# Research and Evaluation Methodology
# for Mass Information
# Activities –

## An institutional approach

# 1. Summary

The present document is intended as a quick guide for IOM staff doing mass information work, in particular information campaign projects. Its purpose is to assist IOM staff with two extremely important and frequently overlooked aspects of mass information work: research and evaluation.

By doing so, the present document seeks to improve the overall quality of IOM's mass information activities, donor reporting documents and promotion of mass information activities.

It provides technical details on indicators, specific evaluation and research instruments as well as a timeframe for carrying out suggested activities.

# 2. General principles

- Research and programme evaluation are closely linked but they are not the same thing. Many definitions can be found on both concepts, but listing and analyzing them goes beyond the purpose of the present paper. What is important here is to clarify the role of each tool in the management of mass information initiatives.

- Research activities and mechanisms can and should be used for programme evaluation purposes. However, evaluation also uses an entire range of specific, non-research instruments.

  Foremost among these are the analysis of the efficiency of project activities and constant monitoring of results and indicators. The indicators can be related to migration dynamics, to feedback/reactions from target audiences or to the financial and administrative aspects of the programme. While research is mostly a preparatory and formative tool, evaluation is a project-long activity  - sometimes continuing beyond the formal conclusion of the project  - and is a function of good management.

- Research carried out within the framework of information campaigns is applied in nature. Its purpose it to lay the ground for the dissemination activities that will

follow, and assist in its evaluation. The primary purpose of the research phase is to prepare for the implementation of the information programme, rather than to conduct major new research on trafficking, and hence this phase might more accurately be described as the Research and Preparation phase.

However, the report of the findings of the research phase can also be used both by IOM and its donors for other purposes: for example to promote greater awareness of the problem of trafficking in a certain country or to provide decision makers with a better understanding of the causes and consequences of trafficking.

- The basis of good research and evaluation of mass information activities is the before and after comparison of similar quantities or variables. Similar sets of questions are asked of the same people (to the extent possible) and similar indicators are monitored both before the launch of the project and after its completion. That is why, contrary to popular perception, research and evaluation are not final-stage activities. They start on day one of the project.

## 3. Schedule

### Initial research

The bulk of research work in preparation of a mass information campaign is carried out in the initial stage of each campaign. For a typical one-year campaign, the research stage should last approximately two and three months. Further research can be carried out halfway through the project, should the nature and the scope of the project require it and sufficient funds be made available by donors. The main findings and their implications for the strategy and the implementation of the campaign will be summarized in a research report that will be made available to donors and other interested parties. Intermediary research findings do not require a dedicate report unless specified so by donors.

### Evaluation: an on-going task

As mentioned earlier, evaluation is not a punctual activity. It starts with the project design stages when adequate indicators and the means to monitor them will be written into the project document and accompanies every single activity and related expenditure throughout the course of the project. As compared to other, more operational IOM projects, mass information activities, require closer and more frequent monitoring. This is due to the public nature of information activities and the extensive public and media relations component of each project.

Moreover, for a number of factors not always related to the project itself, reaction by target audiences to programme messages may fluctuate and change quite quickly. This makes constant monitoring a necessity in order to ensure that required changes are made when needed and most effective.

### Final evaluation: when?

As is the practice with all IOM projects, a final evaluation will be carried out on project completion. However, the impact of information does not end on programme completion, especially in the case of awareness raising or changes in behaviour . Usually, there is a three- to six-month "gestation" period. In this period, the information disseminated throughout the programme can still contribute to changes in perceptions and attitudes. Henceforth, all evaluation carried out in the final stages of the project, while not inappropriate,  risks being incomplete,. Moreover, to monitor certain indicators such as migration dynamics figures a longer stretch of time – and significantly higher budgets – are needed to detect significant changes. This is a fact that should be brought to the attention of the donors in the initial, project design stages.

Due to the duration of our information campaigns (one year project), a mid-term evaluation is usually not appropriate. It could be envisaged for major complex programmes lasting at least two years or more. However, a mid-term evaluation could also be proposed for a one year project if the implementation faces major problems that could have a negative impact for IOM. In such a case, it becomes a corrective action in the monitoring of the implementation.

### The two-step approach

In order to balance this reality with the donors need for accountability on project closure, a two-step final evaluation can be suggested to donors in the early project-design stages. In a first stage, a project evaluation will be carried out in the final stages of the project. This will provide a full account of the programme's overall performance, including, for instance, the relevance of the target groups, the effectiveness in implementing project activities,  and an analysis of expenditure, activities and results to date.

In a second stage, a more comprehensive 'impact assessment' or 'impact evaluation' can be carried out three or six months after the campaign has been officially closed. This will allow collection of more reliable data and provide a more objective gauging of the overall impact of the project. However,  this will need to be specifically included in the budget of the project. In case such an impact assessment/evaluation is proposed, the research conducted will be of major importance as a reference for the impact evaluation exercise.

## Evaluation: an on-going task

As mentioned earlier, evaluation is neither a punctual activity nor one that should be left until the end of the programme. It starts with the project design stages when adequate indicators and the means to monitor them will be written into the project document and accompanies every single activity and related expenditure throughout the course of the project. As compared to other, more operational IOM projects, mass information activities, require closer and more frequent monitoring. This is due to the public nature of information activities and the extensive public and media relations component of each project.

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# 4. Research: objectives and mechanisms

## I. Objectives

The purpose of research is to prepare the way for information dissemination. To do this, research must ascertain a number of facts about the target group and the media to be used during the campaign. This requires research on:

### The profile of target audience members

#### Demographics

- What are the socio-economic characteristics of those most at risk: where they are physically located, their social, economic and cultural background. These indicators as well as others such as employment or marital status will be collected if they are relevant to the campaign.

#### Psycographics

- How aware are the target groups of the risks of trafficking/irregular migration? What are their perceptions of why and how trafficking/irregular migration occurs ? How do they perceive victims of trafficking/irregular migration ?  What are their attitudes to migration ?

#### Media consumption habits

- Where do target audience members get their information? How? How often?

- What are the media they consider most credible? Why?

**Media rates and prices**

- What are current production/broadcast/airtime rates? Which can be used in terms of the campaign budget?

**Local media culture**

- What are the media most present in the country?

- What are the media most used by the target audience?

- What are the most popular media in general?

- How does the media deal with irregular migration/trafficking at present ?

**Message testing**

- What are the messages that are most likely to work? Why?

# II. Mechanisms

Below are some of the most currently used research mechanisms in mass communication projects. The list is provided just for general reference and is not exhaustive. IOM's specialised research department should be consulted for further information as well as for the selection of those information mechanisms best suited to each case.

- Nation-wide surveys  (On representative samples of 1,000 – 1,000 subjects) using short, pre-defined questionnaires)

- Focus groups (moderated discussions with groups of   15-20 individuals selected according to precise criteria among members of the target audience)

- Individual interviews with:

  – Potential irregular migrants

- Actual victims of trafficking

- Migration experts

- Government officials (Ministry of Interior/exterior, police, border guards of countries of origin and destination, embassy officials of target countries)

- Press reviews (before and after) to ascertain coverage of migration/trafficking issues and impact of campaign

- Viewership/listenership ratings

- Statistics from national statistics and research entities (to the extent these are available)

Further research activities can be carried out throughout the project in the form of mini-surveys or focus groups. They should not have the same purpose or scope of the initial research. They are mainly interim assessment, course-correction tools not intended as a complete overhaul of the project's communication strategy.

# 5. Evaluation: scope and indicators

## I. Scope

Evaluation can be carried out by an internal or an external evaluator. Both methods have advantages and shortcomings that cannot be detailed and analyzed here. For the purposes of the present document, the following should be mentioned:

An external evaluator does not preclude the need for IOM to assess its own activities. This is a direct consequence of IOM's policy of total accountability to donors and it is also in line with donors' expectations of IOM as a matter of routine management. Regardless of the overall conclusions of the external evaluation – positive or negative – IOM, as project implementer, should present its own views on the results of the project. This can be done in the same or in separate documents, usually by commenting the evaluation report presented by the external consultant.

If the consultant agrees on the comments made by IOM, they should be included in the report. If there is a major disagreement, this should be specifically mentioned in the report and IOM comments added as an annex. This will show donors that the conclusions of the report are not shared by IOM.

In all external evaluations, one of the most important steps is the preparatory work, usually done through the elaboration of Terms of Reference - TORs. Writing To write them as precise as possible would avoid misunderstanding on what is expected from the external consultant, keeping in mind that most of them have scant, if any, knowledge about the specific project concerned or about IOM.

When reference is made to internal evaluation, three possibilities can be envisaged:

1. The internal evaluation is conducted by the programme manager him/herself. In this case, we usually talk about self-evaluation. Self-evaluations are also considered a typical monitoring tool because that they are done by the programme manager;

2. Evaluation is carried out by the Evaluation Department (EVA) at headquarters, keeping in mind that EVA is limited in the number and type of evaluations it can to conduct in any one year. This should remain an exception

3. The evaluation is conducted by somebody in IOM not having participated in the implementation of the project, for instance by MMS/MIC staff.

Whatever the choice, good evaluation begins with the project design stage. That is when objective and measurable indicators should be found and included in the project document. Most of the time, the impact of information cannot be measured in very precise terms. A certain degree of uncertainty is in-built into every information work.

Attitudes and mentalities can also change for better or for worse because of many other social and economic factors. Nevertheless, a consistent and sustained effort should be made to provide as many indicators for success as possible.

## II. Indicators

There are many similarities between results and indicators. Therefore, when establishing indicators, it is not necessary to repeat what has already been said under results. The purpose of indicators is to refine the results in a measurable way and it is possible to find two or three indicators linked to one result only.

Some indicators used for research could also be used for the evaluation of the project as research is one component of the project. Indicators can be considered as a reference tool for monitoring the performance of the project during its implementation and in case of an evaluation. The typical indicators used in mass communication projects are arranged within a continuum from simple perception of messages to substantial changes in attitude. More precisely indicators can be devised to show the following:

## Awareness/recall

Target audience members:

- Recall specific messages

- Have a good understanding of campaign messages

- Can name information products, activities, and materials

- Changes in awareness levels.

These are the easiest indicators to design and measure. A direct link can be established between the dissemination effort and changes in these indicators. In fact, these are probably the only results which can be attributed totally to the dissemination effort that.

Monitoring these indicators is usually done through a before and after mechanisms with the same set of questions being asked in the two rounds; and, as much as possible, of a sample with the same characteristics as the first.

Research will measure to what extent sample members know more about specific aspects of the campaign's messages. A few concrete examples from previous anti-trafficking information campaigns included:

- Trafficking: how does it occur?

- What happens to victims of trafficking?

- How does one protect oneself?

- What are the means of self-protection?

- Are there any assistance structures? What and where are they?

Usually, a 25% increase in awareness levels is the current figure for success in the media/advertising business. This percentage should become a regular indicator used by IOM in its mass information activities.

## Attitude towards campaign messages

Target audience members:

- Respond favorably to messages

- Discuss messages or issues with members of immediate environment (family, friends).

- Consider that family, friends, and community approve of messages and proposed new behaviour

- Approve proposed new behaviour

To transpose this to territory that is more familiar, the following indicators could be conceived in an anti-trafficking context:

- Irregular migration/trafficking is perceived as a high-risk behaviour.

- The overall attitude towards irregular migration is preponderantly negative

- The issues of trafficking have gained in importance and are discussed more frequently with members of the immediate entourage.

### Intention

Target audience members:

- Recognize that suggested new behaviour can have a positive effect and meet a personal need

- Intend to inquire more

- Intend to change behaviour in the near future

- Are less inclined by a significant amount (15%-20%) to resort to trafficking

### Practice

Target audience members:

- Contact a provider of information/services

- Adopt new behaviour and practices it

- Continue use of new behaviour

Or, again, in the case of anti-trafficking campaigns:

- Less women resort to trafficking or are trafficked against their will

This last group of indicators is the most difficult to measure as trafficking is by definition an underground phenomenon. Moreover, measuring them is extremely time and money consuming. Quite often the cost of monitoring these indicators is just as high if not higher than the information project itself.

As it is the case with the impact evaluation, this issue should be brought to the attention of the donors in the early project-design stages. Several options that include a full research effort, a partial research effort or even a separate research project that could evaluate the impact of several projects over a longer period, should be proposed to donors.

Despite these constraints, a measurement of these indicators should be proposed to donors with the corresponding budget and deadlines.

Measuring changes in attitude could be done based on a number if indicators including:

- Number of apprehended irregulars in countries of destination

- Number of young women in irregular situation assisted by assistance structures (government and NGOs) in countries of destination

- Number of traffickers apprehended

- Number of visas issued by embassies in countries of origin.

None of the above indicators will, in itself, be a sufficiently powerful indicator to show success/failure of the campaign. However, in combination they may paint a sufficiently convincing picture of the impact of the campaign, and reinforce the objectivity of the evaluation exercise.


### Advocacy

Target audience members:

- Experience and acknowledge the benefits of the new behaviour

- Advocate the behaviour to others (becomes key multiplier)

- Supports similar activities within immediate environment.

This last indicator while largely desirable is not an obligatory one for most mass communication work. It is often beyond the reach of an awareness raising campaign and requires a different set of communication tools, a different strategy

and additional resources. Unless specifically required by donors, it should rarely if ever be proposed as a standard indicator.

The degree to which all or some of the above indicators should be included in the project document depends to a large extent on the size of the intervention (number of target audience members to be reached, size of territory to be covered) the result envisaged and the budget made available by donors.

Proper consultation with donors in the early project-design stages should determine these indicators as precisely as possible. Donors should also be informed that it is not always possible to achieve all of these indicators, particularly in the case of a short-term campaign (under six months). Even for longer-term campaigns, changes in behaviour may take considerably longer (several years) to come into effect.

### Other indicators

#### Expenditure monitoring

While mainly an internal administration tool, monitoring of expenditure levels can provide useful information on the cost-effectiveness of the project, more precisely in relation to the cost per head of target audience member (how much it costs to provide information to one person targeted by the project).

#### Regular data collection of data

Collecting such data from media and research entities, government bodies and NGOs does not require dedicated research activities. Partner media and government entities can provide IOM with existing data provided the data is in the public domain. Such data could include, for example:

- Viewership figures for the project's TV and radio broadcasts (this is a routine measurement carried out by major media outlets everywhere)

- Migration dynamics indicators from national and foreign authorities (police, border guards, etc)

#### Media coverage of campaign issues

This can be carried out by regular monitoring of major print media (newspapers, magazines), for instance.

## 5. Further assistance

The above are just a few general principles. The degree to which they apply to concrete situations on the ground will vary from project to project. Project managers are warmly advised to contact the specialised IOM departments at HQ involved in the various stages of mass information activities: Evaluation, Research, Mass Information Service Area.

These can provide further assistance with more elaborate, better-adapted research, evaluation and implementation strategies and methodology.

Additional information on the use of evaluation, including the preparation of an evaluation exercise and the definitions of evaluation concepts can be found in the "IOM Evaluation Guidelines"