but not measure what is intended to be measured.

Retrospective Design: A measurement taken of clients only at one point, after the program intervention. Retrospective evaluation designs are useful when there are time or access constraints that allow only one chance to gather data from each client.

"SMART" approach to writing objectives: A tool to determine whether or not objectives will be measurable and useful to program planning. Specific: Identifies concrete events or actions that will take place. Measurable: Quantifies the amount of resources, activity, or change to be expended and achieved. Appropriate: Relates to the overall problem statement and desired effects of the program. Realistic: Provides a realistic dimension that can be achieved with the available resources and plans for implementation. Time-based: Specifies a time within which the objective will be achieved.

Stability: Sufficient likelihood that a program will not change during the life of the program or during the program/intervention period being evaluated.

Stakeholder: Person, group, or entity that has a role and interest in the goals/objectives and implementation of a program.

Sustainability (of a program): Sufficient likelihood that political and financial support will exist to maintain the program while the evaluation is being conducted.

Two Group, Interrupted Time Series: Study in which a comparison group is used to administer an interrupted time–series design (also see “Time Series” and “Interrupted Time Series”).
Two-Group, Pre-Test/Post-Test Non-Equivalent Comparison Group: Baseline or pre-intervention (pre-test) and follow-up (post-test) measurements are taken from an intervention group and a comparison group. The impact (effectiveness) of the intervention in this design is calculated by the comparison of the difference between the pre-test and post-test measures from the intervention group, as well as the difference between the pre-test and post-test measures from the comparison group. Allocation to intervention and comparison group is non-random.

Time Series: A pre-intervention or baseline measurement is followed by a number of similar measurements after an intervention or service has been delivered. This design allows evaluators to see the possible effects of an intervention soon after clients receive it and at another time period after the intervention or service has been received (also see “Interrupted Time Series”).

Validity: The extent to which a measurement or test accurately measures what is intended to be measured.