Monitoring and Evaluation
How to develop M&E plans

Action Against Desertification programme

Workshopon socio-economic baseline assessment and M&E planning
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 21st – 25th March 2016

INTRODUCTION

- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is necessary and efficient process to deliver development results
- M&E is a part of the programme, not something to be added afterwards
- Designing an effective M&E system helps programme managers to
  - make sure that objectives are well understood and achievable
  - plan for data collection
  - make sure that the data collected is used for decision-making
  - to improve the programme, year after year, but also to better design and implement the next programme

DEFINITIONS

MONITO-RING

- is a continuous process of collecting data to verify whether the objectives of your programme are likely to be attained
- is done by identifying expected results at each step of the programme and the indicators to assess these results
- relies on data that you can easily and regularly retrieve

EVALUA-TION

- is the systematic assessment of a project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results
- is usually done once or twice in the lifetime of a programme
- aims at understanding how and why, as much as whether or not your programme managed to achieve its objectives
- relies on advanced database analyses, surveys, and interviews with stakeholders, focus groups, case studies etc.

Though they are planned together, monitoring and evaluation differ in terms of audience, timing, purposes and actors

OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION

- Choosing what to monitor
- Basic concepts on M&E indicators
- Choosing indicators
- Planning for M&E activities

CHOOSING WHAT TO MONITOR [1]

- The first step to set up a M&E system is to review the **logical framework** of the project, by clarifying and updating
  - Project activities
  - Expected results (in terms of targets)
  - Expected outcomes (specific objectives) (in terms of targets)
- Specify **assumptions** and **risks**
  - Assumptions are the variables or factors that need to be in place for results to be achieved
  - Assumptions shall be revised all along the project, they are likely to be easier to define after a few months of implementation
  - Risks correspond to a potential future event, fully or partially beyond one's control that may (negatively) affect the achievement of results

CHOOSING WHAT TO MONITOR [2]

- Focusing on expected results and specific objectives of the logframe, define good **M&E questions** for each of them
  - How can I measure the achievement of this result/objective?
  - Which data do I need?
  - Who may be concerned?
  - When shall I retrieve the data?
- **Stakeholders** might be involved in the design and implementation of the M&E system, especially when revising the logframe and defining the right M&E questions
  - Focus groups to focus on M&E questions
  - Include stakeholders in the M&E Committee

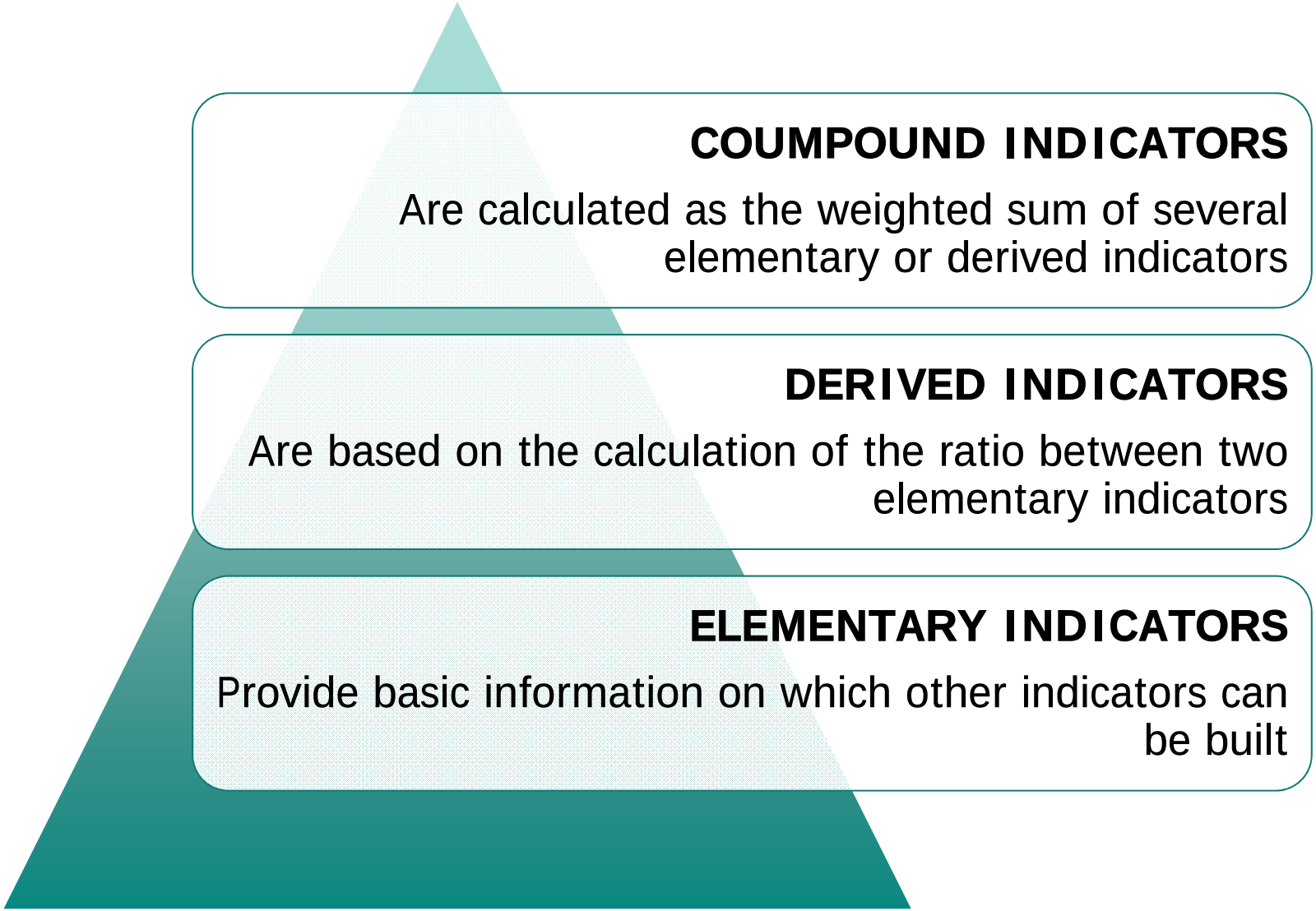
BASIC CONCEPTS ON M&E INDICATORS [1]

- Selecting the right indicators is crucial to develop good M&E plans
- **Indicators** measure the achievement of
  - General objectives of the programme → IMPACT INDICATORS
  - Specific objectives of the project → OUTCOME INDICATORS
  - Expected results → PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
- Indicators may be numerical (**quantitative**) and non-numerical (**categorical** or **descriptors**)
  - Example of quantitative indicator → Number of trees planted within a reforestation project
  - Example of categorical indicator → Species planted
  - Example of descriptor → Attitude of the people to the project

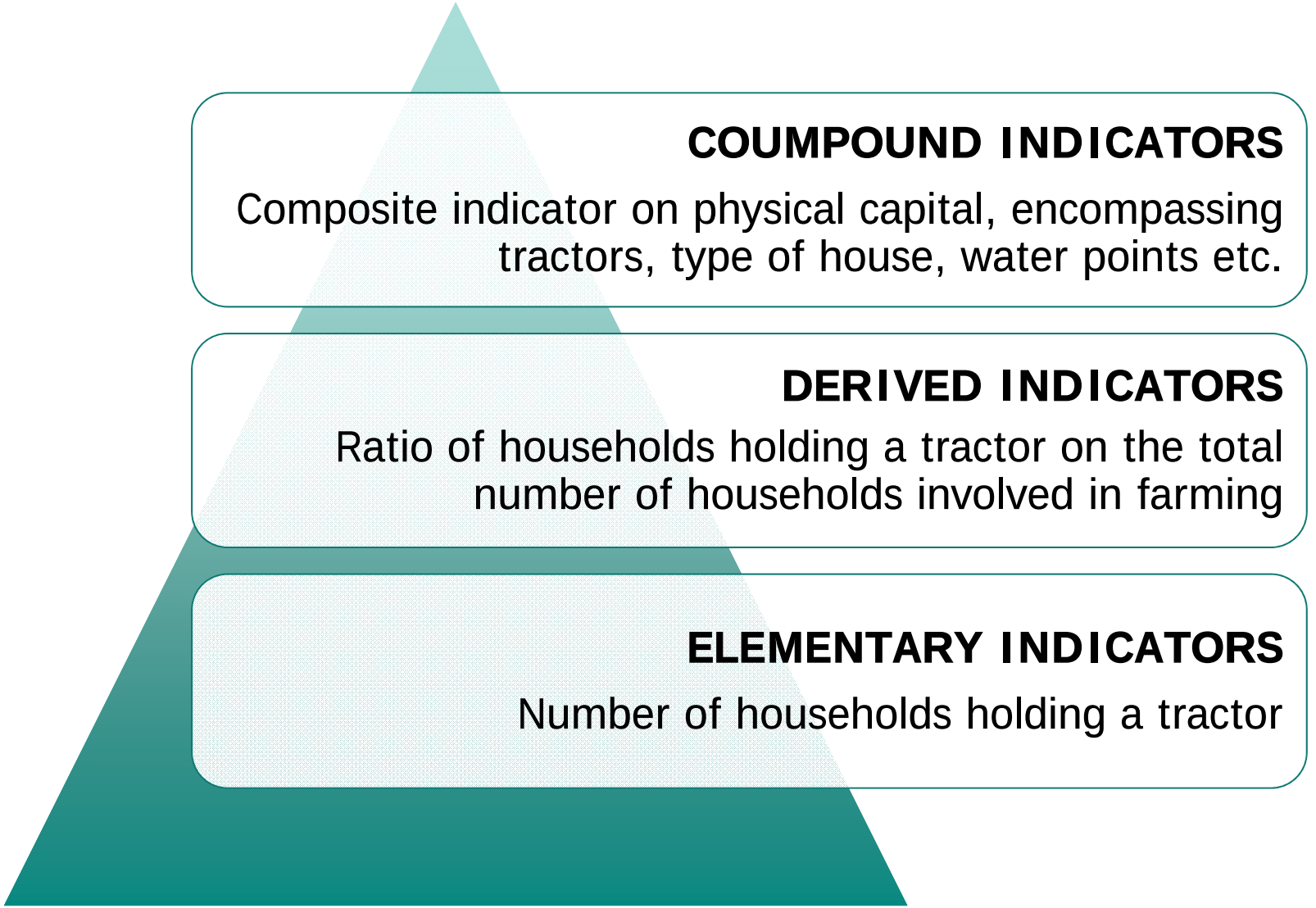
BASIC CONCEPTS ON M&E INDICATORS [2]

- Numerical indicators are preferred to answer to M&E questions, because they are **simple** and easily **understandable**, but some non-numerical information may be useful to better understand what happened
- Indicators can be **specific**, i.e. constructed specifically for the M&E, or **generic**, i.e. they are generally agreed to be able to measure a certain phenomenon
- Both specific and generic indicators are needed, they should be balanced within the M&E system
- It is recommended that different projects belonging to the same programme share a similar set of indicators, so that their results are comparable

BASIC CONCEPTS ON M&E INDICATORS [3]



BASIC CONCEPTS ON M&E INDICATORS [4]



CHOOSING INDICATORS [1]

- Indicators aim to answer to the M&E questions
- They are always an **approximation**, therefore it is important to choose the “best approximation”
- Each indicator should be described in detail, in terms of
  - **Definition**: of how it should be measured
  - **Frequency**: how often it should be measured
  - **Source**: where to collect the data needed for the calculation (internal data collected within the project, external data or survey data)
- Each indicator should include a **baseline** and a **target**
  - Baseline values are usually defined through a baseline study, to be performed at the beginning of the project
  - Targets are defined at the beginning but they may be revised during the lifetime of the project

CHOOSING INDICATORS [2]

- All these information are summarized in the **indicator table**

Name of the indicator	Percentage of extension officers trained on the strategies for reforestation
Definition	Indicator = (A/B*100)%, where: A= number of extension officers who completed the training B= estimated number of extension officers who are likely to be involved in the implementation of reforestation strategies
Frequency	Every year
Sources	For elementary indicator A: activity reports of the programme For elementary indicator B: needs assessment performed in the design phase of the programme
Baseline	15% (54 extension officers were trained in a previous project, against an estimated target of 360)
Target	year 3: 50%; year 5 (end of programme): 75%

CHOOSING INDICATORS [3]

- How to choose the right indicators?
- Indicators should be **few enough** so that the M&E system does not become a burden to the very programme it is supposed to serve and **numerous enough** so that all the major results and objectives of the programme are covered.
- Usually, indicators are selected if the answer the following questions is positive
  - Am I able to collect and analyse data?
  - Is the indicator really necessary?
  - What indicators are used by the organization?
  - What is available from the project level?
  - Do I have enough indicators to cover all the results and objectives?

CHOOSING INDICATORS [4]

- When the set of indicators is finally defined, it is recommended to **check its quality**
- The quality of indicators can be checked through the **SMART criteria**; SMART indicators are
  - Specific: you can make a decision based on it;
  - Measurable: it is possible to retrieve the data needed to calculate them;
  - Achievable: they have a target value and this target may be attained;
  - Relevant: they answer the information needs;
  - Time-phased: the target value evolves in time depending on the time needed to achieve the expected results.

PLANNING FOR M&E ACTIVITIES [1]

- Once the indicators are defined, it's time to plan M&E activities, namely
  - Data collection
  - Analysis and reporting
  - Resources
  - Data management

PLANNING FOR M&E ACTIVITIES [2]

- **Planning for data collection**

Annual data collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes

Sampling:
- probabilistic or not
- Size to be calculated at the time of the survey

Baseline study for a first measurement of the indicators

Main issues in surveys:
- Sampling
- Questionnaire

Testimonies may be collected via interviews, workshops and surveys

Questionnaire should be relevant to calculate indicators, be short and straightforward

PLANNING FOR M&E ACTIVITIES [3]

- **Planning data analysis and reporting**

Annual reports contain updated values of indicators compared to the expected targets

Using the traffic light method for reporting may be useful

Figures should alway be accompanied by interpretation!

Indicators may be below, close or above the target

PLANNING FOR M&E ACTIVITIES [4]

- **Planning for resources**

Human resources needed for M&E should be planned as early as possible

Define roles and responsibilities within the M&E team

Common tasks in M&E:
- data collection
- calculation of indicators
- interpretation
- reporting

Training, coaching and knowledge sharing may help to build M&E team's capacities

Define the tasks to be completed

Cost for staff, reporting, expertise, data collection related to M&E should be estimated

PLANNING FOR M&E ACTIVITIES [5]

- **Planning for data management**

Data format: standardized formats and templates are recommended

Data quality control: data checking and cleaning, management of missing values

Data organization: organize information into logical easy to use categories

Information technology: to systematize the recording, storage and use of data

Data availability: intended users should have access to data; unauthorized use should be prevented

Data security: identifiy responsibles for data management and secure confidentiality

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Thanks for your attention !