

Outcomes, Indicators and Targets: Issues and Cautions **READ THIS******

OUTCOMES	INDICATORS	TARGETS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes are very time-sensitive. When you measure influences what you get. • The more immediate an outcome, the more influence a program generally has on its achievement. • The type and magnitude of outcomes are closely related to program design. There is usually more than one way to get an outcome. Similarly, changes in program design often lead to changes in outcomes. • Positive outcomes are not always improvements. Sometimes they are the absence of something negative; sometimes they are achievement of a standard or milestone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators may not capture all aspects of an outcome. • Indicators should not be excluded because they seem too simple. • Many outcomes have more than one indicator. Identify the set that you believe (or have agreed) adequately and accurately signals achievement of an outcome. Acquire agreement from key stakeholders, in advance, regarding the set of indicators and the “level” required to indicate positive outcomes. • If you are trying to measure prevention of negative events, consider identifying meaningful segments of time to follow-up and determine whether the event happened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance targets should be specified in advance (i.e., with program and evaluation design). The specification process must define what is highly effective, adequate, not adequate. Be sure there is buy-in regarding what constitutes a positive outcome. • Lacking data on past performance it is sometimes advisable to wait for data. • Be especially cautious about wording numerical targets so they are not over or under ambitious, and so they make sense to key stakeholders or information users. • If the target statement indicates change in magnitude (i.e., increases or decreases), be sure to specify the initial levels and what is considered positive. • Be sure target statements are in sync with meaningful program time frames.