



# ALNAP Learning Links

---

Resources for Monitoring and Evaluation  
(M&E) practitioners and decision-makers

# Welcome to ALNAP's M&E resource pack on monitoring & evaluation

---

ALNAP hosts the sector's largest library of resources on Humanitarian Evaluation, Learning and Performance ([HELP library](#)), which features guidance and M&E resources produced by ALNAP together with evaluations from across the sector. ALNAP's key monitoring and evaluation (M&E) resources have been grouped together below. They include papers and guidelines, audio-visual materials, blogs, case studies, e-learning courses and webinars that can provide interactive options for peer groups and practitioners to exchange on.

We are eager to share these with you and hope you can use them as part of your work, as well as existing academic or training programmes, and/or to promote peer to peer learning and practitioner exchanges in any operational or learning setting. While ALNAP's work centres around humanitarian response, we believe these resources can be equally useful for other contexts.

Some of the sections are framed around an overarching evaluation theme, including evaluating humanitarian action, protection and cash programming. While others present a research series such as on improving monitoring in humanitarian action and on COVID-19, which can be broken down into several sub-topics. You can browse through the topics and choose relevant ALNAP resources for your academic or professional development syllabi, your own background reading, or as part of in-class presentations and assignments or reflection points for practitioners.

As a living document we will be regularly fine tuning and updating it with new materials. If there are areas that you think we should add to it, or if you have suggestions for further improving this e-book, please let us know at [h.abulhusn@alnap.org](mailto:h.abulhusn@alnap.org).

Note that this resource pack is not comprehensive of all of the materials in the [ALNAP HELP Library](#), it focuses on a select number of ALNAP resources only. If you can't find a relevant resource here, we encourage you to browse our library of over 22,000 humanitarian learning materials.

Updated 12 December 2023

# Key M&E themes

---

## [An Overview of Evaluation of Humanitarian Action](#)

Take an in-depth look at ALNAP's key resources on evaluating humanitarian action, including practical guidance, a look at its history and evolving practice, and the application of criteria.

## [Improving monitoring in humanitarian action](#)

Explore monitoring outcomes, capturing and using qualitative data, and how monitoring & evaluation can better support project decision-making and learning.

## [Real-Time Evaluation and Learning](#)

Discover how understanding and acting in rapidly changing and unfamiliar contexts renewed interest in real-time evaluation and learning and its relevance for humanitarian response.

## [Remote M&E: An exploration of key challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Understand key challenges and considerations for monitoring & evaluation during COVID-19 at both strategic and practical levels.

## [Evaluation of Protection](#)

Explore the challenges specific to evaluating protection programmes through ALNAP's comprehensive guidance.

## [Evaluation of Cash Programming](#)

Find out more about a range of issues that humanitarian teams and evaluators should pay special attention to when evaluating cash programmes.

## [Use of Evaluation Evidence](#)

Discover what is needed for the effective uptake and use of monitoring & evaluation findings, and wider knowledge management and learning processes in humanitarian action.

# An overview of evaluation of humanitarian action

Explore the many aspects of evaluating humanitarian action in highly complex operating environments, through practical guidance, a look at its history and evolving practice, and the application of criteria.

## ALNAP resources

- [Review of the OECD DAC criteria for evaluating humanitarian action: a mapping of literature, guidance and practice](#) [119pp], [Summary Brief](#) [20pp], 2023 (Summary brief also in [Spanish](#), [French](#) and [Arabic](#))

*Overview of the use of the OECD DAC criteria for evaluating humanitarian action, how they have been interpreted in sector-wide and organisational guidance, key issues identified in literature and application in contemporary evaluations.*

- [Evaluating Humanitarian Action](#) [429pp], 2016 (Arabic upcoming / [French](#) / [Spanish](#)).  
*A comprehensive guide for evaluation specialists and non-specialists at every stage of an evaluation, from initial decision to final dissemination.*
- [Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria](#) [80pp], 2006 ([Spanish](#)).  
*A guide that provides practical support on how to use the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria in evaluation of humanitarian action (EHA).*

Please note that ALNAP is currently undergoing [further research to update and revise this](#).

- [Evolving evaluation practice: past, present and future challenges](#) [30pp], 2021  
*A brief overview of the history of EHA and common challenges, including those linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, written with young and emerging evaluators in mind.*

## Audio-visual materials

- ALNAP presentation: [Modern humanitarian history in six evaluations](#) [8:38], 2021  
*Video featuring ALNAP's Special Advisor and former Director John Mitchell outlining 6 humanitarian moments in which evaluations helped write history and shape future improvements.*

## Tip Clips

*Short video clips of evaluators highlighting their key tips for each stage of an evaluation.*

- [Deciding to do an evaluation](#) [2:48], 2017
- [Initiating an evaluation](#) [2:08], 2017
- [Managing the evaluation](#) [3:19], 2018
- [Interview Techniques](#) [2:27], 2018
- [Engaging with Affected People](#) [3:01], 2018

## E-Learning Course

A 10-part course, "An Introduction to Evaluating Humanitarian Action" (ALNAP/UNICEF), aimed at evaluation managers, program managers and evaluators that expands on the pilot version of the ALNAP Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide.

Note: To follow the entire course and receive a certificate of completion, register through the [Evalpartners website](#).

For access to separate units (use video password: ALNAPEHA):

- [Unit 1: Introducing evaluation of humanitarian action](#) [34:41], 2015
- [Unit 2: Planning for utilisation](#) [27:42], 2015
- [Unit 3: Evaluation design](#) [18:26], 2015
- [Unit 4: Inception phase](#) [13:09], 2015
- [Unit 5: Desk review](#) [19:32], 2015
- [Unit 6: Engaging affected people](#) [32:30], 2015
- [Unit 7: Field methods: evaluation under constraints](#) [23:47], 2015
- [Unit 8: Real-time evaluations](#) [10:36], 2015
- [Unit 9: Humanitarian impact evaluation](#) [18:39], 2015
- [Unit 10: Analysis, outputs, dissemination and take-up](#) [34:08], 2015

### **Group assignments/class discussion**

Follow the e-learning course "An Introduction to Evaluating Humanitarian Action" with reading lists and tests (10 questions) per unit and the option of receiving a certificate of completion.

Create a brief outline for an evaluation plan for a real or imagined humanitarian crisis:

- Which evaluator tips (see tip clips) did you consider in your planning and how?
- What 3 key considerations will you make if you apply the OECD-DAC criteria in the context of your evaluation?

## Improving monitoring in humanitarian action

Explore three monitoring & evaluation (M&E) issues identified by ALNAP membership as requiring further research: monitoring outcomes; capturing and using qualitative data; and how M&E can better support project decision-making and learning.

### ALNAP resources

- [Back to the Drawing Board: How to improve monitoring of outcomes](#) [43pp], 2019

*Encourages humanitarian agencies to step back and reflect on what is being done to measure outcomes and how it can be improved in the future.*

- [Beyond the Numbers: How qualitative approaches can improve monitoring of humanitarian action](#) [62pp], 2019

*Potential ways to improve the capture and uptake of qualitative data in monitoring of humanitarian programmes.*

- [Breaking the Mould: Alternative approaches to monitoring and evaluation](#) [50pp], 2019

*A range of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) innovations that are designed specifically to provide input to ongoing iterative decision-making and learning at the project level.*

### Audio-visual materials:

- Video animation: [Improving monitoring in humanitarian action](#) [1:20], 2019

*Video introducing the outline of ALNAP's research on monitoring of humanitarian action.*

- Video animation: [How to Improve Outcomes Monitoring](#) [1:31], 2019

*Video summarising ALNAP's paper: Back to the Drawing Board, on what is currently being done to measure outcomes and how it can be improved in the future.*

- Video animation: [Qualitative Approaches to Monitoring](#) [1:35], 2019

*Video summarising ALNAP's paper: Beyond the Numbers, on potential ways to improve the capture and uptake of qualitative data in monitoring of humanitarian programmes.*

- Video animation: [Alternative Approaches to Monitoring and Evaluation](#) [2:02], 2019

*Video summarising ALNAP's paper: Breaking the Mould, on M&E innovations designed for ongoing iterative decision-making and learning at the project level.*

Discussion starters:

- [Back to the Drawing Board: How to improve monitoring of outcomes](#) [4pp], 2019

*How close are humanitarians to monitoring actual outcomes in humanitarian action?*

- [Beyond the Numbers: How qualitative approaches can improve monitoring of humanitarian action](#) [4pp], 2019

*Why do M&E practitioners still find qualitative approaches to monitoring challenging?*

- [Breaking the Mould: Alternative approaches to monitoring and evaluation](#) [4pp], 2019

*How can innovations in M&E systems enhance the bridge between formal and informal knowledge systems in the humanitarian sector and can the way we do M&E change the use of the information generated?*

## **Group assignments/class discussion**

Divide into small groups and use the discussion starters to explore each topic and begin to reflect on the questions within each. Report back on 3 key ideas that came up.

## Real-time evaluation and learning

Explore why understanding, analysing and acting in rapidly changing and unfamiliar contexts has renewed interest in Real-Time Learning and Real Time Evaluation, and its relevance for humanitarian response.

### ALNAP resources

- [From Real-Time Evaluation to Real-Time Learning](#) [77pp], 2021

*Reviews the RTE and RTL approaches that have been adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic and draws out lessons and implications for future evaluation practice.*

- Blog: [Breaking the evaluation rule book: how do we learn in the midst of a global pandemic?](#), 2021

*Describes key elements of "From Real-Time Evaluation to Real Time Learning" paper.*

- [Real-time Evaluations of Humanitarian Action - An ALNAP Guide](#) [97pp], 2009

*This pilot guide is intended to help evaluation managers to commission and oversee, and team leaders to conduct, RTEs of humanitarian operational responses.*

Audio-visual materials:

- Webinar: [ALNAP – UNEG evaluation practitioner exchange event: Real-Time Learning and Real-Time Evaluation approaches during COVID-19](#) [1:32:42], 2022

*Joint event with the UN Evaluation Group, presenting various agencies' design and implementation of Real-Time Evaluations and learning exercises during the pandemic.*

- ALNAP Meeting: [Evaluation in the time of COVID-19](#) [1:29:36], 2021

*Video extract (6:36-32:30) describing Real-Time Learning and ALNAP's research.*

### Group assignments/class discussion

Think of an example of Real-Time Learning in an academic or professional setting you are familiar with, or choose one from the [ALNAP HELP Library](#):

- Which type of Real-Time Learning (approach or method) was used and what were the pros/cons?

You are a Monitoring & Evaluation Director for a large organisation:

- How would you summarise the advantages of undertaking an RTE or RTL exercise during a complex crisis response to the organisation's senior management.
- How would you address their potential concerns of conducting an evaluative exercise during an ongoing response effort?



# Remote M&E: An exploration of key challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

Explore some of the key challenges and considerations for monitoring & evaluation (M&E) during peak points of the covid-19 outbreak at both strategic and practical levels, with a particular focus on remote M&E.

## ALNAP resources

- [Getting Remote M&E Right](#) [37pp], 2021

*Explores the ethics, challenges and gaps of remote M&E in practice.*

- Blog: [Remote M&E: 5 key challenges and how to address them](#), 2021

*A summary of the emerging good practice to address 5 key challenges (Inclusion; Safety and well-being; Expectations and trust; Data quality; Data protection) of remote M&E.*

- [Learning as we go: how COVID-19 is changing evaluation strategy and planning](#) [24pp], 2021

*Provides an overview of changes in evaluation strategy and approaches since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, written with senior evaluation staff in mind.*

## Audio-visual material:

- Webinar: [How is COVID-19 transforming M&E?](#) [1:00:19], 2021

*Key takeaways from ALNAP skills-building workshops that brought together over 100 M&E practitioners to reflect & exchange on practical strategic challenges & ways their organisations have had to adapt.*

## Group assignments/class discussion

Break out into groups and discuss:

- What lessons from Covid-19 may carry importance for current and future humanitarian action as it relates to the use of remote M&E?
- Select 3 ethical aspects of remote M&E and how you would mitigate challenges & risks that come up in relation to these when planning an evaluation.

## Evaluation of protection

The number of actors seeking to reduce protection risks for populations affected by crises has steadily risen, and the system has increasingly developed sector-wide policies, standards and tools for protection. ALNAP's resources explore the challenges to evaluating protection programmes due to variation in protection approaches, understanding of cause-effect relationships and collecting data.

### ALNAP resources

- [ALNAP Guide: Evaluation of Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) [133pp], 2018

*Covers the application of a protection lens to the stages of an evaluation, consideration of protection-related issues and challenges.*

### Case study:

- [Bangladesh case study: Covid-19 in Cox's Bazar](#), State of the Humanitarian System [4pp], 2022

*Focuses on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on safeguarding and protection in Rohingya refugee camps.*

### Group assignments/class discussion

You are asked to design an evaluation for a protection programme in your country or region (or use the Bangladesh case study for context):

- What are key protection principles and safeguarding risks you must consider at each stage?
- Describe the mechanisms (for example in the form of a safeguarding and risk management plan) that should be put in place to address those risks.

## Evaluation of cash programming

Cash assistance has evolved rapidly in recent years and continues to change. The scale of humanitarian cash transfers continues to grow and is likely to keep increasing. The changing shape of cash assistance points to the possible beginnings of an evolution in the coordination of humanitarian action, which in turn has implications for evaluation. Here we explore emerging issues such as the linkages with social protection and how to evaluate multi-purpose outcomes.

### ALNAP resources

- [Cashing in: Turning challenges into opportunities when evaluating humanitarian cash assistance](#) [50pp], 2021

*Explores the challenges faced when evaluating cash assistance based on research activities by ALNAP along with substantive inputs from the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) drawing on their research.*

- Blog: [Five things to consider when evaluating cash assistance](#), 2021

*Capturing the range of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) outcomes, and evaluating: multipurpose cash assistance; collaborative approaches; programmes linking CVA with social protection; and service provider partnerships and data responsibilities.*

Case study:

- [Yemen case study: Understanding effectiveness in a food crisis](#), State of the Humanitarian System [4pp], 2022

*Provides context for a situation in which cash and voucher assistance was connected to food aid in Yemen.*

### Group assignments/class discussion

You are asked to design an evaluation for a programme that includes cash and voucher assistance in your country or region (or use the Yemen case study for context):

- What are key considerations you must make at each stage?
- How will this evaluation take special account of the common challenges to evaluating cash programming?
- Summarise key points for consideration in an evaluation design.

## Use of evaluation evidence

Not taking action on M&E insights is a missed opportunity. They provide valuable evidence to trigger change and improve performance in programmes, approaches and policies. Here we explore what is needed for the effective uptake and use of M&E findings and wider knowledge management and learning processes in humanitarian action.

### ALNAP resources

- Blog: [Are humanitarian evaluations fit for purpose?](#), 2021

*Discusses the state of evaluation practice, the role of independent evaluation and the need to think beyond standard evaluation approaches.*

- [Learning from What We Know: How to improve evaluation synthesis for humanitarian organisations](#) [20pp], 2020

*Provides guidance on when to do an evaluation synthesis and how to do it well, as an option for building information about response-wide performance.*

- [Missing the point? Reflections on current practice in evaluating humanitarian action](#) [22pp], 2020

*Aims to stimulate discussion on current evaluation practice in the sector and, in proposing potential solutions to challenges identified, of possible future directions.*

- [Strengthening the quality of evidence in humanitarian evaluations](#) [40pp], 2017

*Explores the evidential challenges confronting those who commission and carry out evaluations in a method note.*

- [Using Evaluation for a Change: Insights from humanitarian practitioners](#) [96pp], 2013

*Presents a framework on strengthening humanitarian evaluation capacities, key issues for improving use of evaluations, plus case studies and practice-based insights.*

### Group assignments/class discussion

Break out into groups and discuss:

- What is meant by 'good quality evidence' in the humanitarian sector and what are the 'qualities' that are most important?
- What makes evidence from across the humanitarian programme cycle credible and of sufficient quality so that different groups of intended users can trust it to inform