Workshop Materials: 
a guide to writing meaningful and accurate accomplishment statements

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Robert M. Penna & William J. Phillips
The Rensselaerville Institute
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The Monitoring, Evaluation and Consulting Division, OIOS,
and with support from the Programme, Planning & Budget Division,
Department of Management
The United Nations
The Process

Executive Direction and Management level (Programme/Department/Office)

Objective level (Subprogramme)

Expected Accomplishment

Objective

Achievement

Expected Accomplishment

Learning

Statement of Accomplishment

Indicator of Data Interpretation Sources

Verification and Data Interpretation Sources

Programme manager and staff

Accomplishment Account

Statement of Accomplishment

Learning

Indicator data

Legend

Element of the Logframe

Document

Activity

Data
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PART 1

Introduction, Background, Purpose, and Expectations
Introduction

This training is intended to guide programme managers in the Secretariat towards crafting meaningful statements of subprogramme accomplishments and impacts that will reflect the Organization’s results-based approach and fit into the evolving new Programme Performance Report (PPR) format. It builds upon the training that programme managers and staff have already had regarding the process of planning and implementing data collection strategies.

Accomplishment statements are critical for both mandatory reporting to the General Assembly, and for enabling the continuous improvement of programme performance for the future, thereby reflecting the UN’s continued commitment to strengthening the Organization’s adoption of a result-based management framework.

The process of translating various accumulated data into succinct, meaningful and useful statements of accomplishment / results achieved is part analysis, part synthesis, and part effective communication. The challenge is not unlike effective story telling in that it requires access and use of reliable information synthesized into a meaningful whole and conveyed in an engaging style. The same skills that are used in any effective communication are those that we will apply to the task of formulating your statements of accomplishment. Just as programmes discovered that planning for data collection involved a series of choices and decisions, so too will they find that conveying the stories the data contain will also present a series of decisions and choices to be made. This training and Guidebook are intended to help you sharpen and utilize these skills in presenting the accomplishments of your subprogrammes for the 2002-2003 biennium.
Background: what we are doing and why

The Secretary-General, with the approval and support of the Member States, has moved the Organization to a results-based planning and management system. Implied a significant shift in perspective, the accent in this approach is primarily upon the results an organization desires to achieve, rather than principally upon the resources and inputs distributed through the budget.

The results-based initiative was launched in 1997 as part of the reforms introduced by the Secretary-General. The ultimate aim of this effort was for the Organization to determine more clearly and systematically the usefulness, relevance, effectiveness and impact of its work. The first practical step was the introduction of a logical framework in the biennial budgets for 2002/2003 period. A key feature of this new results-based approach was the articulation of objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement at the subprogramme level to help change from a system premised on input and output accounting, to one which demonstrates accountability through a fact-based presentation of results substantiated by indicators.

To support these efforts, training on data collection for the assessment of results was conducted in 2002. This training presented four main methods of analysis:

1. the review of official records/internal records,
2. survey administration,
3. interview administration, and
4. content analysis.

As a follow-up, and as part of the self-monitoring measures currently being developed within the Secretariat, programme managers have established a data collection methodology/plan for each indicator contained in the 2002-2003 budget. This information has been captured in the corporate data-base system known as IMDIS. In the programme of work for 2002-2003, there are 450 expected accomplishments and 624 indicators spread throughout some 140 subprogrammes of the United Nations Secretariat.

The crucial need now is to continue to support programme managers with the following: (1) Analysis of the data that they have collected with respect to each indicator;
(2) Interpretation and synthesis of the results of these indicators in relation to Expected Accomplishments. This is the purpose of the present training.

**Results-based Management (RBM)**

The most fitting description of the new system to which the Secretariat has moved, Results-based Management is a comprehensive approach to management that integrates strategy, processes and measurement to improve decision-making and drive change. It facilitates course correction and performance improvement through periodic self-evaluation.

Previously, planning and budgeting in the UN, centred around the allocation of resources and the delivery of outputs, rather than a determination of the effectiveness and impact of those outputs. In results-based planning, however:

- The process starts with the results desired and identifies the means to achieve those results.
- The resulting programme budget, in addition to containing information traditionally provided, also includes expected accomplishments.
- Those expected accomplishments are, in turn, measured by Indicators of Achievement

The purpose of this approach is to provide decision-makers and other stakeholders with a clear indication of the results of a programme; moreover, these characteristics should be instantly recognizable due to your familiarity with the programme budget fascicle. An example from the ECLAC programme is presented below:
### Objective

To increase awareness of gender issues and to promote gender mainstreaming in regional development, including within all ECLAC subprogrammes and projects.

### Expected Accomplishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>indicator of achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened and consolidated national and regional institutions intended to reduce the gender gap in various spheres of development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator of Achievement

Increased use of up-to-date analysis and gender-sensitive indicators, methodologies and information developed and provided by the Commission to support national and regional institutions regarding priority issues.

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**The New PPR Format**

1. Central to strengthening the shift to a results orientation, OIOS has led the development of a revised Programme Performance Report (PPR) to improve the ability of programme managers to communicate progress to Member States. The PPR of the Secretary-General is an analytical document prepared at the end of the biennial programme budget period, and is the main instrument by which Member States can evaluate the results and relevance of the work of the Organization, together with the assessment of the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of individual subprogrammes. Previous Programme Performance Reports were essentially process-oriented documents, providing accounts of inputs and tallies of outputs. While _efficiency_ was implied, _effectiveness_ was left unaddressed. The biennium 2002-2003 was planned using the results-based approach. Therefore, the performance assessment in the PPR for 2002-2003 will be similarly structured.

2. The new PPR format will be narrative in form and feature highlights of each programme’s overall performance for the past biennium. The subprogrammes will also have a section for narrative reports of the progress made towards achieving their Objectives. Subprogrammes will report on results achieved as measured by the indicators as well as on results not achieved. Furthermore, programme managers will be encouraged to identify areas for improvements (learning).
3. In order to accumulate the information needed to draft these narrative reports, subprogrammes will be required to submit Accomplishment Accounts and Statements of Accomplishment/Results Achieved.

4. The **Accomplishment Account** will be a 1-2 page summary of your accomplishments using data collected at the Expected Accomplishment level, including statistical data and other relevant information, and be measured against the Indicators of Achievement. These will be one such Account per Expected Accomplishment.

5. The **Statement of Accomplishment/Results Achieved** will be a half-page synopsis of accomplishments achieved relative to the Expected Accomplishment. It will capture the key facts reflecting subprogramme achievement during the past biennium. The Statement of Accomplishment/Results Achieved is based on and is distilled from the Results/Accomplishment Account.
6. In summary: the Programme Performance Report for this biennium will include:

- A *Highlights of Results* statement at the Programme level;
  - These would be used to give an overall, broad-stroke portrait of *each* Programme’s accomplishments during the reporting period;

- Succinct *Statements of Accomplishment/Results Achieved*, impacts and learnings at the subprogramme level;
  - These would provide a clear snapshot of the work of *each* subprogramme during the reporting period, and would be used as source material for the Programme *Highlights of Results* statement
  - These statements should illustrate progress toward Objectives and Expected Accomplishments with reference to Indicators of Achievement.
Where we are in the PPBME cycle

The diagram below illustrates the Programme Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation (PPBME) cycle. In the current biennium, we are between circles 5 and 6.
This Training

This training is intended to help guide managers in the drafting of useful, meaningful Accomplishment Accounts and Statements of Accomplishment/Results Achieved of their subprogrammes. This guidebook is designed for use during interactive skill-building training sessions and individualized clinics conducted in duty stations around the world during the fall of 2003. It will also serve as a stand-alone resource to assist managers and staff in crafting their results statements in a way that effectively presents their programmatic accomplishments.

Expectations for the Training

The success of this training will be determined by you, the participants. While we hope the workshop itself is interesting and engaging for you, it will be the degree to which you use the information and tools presented to craft your Statements of Accomplishment that will truly determine its success. To use the Logframe reference points of the Organization’s RBM approach, this training is designed as follows:

Objective

To increase the capacity of programme managers to use a results-based approach to prepare an account of their accomplishments, relying upon monitoring, self-evaluation, and data analysis to assess programme performance.

Expected Accomplishments

1. Enhanced capacity of programme managers to assess and evaluate subprogramme performance.
2. Strengthened analytical skills applied to data collected for indicators of achievement.
3. Improved ability of managers to craft useful and meaningful summaries of subprogramme accomplishment.

Our Indicator(s) of Achievement

Success in meeting the expected accomplishments described above will be gauged by the following Indicators of Achievement.
At least 100 of the estimated 133 subprogrammes participating will prepare *Statements of Accomplishment* reflecting the use of the tools and techniques learned from this training.

At least 50 of the 133 subprogramme managers will report, on IMDIS, that they are using a results-based approach to self-evaluation to identify lessons learned and areas of improvement.

*This workshop is designed to help you prepare:*

- **Accomplishment Accounts**
- **Statement of Accomplishment/ Results Achieved**
**Remember:**

An **Accomplishment Account** is a 1-2 page summary of your accomplishments using data collected for the indicators of achievement, statistical data and other relevant information that leads to an assessment of achieving your Expected Accomplishment(s).

AND

A **Statement of Results/Accomplishment** is a half-page synopsis of accomplishments achieved relative to the Expected Accomplishment. It captures the key facts of what was achieved by your subprogramme during the past biennium. The Statement of Accomplishment is based on and is distilled from the Accomplishment Account.
PART 2:

Terms and Concepts
Terms and Concept Scramble

With any system, clarity on terminology is critical. Without it clear communication is impossible.

As a quick review of the key concepts and terms central to the UN’s result orientation, take the next few minutes and complete the RBM Concepts and Definitions worksheet that appears in the Workbook.
How does it all fit together?

To put it all together into a manageable context, see the chart below. Within the RBM framework, the arrows pointing down represent planning; the arrows point up represent implementation and management.

RBM Logframe
**Thinking about External Factors….**

The Organization’s Logframe contains an essential component for the inclusion of External Factors. These are, as we know, factors beyond the control of a subprogramme, but which can and often do influence the success of that effort. How should they be handled when reported upon Accomplishment? While they would never be considered to be a blanket excuse for any and all failure to achieve Expected Accomplishments, clearly, where they are a decisive factor, they must be discussed. More specifically, however, a precise explanation of *how* they influenced a subprogramme’s success would be most helpful to Member States and programme planners alike. The message then, is not to merely cite External Factors where appropriate, but to explicitly *explain* their influence.

**REMEMBER:** *Many* things can impact performance. It is important to capture not only *what* factors may have had an impact, but *how* and *why* they had that impact.
Break
PART 3:

Developing your Accomplishment Accounts
**First things first....**

**What is an Accomplishment Account?**

As we have stated, an Accomplishment Account is a 1-2 page summary of your accomplishments using data collected for the indicators of achievement, statistical information and other relevant facts that leads to an assessment of progress toward achieving your Expected Accomplishment. Writing meaningful, accurate and useful accounts of subprogramme accomplishments has much in common with writing or telling an effective story. All good, compelling and informative stories include a number of separate features that are integrated into a meaningful whole.

These elements or features include answers to the following sets of questions:

The *Who?* and *Where?* questions:

1) **Setting**...where did the events take place?
2) **End-users**...to/for whom were things done?
3) **Intermediaries** – who else was involved?

The *What?* questions:

4) **Challenge**...what was the problem/issue that was addressed?
5) **Events/Actions taken**...what took place, what was done?

The *So What?* question:

6) **Results** – what was accomplished for the end-users?

The *Then What?* question:

7) **Learning**...based upon this experience, how could your results be better?
Capturing the Story

Step 1...The Story Pyramid

The first step in crafting your Accomplishment Account is capturing the basic story, the essential facts. While most people instinctively know how to recount a story or summary of events, as in many other cases, it is sometimes helpful to have checklist of the elements we want to be sure to remember to include. One such checklist is the Story Pyramid.

The Story Pyramid is a tool used for building a cogent account of events from a foundation of basis facts. It includes the elements we listed on the previous page, the answers to the Who?, Where?, What?, So What? and Then What? questions. In this case, the lines of the Pyramid have been designed to reflect the operating environment of most subprogrammes in the Organization. Using the seven elements you could build a “Story Pyramid” for any of these subprogrammes:

1. Setting: ______
2. End Users: ______ ______
3. Intermediaries: ______ ______
4. Challenge: ______ ______ ______ ______
5. Events: ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
6. Results: ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
7. Learning: ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
A word on Learning….

The “Learnings” that come from an effort or initiative are those insights that can be applied toward improved performance in the future. These may reflect changes in assumptions (…things were not as we thought they were), adjustments in the theory of change (…efforts did not bring about the accomplishments we thought they would), changes in the resource base (…the challenge before us is larger than can be accommodated with the resources presently devoted to the targeted objectives), alterations in management practice (…we need to go about this differently) or changes in the stated Objective, Expected Accomplishment or Indicators of Achievement. Learning, for example, that a subprogramme’s Indicators are insufficient to the task of substantiating the realization of an Expected Accomplishment, is perfectly valid and should be noted within the Accomplishment Account. Sometimes we learn the most when we miss the target at which we were aiming….
Step 2...The Story: An Organization-based Example

To clarify the application of the Story Pyramid, we are going to use an abridged version of an account of an ECLAC subprogramme, highlighting the Story Elements as they appear. Readers should be aware that this summary, based on information taken from IMDIS, as well as augmented text to illustrate training points, is not intended to exemplify a full or complete Accomplishment Account; it is an example of a Accomplishment story, the second step towards writing our Account.

Example: Subprogramme 5 Mainstreaming the gender perspective in regional development

The objective of this subprogramme is increased awareness of gender issues, and the promotion of gender mainstreaming within the sphere of regional development and within all ECLAC subprogrammes and projects. A key to the realization of this objective is the strengthening and consolidation of national and regional institutions intended to reduce the gender gap in various spheres of development. Among other goals, the subprogramme therefore aims at achieving increased use of up-to-date analysis and gender-sensitive indicators, methodologies and information developed and provided by the Commission to support national and regional institutions regarding priority issues, specifically through increasing the number of countries that use gender statistics in Equality National Plans and country reports to CEDAW and ECLAC [The Setting] with the intention of increasing the influence upon policy-makers in these countries [The End-users] available to the respective National Offices for Women. [The Intermediaries]. During the biennium, a target of 15 countries using gender statistics in Equality National Plans and country reports to CEDAW and ECLAC was established. ECLAC provided these gender indicators, methodologies and data, [The Event] and by 30 November 2002 it was estimated that 10 countries were using these gender statistics, and by 30 November 2003 it is estimated that an additional 5 will be using them, achieving the subprogramme’s targeted goal. [The Result] Workshops proved more effective than information dissemination for strengthening intermediaries and influencing policy-makers. [The Learning]
For our example, therefore, the initial Story Pyramid might have looked like the one below.

**Example: The Story Pyramid from ECLAC**

1. Setting: Region
2. End Users: policy-makers.
3. Intermediaries: National Offices for Women
4. Challenge: Discrimination against, and inequality of opportunity for women
5. Events: producing gender-sensitive indicators, methodologies and information
6. Results: Equality national plans and reports to CEDAW reflect ECLAC gender data
7. Learning: Workshops on indicator systems were more effective than report dissemination

**Begin with the Pyramid, capture the essential facts.**

*Then draft your story*

**Remember : What your audience wants to know is:**

- **Where** did this occur?
- **Who** was involved?
- **What** was the challenge?
- **What** was done?
- **What** was the result?
- **What** did you learn?
Next...Capturing the right information

Using our Pyramid, we first set out to capture the essential elements of the story we want to tell, and then put it into a narrative form. But is this the Accomplishment/Results Account; is our task complete?

Not quite, because effective Accomplishment Accounts also include a few additional characteristics we must address. These are:

- Verifiable information of what was achieved with mention of Verification Sources
- A comparison to the original target, bound in time
- Numbers and percentages to show relative achievement
- Variations from the target: If target is missed, significant milestones achieved
- Minimal output data

But what is “Verification”? What number should we use? How do we find the information we will use in filling out our Story so it becomes a Accomplishment/Results Account? We will turn to those questions next before returning to the subject of writing an effective Account.
A word about Milestones and Milestone Management....

An important facet of the result-based approach is the concept of a sequential hierarchy of steps that are necessary for any effort, programme or intervention to succeed. Put another way, no journey (except for those in quantum physics) consists of only a beginning and an endpoint. To get from here to there, we usually have to travel through the intervening distance. The management of this journey through these intervening steps is known as Milestone Management.

This approach calls upon managers and staff to identify the discrete steps that, together and in sequence, lead to the final desired outcome or result. Success in the final step, for example, depends upon the successful completion of the preceding steps. By tracking the success through all these sequential steps, we can get a better picture of where difficulties or bottlenecks lie. We can also get a better idea of how to address these problem areas so that the final results are greater, more inclusive or closer to our Expected Accomplishments. Finally, where Expected Accomplishments were not ultimately achieved, reference to the success in meeting meaningful identified Milestones gives decision-makers a better picture of the progress the subprogramme did make.

Use Milestones to track progress towards your goal.
PART 4:

Data Interpretation and Verification
Data and Information: the building blocks.

In order to tell any story, you need facts. These facts, the data, are the building blocks of our story. But where do we find this information, and once we find it, how do we use it? We will address these questions in this section.

Data collection and interpretation

Information Sources

None of our subprogrammes function within a vacuum. The interaction of these subprogrammes with a variety of actors and institutions is usually found in the form of records, data and other information. These records can be kept by the subprogramme itself, the other actors and institutions involved, or by third part observers. The first key in ultimately crafting useful and meaningful Statements of Accomplishments/Results Achieved, therefore, is to be aware of the wide variety of potential information sources that exist. Although there are numerous sources of data concerning your subprogramme, for the ease of classification it might be beneficial to initially divide them generally into two categories, those structured internally within the Organization, and those external to this structure.

Sources structured within the Organization

Within this general category, we can list those documents and databases that the Organization has created or maintains. These would include:

- **The Medium-term Plan (MTP)** – this contains overall objectives for the programme and logframe elements for subprogrammes. The current MTP covers 2002-2005.
- **The Programme Budget (PB)** for the biennium 2002-2003 – the fascicle (A/56/6 Sect. Xx) is the submission of the programme to General
Assembly and contains the logframe elements and programmed outputs. GA resolution 56/253 approves the submitted programme budgets, with amendments as applicable. The consolidated programme budget is available on the webpage of the Office of Programme Planning, Budgetting and Accounts. This is also a useful site for reference to RBB and data collection.

- **IMDIS** – the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System – is the Secretariat-wide electronic repository for planning and monitoring the programme of work. Besides being a source of full details of output delivery, IMDIS also allows for recording of information for the various stages for planning and reporting under the results-based system. Of major use is the ‘reports’ function which allows users to obtain information in summary format, i.e. consolidated report contains ‘results statements’ in line with indicators and expected accomplishments; the catalogue of indicators contains the methodologies identified by programme managers as their method of data collection and verification.

- **Self-initiated monitoring and evaluations** to conform to reporting requirements under the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspect of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8). [Articles VI and VII refer].

- **In-depth Evaluations** conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

- **Audits** conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors.

- **Inspections** (usually programme management and administration) conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

- **External evaluations** conducted by the Joint Inspection Unit and other external bodies (e.g. donors, academic institutions).
Self-monitoring and Self-evaluation

The source data and information for RBM is collected through self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Self-monitoring is the continuous collection and analysis of information on resource use, output delivery and evidence of attainment of results. Self-evaluation is the periodic critical review of programme performance concentrating on efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

Sources external to this structure

Beyond the sources cited above, there are a host of other sources where you can obtain information regarding the impact of your subprogrammes. The Data Collection training offered last year, focused upon several such sources as relevant to most UN subprogrammes. A list of these appears on the following page.
1. *Informal and official records*
   - Governments and governmental organizations.
   - Intergovernmental organizations
   - Businesses and associations
   - NGOs
   - Organizations of the UN system
   - Your own records and notes
   - Other sources

2. *Individuals*
   - Residents of member states
   - Policy makers and staff of Member States and other organizations
   - Expert observers
   - End-users/beneficiaries
   - Others

3. *Documents*
   - Commercial media
   - Official publications
   - Websites, data bases and other sources

4. *Survey data:*
   - Mail
   - Telephone
   - In-person
   - Internet
Taking a look at some sources: External and Internal Records

The Step-by-Step Guide to Data Collection prepared for last year’s data collection workshops described external records as usually comprised of “official accounts of formal institutions such as governments, businesses, multinational organizations, or NGOs,”¹ and internal records as a programme’s own data, “such as [is] available for research and analysis, workload statistics, notes to file, structured checklists, and meeting minutes or logs.”² Together, these two sources have the potential for representing most of the information a programme will need for compiling its results statements. Rarely, however, is this information available in a form that is immediately useful to a programme seeking to write a useful statement of its results. Rather, refinement or processing is usually necessary.

Step 1: Know what you are looking for

Programme managers and staff do themselves an enormous favour by focusing on the key information they want when they set out to substantiate the Statement of Accomplishment/Results Achieved they have in mind. By way of example, if we wanted supporting documentation for the beneficial impacts of an immunization programme against early childhood diseases, we might start by asking ourselves what those impacts might look like. We might come up with a list like this:

1. fewer children within the target population got sick from these diseases;
2. fewer children within the target population required a doctor’s medical attention as a result of contracting these diseases;
3. fewer children within the target population were hospitalized as a result of a severe infection from, or complications arising out of the contraction of one of these diseases;
4. fewer children within the target population missed school as a result of being sick with one of these diseases; and
5. Fewer of the target population’s adult caregivers missed work because the children were home sick with one of these diseases.

¹ “How to Design and Carry Out Data Collection Strategies for Results-based Budgeting: A Step-by-step Guide (Reisman, Leon, Erickson) p. 28
² Ibid. p. 29
By narrowing down the list of evidentiary traits that we think characterize the results we believe the programme achieved, we narrow our search for substantiating documentation.

**Step 2: Know where to look**

Once you have narrowed down the essential questions you want to answer, the next question is to ask where is it most probable that you will find those answers. In other words, if your own programme does not have it, who is likely to have the information you seek?

In the example used above, you would ask whether governmental public health officials have the records you have in mind, or whether a health-related NGO might have them. You would investigate whether local, regional or national education officials have information concerning your specific population.

Would labour officials, local employers or a local business association have records indicating how many work hours were lost among the likely caregivers of your target population due to children’s illness?

These are among the places you would look to find the answers you seek.
Focus your questions and your search

**Step 3: Know what to do with it when you find it**

It is important to remember when crafting a results statement that our goal is to tell a story in a concise way. We should remember this when approaching the sources, the internal and external records. Again, these records were made, and maintained for the purposes of the organization that created them, not for our reporting purposes, so the format in which they appear may not have the information we seek in precisely the form that we’d wish. Narratives, the minutes of meetings, normative reports, and other official accounts may contain the information we seek, without presenting it front-and-center for us to simply pluck from the page. In these cases, we need to utilize a technique such as content analysis. This is,

“...a systematic approach to analyzing themes in audio, visual or print communication. Selected material is reviewed and assessed along the lines of predetermined criteria, such as reflection of key messages, accuracy, prominence, and reference to sponsoring organizations.”

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3 Ibid p. 32
**How do we go about doing this?**

**First**, we remember what we are looking for…evidence to support the contention that a programme or intervention had the impact we think it had.

**Second**, we read the materials, looking for references to the result we have in mind. We are looking for reoccurring themes.

**Third**, we capture the references or mentions we find.

**How many sources?**

A common question when using internal or external records that make references to a point we wish to make, is “How many sources should we consult?” As a guideline, it might be worthwhile to consider A) the nature of the source(s) we are consulting, and B) whether the reference we have found is direct or indirect.

Generally, official publications of governments or NGOs can be assumed to be well documented. In these cases, one or two citations in support of our results statement will probably suffice, this is particularly true where the reference to the result we wish to support is direct, clear and unequivocal. However, when the source is less “official,” where it consists of media reports, books and other similar materials, additional supporting citations are usually a good idea. This is particularly true where the reference to our targeted result is indirect, passing or less than fully treated.
Survey, questionnaire, and interview records

These three methods of collecting information are quite often used in gathering data in support of results statements. But they require a different approach when translating their findings into useful supporting evidence for results statements.

**Surveys**

Surveys are in some ways the easiest to use. Presuming that your sample population has been appropriately drawn and your survey instrument properly designed to ask the right questions and elicit the right type of answers, basic numerical calculations are usually all that it needed to utilize this data. While sophisticated statistical techniques are available for doing a more thorough analysis of this information, more often than not a simple calculation of the major proportions and percentages (called “top end numbers”) will suffice: “82% of Member States expressed satisfaction with the work of the Programme;” “The subprogramme contributed to an decrease in infant mortality of 7%;” “Technical assistance on the subject of elections contributed to a 13% reduction in reported voting irregularities within Member States requesting such assistance.”

**Questionnaires and Interviews**

Questionnaires and Interviews can be extremely useful tools because, as a result of their format, they very often result in more detailed information than a survey can provide. The difference lies in the use, in questionnaires and interviews of “open ended questions.” In surveys, respondents are usually given a set of replies from which they select the answer that seems most appropriate to them. Thus the question: “Which issue is most important to you?” might be followed with a list of 4, 5 or 6 answers form which the respondent selects. A simple percentage of how each reply scored will quickly illustrate the prevailing opinion among the sample population; respondents can also be asked to rank a given set of predetermined replies. However, a questionnaire might follow-up upon this question by asking, “What other issues, not mentioned, do you think are important?” This limited form of open ended question might result in 15 or more additional issues that the designers had not thought of. Similarly, an open ended
question like, “Why do you think X is important?” might elicit a wide range of replies.

In the same way, interviews are designed to give the respondent an opportunity to speak his or her mind fairly unfettered by the questioner’s parameters. Also, interesting answers usually engender follow-up questions that could lead the interview in unforeseen directions, often with enlightening results.

In both of these cases, the sort of content analysis described above and applied to narrative accounts is called for. In other words, once again we are looking for recurring themes, specifically those mentioned by the largest number of respondents. Remember: not every opinion offered needs to be cited; only those shared by a significant number of respondents are usually necessary. Where these appear, they are counted, even if not precisely stated in the same words, and presented as a percentage: “47% of all respondents suggested support for the goals of the subprogramme by indicating that educational opportunities for their daughters was of importance to them.”

The value of information from self-monitoring

Quite often, if programmes are utilizing a good milestone management system, self-evaluation information is available that would allow a presentation of an effort’s results to also contain observations upon how or why things did not work out as planned. The United Nations format, reflected in the Budget, IMDIS and other places, always considers External Factors that may have an influence upon programme performance. However, Internal Factors, such as the subprogramme’s design, assumptions and implementation strategy can also have a decisive impact. Milestone Management gives responsible staff a tool for tracking the influence of these Internal Factors, and this information too can be a very valuable addition to an effort’s overall results report.
Lunch
How we analyze and use the numbers

One of the first choices to be made in the crafting of a Statement of Accomplishment is the type of information to be included. Even where the majority of the available raw information is not in numerical form, numbers will still be integral to the ultimate accomplishment/results accounts and statements: more often than not there will be at least some reference to a quantifiable ingredient within the statement. For example, within traditional output-based reporting, there are usually references made to a numerical accounting of those outputs: “The programme serviced 1082 clients during the reporting period.”

We recognize, however, this statement is a measure of activity, not results: it gives no indication of whether the 1082 represented an increase, a decrease or a static maintenance of clients, and contains no information relating to the impact of the service upon those clients, whether they experienced any sort of meaningful change that improved their behavior, attitude, condition, knowledge or status. But it does, through the use of the numerical reference, give at least some mental picture to the reader…albeit, an incomplete and less-than-completely-enlightening picture.

So too, results statements benefit from numerical references. The difference is that results statements do not look to a simple recounting of outputs, but rather to indicators that give some idea of progress made toward stated target and objectives.

Raw numbers vs. comparisons

An early choice to be made when deciding to include numerical data in a results statement is the form in which that numerical information should be presented. Generally, there are two choices, raw numbers or a comparative format.

Raw numbers are most often used in output tallies: “1700 metres of irrigation pipe were laid through intervention of the subprogramme.” We recognize this as an account of activity, not results. But even in results statements, raw number can be used: “1,987 fewer cases of domestic violence were reported throughout
the region during the reporting period, indicating a positive improvement in attitudes toward the status and treatment of women as a result of subprogramme education and behavior modification efforts."

The problem with this statement is that it gives no indication of how great an improvement the 1,987 was, or whether this was a good or disappointing performance given the subprogramme’s targeted Expected Accomplishment.

A key facet of a good results statement is its ability to give the reader/user a sense of the progress made toward the target Objective or against the Expected Accomplishment. The most common method of doing this is through the use of a comparison against some sort of baseline.

**The idea of a Baseline**

The most common tool for giving an idea of progress (or the lack thereof) is the use of a Baseline. What is a baseline?

A baseline is any set point, usually expressed in quantifiable terms, describing either an ideal condition, or conditions prior to the implementation of the programme or intervention.

There are several types of baselines:
1. Baselines against a generally understood standard or ideal
2. Baselines against past performance
3. Baselines against more recent performance
4. Baselines against a target
5. A No-programme baseline

**1. Baselines against a generally understood standard or ideal**

The use of batting averages in baseball is an example of this sort of baseline. Hitters are ranked according to their batting average, say, .247. This is understood to represent the percentage, 24.7%, of their total times at bat (100%) when they managed to hit the baseball. It gives no indication of whether the hit was worth one base or was a home run resulting in a score. It gives no
indication of whether they ever scored at all. Rather, it merely gives a picture of their success rate against the unstated (but understood) 100% of the time they tried to hit the baseball. A subprogramme, therefore, could include in its results statement the note that it achieved an enrollment rate of .343, indicating that 34.3% of all possible clients (those within a certain population, those contacted, or those receiving some sort of formal introduction to the subprogramme) decided to enroll. It gives no indication of whether these enrolled clients ever showed up for classes or training, gives no indication of how long they stayed with the training, give no indication of whether they actually learned anything, or whether they ever applied those learning to their lives. It nonetheless does represent an indication of progress against the understood potential (but improbable) baseline of 100% enrollment among all possible enrollees.

2. Baselines against past performance
Very often a programme will use its most recent previous performance as a baseline. Therefore, a vaccination programme that resulted in a 20% reduction in reported cases of a preventable disease in 2002, but a 22% reduction in such reports in 2003, has shown a 10% increase in effectiveness. Similarly, an initiative that, through the construction of livable housing units, contributed to the placement of 18,033 individuals in stable, permanent housing in 2002, and the placed 19,722 such individuals in 2003, can lay claim to an increase in effectiveness of 9.36%. This figure gives the reader an idea, in a easy-to-grasp format, of the progress the programme has made.

3. Baselines against more recent performance
Where older, past indications of effectiveness do not exist, in cases, for example, where heretofore only tallies of outputs were maintained, a subprogramme can elect to describe its results at the close of the reporting period against the earliest result information available for the reporting period. The United Nations’ biennial system, for example, includes 8 quarters within each 2-year period. If results information was collected for the first quarter, the first 2 quarters or even for the first year, the final results after 24 months could be compared to the results posted for the earlier period. While this format does not necessarily give a sense of progress against performance during previous biennia, it does at least lend a sense of whether or not the programme is moving forward.
When to Measure

While the issue of data collection is not within the scope of this Guidebook, the question of when to measure or take stock of results is important to the crafting of results statements because of the implications for baseline information.

Where results-based data does not exist for period prior to the current reporting cycle, as noted, subprogrammes may elect to report against a baseline described by results achieved in earlier stages of the current cycle. In order to do this, however, subprogrammes must measure, take stock and collect data throughout a reporting cycle.

Ideally, subprogrammes should gather results data on a continuous basis throughout the reporting cycle, beginning no later than the end of the first six months of a biennium, and not wait until the last six months of the cycle to begin retroactively collecting this information. This not only allows for comparisons against initial performance where results-based information for past biennia is lacking, but also allows for mid-term learning, evaluation and course correction, something that is not possible if only end-of-cycle is available.

4. Baselines against a target.

Where Expected Accomplishments have been established in a numerical standard (“Through the construction of housing units, the programme will achieve a 13% increase in its effectiveness in placing homeless individuals in decent, permanent housing.”) that standard becomes the baseline against which performance can be measured. So, to use our previous example, a 13% increase in effectiveness would have seen 20,377 such individuals so placed. The actual 9.36% increase posted, therefore, gives an indication that, while the programme is making progress, it is falling short of expectations.
A reassessment of your understanding of the external factors, assumptions, resources, implementation or management may be called for.

5. A No-programme baseline

One additional means for establishing a baseline against which results can be measured is a comparison against conditions that would have existed or did exist in the absence of a given programme or intervention. Most often utilized in cases where a programme of effort represents a new intervention in a situation, the no-programme (sometimes called a “zero programme’) baseline is used to show illustrate progress against an existing or control absolute: “Prior to the subprogramme’s initiation, teenaged-births within the target population averaged 87 per 1000 females between the ages of 14 and 17. The programme contributed to a reduction in this figure to 72 births per 1000 females between the ages of 14 and 17, a reduction of 17.3%, which was 2.3% higher than the Expected Accomplishment of a reduction of 15% for the first biennium.”

Verification

What is “verification”?

Take a look at the contrast between the two following statements:

1. Services provided by the subprogramme were highly satisfactory.
2. 83% of the regional bodies and NGOs responding to a survey conducted by the Regional Council of Churches expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the humanitarian services provided by the sub programme.

The difference, as can be clearly seen, is that the first sentence is an assertion, while the second cites sources, cites a specific achievement, and can be accepted as a statement of fact. Verification is at the heart of the difference between the two statements.

Verification is the process of “establishing the achievement of a result by documentation, evidence or testimony”. It answers the question: Did it happen or not?

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4 Ibid. p.8
While conventional evaluation approaches seek to “prove” that an effect was caused by a specific intervention, the concept of verification is often a better fit for most UN subprogrammes.\(^5\)

As a management tool, verification provides reasonably good information quickly, and often relatively inexpensively. Such information is useful for reporting and improving results.

**What Verification Can and Cannot Do**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can:</th>
<th>Cannot:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Establish whether results were achieved.</td>
<td>1. Scientifically prove cause and effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mark achievement of critical milestones.</td>
<td>2. Determine all side effects of an intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Give a longitudinal take on sustainability.</td>
<td>3. Identify all intervening variables that may influence response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Be performed quickly and relatively cheaply.</td>
<td>4. Substitute for statistical analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Generate feedback on specific programme.</td>
<td>5. Provide an in-depth understanding or generate assertions about replicability.</td>
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**Verification of achievements is facilitated when:**

- The expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement are clearly tied together.
- The results to be achieved are observable and unambiguous.

**How to do it: The “Proof” of Verification**

We have defined verification as the process of “establishing the achievement of a result by documentation, evidence or testimony”. How is that done?

\[^5\] The Rensselaerville Institute. Target Setting & Result Verification Guidebook. Rensselaerville, NY, 1999
You begin with the statement you wish to make: Our subprogramme did/achieved/accomplished ________

The next step is to ask how you know that this was, in fact, done, accomplished or achieved. Remember, we are not looking at outputs here, we are not asking whether a subprogramme expended certain resources, established a clinic or held classes. Those are activities, and we are focused, rather, upon the results of those activities. So we again ask, How do you know these results were achieved?

The most common way to answer this question is to point to documentation of the facts we wish to establish. This is verification - the process of identifying a source or sources that can substantiate our claim. This said, verification might not always require an outside source. The subprogramme can ask the verification question(s) itself. It is perfectly valid to say How do I know? I asked. Customer/end-user surveys are exactly this sort of self-implemented verification. But the important thing to remember is that a meaningful, useful Statement of Accomplishment/Results Achieved or account, the story we want to tell, becomes much more powerful, compelling and effective if the information is verified and if we include the source of that verification.

Hints to facilitate verification:
- Explore the connection to “as evidenced by”.
- Look for the verbs.
- Think behaviours.
- Look for the connection to end-users/direct beneficiaries.
- Ask “so what?”
- Look for the obvious.
- Don’t over-complicate.
A Verification Example from ECLAC

Expected Accomplishment:
Strengthened and consolidated national and regional institutions intended to reduce the gender gap in various spheres of development

Indicators of Achievement:
15 Countries that use gender statistics in Equality National Plans and country reports to CEDAW and ECLAC

Possible Verification Information Sources:
a. review of National Offices for Women web sites
b. press releases and official statements concerning the use of information supplied
c. review of local media

What to do when…..
What do you do when you find that the Indicators established for your subprogramme do not adequately reflect the subprogramme’s activity or fail to truly capture the subprogramme’s progress toward the Expected Accomplishment and, in turn, the Objective?

The one thing you should not do is ignore the Indicator. Rather, you should remain faithful to it, and make sure that it is reflected in the Accomplishment Account and Statement. However, in this case, you should also report the inadequacy of the Indicator, and attempt to find and report upon an additional measure that perhaps more adequately reflects your subprogramme’s impacts and accomplishments.

PART 5:
Developing your Accomplishment Accounts and Statements
Before we begin......

To recall what has covered so far:

- The anticipated new PPR format will require subprogramme level, results-oriented submissions, to be called Accomplishment Accounts and Statement of Accomplishment/Results Achieved;
- The Accomplishment Account is a 1-2 page summary of subprogramme accomplishments based upon data collected for the indicators of achievement, statistical data and other relevant information that leads to an assessment of achieving your Expected Accomplishment(s);
- The Statement of Accomplishment/Results Achieved is a half-page synopsis of accomplishments achieved relative to the Expected Accomplishment. It captures the key facts of what was achieved by your subprogramme during the past biennium. The Statement of Accomplishment/Results Achieved is based on and is distilled from the Accomplishment Account;
- We are approaching this task from the perspective of initially using storytelling skills. We recognize that all good compelling stories contain certain central elements. We have used the Story Pyramid to assist us in remembering these elements. For the subprogrammes, the elements include the Setting, the End Users, the Intermediaries, the Challenge, the Events, the Results, and the Learning(s). We use these elements to draft a Story of our subprogramme;
- We have identified probable data/information sources, both internal and external to the Organization, and have established the importance and methods of verification;
- In order to advance a subprogramme story to the level and quality of a subprogramme Accomplishment/Results Account, we also must include considerations of verifiable information of what was achieved with mention of Verification Sources, a comparison to the original target, bound in time, numbers and percentages to show relative achievement, and variations from the target, while employing minimal output data.
We are now ready to move on, to move your subprogramme story to an Accomplishment Account.

We have stated that effective Accomplishment Accounts also include additional characteristics not necessarily contained in the story format. These include:

- Verifiable information of what was achieved with mention of Verification Sources
- A comparison to the original target, bound in time
- Numbers and percentages to show relative achievement
- Variations from the target: If target is missed, significant *milestones* achieved
- Minimal output data

Using our ECLAC example from previous pages, what might an Accomplishment/Results Account look like? We present an example on the following page [*Note: this is enhanced data, and, for purposes of illustration, refers to only one of the subprogramme’s expected accomplishments*]
Example: ECLAC Subprogramme 5 - Mainstreaming the gender perspective in regional development

The objective of this subprogramme is increased awareness of gender issues, and the promotion of gender mainstreaming within the sphere of regional development and within all ECLAC subprogrammes and projects. A key to the realization of this objective is the strengthening and consolidation of national and regional institutions intended to reduce the gender gap in various spheres of development. Among other goals, the subprogramme therefore aims at achieving increased use of up-to-date analysis and gender-sensitive indicators, methodologies and information developed and provided by the Commission to support national and regional institutions regarding priority issues, specifically through increasing the number of countries that use gender statistics in Equality National Plans and country reports to CEDAW and ECLAC [The Setting] with the intention of increasing the influence upon policy-makers in these countries [The End-users] available to the respective National Offices for Women. [The Intermediaries]. During the biennium, a target of 15 countries using gender statistics in Equality National Plans and country reports to CEDAW and ECLAC was established. ECLAC provided these gender indicators, methodologies and data, [The Event] and by 30 November 2002 it was estimated that 10 countries were using these gender statistics, and by 30 November 2003 it is estimated that an additional 5 will be using them, achieving the subprogramme’s targeted goal. [Reference to the target, bound in time] It was reported by National Offices for Women that there were 67 instances of these gender indicators, methodologies and/or data being cited in national media reports within the region, and 13 instances where the materials were either directly cited in national or intergovernmental documents on the status of women or equality in development opportunities, or were verifiably influential in the formulation of those documents. This is an increase over, respectively, 51 and 7 such instances in the previous biennium. [Relative achievement] Positive impact of the programme on expected accomplishment is further illustrated by the steadily increased of technical cooperation extended by ECLAC and by Agreements 9 and 5 of the XXXIV and XXXV Meetings of the Presiding Officers, which respectively welcomed the methodology and modality of technical assistance currently being employed in the region by the ECLAC Women and Development Unit and congratulated ECLAC for having provided technical assistance to countries under the projects "Democratic governance and gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean". [Verification] However, these impacts were also the result of workshops on indicator systems the subprogramme held throughout the region. These workshops proved more effective than information dissemination for strengthening intermediaries and influencing policy-makers. [The Learning]
As can be clearly seen, the elements and characteristics of both the Story and the Account were addressed in the preceding example. For some subprogrammes, the information already entered into IMDIS will essentially meet the requirements of the Account. If the information contains reference to the defined elements, a Statement should be drafted from it as follows.

**Developing your Statement of Accomplishment**

**What is a Statement of Accomplishment?**

- It is a half-page synopsis of achievements relative to the expected accomplishment.
- It captures the key facts of what was achieved by your subprogramme during the past biennium.
- It is distilled from the Accomplishment Account and should capture the ‘essence’ of the results.

**What is a “useful” Statement of Accomplishment?**

The first rule of writing any Statement of Accomplishment is that is must be *meaningful* to the reader. It should:

- Convey the intended information;
- Convey this information in a way the reader/user can understand, in terms that make sense to him or her, intellectually, culturally and linguistically;
- Convey the information in a way that gives the reader a sense of whether progress toward target objectives was or was not realized.

A Statement of Accomplishment should *not*

- Be written in vague, general terms;
- Be written in jargon;
- Be written with circular reference to indicators or objectives;
- Be written without any reference to measures of progress.
**Good Statement of Accomplishment**

The following each highlight at least one characteristic of a good Statement of Accomplishment:

✔️ The programme achieved a 98% immunization rate among the school-age target population, during which period there was a 22% reduction in absences from school, and a 13% reduction in admissions to local hospitals among the same population, and 12% reduction in work days lost by the population’s adult caregivers.

✔️ The programme resulted in a 37% awareness of gender issues amongst the target population, an increase of 22% over the previous biennium.

✔️ The programme provided 17,822 metres of irrigation pipe to farms within the targeted region, contributing to a 23% increase in crop yields for the area, and an average 8% increase in farm family incomes for the first two years of the programme.

**Poor Statement of Accomplishment**

The below illustrates characteristics of poorly formulated Statements of Accomplishment:

✗ The programme resulted in generally high levels of student retention in area schools.

✗ Numlog analysis indicates that SLEF ratios were reduced by 13%

✗ Satisfaction was expressed with the work of the programme

✗ The Objective of the timely release of documentation was realized when documents were released in a timely manner.
The Statement of Accomplishment should include:

- Uses verifiable information of what was achieved
- Verification sources
- A comparison to the original target and is bound in time
- Numbers and percentages to show relative achievement
- Reference to end-users
- Minimal output data

**EXERCISE:** Discuss what makes the sentences above either good or bad statements of results.
Model statement

So far we have discussed the elements that make up a meaningful Accomplishment Account, then used data to substantiate it – now we will turn our attention to extract the essence for the Statement of Accomplishment.

Example: Statement of accomplishment for an ECLAC subprogramme distilled from the Accomplishment Account

Our survey of informal and official records, in combination with a web-based analysis [verification sources] found 67 citations of research reports made in national media reports along with 13 instances where the materials were directly cited in or influential in the formulation of national or intergovernmental documents [key milestone] by regional policy makers [end-users] in the areas of the status of women and/or equality in development opportunities. This is in line with the achievement of our target of 15 additional countries using gender statistics in Equality National Plans and country reports to CEDAW and ECLAC.[target comparison]

Additionally, interviews [verification] with officials of National Offices for Women within the region, reported twenty-two verified instances of the direct adoption by countries within the region of methodologies provided by ECLAC.

Interviews and self-evaluation also revealed that workshops held in the region were more effective than the simple dissemination of information for strengthening intermediaries and influencing policy-makers.[lessons learned]

Keep the message clear.
Keep the message concise.
Make it understandable
Some Closing Words…..
This Guidebook, in concert with the accompanying Workbook, have been
designed to assist you in using the information available to craft meaningful
Statements of Accomplishment and Accomplishment Accounts. Both of these
are central to the success of the Organization’s anticipated new result-based
PPR format for the 2002-2003 biennium.

While this is a new approach, the information you need is already available; in
many cases it will be a matter of focusing upon where to look and what questions
to ask. Moreover, you already possess most of the skills needed to successfully
draft these Statements and Accounts. You use these skills every day, although
you may never have applied them to the specific task of summarizing your
subprogramme’s accomplishments before.

OIOS staff, the consultants and the Organization’s internal consultants are ready
to assist you as you begin this process. We are certain of your success and will
help in any way we can.
The Scramble Unscrambled

A) End-user  
1) The recipient or beneficiary of an output or accomplishment

B) Activity  
2) Action taken to transform inputs into outputs.

C) Impact  
3) An expression of the changes produced in a situation as a result of an activity.

D) Efficiency  
4) The measure of how well inputs are converted into outputs.

E) Effectiveness  
5) The extent to which expected accomplishments are achieved.

F) Expected Accomplishment  
6) A desired outcome involving benefits to end users, expressed as a quantitative or qualitative standard, value or rate. The direct consequence or effect of the generation of outputs and lead to the fulfillment of a certain objective.

G) Evaluation  
7) The process that seeks to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of an activity in light of its goals, objectives and accomplishments.

H) Indicators  
8) The measures by which outcomes and impacts are counted, tracked and assessed.

I) Inputs  
9) Personnel and other resources necessary for producing outputs and achieving accomplishments.

J) Objective  
10) An overall desired achievement involving a process of change and aimed at meeting certain needs of identified end-users within a given period of time.

K) Outputs  
11) Final products or services delivered by a programme or subprogramme.

L) External Factors  
12) Events and/or conditions that are beyond the control of those responsible for an activity, but that have an influence on the success or failure of an activity.