

Manaaki Fund: Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) Guidance

Purpose

This MERL Guidance document is intended to support Manaaki Fund partners as they design MERL frameworks.

Intended audience

NGOs engaged in the Manaaki Fund and MFAT staff.

Version

Version 1: September 2025

1. Rationale

Under the Partnering for Impact (P4I) programme, NGO partners require strong monitoring and evaluation systems and processes to drive activity management, learn lessons for continuous improvement and provide evidence of development delivery. This document provides basic guidance to support the establishment of MERL systems and processes for Manaaki Fund partners.

2. The role of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MERL)

Monitoring and reporting frameworks should be structured to support activity delivery and greater development impact. The purpose of the MERL is:

- to support activity delivery by allowing regular learning and reflection on the implementation processes, the assumptions that underpin activities, and to uncover new information to inform operational changes.
- to be able to accurately 'tell the story' of the development impact, partnership and public diplomacy outcomes the activity is achieving at both the country and community level, and to share learning to enhance policy and programming more broadly.
- to ensure a strong focus on performance and continuous improvement by allowing partners to engage with each other and deliver their programmes as effectively and as efficiently as possible.
- to enable MFAT to manage public funding and to account for the investment and the use of public funding to Ministers and Parliament.

3. Country-led planning and reporting

MFAT is working to maximise development impact at the country level across the whole IDC programme. This includes a strong focus on ensuring we can demonstrate how our work contributes to specific country priorities and outcomes agreed by MFAT and partner governments.

To ensure coherence, Country Plans have been developed that identify alignment between partner country priorities and MFAT's Strategic Framework. Please consider how your activity outcomes align with the Country Plan outcomes and, where possible, include aligned outcomes in your Logic Diagram (Theory of Change).

MFAT has also developed a Partnering for Impact common indicators framework that provides potential indicators for Manaaki partners to consider utilising in their Results Tables. Use of these indicators is not compulsory but does support the aggregation and analysis of development results across the P4I programme.

4. Climate change adaptation and inclusive development

MFAT is seeking to increase focus on climate change mainstreaming. Integrating strategies and measures to manage the risks and impacts of climate change within the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of the Activity strengthens development outcomes and community resilience. Activity MERL should consider climate change mainstreaming. Is the design Climate Change adaptation 'significant' or 'principal'? Is climate change adaptation one of the long-term outcomes?

Climate Change policy markers to the activity and any outcomes that address climate change should be reflected explicitly and integrated into the Logic Diagram (theory of change) and the MERL Table (Results Table). These may be as the top-level ambition (the main outcome of the activity) – to be marked 'principal', or at least one explicit outcome in the intervention logic – to be marked 'significant'.

MFAT is also maintaining our inclusive development focus. Evidence of a gender, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) analysis informing the design is required. If a recent GEDSI analysis has not occurred, this will be required to be undertaken through the design phase.

Gender Equality or the Disability policy markers to the activity, any strategic outcomes that address gender equality and/or disability issues should be reflected explicitly and integrated into the Logic Diagram (theory of change) and the MERL Table (results table). These may be as the top-level ambition (the main outcome of the activity) – to be marked 'principal', or at least one explicit outcome in the intervention logic – to be marked 'significant'.

Note, a GEDSI analysis that determines there are *no* GEDSI issues to address, will be marked as 'not targeted'. However, all activities are still required to collect MERL data disaggregated by sex, and ideally by age and disability.

5. Evaluation

Evaluations are not required for Manaaki activities. Should partners wish to undertake an evaluation, please include this in your MERL Plan and budget for discussion with MFAT. MFAT can provide further guidance for partners that plan to undertake evaluations.

6. Research

Research may be required to build understanding and support programme efficiency and effectiveness, in particular where knowledge gaps have been identified. Research may be included in the MERL Plan but is not a requirement.

7. Funding for MERL

The MERL system needs to be appropriately resourced, including to support in-country partners to participate and build capacity.

The MERL budget should be 5 - 8% of the total programme budget. Where the context is more uncertain (more intensive MERL required), or the locations isolated (increased logistics costs associated with MERL), then a higher budget may be submitted for consideration.

8. MERL - design requirements - quick reference

MERL	Standard required	Guidance
Documents	<p>The required suite of MERL documents will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logic Diagram (submitted with design). • MERL (Results) Table (submitted with design), including baseline data (to be submitted after three months of implementation, unless agreed otherwise). • MERL Workplan (submitted with design). 	<p>Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Learning (MERL) Framework Guidance (attached)</p> <p><i>This document has templates for Programme Logic Diagram, MERL Table and MERL Workplan should they be useful.</i></p>
Country Alignment	<p>MFAT is working to maximise development impact at the country level across the whole IDC programme. This includes a strong focus on ensuring we can demonstrate how our work contributes to specific country priorities and outcomes agreed by MFAT and partner governments. To ensure coherence, Country Plans have been developed that show alignment between partner country priorities and MFAT's Strategic Framework. Please consider how your activity outcomes align with the Country Plan outcomes and, where possible, include aligned outcomes in your Logic Diagram (Theory of Change).</p>	<p>Our development cooperation partnerships in the Pacific.</p> <p>Our development cooperation partnerships in Southeast Asia.</p>
Data collection and common indicators	<p>Each partner has their own way of operating and approach to monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. MFAT require high quality data collection and reporting and have develop guidance to support partners as they plan and deliver their activities.</p> <p>MFAT works to gather evidence of the impact of the entire P4I programme across all unique contributions, as well as demonstrate the entire programme's contribution towards the IDC Priorities and Country Plans. To support this, we have developed a P4I common indicators framework that partners should use where possible.</p>	<p>Standards for data recording and reporting (attached).</p> <p>Common indicators framework (included).</p>

9. Common indicators framework

To support partners to demonstrate impact at both the country and P4I programme level, a P4I common indicators framework has been developed that aligns with the **IDC Priorities Framework** ([IDC Priorities Framework](#)). This P4I common indicators framework provides a line of sight up to the MFAT Strategic Goals, and includes priority outcomes for the Pacific and globally, and IDC common indicators. **P4I common indicators** have been developed (based on an analysis of the results reported from P4I partners over recent years) are also included. We request that partners utilise the P4I common Indicators and/or IDC indicators where possible.

Pacific

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Pacific	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
A safe, secure and just future	The rule of law, human rights and global security are protected and increased.	Strengthened democratic norms and accountable institutions.	Number of people receiving training or capability-building support in governance. <i>Community-level and CSO governance training and capacity building results should be included.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in governance.
			<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in leadership and management (non-governance).
		Partner governments and other humanitarians in the Pacific are prepared for, and lead, effective and inclusive humanitarian responses to disasters and crisis response.	Number of affected people provided with essential and useful assistance following a natural disaster or human induced disaster.	Number of people receiving assistance following a disaster.
			<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in DRR.

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Pacific	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
A prosperous and resilient future	The Pacific and Indo-Pacific regions are more prosperous and resilient.	Strengthened social resilience and inclusion supports achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific.	Number of people directly benefitting from improved infrastructure and services.	Number of people with increased access to WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene).
			<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	<i>No corresponding P4I indicator.</i>
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in infrastructure. <i>Includes energy, transport, water/sanitation, telecommunications and general infrastructure.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene).
			Number of people supported to improve their livelihoods. <i>MFAT definition: Beneficiaries from any activity aiming to increase employment and/or income, where the benefits will persist beyond the provision of aid. For example:</i> • <i>Skills training for workers and businesses resulting in more employment prospects.</i> • <i>Financial inclusion programmes to support better access to employment opportunities and business growth and investment.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in agriculture.
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in vocational skills.
				Number of people with increased access to finance and markets.
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in small business and entrepreneurship.
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in food processing.

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Pacific	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business advisory services that support business growth and ability to offer better employment conditions.</i> • <i>Market development activities that create new employment opportunities and improve incomes for workers and businesses.</i> • <i>Infrastructure and product development that directly contributes to increased Pacific economic activity.</i> • <i>Policy, regulatory and legislative improvements that facilitate more transparent and better governed economic activity.</i> • <i>Agricultural development activities that increase farm productivity, and therefore incomes, or resilience.</i> 	Number of people with increased access to improved agricultural inputs.
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in equity & inclusion.	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in GEDSI (Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion).
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in exploitation and violence prevention.
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in child protection.

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Pacific	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in health. <i>MFAT definition: The number of people in the health workforce who received training or capability support in health.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in health services delivery (health workforce).
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in education. <i>MFAT definition: The number of people receiving training or capability support in education (education professionals)</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in education for education workforce.
			Number of people benefitting from sexual and reproductive health services. <i>MFAT definition: Individual beneficiaries who have benefitted from sexual and reproductive health services funded by NZ.</i>	Number of people with increased access to sexual and reproductive health services.
			<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	Number of people with increased access to health services.
			<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in health and nutrition (non-health workforce).
			<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	Number of people with increased access to education.

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Pacific	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
		Functioning Pacific economies, with strong and stable institutions, support livelihoods and benefit from trade, labour mobility and other safe people movement.	<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	<i>No corresponding P4I indicator.</i>
A sustainable future	The impact of climate change is mitigated through an effective global response.	<i>(No information available)</i>	<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	<i>No corresponding P4I indicator.</i>
	Pacific countries have increased resilience to natural hazards and the intensifying impacts of climate change.	Enhanced resilience and adaptation to the impacts of climate change in the Pacific.	<p>Number of people directly benefitting from activities which aim to increase resilience to climate change and environmental degradation.</p> <p><i>MFAT definition: Only for Activities which are tagged as 'principal' for climate change (Adaptation and/or mitigation), DRR or environment.</i></p> <p>Direct beneficiaries are the immediate recipients (not downstream or secondary):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • those in a community benefiting from climate-resilient infrastructure. • those whose work in organisations with climate/ DRR capacity building support. 	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in climate change adaptation/resilience.
				Number of people with increased access to climate-resilient housing/infrastructure.

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Pacific	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> those receiving training in climate adaptation/resilience. 	
	The sustainability of the natural environment in our region is protected and enhanced, including its oceans, biodiversity and Antarctica.	Biodiversity is sustainably used and managed; and ecosystem function valued, maintained and enhanced, supporting the achievement of sustainable development.	Number of hectares of natural resources and natural ecosystems strengthened by NZ supported activities.	<i>No corresponding P4I indicator.</i>
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in fisheries and oceans.	<i>No corresponding P4I indicator.</i>

Global

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Global	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
A safe, secure and just future	The rule of law, human rights and global security are protected and increased.	New Zealand's global development assistance contributes to peace, security, and stabilisation.	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building support in governance.	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in governance.
			<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in leadership and management (non-governance) .
		With support from New Zealand, crisis affected countries and communities are accessing the assistance and protection they need, especially those most vulnerable.	Number of affected people provided with essential and useful assistance following a natural disaster or human induced disaster.	Number of people receiving assistance following a disaster.
			<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in DRR.
A prosperous and resilient future	Countries and regions are more prosperous and resilient.	Enhanced resilience and economic integration in South and South East Asia.	<i>No corresponding IDC indicator.</i>	<i>No corresponding P4I indicator.</i>
		Increased economic returns and food security benefits. Note: “as a result of climate-smart agriculture” has been removed from	Number of people supported to improve their livelihoods.	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in agriculture.
			<i>MFAT definition: Beneficiaries from any activity aiming to increase <u>employment and/or income</u>, where the benefits will persist beyond the provision of aid.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in vocational skills.
				Number of people with increased access to finance and markets.

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Global	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
		this Global Priority Outcome for the purpose of Partnering for Impact Reporting.		Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in small business and entrepreneurship.
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in food processing.
				Number of people with increased access to improved agricultural inputs.
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in equity & inclusion.	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in GEDSI (Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion).
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in exploitation and violence prevention.
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in child protection.
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in health. <i>MFAT definition: The number of people in the health workforce who received training or capability support in health.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in health services delivery (health workforce).
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in education.	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in education for education workforce.

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Global	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
			<i>MFAT definition: The number of people receiving training or capability support in education (education professionals)</i>	
			Number of people benefitting from sexual and reproductive health services. <i>MFAT definition: Individual beneficiaries who have benefitted from sexual and reproductive health services funded by NZ.</i>	Number of people with increased access to sexual and reproductive health services.
		No corresponding priority outcome.	No corresponding IDC indicator.	Number of people with increased access to health services.
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in health and nutrition (non-health workforce).
				Number of people with increased access to education.
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in education for education workforce.
			Number of people directly benefitting from improved infrastructure and services.	Number of people with increased access to WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene).
				Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene).

MFAT Strategic Goal	Outcomes	Priority Outcomes - Global	IDC Indicators	P4I Common Indicators
A sustainable future	The impact of climate change is mitigated through an effective global response.	Developing countries accelerate action on their mitigation priorities (including those in their Nationally Determined Contributions) in a cost-effective way.	Number of people directly benefitting from activities which aim to increase resilience to climate change and environmental degradation. <i>MFAT definition: Only for Activities which are tagged as 'principal' for climate change (Adaptation and/or mitigation), DRR or environment.</i>	Number of people receiving training or capacity-building in climate change adaptation/resilience.
		Developing countries accelerate action on their mitigation priorities (including those in their Nationally Determined Contributions) in a cost-effective way.	Number of people directly benefitting from activities which aim to increase resilience to climate change and environmental degradation.	Number of people with increased access to climate-resilient housing/infrastructure.
			Number of people receiving training or capability-building in fisheries and oceans.	<i>No corresponding P4I indicator.</i>
		Developing countries increasingly adopt emissions-reducing technologies and practices in agriculture, land-use, forestry, tourism, energy and land and maritime transport.	Number of hectares of natural resources and natural ecosystems strengthened by NZ supported activities.	<i>No corresponding P4I indicator.</i>