

What is the discussion series?

The discussion series is a monthly peer-to-peer sharing and learning event for [UK Aid Direct](#) and [UK Aid Match](#) grant holders. Based on grant holder topic requests, each month two grant holders, or downstream partners, with relevant experience on the topic present their work and answer questions from fellow grant holders and downstream partners, before a wider discussion on the topic is held in smaller groups.

This summary is based on the session held in June 2020 on monitoring and evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Opportunity International

Opportunity International is working to end global poverty by enabling individuals to create dignified and sustainable work as a foundation for transforming their lives, their children's futures and their communities.

Opportunity International's UK Aid Match project equips and empowers women to build secure agricultural enterprises.

As the pandemic hit, the project conducted rapid assessments over the phone with beneficiaries to understand their urgent needs. It also shifted to remote monitoring, using mobile phone data collection platforms for essential data, monitoring the uptake of a new call centre, and providing SMS support for beneficiaries. Key informants embedded in the community were identified to feed back to the project team on the situation. Regular communication, the need to account for the gender digital divide, and the importance of triangulating multiple sources of data to get a reliable picture have all proved essential.



Raleigh International

Raleigh International focuses on creating lasting change through youth in four key areas: livelihoods, natural resource management, water, sanitation and hygiene, and youth in civil society.

Raleigh's UK Aid Direct project empowers youth as active agents of change to raise urgent social issues in their communities and hold authorities to account.

During the pandemic, Raleigh had to maintain existing project monitoring and evaluation as well as carry out monitoring of new COVID-19 response activities. Its approach to monitoring remotely while maintaining safety measures was built on the presence of its existing Community Monitors within beneficiary communities. It used a tailored digital platform as well as WhatsApp, radio and social media analytics to collect feedback and project success indicators, and shifted its evaluation to a retrospective, qualitative evaluation using the Most Significant Change method.

Key takeaways from the session

- The COVID-19 pandemic has raised significant challenges for project monitoring and evaluation with limitations to in-person data collection, sizes of data collection gatherings and accessibility of some beneficiary groups.
- Adapting existing project infrastructure including digital platforms and community-embedded staff, volunteers or partners supports quick beneficiary needs assessments, maintains communication with beneficiaries and informs essential decision-making.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the gender digital divide and heightened the social isolation of people with disabilities. Any shift to remote monitoring needs to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are represented.
- Triangulation of key data through secondary sources and collaboration with other civil society organisations can minimise in-person contact and account for remote monitoring biases.
- Some COVID-19 innovations in monitoring have been very successful and will continue to be used outside of the pandemic context.

Resources

- [Digitising your MERL during COVID-19](#) (opens web browser)
- [World Bank guide on mobile phone surveys to understand COVID-19 impacts](#) (opens web browser)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Tools for Risk Communication](#) (opens web browser)
- [Carrying out qualitative research under lockdown: Practical and Ethical considerations](#) (opens web browser)
- [Adapting data collection and utilisation to a COVID-19 reality](#) (opens web browser)

More learning resources from the Discussion Series and from UK Aid Match can be found on our learning pages