



Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Guideline

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RISDA-Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

RISDA-Bangladesh (“the Organization”) considers Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) as a vital instrument in its development and humanitarian actions as it helps to track the progress of programs and projects, make adjustments and assess the outcomes. The Organization confirms the pivotal role that MEAL plays within all its programs and projects in Bangladesh.

This MEAL Guideline will help the Organization design, plan and implement a project-specific MEAL framework comprising approaches, methods and tools. The project-specific MEAL framework will reflect the Organization’s culture, systems, policies and programmatic activities. This MEAL Guideline intends to benefit all involved in designing, planning and implementing of a specific project. Though MEAL Specialist/ Officer will be precisely responsible for supporting the specific projects with his/her expertise, MEAL will be the responsibility of all.

2. Purpose of the MEAL Guideline:

The MEAL Guideline will assist all projects to have a robust and concise MEAL framework ensuring that:

- a) The Organization is doing what it intends to do,
- b) The Organization is implementing the correct programmes,
- c) The Organization is achieving its targets and making changes,
- d) The programs meet the high-quality standards that the Organization expects.

The purpose of the MEAL Guideline is based on two concepts - **accountability** and **learning**. The MEAL Guideline is a tool for the Organization to ensure its accountability to all stakeholders (including donors and funders) and beneficiaries. The MEAL Guideline will lead the Organization in managing compliances in the project. So, the MEAL Guideline is the finest instrument to demonstrate the Organization’s commitment to correct implementation for achieving the best solutions to the beneficiaries’ issues.

Secondly, the MEAL Guideline is a fundamental component of learning and improvement within the Organisation. It allows teams and partners to further understand the issues and evaluate inputs to make changes to improve projects.

So, the MEAL Guideline is to deliver to project stakeholders a framework that ensures coherence and minimizes inconsistencies in monitoring, results reporting and evaluation processes of the project. It fully equips the MEAL stakeholders to carry out monitoring and evaluation systematically for i) ensuring accountability, ii) facilitating learning, iii) demonstrating impact.

3. Definitions

3.1 Monitoring: Monitoring is the process of continuous tracking or surveillance of the implementation of the project. It seeks to determine whether project inputs have been mobilized, activities undertaken, and outputs produced as scheduled.

In monitoring, data are collected continually and systematically to provide concerned management with information about the progress of the project. The collected data enable concerned management to undertake timely decisions and short-term corrective actions.

3.2 Evaluation: Evaluation is the process of critically assessing whether the objectives of the project are being achieved and whether they are contributing to the attainment of the development objectives.

In evaluation, data-turned information is used to contribute to longer-term organizational learning and adjustments.

3.3 Accountability: Accountability is organizational answerability to the needs, feedback, ideas, and complaints of all stakeholders (including project beneficiaries, donors, implementing partners and the organization itself) of the project.

An accountable project always takes stakeholders' views into account in project development and implementation. Accountability does not take place in a vacuum. So, it deserves from project personnel – i) Transparent communication regarding monitoring and evaluation data and information with the stakeholders, ii) communication channels through which stakeholders can raise their concerns, views, complaints and feedback, iii) quick response to the stakeholders' views, complaints, feedback and iv) stakeholders' varying participation in conducting MEAL.

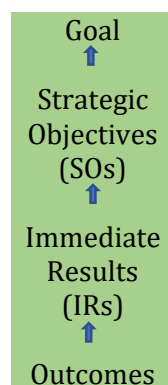
3.4 Learning: Learning is the process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, values and preferences. The new acquisition helps the project to make changes for further quality improvement. Learning is taken placed on past program experiences.

For learning, concerned management can: i) encourage and reward person(s) in pursuit of learning, ii) secure an enabling environment in which person(s) are encouraged to ask questions and challenge established opinions, iii) set a system that absorbs new learning into the organizational knowledge management system.

3.5 Theory of Change (ToC): ToC is a tool used by institutions to promote intended change. The tool helps visualize the intended change. ToC holds the process of attaining the intended change through establishing causal linkages among short-term, intermediate and long-term objectives. The whole process of change is underpinned by preconditions and assumptions.

Descriptions in ToC can be written as a text document. But ToC is more commonly supported with flow charts, maps and network diagrams.

3.6 Result Framework (RF): RF is a tool used by institutions that organize the intended results of a project in 'if-then' relationships. The results are – Outcomes, Immediate Results (IRs), Strategic Objectives (SOs) and Goal. The results are presented in a cause-effect mode:



3.7 Logical Framework (LF): LF is a matrix that presents the sequential process of attainment of intended results. It presents resources to fuel the process of attainment of intended results. It articulates external factors that can influence the attainment of the results as well. A sample of LF is presented:

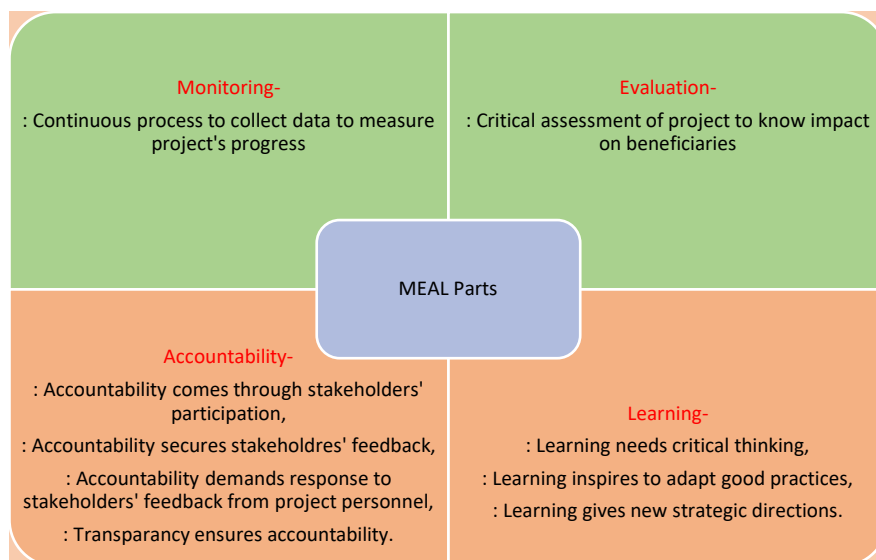
Objectives Statements	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (Means of Verification	Assumptions
Goal			
Strategic Objectives (SOs)			
Intermediate Results (IRs)			
Outcomes			
Activities			

3.7 M&E framework: M&E framework is a table that describes the indicators that are used to measure whether the program is a success.

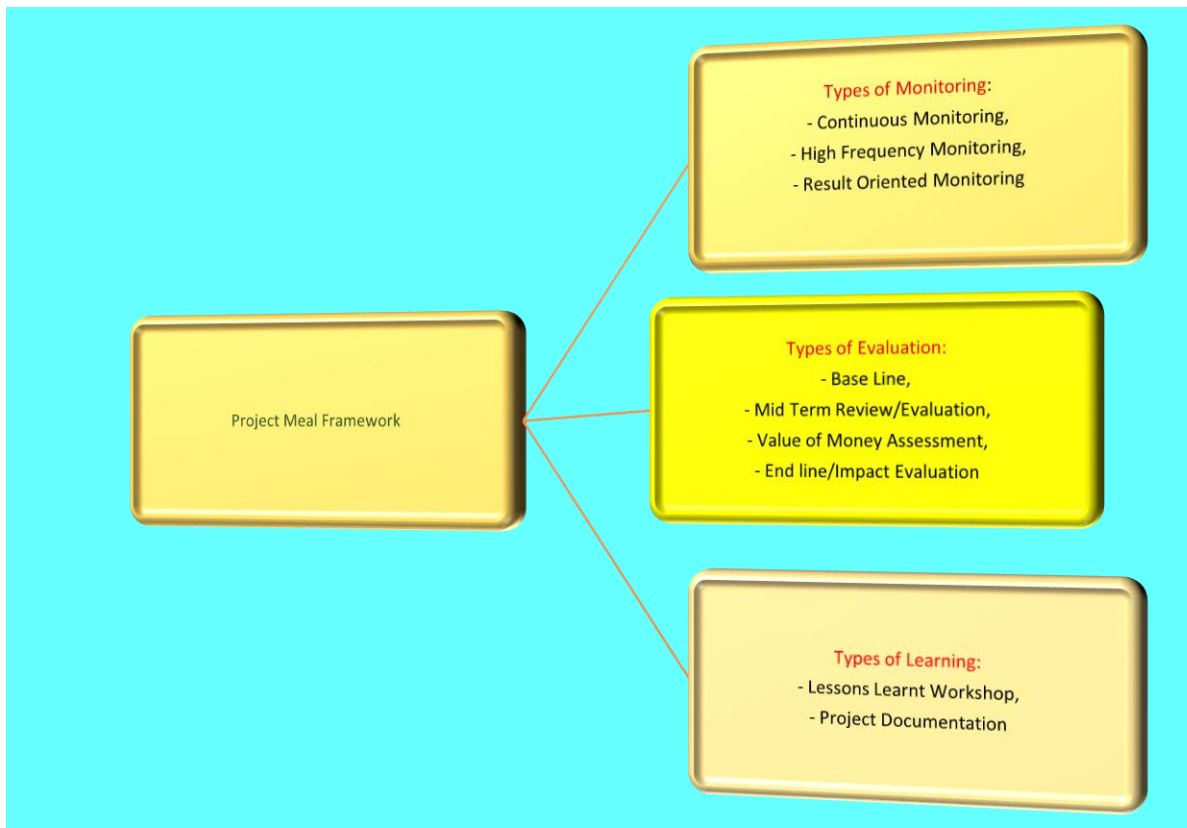
	INDICATOR	DEFINITION How is it calculated?	BASELINE What is the current value?	TARGET What is the target value?	DATA SOURCE How will it be measured?	FREQUENCY How often will it be measured?	RESPONSIBLE Who will measure it?	REPORTING Where will it be reported?
Goal								
Outcomes								
Outputs								

4. MEAL in the Organization:

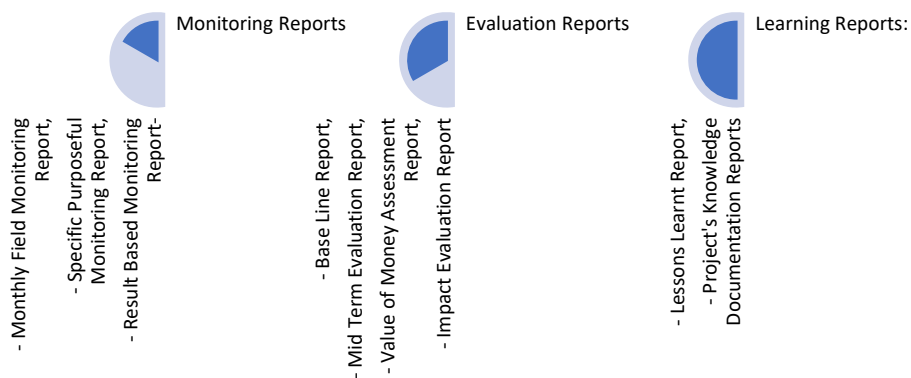
4.1 MEAL Parts: MEAL is the backbone of any developmental and humanitarian intervention. It comprises of 4 parts-Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning:



The Organization will follow the MEAL Framework mapped out below for its project planning and implementation:



Note: The proposed aspects of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning of the MEAL framework can be changed based on emerging needs including donor and organizational requirements. The Organization will produce, but is not limited to, the following reports:



Note: The proposed aspects of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Reports of the MEAL framework can be changed based on emerging needs including donor and organizational requirements.

4.2 Guideline to Monitoring Aspects: The Organization will follow the following aspects for monitoring the project. Based on donor requirements and ground realities changes will be appreciated:

Type of Monitoring	Purpose	Data Collection Tools	Frequency	Product Outcome	Responsible Person
Continuous Monitoring	- To track the progress of project implementation (in terms of inputs and process).	Field Visit and use of monitoring tools	Monthly	Monthly Report	MEAL Officer/Coordinator
Specific Purposeful Monitoring- Real-time monitoring to address suddenly popped-up project issue	- To see how the project is fighting to cope with a suddenly erupted project issue.	Real time monitoring with available device	As needed	Situation Update Report	Do
Result-Based Monitoring (RBM)	- To see progress on set project results	- Field Visit with result-oriented monitoring tools - Report Analysis	6-monthly (Periodic)	RBM Report	Do

4.3. Guideline to Evaluation Aspect: The Organization will follow the following aspects for evaluation of project. Based on donor requirement and ground realities changes will be appreciated:

Type of Evaluation	Purpose	Data Collection Tools	Frequency	Product Outcome	Responsible Person
Baseline Survey	- To assess the status of indicators project wants to address, - To use in the mid-term review, impact evaluation for measure attainment.	Survey at the intended communities	Within 2 months of project's commencement	One time Survey Report	Third Party with oversight from RISDA (MEAL Officer/Coordinator)
Mid-term Review/Evaluation	- To assess the progress of the project midway, - To provide management with recommendation needed for the rest of the project time.	- Survey, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview	Midway of the project	Mid-term Evaluation Report	Do

		(KII), Review of the Reports etc.			
Value of Money Assessment	- To see if the project has achieved results as outlined in terms of money spent.	- Survey	End line	Report	Do
End Line/Impact Evaluation	To see ultimate attainments of the project's expected results in terms of i) Relevance of the Project, ii) Efficiency of the project management, iii) Effectiveness for the project beneficiaries, iv) Impact and v) Sustainability of the project components.	- Survey, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview (KII), Case Study, Review of the Reports etc.	End line	Impact Evaluation Report	Do

4.4 Guideline to Learning Aspects: The Organization will follow the following aspects for the learning of project. Based on donor requirement and ground realities changes will be appreciated:

Type of Learning	Purpose	Data Collection Tools	Frequency	Product Outcome	Responsible Person
Lessons Learnt Workshop	- To capture lessons learnt in a project for future project implementation	Workshop having project people of different strata	End line	Lessons Learnt Report	MEAL Officer/Coordinator
Project Documentation	- To collect knowledge, skills and attitudes earned in a project	- Consultation of project personnel, Project documents review etc.	End line	Project Documentation Report	Third-Party with oversight from RISDA (MEAL Officer/Coordinator)

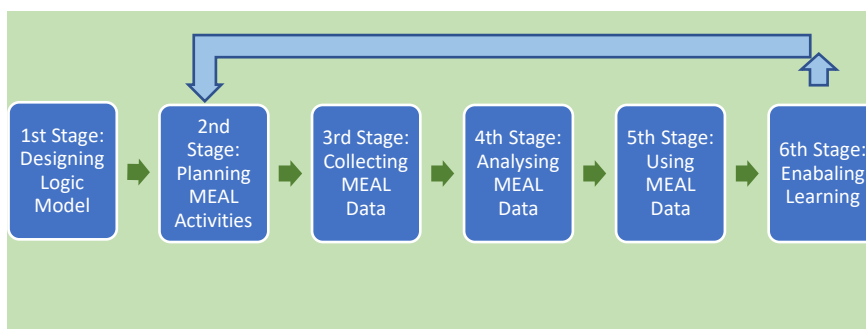
4.5 Reporting Aspects: The following aspects will be followed in preparing reports related to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning:

Report Type	Source of the Report	Reporting Period	Dissemination of Report
Monthly Field Monitoring Report	Continuous Monitoring	Monthly	Report sharing with inside stakeholders
Specific Purpose Monitoring Report	Specific Purpose Monitoring	Need-based	Do
Result-Based Monitoring (RBM) Report	Result-Based Monitoring (RBM)	6-monthly	Report sharing with stakeholders including donor
Baseline Report	Baseline of the Project	Within 3 months of the project's	Do

		commencement	
Mid-term Evaluation Report	Mid-term Evaluation	Midway of the Project	Do
Value of Money Assessment Report	Value of Money Assessment	Before 5 months of project phase-out	Do
Endline/Impact Evaluation Report	Endline/Impact Evaluation	Before 5 months of project phase-out	Do
Lessons Learnt Report	Lessons Learnt Workshop	Before 5 months of project phase-out	Do
Project's Knowledge Documentation Report	Project Documentation	Before 5 months of project phase-out	Do

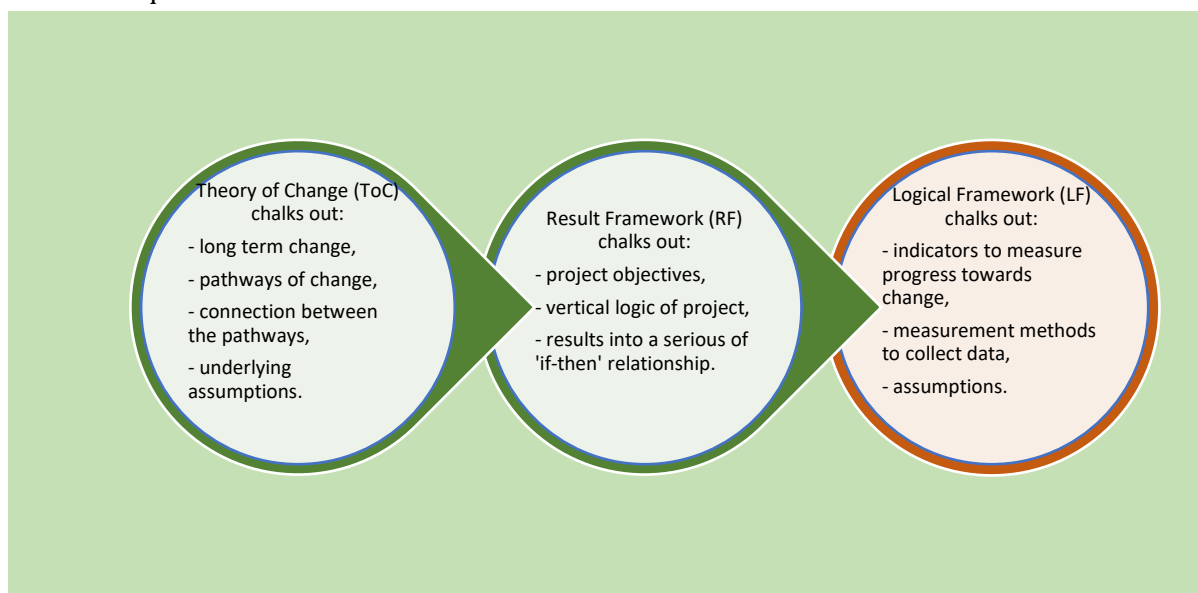
5. MEAL Cycle:

Logic Model consists of Theory of Change (ToC), Result Framework (RF) and Logical Framework (LF). MEAL framework is developed based on MEAL Guideline. Then the MEAL framework is applied in the entire life cycle of a project. It starts to work at the very beginning of a project and continues to work until the end of the project. The Organization will use a robust results-based MEAL framework. Activities under a project MEAL framework are organized at six progressive stages:



5.1 1st Stage: Designing logic model:

Designing logic model will help the Organization establish project MEAL framework. The Organization will use three commonly used project logic models: Theory of Change (ToC), Results Framework (RF) and Logical Framework (LF). As each logic model (whether it is ToC or RF or LF) is built on the information found in the previous one, the Organization will create those in sequences:



Planning MEAL Activities includes- Monitoring Plan and Evaluation framework, Feedback-Response Mechanism, MEAL Communication Plan, Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), Budgeting and Staffing.

5.2.1 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework: M&E framework is a table that describes the indicators that are used to measure whether the program is a success.

5.2.2 MEAL Feedback-Response Mechanism: This is a two-way mechanism in which communities give feedback and the project team provides appropriate responses to the communities. The communication between communities and the project team takes place through phone calls, text messages, suggestion boxes, community meetings, etc.

5.2.3 MEAL Communication Plan: MEAL-related communication with stakeholders is vital. Media such as conferences, social media platforms, leaflets, notice boards, workshops, community meetings, phone calls, and project reports will be used in MEAL communication.

5.2.4 MEAL Calendar: The Organization will develop a year-wise MEAL calendar for the project. The MEAL calendar will be on Gantt Chart. The contents of the year-wise Gantt Chart will include- Continuous monitoring visits, Result-Based Monitoring (RBM), monitoring tools development event, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) design, Mid-term Evaluation, Impact Evaluation, etc.

5.2.5 Budgeting: The Organization will include the MEAL budget in the submitted Project Proposal (PP). The Organization, after being awarded a project from the donor, will turn the PP budget into a detailed one. The detailed budget will be prepared on Gantt Chart-based MEAL Calendar. The MEAL budget will ensure allocation for staffing, equipment, materials & supplies, travel.

5.2.6 Staffing: Primarily MEAL Officer/Coordinator will be responsible for MEAL management of a particular project. In principle, all project staff are part of MEAL management. So, coordination among MEAL person(s) and other project staff is important for MEAL implementation.

5.2.7 Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR): ToR will be a well-organized guiding tool for the Organization's project evaluation. ToR will set the standard for the evaluators. The ToR will have the following components- i) Introduction to the Project, ii) Background of the Evaluation, iii) Evaluation Purpose, iv) Evaluation Criteria and Questions, v) Evaluation Methodologies, vi) Evaluation Rules and Responsibilities, vii) Evaluation Deliverables and Timelines, viii) Evaluation Logistics and Supports, ix) Reporting aspects. The ToR will inherit 5 evaluation criteria, namely i) Relevance of the Project, ii) Efficiency of the Project Management, iii) Effectiveness of the Project, iv) Impact of the Project and v) Sustainability of the Project.

5.3 (3rd Stage): Collecting MEAL Data:

Collecting MEAL data includes – data quality, developing data collection tools, collection of data sampling and finalization of data collection tools.

5.3.1 Data Quality: To fulfil the purpose of MEAL, collection of quality data is essential. To collect bias-free quality data, the Organization will apply 5 standards applying to data collection. The data-quality related standards are- i) Validity of Data (checking the accuracy of data), ii) Reliability of Data (data collection method's consistency), iii) Precision of Data (representing accurate picture of what is happening), iv) Integrity of Data (overall accuracy, completeness and consistency of data) and v) Timeliness of Data (availability of data during the time of need).

5.3.2 Developing Data Collection Tools: The Organization will use both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools in its MEAL. The qualitative data collection tools will include, but not limited to, i) In-Depth Interview (IDI), ii) Focus Group Discussion (FGD), iii) Key Informant Interview (KII), iv) Case Study, v) Mapping, vii) Observation, viii) Action Research, ix) Story Telling, x) Document Review. The quantitative data collection tools will include, but not limited to, i) Survey, ii) Document Review such as technical and administrative documents, iii) Report Data Review- both financial and program data review.

5.3.3 Creation of Data Sampling: The Organization will apply both probability and non-probability data sampling methods. The probability data sampling methods will include i) Simple Random Sampling, ii) Cluster Sampling, iii) Stratified Sampling. At the same time, the Organization will apply non-probability data sampling methods- i) Purposive Sampling. The selection of data sampling method will depend on volume of target population and the purpose of monitoring or evaluation, cost associated.

5.3.4 Finalization of Data Collection Tools: After finalizing of MEAL data collection tools for, the Organization will follow the steps- i) data collection tools will be translated into other languages, if needed, ii) data collectors will be trained on data collection tools and processes, iii) data collection tools will be field tested, revised and finalized.

5.4 (4th Stage): Analysing MEAL Data:

After collection of data, some works will be done. Those are – i) Data Entry in MS Excel Sheet or SPSS Software, ii) Data Cleaning/ Removing deleting errors and inconsistencies, iii) visualization of Data in the form Bar Chart, Column Chart, Pie Chart, Line Chart, Scatter Chart, Heat Map etc. and iv) Interpretation of Data into information for know the trend of the project activities, correlation among project components, finally the learning of the project etc.

5.5 (5th Stage): Using MEAL Data:

The Organization will utilize the collected MEAL data to – i) prepare MEAL report, ii) communicate the MEAL report with different stakeholders and iii) show progress to the project management team for adapting MEAL lessons.

5.6 (6th Stage): Enabling Learning:

The Organization will adapt culture that enables learning. The Organization will translate learning into practice that responds to MEAL-induced new contexts and information. The whole learning process will be adapted in the Organization in three ways: i) new knowledge will be created in the Organization, ii) created knowledge will be transformed through person-to-person and knowledge platforms and iii) knowledge will be retained in the Organization through embedding it into process and activities.

7. MEAL task for different sections of RISDA-Bangladesh

6.1. Executive Director

The Executive Director provides overall direction, leadership and management of the organization. His roles and responsibilities are the following:

- Submits the organization's results-based programme budget to the Executive Committee for approval;
- Submits other relevant documents to the Executive Committee for review, including the organization's Strategic Plans, Programme Performance Reports and Evaluation Reports; and

- Identifies projects and undertaking for, and requests the Monitoring and Evaluation Section to perform evaluations.

6.2. MEAL Section

The MEAL Section acts as the custodian of the monitoring and evaluation functions. The section's roles and responsibilities are the following:

- Oversees the application of the Guideline, identifies bottlenecks and constraints and makes recommendations for updating the requirements or other elements of the guideline, in line with national and international good practice, lessons learned as well as and the evolving programming and operational needs and characteristics of the organization;
- Facilitates regular interaction in-house with managers and other staff, collects feedback and facilitates learning on the guideline;
- Conducts research and engages in critical and analytical reflection as well as issues recommendations to management for compliance with the guideline;
- Prepares and circulates guidelines, checklists, templates and other tools to facilitate the application of the guideline;
- Develops and promotes standards for evaluation and quality assurance;
- Conducts and/or manages evaluations at the request of the Executive Director and/or programmes and other organization section entities;
- Undertakes reviews of decentralized evaluations on periodic and selective basis for quality assurance purposes;
- Prepares and maintains a depository of annual work plans;
- Prepares, maintains and monitors the implementation of an annual evaluation plan based on scheduled evaluations;
- Prepares a synthesis and maintains a compilation of Programme Performance Reports based on submissions from programme management;
- Maintains a public depository of evaluation reports with a view to ensure transparency and facilitate the integration of lessons learned and best practices into the broader concept of knowledge management;
- Oversees the development and maintenance of an intranet-based knowledge navigator tool to stock, manage and disseminate lessons-learned from evaluations;
- Promotes knowledge management, organizational learning and lessons learned by keeping abreast of innovative practices in the field of evaluation and monitoring, identifying relevant state-of-the art techniques, tools and methods, and providing divisional units with guidance on the use of respective tools and methods;
- Commits to sharing best practices and lessons learned for the purpose of enhancing the quality of the Institute's products and services; and

6.3. Program Management

Program management is a generic term comprising the manager-level posts of all entities, including programs, sections, offices and units. Programme management's roles and responsibilities are the following:

- Undertakes monitoring and evaluation functions in accordance with the present guideline, including monitoring progress towards results, as well as planning and conducting decentralized, self-evaluations;
- Informs donors and implementing partners of the organization's evaluation requirements when preparing and negotiating project agreements and modalities for cooperation, and ensures that monitoring and evaluation modalities are specified in project documents or related agreements;

- Budgets resources for the planning and undertaking of self- and/or independent evaluations in line with applicable evaluation requirements;
- Incorporates evaluation into annual work planning and informs the Monitoring and Evaluation Section of the scheduling of evaluations on a rolling basis;
- Submits copies of results and/or reports of decentralized, self-evaluations undertaken to the Monitoring and Evaluation Section upon completion;
- Follows-up on findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons-learned of independent evaluations in the form of a management response;
- Implements recommendations of evaluations provided that they are relevant and actionable, and indicates expected dates for completing implementation; and,
- Commits to sharing best practices and lessons learned for the purpose of enhancing the quality of the organization's products and services.

7. Guiding Principles for MEAL:

The Organization will adapt the following MEAL guiding principles:

7.1 Participation of Stakeholders: Project stakeholders will be engaged in all stages of MEAL, namely planning, monitoring, evaluation, learning and improvement.

7.2 Privacy and Confidentiality of Participants: Data collection and storage should keep the participants and their opinions private and confidential.

7.3 Bias-Free: In monitoring and evaluation activities MEAL persons will remain bias-free.

7.4 Evidence-based Practices: Decision will be drawn upon consistent data, information and knowledge.

7.5 Practical and Cost-effective Processes: Project will apply practical approaches, tools, methods. The MEAL will adapt a cost-effective approach.
