

Monitoring & Evaluation for Results

Reconstructing Baseline Data for Monitoring & Evaluation -Data Collection Methods-

Baseline Data

Baseline data...

- are initial information on program participants or other program aspects collected prior to the program intervention
- are essential to enable stakeholders (e.g., policymakers, beneficiaries, etc.) to monitor and track changes
- may be used later to provide a comparison for assessing program outcomes or impacts

Why Are Baseline Data Important?

When baseline data are not available it is difficult to:

- Set future targets of the project
 - If you do not know where you are, how can you know where you are going?
- Estimate changes as a project proceeds in monitoring
- Compare the initial conditions and changes of project and control groups in an impact evaluation



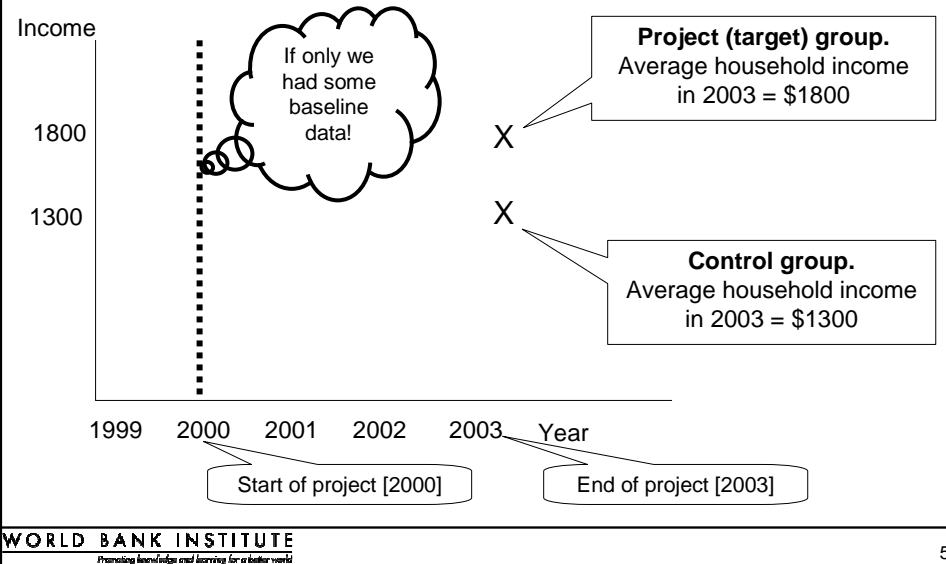
Example: Importance of Baseline Data

Estimating Impact of Road Construction Project on Household Income

- A road construction project was started in 2000
- In 2003, a study found that the average income of
 - target (project) households was \$1800
 - control households was \$1300



Example: Importance of Baseline Data



Discussion

- Can we assume that the project and control groups had the same average household income at the start of the project?

Discussion

- In your experience what factors explain the lack of baseline data?



Why Are Baseline Data Often Not Collected?

- Insufficient program planning and oversight
- Budget constraints
- Time constraints
- Political constraints
- Management (decision makers) not interested
- Evaluation not commissioned until late in the project cycle
- Difficulties of identifying comparison group or collecting information on it (for an impact evaluation)

Some Data Collection Methods for Reconstructing Baseline Data

1. Secondary data
2. Project Administrative Records
3. Recall
4. Key informants

Using Secondary Data

- Census
- Surveys
- Ministry/Agency reports/records
- Special studies by NGOs, donors
- University studies
- Mass media (newspapers, radio, TV)
- Community organization records
- Notices in offices, community centers, etc.

Using Secondary Data

- It is important to assess the utility of potential secondary data
 - Reference period
 - Population coverage
 - Inclusion of required indicators
 - Completeness
 - Accuracy
 - Free from bias

Using Project Administrative Records

Data can be found in:

- Feasibility/planning studies
- Application/registration forms
- Supervision reports
- Meeting reports
- Community and agency meeting minutes
- Progress reports



Using Project Administrative Records

When using project administrative records:

- Ensure identification data are included and accurate
- Ensure data are organized in a way needed for the context of M&E needs, for example:
 - by community
 - types of service
 - family rather than just individuals
 - economic level
 - etc....



Using Recall

We can ask informed subjects to recall many things, for example:

- School attendance
- Time or costs of travel
- Use of services (e.g., health facilities, social assistance office services)
- Income/earnings
- Water usage/quality/cost
- Travel patterns



Limitations of Recall

- Generally not reliable for precise quantitative data
- Useful for recalling major events or the impacts of a new service where none existed before
- Deliberate or unintentional distortion
- Few empirical studies (except on expenditure) to help adjust estimates

Sources of Bias in Recall

- Who provides the information
- Underestimation of small and routine events
- “Telescoping” of recall concerning major events
- Distortion to conform to accepted behavior
 - Intentional
 - Romanticizing the past
- Contextual factors
 - Time intervals used in questions
 - Respondents’ expectations of what the interviewer wants to know

Improving the Validity of Recall

- Minimize the elapsed time to the extent possible
- Link recall to important reference events
- Define context
 - Clarify expectations
 - Define time period
- Ensure all groups interviewed
- Conduct small studies to compare recall with survey or other findings
- Triangulation – comparing results with other data collected

Discussion

What are your examples of where recall was or could be useful?

Or, what are your experiences where recall was or could be misleading?



Recall Questions

1. What did you have for lunch three days ago? How certain are you about it?
2. What was the biggest concern about your job when it turned year 2000?
3. For how long did you wear a heavy coat in the winter of 2003?



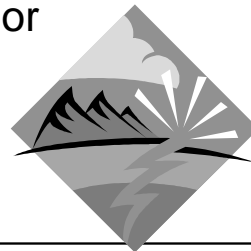
Using Key Informants

- Not just officials and high status people
- Everyone can be a key informant on their own situation:
 - Pensioners
 - Employees of municipal social assistance offices
 - Single mothers
 - Construction workers
 - Street children
 - Owner of the community store

Discussion

Emergency housing and feeding programs following a major earthquake

An evaluation was conducted of the effectiveness of emergency housing and feeding programs following a major earthquake.



Example: Evaluation Key Informants

- Emergency Preparedness Committee Director
 - Special problems facing the elderly, young children and women during emergencies
 - Strategies for involving civilians in community emergency planning committees
- Local health care workers
 - Information on staffing, communications and supplies
- The school director
 - The experience of using school buildings for temporary housing

Using Key Informants

- Look for “outsiders” who can provide a different perspectives as well
 - People who did not attend the community meeting or who did not speak in the meeting
 - Sometimes they will seek an opportunity to speak with you outside or after the meeting
 - Children not attending school
 - Youths who are not members of the club
 - People who seem reluctant to enter the clinic or the village bank, etc.

Some Criteria for a Good Key Informant

- An established member of the group being studied or knows the group well
- Able to reflect and report how other people feel or behave
- Ability to observe and describe – orally, in writing or in some other medium (acting, drawing, etc.)

Guidelines for Key Informant Analysis

- Triangulation greatly enhances validity and understanding
- We are not looking for truth but for perspectives of informants reflecting different categories of people or experiences
- Understand how the informants fit into the picture

Issues and Challenges for Reconstructing Baseline Data

- Variations in reliability of recall
- Memory distortion
- Secondary data not easy to use
- Secondary data incomplete or unreliable
- Key informants may distort the past

