



GRADUATION APPROACH FOR REFUGEES

# M&E Guide and Toolkit

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Authors: Alexi Bernagros, Director, Technical Assistance; Lori Fried, Program Manager; Tendayi Nyanhete, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer; and Jo Sanson, Director of Monitoring, Evaluation and Research, Trickle Up

Reviewers: Alexi Bernagros, Director, Technical Assistance and Jo Sanson, Director of Monitoring, Evaluation and Research, Trickle Up

Editor: Michael Karam, Communications Associate for Refugee Affairs, Trickle Up

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104 W 27th Street, 12th floor  
New York, NY 10001  
+1 (212) 255-9980  
trickleup.org

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Front cover: Graduation participants attend a refresher training on why and how to save in Block A, Meheba Settlement, Zambia (January 2019)

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## Acronyms

BMI	Body Mass Index
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GA	Graduation Approach
GA4R	Graduation Approach programming in refugee contexts
GMI	Group Maturity Index
HMT	Household Monitoring Tool
IP	Implementing Partner
MIS	Management Information System
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
PIRS	Performance Indicator Reference Sheets
PP/SH	Participants/Stakeholders
PPI	Progress out of Poverty Index
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PWR	Poverty Wealth Ranking
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
SEA	Socioeconomic Assessment
ToR	Terms of Reference

# 1. Introduction

A well-designed and executed project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is invaluable. The development sector increasingly acknowledges M&E as central to an organization's ability to deliver the right intervention to the right people, to ensure transparency and accountability, and to enable practitioners to clearly understand what they are doing, to learn from projects as they unfold, and to share information and evidence with others in the sector. However, creating and implementing a high quality but streamlined M&E system is not a simple process. Common constraints include lack of commitment to M&E by donors or implementing organizations, poor understanding about the functions and benefits of M&E, a weak culture of using M&E results to manage adaptively, a shortage of M&E specialists or trained staff, a limited M&E budget, and a lack of clear guidance around M&E.

## Text Box 1. Graduation Approach

A sequenced and time bound (18-36 months) intervention that aims to help people living in extreme poverty build resilience and engage in sustainable livelihoods.

The key components of Graduation in a refugee context are: Coaching, Savings, Network Engagement, Consumption Support, Core Capacity Building, Development of a Livelihoods Roadmap, Technical Skills Training, and either a Livelihoods Asset Transfer or Job Support.

Currently, little guidance around M&E considerations for Graduation Approach (GA) projects exists, and even less for GA projects designed to serve refugees and host communities. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and implementing partner (IP) staff often have vastly varying levels of familiarity and understanding of M&E concepts and functions in general, and M&E of GA in particular. (See [Text Box 1](#))

Trickle Up developed the Graduation Approach for Refugees M&E Guide and Toolkit ("the Guide") for livelihoods practitioners, including UNHCR and IP staff, who implement or are interested in implementing GA programming in refugee contexts (GA4R). The Guide aims to capture and leverage good practices and lessons learned from the UNHCR Zimbabwe Scaling Graduation with Refugees pilot, from UNHCR GA pilots in other countries, and from Trickle Up GA projects for non-refugees. It aims to benefit those who face the same questions and challenges as those faced during the UNHCR Zimbabwe pilot by providing foundational information upon which to build an adequate and useful M&E system. Specifically, the Guide:

- Defines and describes the key building blocks of effective and useful M&E for GA4R projects.
- Leads practitioners through the processes, considerations and decision points related to M&E systems.
- Explains the logic behind the key elements of M&E for GA4R projects, and how they work together during various project stages to support the GA.
- Provides examples of methods, tools, templates and additional resources from other GA projects, many of which are available in the Guide's accompanying [Zip Folder](#).

This guide is a living document that is meant to be built upon, updated and improved as more is learned from ongoing and new projects, and from the wider refugee self-reliance community of practice.



# 2. Monitoring and Evaluation: An Overview

## 2.1 What is Monitoring? What is Evaluation?

USAID, in its [Program Cycle Operational Policy](#),<sup>1</sup> defines monitoring and evaluation as follows:

***Monitoring** is the ongoing and systematic tracking of data or information relevant to strategies, projects, and activities. Data and informational needs are identified during planning and design and include measures that are directly affected by the intervention as well as measures of the operating context and programmatic assumptions.*

*Monitoring informs strategy, project, and activity design, implementation, adaptive management, and accountability. Performance monitoring is the ongoing collection of performance indicator data and other information to reveal if implementation is on track and if expected results are being achieved.*

**Monitoring answers the questions “What are we doing?” and “Is what we are doing working?”**

***Evaluation** is the systematic collection and analysis of information about characteristics and outcomes of projects and activities conducted as a basis for judgments to improve effectiveness and timed to inform decisions about current and future programming. The purpose of evaluations is twofold: to ensure accountability to stakeholders, including participants, and to learn to improve development outcomes.*

**Evaluation answers the questions “What have we done?” and “What outcomes have we achieved?”**

Monitoring and evaluation are two different management tools that are closely related, interactive, and mutually supportive, but they are *not* synonymous. Through routine tracking of project progress, monitoring can provide data useful for design and implementation of project evaluation exercises. Evaluation findings can inform the refinement and adaptation of monitoring tools and strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> ADS Chapter 201, Program Cycle Operational Policy, USAID

Table 1, below, provides a general comparison between monitoring and evaluation, with examples from GA4R projects. Not all the examples are required for all GA4R projects (e.g., randomized control trial (RCT)); they simply show how monitoring differs from evaluation. Such examples will therefore not be expanded upon in the Guide.

Table 1. Monitoring vs. Evaluation

	Monitoring	Evaluation
<b>Frequency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing, regular</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Episodic</li> </ul>
<b>Main action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep track of ongoing activities and outcomes; adaptive management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess processes</li> <li>Assess results</li> </ul>
<b>Basic purposes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Is project on track to achieve objectives?”</li> <li>Provide basis to improve current project’s effectiveness or efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Did project achieve objectives?”</li> <li>Provide basis to improve design of future programming</li> </ul>
<b>Focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inputs/outputs, process outcomes, work plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness, relevance, impact, cost-effectiveness</li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Routine tracking of GA participant progress towards project targets (guides coaching work and individual participant goal attainment)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household Monitoring Tools (HMTs) that coaches and participants use to track individuals’ progress through the GA</li> <li>GA savings group data collected by coaches/staff</li> </ul> </li> <li>Monitoring of particular components (e.g., effectiveness of training)</li> <li>Household monitoring data, aggregated to assess progress towards project objectives and other evaluative purposes (see Evaluation column)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline and endline evaluations</li> <li>RCT evaluation</li> <li>Qualitative evaluations</li> <li>Process evaluations</li> <li>Household monitoring data, aggregated and analyzed to inform evaluations</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Monitoring and Evaluating in Graduation Projects

The structure of an M&E system depends on the project - its design, its purpose, available human and financial resources, and the context in which the project is delivered. For example, the M&E system of a project meant to strengthen government authorities’ capacity to advocate for clean energy policy is going to look and behave very differently from the M&E system of a GA4R project, meant to equip, through intensive coaching, extremely poor refugees with behaviors, skills, and knowledge needed to achieve sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance.

### 2.2.1 Monitoring

Effective monitoring of GA projects calls for adequate planning, selection of contextually valid and well-crafted indicators, collection of reliable data through appropriate methods, analysis of the data, and access to and use of the data by the right players.

In GA4R projects, routine monitoring data is used to:

- Provide managers with information about how well the project is being implemented.
- Track participant progress toward meeting project objectives and reaching Graduation Criteria.

- Provide coaches with information they need to understand participants' challenges and to come up with proactive, effective responses.
- Provide managers and coaches with data needed for decision-making, allowing staff to identify and reinforce positive results, and to address weaknesses and obstacles through course correction.
- Produce participant and household level data that can be analyzed to identify trends and to help test assumptions underpinning the theory of change. (Note that this objective is often only associated with evaluations but monitoring data can also play an important role.)

**Types of Monitoring Data.** In GA projects, staff must continually respond to the changing needs of participants and reinforce or adapt training messages through the coaching component. As such, regular monitoring is integral to project management and success. Access to up-to-date information collected through regular monitoring allows coaches to track participants' progress, respond quickly to emergent problems, and identify trends.

Aside from providing coaches with information to work effectively, household, savings group, livelihoods activity and other data enable supervisors and managers to support coaches, adjust project inputs, make other management decisions and learn. Streamlining monitoring helps to ensure that only data which is needed and will be used goes to the right staff at the appropriate intervals.

Specifically, all GA projects should aim to collect the following types of monitoring data:

- Participant and savings group-level data collected and used by coaches to guide coaching
- Participants and savings groups –level data (generally collected by coaches) and reported up to others for analysis and project management
- Data on coaching provision and quality collected and used by supervisors
- Data on the provision and quality of other inputs, including trainings and asset transfers
- Data around drop-outs used for project management and learning

## 2.2.2 Evaluation

Evaluation can serve many purposes, such as to:

- Determine if desired outcomes have been achieved.
- Identify ways in which programs can achieve the same or better results for lower costs.
- Assess adaptations for particular contexts; evaluate impacts of the approach on different segments of the extreme poor.
- Determine how to improve targeting.
- Understand long-term costs and benefits and develop strategies to ensure sustainability.
- Determine the validity of hypotheses underlying the project's theory of change (e.g., whether the project's asset transfer is enough to enable participants to reach the Graduation Criteria).

**Types of Evaluation for GA Projects.** At a minimum, all GA projects should include assessment of outcomes against targets and Graduation Criteria. This requires administration of baseline surveys, which are also important to help refine targets and inform project design. While baseline surveys can be compared to endline evaluations to assess progress against targets, it is important to note the limitations of this approach, as this method is unable to fully attribute the observed changes to the intervention.

Please see [Section 6](#) for more detailed information about evaluation in GA projects.

## 2.3 Good M&E Practices for Graduation for Refugees Projects

The following good practices should be implemented for all monitoring and evaluation efforts implemented related to the Graduation Approach for refugees:

- Processes should be participatory and transparent. (See [Text Box 2](#))
- Applicable M&E lessons and good practices, including M&E tools, such as those suggested in this Guide and Toolkit, should be adapted from other GA projects.
- Project plans should earmark at least 5-10% of implementing costs for M&E. Please see the [Zip Folder](#) for an **M&E Budget Template** to help guide planning.
- The team should include at least one M&E staff or person responsible for coordinating M&E activities. M&E staff, having the relevant skills, should engage in team meetings and collaborate in planning. **Roles and responsibilities** for M&E activities will vary somewhat by project. [Table 2](#), below, shows an example of M&E Roles and Responsibilities from the UNHCR GA4R project in Zimbabwe.
- To the extent possible/logical, project indicators should reflect or align with UNHCR Livelihoods Indicators (see [Zip Folder](#) for these Indicators and their Guidance Sheets) and other relevant standard indicators.
- M&E should be viewed with an eye towards scaling up, which requires very streamlined monitoring systems and tools. However, in a pilot stage, it is often worth investing more in M&E and explicitly integrating learning objectives throughout the implementation period, to be addressed through monitoring data or specific evaluation activities.
- M&E processes and tools should reflect global principles, standards, and best practices.

### Text Box 2. Participatory Methods

Through participatory methods, participants and community leaders are involved in targeting, monitoring and evaluation, and the processes of accountability. Participatory processes are essential to ensure ownership and cultural pertinence:

- The definition of poverty, used for targeting, is made at community level with community leaders, based on local indicators and definitions.
- Participants contribute to defining their own Graduation Criteria to define project success and their exit from extreme poverty.
- Participatory M&E can enable participants and their groups to track their own performance toward their own goals.
- Participants are involved in the analysis of data, including identifying key lessons. They may also be involved in the dissemination of results, for example through testimonies.

Table 2. Illustrative Example of M&E Roles and Responsibilities in GA4R Projects, from UNHCR Zimbabwe project

Step	Role	Responsibility
Targeting	Participants / stakeholders (PP/SH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide input to refine exclusion/inclusion criteria</li> </ul>
	Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect household data</li> <li>• Mobilize community members on targeting activities</li> <li>• Participate in targeting meetings</li> </ul>
	IP M&E staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop targeting data collection tools</li> <li>• Configure tools into KoBoCollect or relevant software</li> <li>• Conduct data cleaning, analysis, and report writing</li> <li>• Provide input and feedback on exclusion/inclusion criteria</li> </ul>
	IP Program (non-M&E) staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select geographic targeting area</li> <li>• Draft exclusion/inclusion criteria</li> <li>• Supervise coaches/enumerators on data collection</li> <li>• Conduct data quality checks</li> </ul>
	UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select geographic targeting area</li> <li>• Draft exclusion/inclusion criteria</li> <li>• Ensure selected households are eligible for the project</li> </ul>
	Trickle Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide technical support on targeting for GA4R</li> </ul>
Monitoring	PP/SH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in data collection, and where possible analysis of data</li> </ul>
	Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection (household/participant monitoring)</li> <li>• Use collected data (from M&amp;E staff) to inform coaching</li> <li>• Provide qualitative information during learning meetings</li> <li>• Assist in savings group data collection</li> </ul>
	Coaches' Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check quality of coaching and quality of data collected by coaches</li> </ul>
	IP Program staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support in data quality assurance and data verification</li> <li>• Assist in triangulation of data and verification of quality of data produced by M&amp;E team</li> </ul>
	IP M&E staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train staff on use of monitoring tools</li> <li>• Perform data quality spot checks and verification, data cleaning and analysis</li> <li>• Develop data collection tools and configure them into mobile devices, if applicable</li> <li>• Manage project database</li> <li>• Produce monitoring reports and share with supervisors</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share summarized printout reports with coaches<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Assist in identifying trends and learning from analyzed data for use by program staff</li> </ul>
	UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct Data Quality Assessments (DQAs)</li> <li>• Approve and share M&amp;E reports</li> <li>• Learn from data, incorporate data into current and future programming</li> </ul>
	Trickle Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide GA technical support</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluations (Baseline &amp; Endline Evaluations)</b>	PP/SH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), provide input to refine and finalize Graduation Criteria</li> </ul>
	Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate access to participants for enumerators to do surveys or collect data directly from participants if evaluation is undertaken internally (Note: this may be cheaper, and coaches are sometimes in a position to get more accurate data, but objectivity may be at greater risk and it may not be appropriate if data needs to be confidential).</li> </ul>
	IP Program staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support in data quality assurance and data verification</li> </ul>
	IP M&E staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train staff on use of evaluation tools and methods</li> <li>• Lead surveys, including baseline evaluation (development of tools, Terms of Reference (ToR), data analysis, report writing and presentation)</li> <li>• Provide input and feedback on Graduation Criteria</li> <li>• Spearhead development of indicators and their targets</li> <li>• Populate GA M&amp;E planning and start up templates</li> <li>• Ensure quality data collection and data quality</li> <li>• Supervise coaches/enumerators on data collection</li> </ul>
	IP Program staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Graduation Criteria, later refine using baseline, PP/SH input, experts and secondary data</li> <li>• Support in set targets for project indicators, including Graduation Criteria</li> <li>• Support quality data collection and data quality</li> </ul>
	UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Graduation Criteria prior to baseline, later refine with baseline info and input from participant, stakeholders, experts, secondary data</li> <li>• Validate the baseline survey report</li> </ul>
	Trickle Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide UNHCR and IPs with GA4R technical support</li> </ul>
	UNHCR M&E staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support or lead data spot checks and DQAs</li> </ul>
	Trickle Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide technical support on data quality checks and DQAs</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Unless coaches are using a data collection system that provides them with a dashboard or access to the data.

# 3. Targeting Graduation Participants

## 3.1 Overview

While participant targeting is a programmatic activity, not an M&E activity, there are key areas of overlap. This section of the guide provides an overview of the targeting process and presents some key considerations to keep in mind.

**What.** Participant targeting is the process of identifying and selecting the participants who will benefit from the GA.

UNHCR has a mandate to protect and support refugees. However, only some refugees are appropriate Graduation participants. In the context of GA for refugees, projects target the poorest persons of concern (includes refugees, and in some projects, host community members) who can engage in sustainable livelihoods activities. Specifically, Graduation participants must be:

- **Engaged in, or have the potential/capability to be engaged in, sustainable livelihoods, and**
- **Extremely poor**, not able to sufficiently benefit from less intensive approaches. (e.g., if a household's only restraint is financial, then simply providing capital would be more effective than applying the GA.)

Graduation participants are usually: chronically food insecure, in poor health, lacking education, socially isolated, disconnected from government services, and have few or no assets and limited livelihoods options. However, they ***must not*** be:

- Too vulnerable (e.g., children) to participate in livelihoods activities, or
- Among the merely poor or better-off poor (see [Figure 1](#)).

**Why.** The GA is a livelihoods intervention intentionally designed for people living in extreme poverty. Following a targeting process helps ensure that those selected for the project fit within the project's specific selection criteria, and therefore are most likely to benefit from the project's impact.

**Who.** The IP leads participant targeting, with the assistance of other stakeholders, including PoCs, community leaders, UN agencies, and governments. Trickle Up can also support the targeting process.

**When.** Participant targeting can often begin immediately after project conceptualization and must be completed prior to the launch of the project. Depending on the methodology, targeting may take 2-3 months.

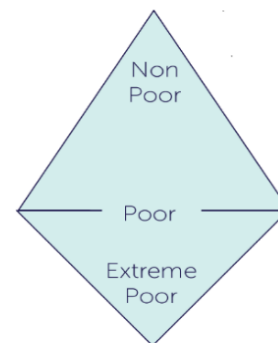


Figure 1. Graduation Diamond



## 3.2 Graduation Targeting Process

This section outlines the five-step process for participant targeting in the GA4R context.<sup>3</sup>

### Step 1. Selection of Program Area(s)

The first step of targeting is the selection of program area(s) where the Graduation project will be piloted. To do so, it is necessary to identify areas where there is a high density of refugees living in extreme poverty.

National poverty maps, UNHCR databases, and data from regional or local governments may often be leveraged.

Next, specific municipalities, neighborhoods, refugee camps, or areas within a refugee camp should be identified. Depending on the context, areas with higher poverty levels may be identified by a variety of indicators. In an urban refugee context, housing density and assets may be the most indicative of poverty, whereas in a camp setting access to land and housing materials may be considered. See **Text Box 3** for additional tips related to program area selection.

#### Text Box 3. Tips: Program Area Selection

- Set yourself up for success; start simple and get the basics right
- Limit yourself to one representative location
  - Focus attention on learning how GA works in your context
  - Being intentional about selection helps control certain variables
- Select an area with a high concentration of refugees
  - 250+ households that meet the Graduation Criteria
  - Population density
- Select area that has adequate lead IP for coaching
- Ensure access to markets
  - In rural areas, if possible, select an area with multiple agricultural cycles/year

### Step 2: Definition of Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria

Once the program area has been selected, UNHCR and the IP, with input from stakeholders, including PoCs, must define initial exclusion and inclusion criteria for the Graduation project. Choosing clear, logical, and measurable selection criteria and communicating them to partners and participants helps to ensure transparency and encourages buy-in.

See **Text Box 4** for a list of guiding questions to help choose exclusion and inclusion criteria.

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to BRAC (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2016/Poverty-SDGs/BRAC-PROPEL-Toolkit.pdf>) and CGAP ([https://www.microfinancegateway.org/sites/default/files/pei\\_graduation\\_technical\\_guide\\_2018\\_edition\\_0.pdf](https://www.microfinancegateway.org/sites/default/files/pei_graduation_technical_guide_2018_edition_0.pdf)) for additional information about targeting methodologies used for Graduation in other contexts.

**Text Box 4. Considerations for Defining Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria**

**Exclusion Criteria**

- Common considerations may include refugee status, migration, vulnerability, age, assets.

**Inclusion Criteria**

- What poverty indicators will your program use as inclusion criteria?
  - Use the Socioeconomic Assessment (SEA) to guide targeting inclusion and exclusion criteria.
  - Does UNHCR already use any poverty indicators?
  - How does UNHCR or the local government define poverty here? What is the Minimum Expenditure Basket?
  - Where/how can you find this information?
- What other socioeconomic indicators will your program use as inclusion criteria?
  - Does UNHCR already use other socioeconomic indicators?
  - Asset indicators? Food security indicator, etc.?
  - Where/how can you find this information?

**Table 3**, below, includes examples of exclusion and inclusion criteria used by UNHCR Mozambique and UNHCR Malawi, respectively, for Graduation projects.

**Table 3. Examples of Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria**

UNHCR Mozambique GA pilot	
Exclusion Criteria	Inclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentive earners</li> <li>• Children under age 18</li> <li>• People engaged in formal employment</li> <li>• People engaged in large businesses</li> <li>• New arrivals (&lt;6 months in camp)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households with a <math>\geq 1:3</math> dependency ratio<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Single female-headed households</li> <li>• Households with a family member with a specific vulnerability</li> <li>• Participants living in overcrowded conditions</li> </ul>
UNHCR Malawi GA pilot	
Exclusion Criteria	Inclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children under age 18</li> <li>• Too ill to participate in livelihoods</li> <li>• Formal employment (host)</li> <li>• Home ownership (host)</li> <li>• New arrivals (&lt; 6 months in camp)</li> <li>• Already enrolled in livelihoods project (camp)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No/little income</li> <li>• Large family/household size</li> <li>• No/few productive assets</li> <li>• Single-headed household</li> <li>• Debts (host)</li> <li>• &lt; 2 meals/day (host)</li> </ul>

**Step 3. Household Targeting**

The third step of the Graduation targeting process is household (HH) targeting. Upon completion of the household targeting step, the project should have a preliminary list of potential Graduation participants. This section provides an overview of household poverty targeting methods, considerations to help operations select most appropriate methods, and examples from GA projects.

<sup>4</sup> The dependency ratio is an age-population ratio of those typically not in the labor force (the dependent part, ages 0 to 14 and 65+) and those typically in the labor force (the productive part, ages 15 to 64).

To the extent possible, key stakeholders, including community leaders and representatives from the target population, should be involved in defining “poverty” in their context and in the development of a potential list of program participants. The method, or combination of methods used, depends on several contextual factors, including geographical location, availability of resources, including staff capacity, and timeframe:

- **Context** – How is poverty understood in this context? What existing tools and data can be leveraged to help us understand poverty in this context? Is poverty within the target group homogenous? Is poverty within the group geographically concentrated or spread out?
- **Resources** – What is the capacity of staff to execute different types of targeting? How many staff/coaches are available to collect and verify data? Are there community leaders who can participate in the targeting process?
- **Timeframe** – How much time do we have available to implement household targeting? Are we certain that we will be able to select the right people within this timeframe?

Within the household targeting step, there are several methods by which a project may make its initial selection of potential participants. The project may: make use of household databases, if available, undertake a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), employ a poverty scorecard, utilize community leadership, or rely on existing participants to refer others. A brief description of each of these methods follows.

#### METHOD A. HOUSEHOLD DATABASES

In some contexts, UNHCR, the government, or another institution may have accurate and relatively recent household databases available, which can be leveraged for poverty targeting. Though not without its challenges, when an accurate household database is available, this is often the most efficient way to proceed.

Table 4. Household Databases, Pros and Cons

Household Databases	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient - faster to extract from already available data</li> <li>• May help build stakeholder buy-in (government, UNHCR, etc.)</li> <li>• Quantitative in nature, more objective</li> <li>• Low cost</li> <li>• Does not require high staff capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not incorporate community input</li> <li>• The definition of poverty may be different from GA’s or target population’s definition</li> <li>• Accessibility can be a challenge due to data protection policies, e.g., ProGres database access requires UNHCR authorization</li> <li>• Indicators may overlook or miss some aspects of poverty and vulnerability</li> <li>• Databases may be dated or inaccurate</li> </ul>

#### METHOD B. PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL

PRA is a targeting method favored by “classic” GA projects for its participatory nature. In a PRA, communities actively engage in the targeting process. One tool commonly used is Poverty Wealth Ranking (PWR), in which communities are asked first to define “poverty” in their community’s context based on specific wealth/poverty criteria, and then to identify and rank the poorest households in their community. Consultation with communities and individuals through PWR helps ensure that community definitions of poverty and the value base they reflect inform project design.

While PRA processes tend to give a much nuanced understanding of poverty, they are time- and resource-heavy, which may be prohibitive for some GA projects. Similarly, in contexts where refugees may have distrust or do not know each other well, PRA processes have not been especially successful, to date.

Table 5. PRA/PWR, Pros and Cons

PRA/PWR	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparent</li> <li>• Participatory – reflects community values and builds buy-in</li> <li>• Results in a localized, contextualized definition of poverty</li> <li>• Favored by the Graduation community of practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not work well in contexts where community members do not know each other</li> <li>• Does not work well in large regions</li> <li>• Requires context expertise to design and conduct</li> <li>• Time and resource intensive</li> <li>• Qualitative in nature, more subjective</li> </ul>

### METHOD C. POVERTY SCORECARD

A household means-test survey is a simple survey that uses indicators to measure household poverty. In many refugee contexts, where target groups are not especially cohesive, are not very trustful of each other or project staff, or do not know each other well, a customized poverty survey with scorecard can help assess and rank potential participants’ relative poverty rates. A poverty scorecard should include a broad range of socioeconomic measures, both financial and non-financial, such as indicators related to food security, coping mechanisms, livelihoods, self-esteem, disabilities in the household, single parenthood, dependency ratio, and other areas relevant to the particular situation.

Often there may be existing poverty scorecards that an implementing organization can leverage and adapt to reflect its local context or to address specific programmatic goals, notably the Grameen Foundation’s Progress out of Poverty Index (PPI)<sup>5</sup> tools and USAID’s Poverty Assessment Tools.<sup>6</sup> Note that these instruments are *not* developed for the GA nor for refugees. As such, always assess the appropriateness of an existing tool in a particular context and make necessary adaptations to the tool or the method before implementing.

With the help of FGDs, the UNHCR GA pilot in Mozambique modified a recent Mozambique PPI tool into its household targeting approach, simplifying and adapting it into a straightforward scorecard that fit the Maratane refugee camp context. Then, the pilot created and applied another scorecard to verify (see [Step 4, Household Verification](#), below) the poverty level of self-selected potential participants.

<sup>5</sup> Progress out of Poverty Index (PPI), <https://www.povertyindex.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Poverty Assessment Tool (PAT), <https://www.povertytools.org/>

Table 6. Poverty Scorecard, Pros and Cons

Poverty Scorecard	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can often leverage previous (tested) work</li> <li>• Quantitative in nature – objective</li> <li>• May require fewer resources and staff capacity</li> <li>• Suited to contexts in which target group members do not know each other well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does a good job of distinguishing between the better and worse off, but not necessarily between levels of extreme poverty</li> <li>• Tool adaptation requires some expertise</li> <li>• Requires some expertise to develop scoring system</li> <li>• Poverty may not be contextualized to refugee context</li> </ul>

#### METHOD D. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

In contexts where community leadership is in place and well-functioning, engaging these leaders in the selection process can legitimize it and build community buy-in. A group of recognized leaders drawn from across various sub-groups (e.g., women, health practitioners, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and youth) brings valuable knowledge about their community and may be leveraged to develop a preliminary list of households appropriate for the GA.

Table 7. Community Leadership, Pros and Cons

Community Leadership	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involving community leaders lends legitimacy to the selection process and builds buy-in</li> <li>• Community leaders have unique and valuable knowledge about their community members</li> <li>• Requires less staff capacity than PRA/PWR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not suited to contexts in which target group members do not know each other well</li> <li>• Community leadership may be biased</li> <li>• If leaders are not widely respected, selection could be perceived as illegitimate or favoring certain groups</li> </ul>

#### METHOD E. SNOWBALL METHODOLOGY

The “snowball” methodology, also called “chain” or “referral” methodology, relies on existing participants to recruit future subjects from among their own acquaintances. This methodology is often used to target populations that are difficult for practitioners to access. In the GA4R context, it is most appropriate in a setting where UNHCR or the IP may not be aware of, or in contact with, all refugee households or potential participants, as is the case in many urban settings.

Table 8. Snowball Methodology, Pros and Cons

Snowball Methodology	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverages networks of PoCs</li> <li>• Does not require high level of staff capacity</li> <li>• Suited to contexts in which target group members are difficult to access</li> <li>• Can help overcome the challenge of not having existing contact with potential participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective</li> <li>• Selection bias – participants subsequently identified depend on the first group of participants</li> <li>• Risk missing eligible participants that are unknown to the referring parties</li> </ul>

### Step 4: Household Verification

Once an initial list of potential Graduation participants is developed, the list must be verified in anticipation of final participant selection. As with the previous step, one or many of the following methodologies may be utilized as part of household verification, depending on the context. Similarly, flexibility and judgement on the part of staff should be maintained at this step in the process.

#### METHOD A. MEANS-TEST SURVEYS

Like a poverty scorecard, a household means-test survey is a simple set of easily verifiable indicators that act as a proxy to measure poverty. Example indicators include land, livestock, family size, assets, and housing.

To confirm the results of the previously implemented poverty targeting activity, IP staff and/or coaches may apply a household means-test survey to those households ranked in the bottom 2/5 of the poverty targeting exercise.

As mentioned above, the UNHCR GA pilot in Mozambique, with FGD guidance, adapted PPI tool into a simplified, context-appropriate scorecard, then created and applied a verification scorecard (see [Text Box 5](#) for an excerpt) to confirm the poverty level of self-selected potential participants. Please see the [Zip Folder](#) for UNHCR Mozambique’s **Poverty Scorecard Verification Tool** and UNHCR Zimbabwe’s **Household Targeting Verification Tool and Scoresheet**.

#### Text Box 5. Excerpt from UNHCR Mozambique Household Verification Scorecard

- How many people usually live in your household?
- How many children are under the age of 15?
- How many are children aged 5 or below?
- How many rooms are used for sleeping?
- What is the main source of lighting for this house?
- What is the main material of the floor?
- What kind of toilet facility do members of your household usually use?
- Can the head of household read and write?
- What type of fuel does your household mainly use for cooking?
- Does your household have a table? A television? A mobile phone? A radio? A bicycle?
- Does your household have access to land for cultivation (owned or rented)?
- If yes, what is the size of your plot?

**Text Box 6** describes a similar tool adapted by UNHCR for use in Ecuador.<sup>7</sup>

## METHOD B. VERIFICATION VISITS

In some instances, it may be advantageous for project staff to conduct household visits to verify the socioeconomic status of the preliminary participants identified through the previous step. As many of the aforementioned poverty targeting methodologies are

somewhat subjective in nature and/or overlook many aspects of poverty and other vulnerabilities, a face-to-face visit with potentially eligible households can help finalize participant selection. While ideally all households might be visited, resource limitations often require a project to conduct household verification visits for a randomly selected sample of households only.

### Text Box 6. UNHCR Ecuador Example

UNHCR Ecuador used a household targeting tool, the [Local Integration Index](#) (LII), which addresses the context specific to refugees in Ecuador. The LII employs a survey questionnaire to measure three dimensions: legal, economic, and socio-cultural. UNHCR originally created the tool for non-GA projects and then adapted it. HIAS and UNHCR developed a simplified, 20-question scoring calculator for the GA pilot. Following the survey and scoring, results were verified through committee meetings and/or home visits. The final selection of participants is based upon the household scores and verification.

## Step 5. Final Household Selection

The fifth and final step of Graduation targeting is to develop the final list of selected participating households. It is recommended to include approximately 20 percent more households than the project anticipates targeting, to allow for participant dropout and other forms of attrition.

## 3.3 UNHCR Zimbabwe Targeting Case Study

Each project must consider its context, the strengths and weaknesses of its human and financial resources, and the pros and cons of the available methods in order to decide which targeting approach(es) will work best. Please see the case study below for an overview of how UNHCR Zimbabwe and its IP, GOAL, approached the five-step Graduation targeting process:

1. **Selection of Program Area.** As there is only one refugee camp in Zimbabwe, Tongogara Refugee Camp was selected for the pilot project. While Trickle Up advised that the Graduation pilot project only be in the Section of the camp with the highest incidence of poverty, this recommendation was rejected and targeting was camp-wide.
2. **Definition of Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria:** The project team developed context-specific selection indicators based upon the SEA, then met with a Beneficiary Selection Committee composed of community leaders to refine and agree upon the exclusion/inclusion criteria.
3. **Household Targeting.** After developing draft exclusion and inclusion criteria, the Beneficiary Selection Committee, composed of religious and other PoC community leaders, used these indicators to create a list of 300 households (from a total household population of greater than 2000 in Tongogara Refugee Camp) for consideration for the Graduation pilot.
4. **Household Verification:** After the shortlisting of the 300 households, UNHCR and GOAL developed a household means-test tool to verify the poverty levels of the selected households. Household verification was conducted by coaches and supervised by GOAL staff.
  - **Define poverty.** UNHCR and GOAL, with support from Trickle Up, conducted a FGD with community members to assess how the community defined poverty within three

<sup>7</sup> New steps to measure local integration. UNHCR Ecuador 2015. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/50852>

categories: Very Poor, Poor, and Better Off. Findings from the SEA were used to inform the development of the FGD. **Table 9** below provides an overview of key findings. See [Zip Folder](#) for UNHCR Zimbabwe’s **FGD for Community Members Tool**.

Table 9. UNHCR Zimbabwe Poverty Indicators

Better Off	Poor	Very Poor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owns a car</li> <li>• Owns big shops in the camp (not tuck shops)</li> <li>• Income of at least \$200/month</li> <li>• House of at least 3 bedrooms</li> <li>• Owns grinding mills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casual workers, unemployed</li> <li>• Signs of malnutrition</li> <li>• Always in debt, can’t re-pay</li> <li>• Small house (2 rooms)</li> <li>• Many children</li> <li>• Not members of any savings group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depend on Cash Based Interventions, not enough to sustain them</li> <li>• Socially disconnected</li> <li>• Begging, unemployed</li> <li>• Dilapidated houses</li> <li>• Signs of malnutrition</li> <li>• Many children</li> </ul>

- **Draft household means-test tool and scorecard.** Using the information learned, the team developed a draft household means-test, **UNHCR Zimbabwe Household Targeting Verification Tool** and an accompanying **Verification Tool Scoresheet** (see [Zip Folder](#)).
  - **Configure targeting tool into mobile data collection system and test.** Trickle Up programmed the tool, including the scoring mechanism, into KoBoCollect, UNHCR Zimbabwe’s M&E management information system (MIS).
  - **Train coaches.** Over the course of a half-day, Trickle Up and GOAL trained five coaches in the use of the UNHCR Zimbabwe Household Verification Tool and Verification Tool Scoresheet by reviewing the tool, question-by-question, on the coaches’ smartphones.
  - **Test and revise household verification tool.** The coaches, with support from Trickle Up and GOAL, pre-tested the tool by implementing it with 30 randomly selected households. Trickle Up and GOAL made final adjustments to the UNHCR Zimbabwe Household Verification Tool and Verification Tool Scoresheet.
  - **Data collection.** The coaches applied the final tool to the 300 shortlisted households through individual household visits. Data was collected electronically using hand-held tablets. GOAL staff supervised the 10-day process.
  - **Analyze data.** Trickle Up, with support from GOAL, uploaded the data from the mobile devices to the KoBoCollect cloud. Data was exported to Excel for analysis.
5. **Final Household Selection.** KoBoCollect scored and ranked households by poverty level using the data collected from the UNHCR Zimbabwe Household Verification Tool and Verification Tool Scoresheet. To ensure a minimum of 100 participating households, the final household selection over-selected 25 households to account for anticipated attrition and drop-outs. The 125 households with the lowest score (highest poverty level) were selected for the Graduation project.



## 3.4 Good Practices for Participant Targeting

The following good practices should be implemented for all participant targeting activities related to the GA4R:

- Properly communicate the theory and purpose for targeting decisions, including selection criteria, to the community and, where applicable, government stakeholders. Emphasize the value addition of the project on household savings and income-generating activities, to encourage participation and understanding.
- Poverty should be defined for the project with input from the target population about how they perceive and define poverty in their context. This definition may be different, and more fitting, than how UNHCR or IPs define it. Poverty indicators must be relevant and the scoring rubric meaningful. This helps ensure an appropriate definition of poverty and build buy-in from the community and other relevant stakeholders.
- A number of different targeting mechanisms may be used for participant targeting. Be sure to consider local context, resources and timeframe, to justify the selected methodology(ies).
- To the extent possible, draw from relevant secondary data around socioeconomic indicators to inform targeting methods and tool design. (e.g., SEA, existing poverty scorecards, government databases, etc.).
- Use a balance of financial and non-financial indicators (food security, capacity to cope with risks or coping mechanisms, self-esteem, and sustainable livelihoods) and qualitative and quantitative tools to help understand the socioeconomic status of participants.
- When possible, apply a mix of community based (e.g., PRA) and evidence based (e.g., scorecard) techniques. Triangulate methods to reduce bias and help ensure people are not excluded, either due to error or deliberately.
- Graduation targeting must be implemented flexibly. Especially when utilizing quantitative tools, there may be cases when a potential household may not meet all criteria, but the project may assess that the household should still qualify based upon the full household profile.
- Pre-testing data collection tools is important. Let findings guide the tool development.

# 4. Graduation Criteria

## 4.1 Overview

**What.** Graduation Criteria are context-relevant household indicators that mark a participant's movement out of poverty. Collectively, a project's Graduation Criteria enable the assessment of a household's progress towards, or across, a threshold predetermined to signal that the household has attained, and is likely to be able to sustain for the long-term, a level of wellbeing and self-reliance so as to avoid sliding back into extreme poverty. Participants are considered to have "graduated" when they meet all, or a mandatory number, of Graduation Criteria indicator targets. In other words, Graduation Criteria represent what "success" looks like for participants in the project. As such, these targets should inform all project design, and be reflected in the project's M&E system.

**Important!** Graduation is not a magic line that participants cross and are suddenly and permanently resilient to falling back into poverty. If only it were that simple. It is a certainty that some participants, being extremely poor, and often vulnerable in other ways as well (e.g., refugees, single mothers, people with disabilities), will backslide before progressing forward again. The acquisition of increased savings, assets, skills, self-confidence, diversified income sources, and links to networks and services in their communities build resilience, but graduation from extreme poverty is a process.

**Why.** Graduation Criteria help us:

- Articulate what constitutes participant success, or "graduation."
- Guide program design in relation to that articulation of success.
- Reflect the project's theory of change, which explains how and why we believe each outcome area is important for participants to be successful and maintain their progress.
- Assess households' progress towards graduation by monitoring progress against Graduation Criteria, or other indicators that contribute to achievement of Graduation Criteria.

**Who.** UNHCR livelihoods staff, IP livelihoods and program staff, and participants themselves should all contribute to the development of Graduation Criteria. Often coaches are responsible for collecting data related to Graduation Criteria as part of the HMT (See [Section 5](#)).

**When.** UNHCR livelihoods staff, IP staff and partners, with support from Trickle Up, often draft Graduation Criteria during the initial Design Mission. While defining Graduation Criteria and setting their targets is an iterative process and some Criteria and/or targets may need adjustments throughout the design phase, during start-up, in response to FDGs and the baseline evaluation data results (see [Section 6](#)), the Criteria should be defined early in the process. *It is important that Graduation Criteria inform project design more than vice versa.* For pilot projects, it may also be necessary to re-evaluate the Graduation Criteria about six months into project implementation.

Coaches usually track at least some Graduation Criteria - or indicators that suggest progress toward Graduation Criteria targets - during each coaching visit. In addition, IP staff may take regular (such as

annual or every six months) measurements of participants’ progress against Graduation Criteria in order to *evaluate* whether or not they are on track to “graduation.”

## 4.2 Defining Graduation Criteria

The process of drafting and finalizing Graduation Criteria is iterative and is often completed over the course of many months. Nonetheless, the criteria must be well defined, appropriately contextualized, and clearly explained to all GA stakeholders.

Each project should develop approximately **six to ten clear draft Graduation Criteria**. This process often takes place during the Design Mission and is informed by SEA data. There should be at least one Graduation Criterion defined for each of the Graduation goals or project areas outlined in [Table 10](#) below.

Table 10. Sample Graduation Criteria

Graduation Goal	Sample Graduation Criteria
1) Establish food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumes (2) (nutritious) meals per day during the previous (1) week</li> </ul>
2) Establish sustainable, stabilized income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earned (X) income for the last (6) months</li> <li>Sustains employment for (6) months</li> <li>Has (X) sources of income in the HH</li> </ul>
3) Establish savings (including assets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has (X) in savings</li> <li>Assets worth (X) amount</li> </ul>
4) Establish self-confidence/agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a plan for the future</li> <li>Knows his/her rights</li> </ul>
5) Establish access to networks and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attends (2) community events each month</li> <li>Belongs to (X) groups (savings, church, youth, etc.)</li> </ul>
6) Other <sup>8</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be determined by the participant him/herself</li> </ul>

Some Graduation Criteria can stand on their own as meaningful indicators. However, in other cases the category may be too complex to be collected through a single indicator, especially those related to food security and income. In such cases, sub-indicators must be developed to capture meaningful information. [Section 4.3](#) goes into more detail about this process.

### 4.2.1 Guiding Questions for Graduation Criteria and Indicator Development

The following questions can help guide the development of appropriate Graduation Criteria:

- Which **characteristics** play a **direct role** in supporting households to **engage in livelihoods and become more resilient** against shocks? Why? How? Are they reflected in the criteria?
- Are there other factors that are important for the **long-term wellbeing** of the household or its members, for example that children are attending school, or the household has access to potable water and sanitation?
- Has the **SEA** and/or other relevant **secondary data sources** been consulted to inform the criteria?

<sup>8</sup> Graduation should also mean that participants meet some of their own personal objectives.

- Does the criterion incorporate **participant input**? Confirming criterion suitability with participants helps to ensure contextual fit and participant buy-in.
- Do the criteria reflect the **policy environment** (e.g., labor laws of the project country)
- Have **relevant standard indicators**, or indicators that align with those of other GA projects, been selected or adapted? While Criteria will vary by geographic, social, and financial contexts, it can be useful, to the extent it is logical, to measure Graduation in a similar way across operations, especially within the same country or region. Alignment generates understanding among staff and participants and can simplify monitoring of multiple projects. See **Text Box 7** for examples of standard indicators that may be relevant to GA4R projects.
- Is the criterion **coherent**? Projects target the extreme poor based on certain criteria, so it makes sense to reflect progress made along these criteria at the end of the project. The Graduation Criteria wording and targets should be simple and easy to understand.
- Is the criterion **meaningful**? Graduation Criteria need to be ambitious yet achievable within the project timeline. They must also reflect the intervention. For example, it is unrealistic to expect improved health outcomes after an 18-month intervention if the project did not specifically include access to healthcare as a component.
- Is the criterion **measurable**? Indicators must lend themselves to being measured with a reasonable level of accuracy. This means that the indicator should be quantifiable and time bound. While some measures of meaningful economic changes are easy to assess (e.g., increases in savings), others, such as income, tend to be quite complex, as are some less tangible indicators, such as increase in self-esteem. Given most Graduation Criteria should help inform management decisions, their collection should not rely on sophisticated, expensive techniques (such the long surveys used in RCTs), which would not be cost-effective. Therefore, it is important to take into account what is useful and reasonable to assess within a project’s own internal M&E system, including what level of reliability is “good enough.”
- Does the criterion represent a meaningful **threshold or end state**? For example, knowing how much money a participant *saves per month* may make for a more useful monitoring indicator, but a target related to how much a participant *has in savings* can be more directly related to a state of resilience (see examples below for linking targets with goals).
- Is the criterion **participant-oriented** versus out of participants’ control? For example, self-confidence is an important project outcome and influences participants’ ability to pursue the project’s goals, so it is important to track participants’ subjective sense of wellbeing. On the other hand, legal status is not within the participant’s control.

**Text Box 7. Examples of GA4R Relevant Standard Indicators**

- [Refugee Self-Reliance Index indicators](#) (See [Zip Folder](#))
- [UNHCR Livelihoods Indicators](#) (See [Zip Folder](#))
- [USAID Cross-Cutting Gender Indicators](#)
- [Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index \(WEAI\)](#)
- [SGD Goal 1: End Poverty indicators](#)

## 4.3 Setting Graduation Indicators and Targets

As noted above, it is important that Graduation Criteria collectively describe a situation in which participants have moved out of extreme poverty and are likely to be able to sustain that condition (or are on a viable path to this situation). This means that each target must have a tangible connection to this desired end state.

**Periodically assess the Graduation Criteria's appropriateness.** No pilot project gets everything right on the first try. Draft Graduation Criteria are developed using informed assumptions. As such, it is important to test those assumptions and amend the Criteria, *if needed*, based on learnings. Trickle Up recommends reviewing Graduation Criteria about six months after implantation begins. However, revisions should be based on revisiting assumptions about what a participant or household needs to achieve wellbeing and resilience, *rather than* lowering the bar of what a project is expected to achieve. The latter should instead prompt rethinking of the project design rather than the criteria themselves.

**Important!** A common mistake is to design targets based on what staff believe is likely achievable, given a project's design, rather than first identifying the desired end state, then working backwards to determine key design inputs (e.g., asset transfer amounts, length of intervention) required to reach this state. That said, some iteration and compromise is almost always required.

The following sections provide additional guidance around indicator selection and target setting for a few of the most essential and commonly quantified Graduation goals: food security, income/livelihoods, savings, self-confidence/agency, and access to networks and services.

### 4.3.1 Food Security

Food security is one of the most tangible desired goals of GA projects. Food insecurity can also be a significant threat to achieving other Graduation targets by leading to irreversible coping strategies that undermine future productive potential. Food security-related indicators and targets are therefore critical Graduation Criteria.

Food security indicators can focus on:

- Consumption of or access to sufficient food (quantity)
- Consumption of or access to nutritious food (quality)
- Coping strategies during shortages
- Access to entitlements that directly support food security (depending on context)

#### 4.3.1.1 FOOD CONSUMPTION AND ACCESS

The first two indicator areas, **consumption of or access to sufficient food and nutritious food**, are the most important. For evaluation purposes, it is best to use a reputable, well-tested scale. Many such scales exist, and some of them combine aspects of both the quantity and quality of food.

Recommended scales include:

- **Food Consumption Score (FCS):** Developed by the World Food Program, and includes some metrics related to both access and nutrition.<sup>9</sup>
- **Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS):** As its name suggests, focuses more on nutrition. Guidance about the HDDS is on FAO's and FANTA's websites.<sup>10</sup>
- **Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS):** Provides a more general picture of food security. It is similar to the Household Food Insecurity Experience Index (HFIES), which is used

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/content/technical-guidance-sheet-food-consumption-analysis-calculation-and-use-food-consumption-score-food-s>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.fantaproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/HDDS\\_v2\\_Sep06\\_0.pdf](https://www.fantaproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/HDDS_v2_Sep06_0.pdf)

in the SDGs. However, the HFIAS is easier to analyze than the HFIES. Guidance about the HFIAS is on FAO's and FANTA's websites.<sup>11</sup>

Project staff and participants favor simpler indicators, particularly **number of meals consumed per day**. This metric has an intuitive meaning to many people, though *it is not a very rigorous indicator* given the complexity of defining what we mean by "meal." However, if "meal" is defined (e.g. cooked meals), and a timeframe is specified (e.g. in the previous week), this indicator can complement more rigorous indicators used by coaches and participants to define and measure progress.

If nutrition education is part of the project design, tracking **consumption of nutritious foods** can be a useful, both enhancing participant awareness and providing coaches with useful information to guide their actions. Tracking tools can include self-monitoring through "nutrition diaries," which can use pictures for participants or coaches with low literacy. Other types of indicators can also be useful, depending on the context. For example, where land is available, Trickle Up's Graduation projects encourage kitchen gardens, whose existence is easy to measure. Whether this indicator is considered high-level enough to be a Graduation Criteria depends on local conditions and project design.

Some Graduation projects measure Body Mass Index (BMI). However, as this requires special training and tools, and its interpretation must take into account a range of factors that can influence BMI, this measurement is *not recommended*.

#### 4.3.1.2 COPING STRATEGIES

Even the most successful participants can experience setbacks and shortages. How they cope can have a major impact on their future productivity and wellbeing. It is useful to distinguish between "**reversible**" coping strategies, such as drawing down savings or loans from savings groups, and "**irreversible**" coping strategies, such as selling productive assets, taking high interest loans, consuming seed stock or immature crops, pulling children from school, or skipping meals. Indicators to gauge coping strategies should be tailored to focus on lean seasons and may take the form of individual indicators or an index, such as the [Coping Strategies Index](#).<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.3.1.3 ACCESS TO FOOD-RELATED ENTITLEMENTS

While Graduation programs aim to promote self-reliance, it is also important to take into account access to entitlements that directly support food security, such as public distribution schemes or other subsidized food sources. However, the appropriateness of such measures is highly context dependent.

#### 4.3.1.4 GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FOOD SECURITY INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT

The following questions can help guide the development of appropriate Food Security indicators:

- **Food security for whom?** It is important to note that food is often not distributed equally within households, with men more often having preferential access. Some scales focus on the household, while most focus on a participant's individual experiences, or those of their

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fantaproject.org/monitoring-and-evaluation/household-food-insecurity-access-scale-hfias>

<sup>12</sup> [https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual\\_guide\\_proced/wfp211058.pdf](https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp211058.pdf)

children. When women are respondents this is generally not a problem. However, when not, it is worth specifying which individuals, such as female children or women, are the subject.

- **When to measure?** Food insecurity tends to have a seasonal component, particularly in agricultural regions. However, most projects do not have the luxury of aligning their assessment periods by season. Therefore, target setting and data analysis must take into account when the data was collected. For example, in some contexts we may not expect to see major changes in food security after harvests, but it can be very important to assess food access and coping strategies in the lean season prior.
- **What to monitor, what to evaluate?** While food security should be reflected in Graduation Criteria and evaluations, the value of tracking food security indicators throughout the project depends on the project's theory of change and, as with all indicators, what can be done in response to the data collected. For example, access to food is generally secured through sufficient income or resources to buy it (or, along with required skills, to grow it.) Therefore, it may be more useful to monitor livelihoods activities than progress toward food security targets themselves. If coaches find a household does not have enough to eat, their actions would likely focus on strategies to increase income or productivity. On the other hand, if nutrition education and behavior change is integrated into a project (behavior and beliefs are also understood to be barriers, along with resource constraints), then collecting monitoring data on the quality of food consumed (or produced) can be valuable to coaches.
- **How does data inform learning?** Another reason to collect monitoring data relates to informing learning about the functioning of program components. For example, consumption support is provided in Graduation projects to help households meet basic needs while they develop livelihoods skills. However, it is often not clear in advance what amount of consumption support is required, for how long, and when. Monitoring food security throughout a project can help inform such decisions.

### 4.3.2 Income/Livelihoods

Assessing the development, productivity and sustainability of income and livelihoods is one of the more difficult things to incorporate into monitoring systems. However, this area is also one of the most important, given the priority of livelihoods within the GA. A range of indicators should be used to assess progress in this area.

Some common indicators focus on:

- Diversification of livelihoods activities
- Income
- Productive assets
- Employment status
- Good livelihoods practices and skills

#### 4.3.2.1 DIVERSIFICATION OF LIVELIHOODS ACTIVITIES

The diversification of livelihoods activities can be important for resilience. However, the viability, or even desirability, of promoting diversification depends on context, particularly for refugees for whom income generation options can be highly limited. Where this is *not* the case, a good rule of thumb for a target is:

- Engagement in at least two different types of livelihoods activities

#### 4.3.2.2 INCOME

**Increased income** is another key goal of Graduation projects, but its assessment is challenging. Income can be assessed through surveys, but to be reliable they must be quite long and complex. Measurements of consumption tend to be more reliable. Nevertheless, income can be tracked. The **viability and cost-effectiveness** of doing so depends on several factors:

- **Function and objectives of coaching.** In some projects, an important function of coaches is to help participants keep basic records of the profitability of their activities. In such contexts, the process of asking about income can contribute to the objectives of coaching, and so does not require an extra cost in terms of time. However, the viability of this is itself dependent on some of the following points.
- **Education and skills of participants.** Most Graduation participants tend to be illiterate and have low numeracy skills – but this varies – which influences the viability of record keeping as an objective.
- **Education level of coaches.** Operational contexts can have huge impacts on the education level of coaches, which in turn influences the viability of their supporting record keeping among participants, and of helping them periodically estimate income if they are not able to keep records.
- **Frequency or intensity of coaching.** If coaches are not able to visit frequently, then following up on income will likely not be a good use of their time, nor may it be viable given the complexity that long recall periods add.
- **Types of livelihoods activities.** Regular basic record keeping of some activities, such as small commerce, is arguably more important for guiding their management than for other activities. Activities like animal husbandry and agriculture also require some analysis of recurring costs, such as feed and vaccinations, to inform profitability. Depending on the context, costs may be able to be estimated retrospectively.
  - **Caution:** careful accounting in Trickle Up’s programs in Guatemala revealed that a number of livestock-based activities, assumed by participants to be profitable, were in fact, not profitable when taking into account the many, small costs incurred prior to sale.
- **What level and type of data is “good enough.”** Highly rigorous data is not usually needed to inform the day-to-day decisions of coaches and their managers, as long as it gives a reasonable sense of the trajectory and productivity of activities, especially if its collection prompts useful conversations.

Good rules of thumb are to align income targets with:

- National poverty lines
- Cost of baskets of basic goods and services

**Important!** Even if it’s not deemed viable to incorporate income targets into Graduation Criteria due to data collection challenges, clarity on the level of income required to enable households to meet graduation goals is still necessary, given this informs project design, including the asset transfer amounts. As with other targets, income targets should be explicitly linked to a tangible threshold of wellbeing.



### 4.3.2.3 PRODUCTIVE ASSETS

**Productive assets are often easier to quantify than income, but their utility as an indicator depends on the types of livelihoods activities.** For asset-intensive activities such as livestock production, which requires significant investment in equipment, a good indicator is:

- Value of productive assets

However, small commerce, some services and some agricultural activities are not well assessed by asset value. Although one can include working capital and stock (in the case of commerce) and estimate of the value of crops in the ground (for agriculture), such data can be unreliable and difficult to obtain. One way of addressing this, if this indicator is deemed useful, is to include productive assets as one Criterion among others:

- Productive assets of X amount *or* income of X amount

**If a productive assets indicator is deemed useful as a Graduation Criteria, targets should be calculated by linking them to income targets.** Regardless of whether income targets are explicitly identified as Graduation Criteria, all projects should be designed based on an understanding of what level of income it is trying to promote. For example, if livestock is a major activity, targets should consider the number of animals required to meet income targets (or a proportion thereof, if income comes from more than one type of livelihoods activity) while maintaining enough breeding stock or capital for reinvestment. Such calculations are also of use in determining initial input requirements, by making explicit the link to inputs, including calculations of reasonable enterprise growth rates.

### 4.3.2.4 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

**Employment status may refer to either self-employment or wage employment.** Monitoring employment status is another way, easier than tracking income, of determining whether a participant is on track to establish sustainable, stabilized income.

In many contexts, wage employment is not a good option for refugees due to laws, discrimination, language barriers and other hindrances which restrict access to wage employment in host countries. At the same time, refugees may bring, or can gain through training, skills conducive to entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Regardless of whether a participant pursues self-employment or wage employment, indicators should be designed to reveal:

- **Whether the employment has been sustained over a certain amount of time.** Simply tracking if a participant is employed or not at a certain point in time does not reveal whether the employment is stable or sustainable.

- **The quality of the employment.** A fulltime job that is only seasonal may be less stable than a regular, long term part-time job. The Refugee Self-Reliance Index (see [Zip Drive](#)) illustrates this through its employment indicator. (See **Text Box 8**)

**Text Box 8. Employment Indicator, Refugee-Self-Reliance Index**

*Employment score should consider any income-generating activity: self, wage, formal/informal, seasonal, part-time, small business, etc. Part-time or full-time (35+ hours per week) employment could be made up of a number of different jobs.*

**How would you describe the income-generating activities that the household members are engaged in, in the last 6 months?** (*score the highest scoring household member*)

1. No employment
2. Temporary, irregular, seasonal
3. Regular part-time (including self-employment)
4. Full-time (including self-employment), without necessary legal documentation
5. Full-time (including self-employment), with necessary legal documentation

#### 4.3.2.5 LIVELIHOODS PRACTICES AND SKILLS

Supporting participants to develop skills and adopt good practices related to business management and their chosen livelihoods activities is one of the most important functions of coaches. However, while helping coaches track participants' development of skills and good practices is useful, **such indicators are generally not included in Graduation Criteria**. The rationale is that Graduation Criteria help describe an *end state*, the achievement of which assumes the development of skills and good practices to earn income and accumulate savings and assets. Nevertheless, given that the development of skills is also important for future productivity, it is possible to include such indicators in Graduation Criteria if staff and participants themselves feel it is worthwhile.

In such cases, it can be useful for indicators to reference **basic business skills and financial management, and/or skills associated with particular livelihood activities**. For example, in relation to livestock:

- Participants apply good practices (vaccinations, proper shelter, and appropriate feed)

A simple indicator can be created which aggregates all such practices into either a binary metric (follows good practices or not), or a slightly more nuanced one, generally more useful for monitoring. (e.g., *fully follows all practices; follows most practices; does not follow most practices*; the latter two options flagging some level of required follow-up.)

#### 4.3.2.6 CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCOME/LIVELIHOODS INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT

- **What is meant by "diversification?"** It can mean between sectors (e.g., petty commerce and livestock) or within sectors (raising both pigs and chickens). As diversification is an indicator of resilience, it is advisable to consider whether activities are susceptible to the same risks or not. For example, diversification across two growing seasons in a year may count, whereas increasing the variety of crops within the same growing season may not.

- **How to take into account expected future livelihood development?** Generally, the concept of Graduation relates to an achieved state. However, the length of an intervention should be based on the length of time that participants are expected to require support (coaching, consumption support), and this length does not always equate with attainment of the desired end state. Therefore, depending on the context, such as available social safety nets, it may be appropriate to define graduation income targets that fall short of the intended ultimate income goals. In such cases, the rationale for doing so should be clearly documented, and evaluations should test the assumptions behind doing so.
- **How should income targets relate to self-reliance?** Graduation projects, particularly in the refugee context, aim to enable participants to become self-reliant, often meaning that they will no longer require additional external support. However, there is debate within the Graduation community about the extent to which this is an appropriate final goal. In fact, many Graduation projects aim to connect participants with social safety nets to which one is entitled to increase resilience and supplement income from livelihoods activities. The appropriateness of this strategy is dependent on context. Where it is appropriate, Graduation Criteria should include access to, or receipt of, such entitlements.
- **Include income from just the activities directly supported by the program, or total household income?** While total household income better relates to the ultimate thresholds we seek to attain, it may be more realistic to just include income from activities directly promoted by the project. This is especially true when drawing from monitoring systems that link to the daily activities of coaches, who usually would not be expected to follow-up on other income sources. In Trickle Up's programs in India, for example, targets for project-supported activities were based on 80% of the poverty line, with the assumption that other types of income generation (e.g., access to entitlements and some migratory or local wage labor) would bring households above the poverty line.
- **How to account for semi-subsistence activities?** Graduation projects in rural areas often strive to increase access to cash income while also promoting increased access to nutritious food through improved agricultural techniques and promotion of kitchen gardens. Resulting products are often not monetized, but if a significant amount of crops for household consumption is expected to be produced, it may make sense to include a separate indicator for this.

### 4.3.3 Savings

Savings are important for various reasons, so a useful first step to set savings targets is to **choose which of the following reasons to prioritize**:

- Savings contribute to a household's resilience by enabling it to respond to shocks (e.g., health shocks, poor harvest) without resorting to "irreversible" coping strategies, like selling productive assets and pulling children out of school, which will undermine future productivity or well-being.
- Savings help households to smooth their consumption, as most households' income is irregular, thus contributing to the meeting of basic needs.
- Savings can be a source of further investment in livelihoods activities, especially when large lump sum investments are required to boost productivity.
- Savings amounts determine an individual's ability to access loans, which in turn can be used to support any of the above purposes.

#### 4.3.3.1 SETTING SAVINGS TARGETS

While all of these reasons are important, and not mutually exclusive, Trickle Up has found that the first one, **related to resilience to shocks, tends to be most useful for setting targets**. It is important to communicate to staff and participants that these are based on averages, so they will not perfectly match each households' situation, but such estimates and averages are "good enough" for management purposes. Refer to data from the SEA, relevant secondary data and/or baseline data to inform savings targets. A useful rule of thumb for setting a target that indicates a reasonable degree of financial resilience is:

- Sufficient funds to cover an average household's expenses for 3 months

Alternatives, depending on the context, are:

- 3 months' worth of average income from a main breadwinner (or main livelihood activity)
- Sufficient funds to cover a "moderate" health crisis, including lost earnings and health costs

#### 4.3.3.2 CONSIDERATIONS FOR SETTING SAVINGS TARGETS

The setting and interpretation of savings targets may also depend upon:

- **The savings methodology used.** For example, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) redistribute funds at the end of each cycle (year) whereas other savings methodologies tend to be cumulative, thus influencing how a target should be set in relation to a payout period.
- **The timing of the measurement.** For example, we may expect households to deplete a significant amount of their savings as a reasonable coping mechanism during each lean season, so targets expected to be measured before a lean season may be higher than those measured after a lean season.
- **Other mechanisms to which participants have access to help cope with shocks.** For example, if they have access to insurance schemes, lower savings targets may be justified.
- **How participants store their savings – cash versus assets.** Cash is not the only way to save, and in some contexts, people can easily liquidate livestock or other assets in times of need. However, when setting targets, it is important to not confuse the functions of different types of assets. For example, the value of productive assets for which liquidation would have *negative long-term effects* should not be included with the value of assets for which liquidation constitutes a "reversible" coping mechanism.
- **How participants store their savings – different types of cash.** People often store cash savings in a variety of locations. If participants are integrated into savings groups or have access to bank accounts, generally just these two locations are sufficient. They also have the advantage of being easy as records are often available and are less sensitive to ask about than sources such as savings kept at home.

Some programs set a **rate of saving, instead of a cumulative savings amount**, as their target (such as saving X amount of money in the last 3 months). This has the advantage of demonstrating a savings habit, plus an indication of amount of savings, which is also important. However, such a target can generally less explicitly inform a Graduation threshold.

### 4.3.4 Self-Confidence and Agency

For many Graduation participants, developing agency and confidence is both an important means for developing self-reliance, and an end. However, while living in extreme poverty tends to be disempowering and marginalizing, this varies considerably by person and context, and arguably even more so when working with refugees who possess wide ranges of human and social capital. Monitoring systems should support coaches and managers adapt and respond to these varying needs. However, given the often intangible ways in which agency and confidence are apparent, the types of indicators useful for monitoring often differ considerably from evaluation indicators. Useful indicators may focus upon:

- Decision-making power
- Viable plans for the future
- Optimism and self-efficacy

#### 4.3.4.1 DECISION-MAKING

Agency is often operationalized as decision-making related to various domains. However, the relevance of assessing decision-making within the household depends on who is the primary participant, and if efforts are made to increase the agency of particular household members. These tend to be women but may also include other categories of people who typically have less decision-making power, such as people with disabilities. Indicators are usually constructed from a series of questions about the extent to which women are involved in decisions related to such domains as:

- Financial management
- Health care
- Children's education
- Purchases (both large and small)

The choice of domains must be adapted to context, preferably through participatory processes with women (or other groups) themselves. It has been argued that indicator creation should take into account the value women (or other group) place on each domain, understanding that they may not want greater influence in all domains.<sup>13</sup>

However, such indicators are generally not particularly useful for including in monitoring systems, even if they are reflected in Graduation Criteria. Indicators that more directly relate to participants' ability to successfully engage in the project and around which coaches can play a more directly supportive role tend to be more useful, such as:

- Ownership over livelihood plans
- Level of control over project-supported livelihood assets, profits and savings

**Important!** A project should monitor any potential negative outcomes related to women's position in the household resulting from backlash, or other significant barriers to their participation, such as ability to attend savings groups meetings, or other types of mobility issues. While it is important for coaches to be tracking such indicators, it is not always necessary important that all this information be reported up.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container2673/files/Publications/WP/2017/wp-201713.pdf>

#### 4.3.4.2 PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Graduation projects aim not only to provide the resources that enable participants to realize their livelihoods plans, but also help them envision a future they may not otherwise have been able to conjure. Therefore, while ensuring participants have a viable livelihoods plan is an important output indicator early in the project cycle, participants' ability to project viable future plans (e.g. for the next agricultural season and beyond) is an important monitoring indicator.

Some projects include as a Graduation Criteria:

- Existence of a livelihood plan for the future (e.g. for the next 3-5 years), which is assessed as viable by program staff

#### 4.3.4.3 OPTIMISM AND SELF-EFFICACY

An important part of a coach's role is to provide encouragement and foster a sense of self-efficacy. Numerous scales have been developed to assess optimism and self-efficacy. The most useful information to inform action will likely become apparent as coaches build relationships with participants. However, some tools, such as the "life satisfaction ladder," can be integrated into monitoring systems and can also inform evaluations.

- How would you describe your satisfaction with life? The top rung of the ladder (10) represents very satisfied and the bottom of the ladder (1) represents very dissatisfied. On which step would you place yourself?

This can also be extended to gauge outlook by adding:

- Which step do you believe you will be on in 5 years?

and to gauge perception of relative wellbeing to others in the community through:

- Now assume that the top rung of the ladder (10) represents the best-off members of your community and that the lowest rung (1) are the poorest individuals. Where would you place your household on the ladder in terms of economic status?

Simple questions, with answer options of *strongly disagree/disagree/neutral/agree/strongly agree*, can also be integrated into evaluations, though they are not recommended as Graduation Criteria because they are not very tangible:

- I feel confident in my ability to improve my circumstances and those of my household.
- I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

#### 4.3.5 Access to Networks and Services

Access to social networks and services are important pathways by which Graduation participants build social capital and solidarity, which in turn helps build household resilience and strengthens the process of local integration. Participants that are linked to relevant services, networks or groups are more likely to continue to be actively engaged in their community after the project ends, **increasing the long-term sustainability** of project results.

Projects should actively seek opportunities to link participants with existing services (e.g., health, financial, legal), groups and activities, and encourage participants to attend community events and other functions. Networks and groups can include savings groups, social and cultural groups, religious organizations, trainings and livelihoods activities. Participants may already be members of a network, in which case it is a good practice for coaches to **map groups and reinforce engagement in existing linkages** rather than require participants to join additional networks.

Indicators around network engagement and access to services should provide insight into the breadth and depth of participants' ability to function in their society by drawing upon their social capital, and may include:

- Attends (X) community events each month
- Active member in (X) groups (savings, church, youth, etc.)

# 5. Monitoring Graduation for Refugees Project

The success of a Graduation M&E system lies with well-designed, complementary program and M&E activities. Indicators, including Graduation Criteria, must be well crafted and data accurately collected at the right time, delivered into the right hands, and used purposefully.

In the GA4R context, monitoring serves multiple purposes:

- Provides coaches with information they need to understand participants' needs and respond effectively
- Provides IP staff with data to inform project management decision-making
- Generates data that can be aggregated for analytic and evaluative purposes
- Tests and challenges the assumptions underpinning the project's theory of change, thus contributing to learning and adding to the body of evidence around refugee livelihoods, self-reliance and resilience

Section 5 explains household and savings group-level monitoring using Graduation Criteria and other indicators, describes a HMT, and how to set indicator targets, and then takes a deeper dive into Graduation Criteria – the process and good practices for developing them. This section also addresses other, non-household aspects of monitoring GA projects, and the use of monitoring data for purposes beyond monitoring, i.e., for evaluative purposes.

## 5.1 Household Monitoring

This section provides an overview for defining monitoring indicators, setting targets for measuring progress against these indicators and the monitoring tools,

### 5.1.1 Overview

**What.** Household monitoring is the process of collecting household-level data on participants' progress against indicators that are useful for to guide program delivery and management. Data collected is most often related to Graduation Criteria and other predetermined quantitative indicators.

**Why.** Household monitoring has a variety of purposes. Most notably, it:

- Enables coaches to learn about their participants ("Are they on track?" "What are their challenges?"), gauge changes, look for trends, identify fast and slow climbers, keep track of their advice and action points for follow-up, and provide responsive, impactful coaching. HMTs can therefore also work as a form of "checklist" to help remind coaches for what they should be looking out and on what they should be following up.
- Allows supervisors to look for trends within and across coaches, and to effectively support coaches' work and help them develop professionally.



- Provides IP staff and others with information needed to identify programmatic areas or activities that are going well and those that are especially challenging. Ideally, these findings are used to adapt program implementation accordingly by building upon project strengths and adjusting and improving upon challenging components.
- Can contribute to evaluative functions, including assessment of progress against targets.

**Who.** Coaches, under supervision of IP field staff, regularly capture household monitoring data. M&E staff should conduct regular field visits to ensure data quality, and to oversee any other types of data collection required.

**When.** Household monitoring data should be collected on a predetermined schedule and a regular basis. It is a good practice for coaches to collect these data during each weekly or bi-weekly coaching session and to submit data on a monthly, or more frequent, basis.

**Important!** During their work, coaches collect a lot of data, especially household monitoring data, but other types of data as well. Much of it is for their and their participants' use and does not need to be reported up. Some of it is reported up to M&E and program staff to analyze, evaluate, manage the project, and aggregate for insight into broader outcomes – project-level results rather than individual household-level results. However, coaches' main, and most important, work is coaching, not collecting data.

### 5.1.2 Definition of Household Monitoring Indicators

The first step in the development of a household monitoring system is defining household monitoring indicators. Indicators are quantifiable measures of characteristics that specify what data the project will (and will not) collect, and allow us to track participants' progress, provide actionable information to coaches and IP staff, and enable the comparison of results over time. Household monitoring indicators should be intentionally designed collect and track the information and data most relevant to the project.

#### Good Practices for Defining Household Monitoring Indicators

- Make sure household monitoring indicators, like all project indicators, align with SMART principles (see [Text Box 9](#)).
- These indicators, as a group, should provide information that is needed to inform decision-making throughout the project. Generally, if the information collected would *not* be used to inform decision-making - either by coaches or managers - it is better to just collect it through evaluations instead.
- Prioritize "need-to-have" data and indicators. While potentially interesting, the collection of unnecessary, "nice-to-have" data will clutter the monitoring system, tax coaches' time, and consume resources. To avoid this, identify a set of indicators that fits within the project's theory of change, tracks the most

#### Text Box 9. SMART Indicators

- **Specific.** The indicator clearly specifies what single aspect or variable is being measured.
- **Measurable.** The indicator must have the capacity to be counted, observed, analyzed, tested, or challenged.
- **Attainable.** The indicator must be achievable, given the scope and timeframe of the project.
- **Relevant.** The indicator must have to do with the goals of the Graduation project.
- **Time bound.** The indicator has a timeframe for achievement and measurement.

critical outputs and outcomes, and provides data that is useful to coaches and for project management.

- Tool designers must consider timeframes, to help participants recall specific types of information. For example, participants may be able to recall household spending on utilities on a monthly basis but recall food consumption on a weekly or daily basis.

### 5.1.3 Development of Household Monitoring Tools

Once the household monitoring indicators have been selected, the project team should develop appropriate HMTs. These are the tools coaches, and potentially other staff depending on the project, use to track household data on a regular basis.

At a minimum, HMTs should enable coaches to:

- Track regular household data during coaching sessions
- Record and access participant-level information that helps them adapt their coaching to meet the specific needs of each participant
- Track participants' progress against Graduation Criteria

HMT development tends to be informed and guided by Graduation Criteria indicators, though may include other "must-have" indicators. To ensure quality, it is recommended that UNHCR take a lead in the development of the HMT, with active support and input from the IP and Trickle Up. UNHCR should link the tool with its MIS, if possible. See [Text Box 10](#) for information about how the UNHCR Zimbabwe project uses its HMT.

#### Text Box 10. Household Monitoring Tool, UNHCR Zimbabwe

The UNHCR Zimbabwe HMT tracks household data related to the Graduation Criteria and other relevant household monitoring indicators. The tool is configured into KoBoCollect using UNHCR's account, and structured - composed with pre-coded responses. Coaches collect monitoring data during each monthly household visit using their smartphones, (e.g., household savings per month, food consumption). Coaches then submit their phones to the GOAL M&E Officer who checks the data, then uploads it into KoBoCollect before the end of each month. GOAL then cleans and analyzes the data (including aggregate analysis) in Excel and shares findings, together with household statistics, with coaches in the form of printouts.

IP staff monitor data collection on a regular basis to ensure quality. The HMT provides coaches with actionable information to help them coach effectively, track each household against their graduation goals, and collect data that can be aggregated for analysis and evaluative purposes. The [Zip Folder](#) contains UNHCR Zimbabwe's HMT.

Drawbacks to the HMT are that coaches cannot access real time data, submitted data, data analytics, or dashboards via their smartphones. They can only access reports via printouts or spreadsheets prepared by M&E staff. In addition, KoBoCollect tracks household data as discrete occurrences rather than along a continuum, which does not reflect how coaching flows.

**Important!** Do not assume that Graduation Criteria necessarily make the best monitoring indicators. For example, if improved food security is expected to be achieved through improved economic productivity/livelihoods, it may be best to focus on indicators related to economic productivity in monitoring systems, and only measure the end result – improved food security – in periodic

evaluations. On the other hand, if improved nutritional practices are also goals, then it makes sense to incorporate this into monitoring tools, because if such practices are lacking, it is something that coaches may be expected to address.

### 5.1.3.1 CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOUSEHOLD MONITORING TOOL DEVELOPMENT

- **Coach capacity.** HMTs are only useful if they can be used correctly. The level of complexity must align with the capacity of the coaches and other users of the tool(s). This may include tools that largely are pictorially based in the case of coaches with limited literacy.
- **Appropriate content.** Monitoring tools should focus on measuring indicators that are most directly influenced by the project and which can in turn influence program management and delivery.
- **Actionable.** Tool design should consider the frequency of data collection and the breadth and depth of information that must be provided to be actionable. Participants, coaches, and IP staff must be able to utilize the data to inform regular coaching and programmatic decisions.
- **Survey fatigue and opportunity cost.** HMT design must also consider participants' and coaches' time. As discussed in the previous section, the more the data collected can contribute directly to program goals (e.g., by reminding coaches what they need to be keeping an eye on, and prompting useful conversations between coaches and participants), the better. Monitoring tools should also be as simple as possible to reduce the time required to use them.
- **Frequency of aggregation and reporting up.** Consider how often to aggregate data from all households to track overall project progress (vs. individual household progress) as well as which data to report up – for aggregating or evaluating - and which is only needed to support

### 5.1.4 Tracking Household Monitoring Indicators

Once the household monitoring indicators have been defined and appropriate tools developed, it is important to clearly record details about each indicator. This information will ensure all staff understand the definition of each indicator, which tool(s) are used to collect data on each indicator, and other data collection requirements, and will guide data collection procedures.

Trickle Up recommends using USAID's **Performance Indicator Reference Sheets** (PIRS) template, as it is adaptable and well-known to many practitioners (see [Zip Folder](#)). The simpler **Performance Measurement Framework**, see [Text Box 11](#), may also be used as a template (see [Zip Folder](#)).

UNHCR should work closely with IP M&E staff to develop and populate these forms and train staff on their use. IP staff must also be trained on data collection requirements, including requirements for aggregating and analyzing data for evaluative purposes.

### 5.1.5 Setting Household Indicator Targets

Once the HMTs and procedures have been developed, IP program and M&E staff, with input from other stakeholders, should define appropriate targets for each indicator. Targets serve as guideposts for monitoring, to check if

#### Text Box 11. Tracking Household Monitoring Indicators, UNHCR Zimbabwe Case Study

The UNHCR Zimbabwe pilot opted to utilize the simple **Performance Measurement Framework** rather than PIRS as the template for its household monitoring indicator tracking in response to UNHCR and IP's capacity and workload.

Trickle Up and the IP M&E staff also developed the **Indicator Tracking Tool** (see [Zip Folder](#)), a compliance tool populated by IP staff, that helps ensure that indicator data is captured at the planned intervals.

progress is being made at the planned pace and, if not, signal that modifications to the intervention may be needed.

**Important!** Household indicator targets should be closely linked to the overall objectives of the GA4R project. The definition of appropriate targets must be informed by the project's goals, where the project aims for participants to be by the end of the project.

For example, if the project is setting a monthly savings target for participants, it should *not* start with how much money it thinks a participant could save in a month, which may *not* result in an amount sufficient to achieve self-reliance. Rather, the project should start at the end point – the total amount a participant needs by the end of the project to be resilient – and work backwards to determine how much savings/month is needed to get there. The project, in turn, must be designed accordingly to respond to this indicator target, in terms of inputs and timeframe, to make sure participants will be able to reach that target amount. Please see [Text Box 12](#)<sup>14</sup> for a note about GA target setting.

**Text Box 12. Note on Target Setting**

"It is a difficult and inherently subjective task to determine actual present capacity to withstand hypothetical future events.

However, even reasonable estimates to assess increased resilience (e.g., savings, self-confidence) are valuable because they reflect the goal. The GA is not a short-term escape from extreme poverty but seeks to equip participants with the tools, livelihoods, and self-confidence to sustain themselves when the Program is over."

## 5.2 Monitoring Additional Aspects of Graduation Projects

### 5.2.1 Overview

**What.** In addition to household monitoring data (inclusive of Graduation Criteria), there are many additional types of monitoring data that may be useful for GA4R projects to collect and analyze.

**Why.** The function of these different types of monitoring data varies. However, they are generally used to better monitor and understand specific components of the GA. Data may be used to support coaches, for project management purposes, or to inform broader learning.

**Who.** The implementers of these monitoring tools, and users of these data, vary significantly depending on the type of data being collected.

**When.** The frequency of data collection varies significantly depending on the type of data being collected and their intended use(s).

**Important!** While it is advisable to plan to collect as much data as needed, remember to be selective. As with household monitoring indicators, the inclusion of many "nice-to-have," but unnecessary,

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<sup>14</sup> From Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods. A Technical Guide to the Graduation Approach. CGAP, Ford Foundation. September 2014. [http://www.cgap.org/sites/default/files/graduation\\_guide\\_final.pdf](http://www.cgap.org/sites/default/files/graduation_guide_final.pdf)

indicators will burden the monitoring system, tax coaches' time and consume resources. Make sure that the project really needs, and will use, all the data that will be collected.

## 5.2.2 Monitoring Savings Group Activities

Access to savings is a key component in all GA4R projects. One mechanism utilized to by many projects to promote savings and network engagement are savings groups. Savings groups provide participants a secure place to:

- Save regularly, which helps build self-reliance and resilience
- Apply their financial literacy training
- Borrow small amounts on favorable terms
- Build networks with fellow members
- Receive trainings and capacity building in a group setting
- Exercise leadership

This section looks at good practices and tools for monitoring savings activities within a GA4R context.

**What.** This refers to the monitoring of data related to savings group activities. What savings activity data the IP staff ultimately decide to monitor depends on what the project aims to accomplish and wants to learn through savings group activities. However, some basic metrics that IPs in the GA4R context most frequently track include:

- Individual attendance, saving and loan activities
- Group profits, savings and loans
- Attendance, new members, drop-outs
- Women's participation and leadership
- Group capacity, sustainability
- Building of social capital and self-help
- Trends across groups

Trickle Up recommends that all GA4R projects develop and utilize a minimum of the following three types of tools to monitor and analyze savings group activities (where savings groups are utilized): **an individual savings activities tool, a savings group financial activities and cash flow tool, and a savings group organizational capacity assessment tool.**

**Why.** Access to and appropriate use of savings can be an important means to the success of the GA. Building savings – both the habit of saving as well as the accrual of savings assets – helps build participants' self-reliance and resilience to future shocks. Monitoring savings group activity allows participants to track their own progress over time. It provides IP staff with a variety of data that enables them to assess and respond to the needs of specific savings groups. It can also help UNHCR, the IP and savings groups themselves track organizational strength/health and identify trends within and across groups that may be addressed through programmatic changes.

**Who.** Savings groups usually have a leadership council comprised of elected savings group members. It is the responsibility of these leaders to oversee regular data collection at both the individual or group level. Coaches or savings group facilitators (IP staff) often help oversee this process, especially when

savings groups are new. Coaches or IP staff collect aggregated, group-level data (savings, loans, profits, attendance) on a monthly basis for analysis by the IP.

**When.** Regular monitoring should be conducted at each savings group meeting and should commence immediately upon formation of the savings group. An organizational assessment of the group should be performed every six months or annually, depending on the duration of the project. It is important that groups learn to manage and monitor their own functioning and transactions, so coaches should gradually reduce their engagement.

Please see the [Zip Folder](#) for a guide to savings groups, **Village Savings and Loan Associations, Field Officer's Training Guide**, which provides additional guidance around savings groups, including individual and group monitoring tools.

### 5.2.2.1 INDIVIDUAL SAVINGS ACTIVITIES TOOL

An individual savings activities tool is used to monitor each member's individual financial activities, including their attendance, how many shares they buy/save at each meeting, any loans that they take out, repayments, contributions to the social fund, and other indicators. In the case of VSLAs, each savings group member has a booklet, or "passport," in which individual savings activities are tracked. The booklet is updated during each meeting and safely stored by the savings group leadership between meetings. See the [Zip Folder](#) for an example of an **Individual Savings Passport** used in Guatemala.

### 5.2.2.2 SAVINGS GROUP FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES AND CASH FLOW

In addition to tracking individual savings activities, it is important to aggregate the data as a way to monitor a savings group's overall financial activities and cash flow. A savings group financial activities and cash flow tool tracks most of the same data as that captured through the individual savings activities tool, but aggregated at the group level. Most frequently, these data are captured by coach or IP staff who help oversee the savings group.

See [Zip Folder](#) for examples of **savings group financial activities and cash flow monitoring tools** developed and used by Trickle Up in Guatemala and West Africa.

### 5.2.2.3 SAVINGS GROUP ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

In addition to tracking each savings group's financial activities and cash flow, it is important for the IP and UNHCR to understand the groups' organizational capacity as this informs any capacity building required to help ensure group sustainability beyond the completion of the project. A **savings group organizational capacity monitoring tool** is usually administered every six months, or on an annual basis, and assesses a savings group's governance, resources, objectives, impact, sustainability and systems. See [Zip Folder](#) for an example of UNHCR Zimbabwe's **Group Maturity Index (GMI)**.

### 5.2.2.4 CASE STUDY: UNHCR ZIMBABWE SAVINGS GROUP MONITORING TOOLS

The UNHCR Zimbabwe pilot plans to use three tools: an **Individual Savings Passport**, a **Portfolio Tracking Tool**, and the **GMI**, to monitor individual savings activities, group financial activities and cash flow, and group organizational capacity, respectively. **Table 11** provides a summary of these tools.

Table 11. Savings Group Monitoring Tools, UNHCR Zimbabwe

Tool	Function	Frequency	Who
<b>Individual Savings Passbook</b> ( <i>in development</i> )	Track individual’s financial activities within the group such as savings and loans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-weekly</li> <li>• Less frequently aggregated with other members’ data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group officers</li> </ul>
<b>Group Portfolio Tracking Tool</b> ( <i>in development</i> )	<p>Track the financial activities and cash flow of the savings group.</p> <p>By tracking the group’s income, savings, loans and profits, UNHCR and IPs can assess whether group is saving as planned, whether members have access to cash.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IP field staff and/or coaches</li> </ul>
<b>GMI</b>	<p>Assess degree of maturity and health of the savings group based on governance, resources, objectives, impact, sustainability and systems.</p> <p>Allows groups and IP staff to learn where additional capacity building is needed to help ensure groups’ health and sustainability beyond the project.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Zip Folder</a> contains a <b>GMI Concept and Guide</b> document and <b>GMI Assessment Form</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every 6 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IP staff once the group formed or, in the case of existing groups, identified</li> </ul>

### 5.2.3 Monitoring Other Types of Project Information

Table 12 displays examples of additional (though non-exhaustive) aspects of GA4R projects, aside from savings groups, household monitoring and Graduation Criteria that should be considered for monitoring. The table outlines what types of users are most likely to use such information, the purpose of the monitoring, and, when possible, examples of tools that Trickle Up and its partners have used to collect the respective type of information.

Table 12. Monitoring Additional Aspects of GA Projects, Examples

Examples of Additional Types of Monitoring in GA Projects			
Aspect	User	Purpose	Example Tools (see <a href="#">Zip Folder</a> )
<b>Registration</b>	IP facilitates and updates, UNHCR supports and ensures data ethically and securely handled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide UNHCR and IP with household demographic information (e.g., size, dependency ratio, number of economically active members)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Database Template, UNHCR Zimbabwe</li> </ul>
<b>Coaching</b>	Coach Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality control of coaching. Measure coaching techniques and soft skills, including active listening, use of probing questions, etc.</li> <li>• Look for trends/patterns across, within different coaches' participants</li> <li>• Support coaches to improve their skills</li> <li>• Ensure coaching visits are happening as scheduled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Forthcoming</i></li> </ul>
<b>Drop-outs</b>	Project team, Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn what factors lead participants to drop out</li> <li>• Inform decisions about how to counter these factors in future projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Forthcoming</i></li> </ul>
<b>Participant businesses</b>	Coaches, Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track business expenses, profits, working capital</li> <li>• Monitor participants' management of their livelihoods activities</li> <li>• Check if trainings are having intended effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Forthcoming</i></li> </ul>
<b>Self-monitoring</b>	Participants, Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase understanding of the project and how participants' active participation in it can improve their wellbeing</li> <li>• Monitor progress towards Graduation Criteria and other project goals</li> <li>• Reinforce agency and self-confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduation Monitoring Tool</li> <li>• Graduation Map</li> </ul>
<b>Partner/Funder-defined</b>	Trickle Up, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and report on specific funder- or partner-defined indicators</li> <li>• In the case of the PRM/Trickle Up/UNHCR partnership, IPs should collect and report quarterly data on new, continuing, and dropped-out participants to Trickle Up, which reports up to PRM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trickle Up Participant Counting Tool</li> </ul>



# 6. Evaluation in GA Projects

Project evaluations help implementers and other stakeholders understand the outcomes that have been achieved through a project. Section 6 describes the basic evaluation activities for GA projects, provides a step-by-step guide and good practices to implement the steps, and briefly introduces some types of evaluations that can be included on a selective basis.

## 6.1 Baseline and Endline Evaluations

### 6.1.1 Overview

**What.** A baseline evaluation is an assessment conducted at the beginning of a project to establish the current status of a population, in this case the selected participants, before the intervention begins. An endline evaluation is an assessment that collects data on the same topics and from the same population as the baseline, but it is completed at the end of the intervention. While baseline surveys can be compared to endline evaluations to assess progress against targets, the method *cannot definitively determine attribution* observed changes to the intervention.

At a minimum, each GA project should include a baseline evaluation and some way to assess outcomes against targets – generally analysis against a combination of monitoring data and an endline. Depending on the length of an intervention and the status of its monitoring system, a midterm evaluation can also be useful for informing learning that can be acted upon before the program’s end.

**Why.** Baseline and endline evaluations are generally useful to:

- Describe conditions in a particular community or group (e.g., extremely poor refugees from DRC and Burundi living in Dzaleka refugee camp)
- Provide information to help refine targets and inform project design (Baseline)
- Determine the validity of hypotheses underlying the project’s theory of change
- Provide information to inform future project design (Baseline + Endline) (again, noting caveats around attribution)

**Who.** UNHCR’s M&E focal person should spearhead the development of the baseline and endline questionnaires, with input from IP M&E and field staff. The IP, or a third party, conducts the baseline and endline evaluations. The coaches may serve as enumerators (noting this may introduce bias but is cheaper) or external enumerators can be hired.

**When.** Development of the baseline survey questionnaire tool should commence once the Graduation Criteria and project indicators are finalized. The baseline evaluation should occur after participants have been selected and before implementation begins. The endline evaluation should be done as the project’s end, or very soon thereafter.

### 6.1.2 Implementing Baseline and Endline Evaluations

**Table 13** outlines the key steps for conducting baseline and endline evaluations in the GA4R context.

Table 13. Step-by-Step Guide to Baseline/Endline Evaluations

Step	Notes	Responsibility
<b>1) Develop the Scope of Work (UNHCR and/or IP conduct) or ToR (external third-party conducts) for baseline or endline evaluation</b>	<p>Scope of Work or ToR (See <a href="#">Zip Folder</a> for an example of a ToR) should contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief description of GA project, background of country/target group/problem, how project will address problem</li> <li>• Evaluation objectives (info needed, who will use, how will they use it), scope (including indicators under review, geographical area, target group)</li> <li>• Identify any secondary data sources used to inform the baseline/endline design</li> <li>• Data collection methodology (survey) and tools (e.g., FGD guides, evaluation survey questionnaire)</li> <li>• Data analysis methods (unless ToR calls upon applicants to describe)</li> <li>• Sampling framework (GA pilots, which are small in size, will likely interview all participants vs. a sample)</li> <li>• Other details: number of enumerators, data collection mode (see <a href="#">Section 7.1.1</a>), tasks, roles and responsibilities, timeline</li> <li>• Outputs/deliverables (questionnaire, data analysis plan, report) and timeline</li> </ul>	<p>IP M&amp;E staff, with support from UNHCR livelihoods staff</p>
<b>2) Develop the data analysis plan</b>	<p>The data analysis plan document should identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audience, purpose, the process, (methods, tools), and limitations</li> <li>• Responsible parties and include a timeline of the analysis</li> <li>• How results will be presented/visualized (tables, graphs, etc., to visualize findings) in the evaluation report, and how report will be disseminated</li> <li>• Basic analysis required (e.g., mean, median, ranges), and what outliers are of interest</li> <li>• Baseline/endline evaluations should employ descriptive analysis, which answers the question, “What?” (rather than “What caused it?”) e.g., “Are there trends? Are there similarities in trends from different sets of data? Does data show us what we’d expected?”</li> <li>• Disaggregation required (e.g., sex, age, household type, ethnicity, etc.)</li> <li>• Any correlations/comparisons of interest (e.g., demographic, expected vs. actual)</li> </ul>	<p>IP M&amp;E staff, with support from UNHCR</p>
<b>3) Develop the baseline survey questionnaire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should include questions that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Help assess data against core performance indicators and targets</li> <li>○ Gather demographic data to enable disaggregation (sex, disability, ethnicity, marital status, age)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>IP M&amp;E staff, with support from UNHCR</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are required by the funder to IP</li> <li>● Map survey questions to household monitoring/GC and project indicators</li> <li>● IPs &amp; UNHCR staff review and finalize the survey questionnaire (See <a href="#">Zip Folder</a> for an example)</li> <li>● Translate and back-translate (if applicable) to ensure linguistic accuracy</li> </ul>	
4) Develop Excel data analysis template	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Note:</b> Only needed if <i>not</i> using software than can generate its own reports</li> <li>● The data analysis template captures and displays survey responses</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff
5) Develop ToR for enumerators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Details enumerator tasks and role in the evaluation, expected duration of activities, code of conduct</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff, with support from UNHCR
6) Develop data collection guidelines for survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The guidelines list all survey questions and data quality checks for each question</li> <li>● Help ensure standardization, consistency and reliability in the data collection process</li> <li>● Enumerators can refer to guidelines for explicit guidance on collecting quality data during the survey</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff
7) Train enumerators on data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overview of data collection system, data collection techniques, the questionnaire tool, ethics</li> <li>● Practice using the questionnaire, role-plays</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff, with support from UNHCR
8) Pre-test and refine questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IP M&amp;E staff and enumerators pre-test questionnaires to identify problematic or confusing questions, problems with flow, and build capacity of enumerators</li> <li>● Correct errors identified during pre-testing</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff, enumerators
9) Refine data collection guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Refine the data collection guidelines to address any changes made to the questionnaire following its pre-testing and refinement</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff
10) Collect data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● M&amp;E field staff conduct spot checks (see <a href="#">Table 12</a>) to ensure interviews are going smoothly. and the enumerators are capturing high quality data</li> </ul>	Enumerators, under supervision of IP M&E field staff.
11) Clean data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data cleaning helps correct data collection errors</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff
12) Analyze data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Performed using Excel data analysis template or data software that generates its own reports</li> <li>● Present results graphically to aid interpretation</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff
13) Produce the survey evaluation report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The report should be concise, well-structured and complete, and should:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Explain steps and procedures followed</li> <li>○ Acknowledge limitations</li> <li>○ Present findings</li> <li>○ Address all points named in the Scope of Work</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Use illustrations such as statistical charts and tables for easy visualization</li> <li>● UNHCR should review a draft report, project staff circulate final version to stakeholders</li> </ul>	IP M&E staff, UNHCR & Trickle Up

### 6.1.3 Good Practices for Baseline and Endline Evaluations

The following good practices should be implemented for GA4R baseline and endline evaluations:

- For UNHCR GA4R projects, baseline and endline surveys must include:
  - 1) **Key indicators that will help set targets and assess data against other indicators important to the project’s theory of change.** These may include some, but not necessarily all, of the Graduation Criteria. For example, some commonly used Criteria, such as “has a plan for the future,” may not be appropriate to include in a baseline evaluation as the participant will have no frame of reference to respond. Instead, this data may be better collected through monitoring systems and/or in an endline evaluation only.
  - 2) Questions to collect **demographic data** (e.g., age, sex, disability, nationality) about participants.
    - If these data are already available through ProGres or other UNHCR records, it is best to use that data rather than duplicate the effort to re-collect them.
    - Keep in mind how indicators must be disaggregated when designing the survey tool. UNHCR’s Policy of Age, Gender, and Diversity requires that data be “disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible, for purposes of analysis and programming.”<sup>15</sup>
  - 3) Relevant **UNHCR Livelihoods Indicators.** Operations must report on at least one UNHCR Livelihoods Results Framework impact indicator, in addition to the livelihoods Global Strategic Priority indicator, and use appropriate proxy indicators to measure context specific impact.<sup>16</sup> **Text Box 13** shows the UNHCR Livelihoods Indicators used in the UNHCR Zimbabwe pilot.

**Text Box 13. UNHCR Livelihoods Indicators, UNHCR Zimbabwe**

The UNHCR Zimbabwe pilot will track three UNHCR Livelihoods Indicators through its baseline/endline evaluations:

- % of targeted PoCs who currently access informal savings services
- % of targeted PoCs who self-report increased income compared to the previous year
- % of targeted PoCs who self-report increased savings (including assets) compared to the previous year

- As with monitoring data, do not unnecessary “nice-to-have” questions. Collect only data needed by project staff and stakeholders. Less data is better than more, unless a more rigorous evaluation design is employed.
- Additional information that is useful to better understand participants’ lives and that may impact project design and interpretation of results can also be collected through other means such as FGDs, so they do not all need to be included in quantitative surveys.
- In designing the baseline and endline questionnaires, it may be helpful to refer to existing surveys. Include relevant questions from other surveys but be sure that they are appropriate for the context and purpose.
- Keep the questions and the questionnaire as simple as possible.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/women/5aa13c0c7/policy-age-gender-diversity-accountability-2018.html>

<sup>16</sup> Minimum Criteria 9. UNHCR/OG/2015/4. Operational Guidelines on the Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming. 1 March 2015. <http://www.unhcr.org/54fd6cbe9.pdf>

- The endline survey tool should closely mirror the baseline tool to be able to compare before and after values.
- Baseline and endline data should be collected during the same time period to ensure seasonality does not impact analysis. If this is not possible, an approved alternative plan must be in place.
- While draft Graduation Criteria and initial targets should have been set during the project planning stage, baseline results may indicate refinement of these Criteria and/or targets is appropriate
- If a project is longer than 18 months and resources are available, a midterm evaluation can also be conducted.
- Coaches often serve as the enumerators on baseline and endline surveys. This could, however, introduce bias, e.g., social desirability bias wherein participants may not answer questions candidly to make, or prevent making, a certain impression on the coaches. If the project is conducting a rigorous evaluation (such as an RCT), use non-coach enumerators. This may lessen, cannot completely eliminate, bias.

## 6.2 Other Types of Evaluations

The implementation of baseline and endline evaluations provides a simple comparison of change over time, and can give us some indication of whether a project has achieved its stated goals - as far as targets. However, these comparisons are not able to tell us to what extent other contextual factors, aside from project activities, also influenced outcomes. As such, we must be very cautious about attributing the changes we see to the intervention. These limitations must be taken into account in the analysis and interpretation of results.

Other types of evaluations, in addition to the baseline and endline evaluations, can help provide a more robust picture of project results. Beyond baseline and endline evaluations, the main types of evaluations include, but are not limited to:

- **Process evaluations** - determine whether program activities have been implemented as intended, and assess processes related to implementation (e.g. quality of services, modalities for delivering coaching). Qualitative process evaluations can provide valuable insights to inform program design and learning, such as around the dynamics of change (i.e., "why" and "how"), or barriers to change and how participants and staff experience the project.
- **Outcome evaluations** – assess change over time but without a comparison group to estimate what would have happened without the project. By also drawing on monitoring data or conducting midterm evaluations, such data can be useful for adjusting program design and delivery.
- **Impact evaluations** - identify attribution of outcomes to project activities by incorporation of a control group (as in an RCT). Such fully experimental evaluations are the most rigorous and capable of assessing the impact of an intervention (as well as what would have happened without the intervention). Due to their cost and complexity, which requires careful planning from the preliminary stages of project design, it is advised that such evaluations be conducted through partnerships with external researchers. As such, this Guide does not go into more depth on these types of evaluations. However, other types of comparison groups, which are not randomized, may be used in quasi-experimental evaluations, which generally are less rigorous but may be more viable based on the context.

Some types of evaluation are more useful and cost-effective when first rolling out a new project. During initial piloting, it is worth focusing on implementation processes as these can have major implications for outcomes. Furthermore, if approached cautiously, assessments of outcomes without

a comparison group can be useful for informing design decisions and whether or not to continue a project. This is particularly true if using qualitative and participatory methods that can provide information about the dynamics associated with change, and if contextual factors are taken into account. For example, if a population has little history of engaging in certain types of livelihoods activities or in accumulating savings, then it may be reasonable to assume that changes in these areas can be largely attributed to the project if no other factors have changed. However, it would be unwise to assume that changes in food security and overall income can be attributed to the project, given these are highly dependent on a complex range of contextual factors.

Both impact and outcome evaluations can be conducted via the baseline to endline, but it is also important to assess longer-term effects of the intervention on participants' lives, at least 2 years and preferably considerably longer, after the project ends. Ideally, all evaluations should use mixed methods, with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, to understand not just "what" happened, but also "why" and "how" it happened (or failed to happen).

# 7. Data Management

Without data of satisfactory quality, information cannot be developed, and without information, good decisions cannot be made. Likewise, relying on poor quality data to make project management decisions will inevitably result in poor decisions. Therefore, the establishment of a logical, useful data management system and data quality protocols should underpin all projects. Data management refers to processes and systems for systematically collecting, storing, managing and accessing data, optimally in user-friendly formats. It is important to conscientiously prepare and apply data collection plans, data quality procedures, and data management systems throughout the GA4R project cycle.

## 7.1 Data Collection and Management Information Systems (MIS)

Data collection approaches, tools and good practices for various aspects of GA4R projects have been discussed within their respective sections, above. This section looks at considerations for choosing the mode of data collection and a MIS.

### 7.1.1 Electronic Versus Paper Data Collection

As with other types of interventions, GA4R projects can collect data using mobile devices or paper based methods. Whenever possible, mobile data collection systems are recommended over paper based methods, as they may be able to:

- Remove the risk of paper being lost or destroyed.
- Eliminate additional steps necessary for transmitting data from the enumerators to M&E staff and managers when using paper based systems.
- Reduce the risk of data entry errors and invalid data mistakes through built-in data check functions for enumerators, and by eliminating a separate data entry step.
- Enable the capture of, and access to, real-time information. (However, not all mobile data collection systems support real-time data access by coaches and others; the KoBoCollect app used by the UNHCR Zimbabwe project does not.)
- Potentially allow fewer enumerators to collect more data in less time.
- Capture additional data like GPS coordinates, photos, and videos.

Nonetheless, electronic data collection is not always possible, and it is only as good as the technical infrastructure supporting it. [Table 14](#) provides an overview of several pros and cons of mobile and paper based data collection that help determine which method is most appropriate. In summary, digital data collection for baselines and other questionnaires mobile data collection is almost always a significantly better option. The situation with monitoring systems is more complex, and depending on the context, the use of some types of paper-based monitoring tools, in combination with periodic digital data collection, may be necessary.

Table 14. Considerations: Mobile vs. Paper based Data Collection

	Pros	Cons
<b>Mobile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection faster</li> <li>• Costs decrease over time or with scaling</li> <li>• Free or low-cost software available (e.g., KoBoCollect)</li> <li>• Potentially enables access to real-time data and instant validation of that data</li> <li>• Can customize software, program with validation rules, pre-defined fields, skip patterns to control data quality as it's entered</li> <li>• Data security and encryption</li> <li>• Data instantly digitized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High initial cost</li> <li>• Technical knowledge needed to program surveys, train enumerators and support</li> <li>• Requires electricity to charge devices</li> <li>• Unless data is made available to coaches in the field, it can reduce their ability to access information from previous participant visits when they need it</li> </ul>
<b>Paper</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low initial costs</li> <li>• Less training required on data entry (though potentially more on survey questionnaire delivery)</li> <li>• May be preferable if participants suspicious or fearful of mobile data collection</li> <li>• No electricity needed</li> <li>• Less susceptible to technical glitches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low initial costs become more expensive than mobile over time or with scaling</li> <li>• Complex or numerous skip patterns difficult for enumerators to master</li> <li>• Must transfer data from paper to computers – takes time and creates opportunity for errors</li> <li>• May require extra space for storage and/or resources to destroy papers</li> </ul>

### 7.1.2 MIS

If possible, projects should plan and budget for a digital MIS, including mobile data collection, cloud based storage, and a relational database to support data quality checks, real-time analysis and use of data for project management and learning. GA4R projects may consider using KoBoCollect or other types of MIS.

#### 7.1.2.1 KOBACOLLECT

KoBoCollect, a customizable, open source software, is UNHCR's preferred MIS and used by many Operations. See [Text Box 14](#) for a description of how coaches in the UNHCR Zimbabwe pilot use KoBoCollect to collect and submit data to M&E staff. As with any system, KoBoCollect has both strengths and weaknesses, delineated below in [Table 15](#).

#### Text Box 14. KoBoCollect by UNHCR Zimbabwe

The UNHCR Zimbabwe GA4R pilot's HMT is programmed in KoBoCollect. Coaches use smartphones loaded with the software to collect data and submit it to IP staff in the field office.

After coaches submit monitoring data, they can access it only through printouts or spreadsheets prepared by M&E staff. Coaches cannot access submitted data, real time data, data analytics, or dashboards via their smartphones. In addition, KoBoCollect tracks household data as discrete occurrences rather than along a continuum, which does align smoothly with how coaching actually works. These drawbacks illustrate the limits of tools, like KoBoCollect, better suited to evaluation (collecting baseline and endline data) than monitoring as data only flows in one direction – up the chain.



Table 15. KoBoCollect, Pros and Cons

KoBoCollect	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web-based but can be used offline for data entry</li> <li>• Can program forms with validation rules and pre-defined fields to increase data quality and avoid data collection errors</li> <li>• Free version available</li> <li>• Easy to monitor submitted data</li> <li>• Exports data to Excel</li> <li>• System generates reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited data analysis</li> </ul> <p>Without going through IP M&amp;E staff, coaches cannot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggregate and see analysis of data within and across the households they coach. This capability would help uncover trends and variance and illuminate adjustments needed in coaching intensity or quality</li> <li>• See a dashboard of progress</li> <li>• Access real-time data</li> <li>• Access data on their mobile device after it has been submitted</li> </ul>

### 7.1.2.2 OTHER TYPES OF MIS DATABASES

It is recommended that a project use an MIS system that coaches can use to inform their work while in the field. In the absence of such a system, a project can consider hybrid systems. In the case of the UNHCR Zimbabwe pilot, GOAL staff use both cloud-based KoBoCollect and Excel in tandem to manage project data. Other systems include:

- **Salesforce.** Cloud-based system used within development project MIS. It can be customized and can work with data collection applications such as **Taroworks**, but it can become quite expensive and requires expertise for customization.
- **Atlas Impact, other data collection and management tools.** Designed specifically to give coaches access to relevant data while in the field, even without an internet connection.

An increasing number of other types of software exist that have the potential to better provide coaches with data they need to inform decisions while in the field. However, most of these systems require upfront costs (sometimes considerable) to customize them, and in some cases recurrent fees.

## 7.2 Data Quality Control

While ensuring data quality should be an ongoing process, it is important to have procedures in place for the systematic checking and cleaning data and addressing missing data. Unreliable data can result from poor data inputs, duplication of data entries, inconsistent data, accidental deletion and loss of data, among many other possible mistakes and errors.

### 7.2.1 Overview

**What.** Data quality control is the process by which project staff, funders and/or third parties examine and ensure the quality of indicators, data collection tools, data collection methods, data entry and data cleaning activities, and the actual data being collected by the project. Two recommended data quality control processes are:

- 1) **Spot checks:** ongoing, random inspections of data collection, data entry and data cleaning, performed by IP M&E staff

2) **DQA:** a more deliberate, in-depth examination of collected data to confirm it meets the five **Data Quality Standards** (see [Table 16](#), below)

**Why.** To ensure that project data is credible and can be relied upon for decision-making, a reasonable level of confidence in the data is required. M&E staff can take steps during data collection, entry, cleaning and assessment to enhance data quality.

**Who.** The IP’s M&E staff should conduct regular spot checks of data collection, entry and cleaning activities (See [Table 17](#), below.) UNHCR M&E staff, IP M&E staff, and/or a consultant M&E Specialist should conduct a DQA, of (at least) the most critical project indicators.

**When.** Spot checks occur on a regular, ongoing basis. DQAs are typically performed every two or three years. For an 18-36-month GA4R project, it is recommended that UNHCR or IPO M&E staff conduct at least one DQA after six months of implementation and data collection.

Table 16. Data Quality Standards

Data Quality Dimension	Description
Validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data are clear and measure what they intend to measure.</li> <li>• Are the questions being asked giving the team information about what they want to measure? E.g., using an outdated SEA report to inform Graduation Criteria will not provide an accurate picture of the current situation.</li> </ul>
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collected, analyzed, and reported have mechanisms and procedures in place to reduce possibility of data manipulation, bias, and errors in transcription.</li> <li>• An M&amp;E staff member should spot-check data coming in from coaches.</li> </ul>
Precision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data have sufficient details to permit decision-making. Data should be complete. E.g., if indicator requires household-level info, measures taken at household level.</li> </ul>
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data should reflect stable and consistent collection processes and analysis methods over time. The same thing is measured the same way each time.</li> <li>• In GA, if savings data must be collected in USD, all collected data should be presented in US Dollars throughout the project life cycle, not in Pounds or Euros.</li> </ul>
Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data should be available at a useful frequency, timely enough to influence management decision-making, and should be current.</li> <li>• To successfully mentor participants, coaches should collect some data weekly, some monthly, and some quarterly, based on how the specific data will be used.</li> </ul>

### 7.2.2 Data Quality Spot Checks

To minimize and mitigate inevitable errors in data collection and entry, IP M&E staff perform regular spot checks, which are important to:

- Monitor performance of data handlers.
- Provide timely support and guidance in resolving issues that may arise.
- Identify ongoing training or support needs.
- Identify potential sources of bias or inaccuracy that should be taken into account in the analysis of results.
- Identify potential previously unidentified weaknesses with survey and other data collection tools.

[Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.](#), below, provides additional guidance around the performance of regular spot checks.

Table 17. Data Quality Spot Checks

Stage	Who	What	When
<b>Data collection</b>	UNHCR or IP M&E staff	<p>Observe data collection to ensure proper procedures are being followed. Watch for poor <b>interview technique</b>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate introductions, explanations</li> <li>• Prompting of responses</li> <li>• Inadequate probing</li> <li>• Not reading questions as written</li> <li>• Improper translation of questions (in cases where the questionnaire has not been translated)</li> <li>• Not checking answers against previously reported data (e.g., if the number of children reported has changed from the number of children previously recorded)</li> <li>• Recording data about participant received from persons other than participant</li> <li>• Non-correction of inconsistent or illogical responses</li> <li>• Non-completion of all questions</li> </ul> <p>Be aware of <b>signs that participants are providing inaccurate info</b> due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of trust</li> <li>• Desire to please</li> <li>• Recall errors</li> <li>• Confusion about meaning of questions</li> </ul>	Enumerators collect data from participants
<b>Data entry</b>	IP M&E staff	<p><b>Quality of data entered:</b><sup>17</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete questionnaires - are all of the questions answered?</li> <li>• Have skip patterns been followed?</li> <li>• Are both participant and enumerator names clearly written?</li> <li>• Are dates within the appropriate timeframe? (E.g., date of birth should not be confused with date of the interview, for instance.)</li> <li>• Do values correspond with what we expect? (an age of 99 years, for example, would probably not be accurate)</li> </ul>	Enumerators submit data they have collected from participants

<sup>17</sup> As mentioned in 6.1.1, many common data collection errors can be prevented through mobile data collection. For example, KoBoCollect can be programmed to require each question be answered, to follow skip patterns, and to only accept dates within a certain format and range.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other unexpected or unclear responses</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality of data entry process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A random sample (at least 5%) of entries should be verified</li> <li>• Process quality checks should occur during <i>data</i> the entry process</li> <li>• Errors should be recorded and corrected</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Data Cleaning</b></p>	<p>IP M&amp;E staff</p>	<p>Use software’s descriptive statistics tool(s) to detect potential data quality issues by calculating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Basic descriptive statistics:</b> response distributions, measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), measures of dispersion (variance, standard deviation)</li> <li>• <b>Completion Rates:</b> Were all of the expected surveys received? Were they all entered? Do the partner totals add up as expected?</li> <li>• <b>Duplicate Values:</b> Are any of the entries accidentally repeated? Does each participant have his/her own participant ID number?</li> <li>• <b>Rate of Missing Data:</b> Is there a high percentage of missing data points for certain questions? This could indicate a problematic question,</li> <li>• <b>“Sense check:”</b> Is there anything in the data that signifies a problem with how questions are interpreted by staff or participants?</li> <li>• <b>Frequency Distributions:</b> Can help identify data tendencies and potential problems with collection process or survey tool. Simple way to view and describe results.</li> <li>• <b>Outliers:</b> Frequency distributions can identify outliers. Do the majority of responses fall within a given range, except a few? How do we explain these? Are they errors, or do they represent exceptional results?</li> <li>• <b>Internal Consistency:</b> Internal consistency can be checked <i>after</i> data entry. E.g., Search for participants who have more “children in school” recorded than they have children.</li> <li>• <b>Cross Tabulations:</b> Cross tabs allow comparison of data separated by another variable. E.g., to view frequency distributions for a given variable, such as USD saved, by participant’s country of origin, sex or age.</li> <li>• <b>Results of data cleaning process should be documented and used.</b> In many cases, staff can clarify causes of discrepancies and determine what action should be taken. Faulty data should be corrected, where possible.</li> </ul>	<p>IP M&amp;E staff receive data submitted by enumerators</p>

### 7.2.3 Data Quality Assessment (DQA)

**What.** A DQA is a data quality control process, carried out by M&E staff, or an external third party, in which collected project data is methodically scrutinized, using **Data Quality Standards**. A DQA also examines data collection tools and methods “to determine whether they are likely to produce high quality data over time. In other words, if the data quality standards are met and the data collection methodology is well designed, then it is likely that good data quality will result.<sup>18</sup> See the [Zip Folder](#) for **USAID TIPS, Conducting DQAs**.

**Why.** The purpose of a DQA is to understand 1) the strengths and weaknesses of the data, as determined by applying the Data Quality Standards, and 2) the extent to which data integrity can be trusted to influence decisions.

**Who.** UNHCR M&E staff, IP M&E staff and/or a consultant M&E Specialist, should conduct a DQA of (at least) the most critical indicators. For the purposes of this Guide, it is assumed that IP M&E staff are leading the DQA.

**When.** For an 18-36-month GA4R project, it is recommended that at least one DQA be conducted after 6 months of implementation and regular data collection.

**How.** A simple **Data Quality Checklist** (see [Zip Folder](#) for an example) may be used to perform a DQA of collected indicator data. This checklist tool gives guidance for assessing the five dimensions of data quality, providing a set of questions for each dimension. We recommend selecting two or three of the most applicable questions from each dimension, per indicator.

#### 7.2.3.1 DQA GOOD PRACTICES<sup>19</sup>

- Document findings, which can potentially be used as lessons learned.
- Devise a plan to address issues uncovered during the assessment.
- Correct incorrect data, if possible.
- As a full DQA of all indicators can be time-consuming, depending on the number of indicators, select those indicators that are most critical, or assess a few indicators at a time, spread out over several months.

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<sup>18</sup> USAID TIPS, Conducting Data Quality Assessments. [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pnadw118.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadw118.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Also refer to USAID’s Learning Lab for additional guidance on Data Quality control. <https://usaidearninglab.org/site-search/data%20quality>

# 8. Illustrative M&E Activity Timeline

The timeline below shows the timing of a GA4R M&E activities, organized by the stages of the program cycle, of a typical 18-month project.

Stage	Activity	3 months pre-launch	1 month pre-launch	Month of Implementation										
				Y1 Q1	Y1 Q2	Y1 Q3	Y1 Q4	Y2 Q1	Y2 Q2	Y2 Q3	Y2 Q4	Y3 Q1	Y3 Q2	
Planning	Develop <i>draft</i> Graduation Criteria													
	Develop M&E planning tools													
	Develop targeting criteria													
	Develop & test targeting tools													
	Targeting, select participants													
Start-up	Develop baseline survey													
	Conduct baseline													
	Develop <i>final</i> Graduation Criteria & targets													
	Develop project database													
Implementation	Monitoring													
	Ongoing data quality spot checks													
	DQA/data quality checklist													
	Quarterly adaptive management/learning meetings													
	Quarterly reports													
Closeout	Endline													
	Final report													
Post-implementation (optional)	Post-implementation evaluation <b>*2-5 years after project ends</b>													