



# COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR REMOTE: DESIGN MONITORING EVALUATION LEARNING

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## Definitions

A **program** has a wide scope, focusing on benefits. Programmes involve a series of specific and complementary projects. Because they are concerned with benefits and not deliverables, programs are more strategic than projects and may have to change scope dramatically during their execution to meet the changing needs of the organization and communities with which Raks Thai works. Programs will typically span multiple functional units within an organization and are often executed over a much longer timescale than projects.

A **project** is a series of activities implemented to produce specific deliverables within a defined time-period and with a defined budget. Because projects are more concerned with deliverables than benefits, the scope of projects is narrow. Projects are typically confined to a single functional unit within an organization and typically of a shorter duration than programs, and by definition have a finite duration.

**Design** is the process of setting goals, developing strategies, outlining the implementation arrangements and allocating resources to achieve those goals. Design is regarded as the starting point, and is therefore a crucial stage of development initiatives. Project design involves multiple stakeholders and follows a process including but not limited to problem identification, beneficiary identification, stakeholder analyses, gender analyses, activity design, development of monitoring frameworks, risk management, budget development, sustainability assessment and agreement on an achievable timeline.

**Monitoring** is a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data to provide management and the main stakeholders with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds. Raks Thai Foundation's monitoring efforts focus on both program and project monitoring

- Project monitoring measures and reports on the implementation progress of a project while it is being implemented. The format and deadlines for reporting are typically determined by the donor and reporting is often against a logical framework and set of indicators agreed at the start of the project.
- Programme monitoring measures and reports on the implementation of a thematic programme area through a set of indicators. Every Raks Thai Foundation programme reports on an annual basis on implementation progress and delivery of results. This is aggregated into an annual Programme Report.

**Evaluation** is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation and results, including the sharing of results and the implementation of corrective measures. The aim is to determine the relevance and achievement of the objectives with regard to predefined criteria. An evaluation process should provide credible and useful information that allows the lessons learned to be integrated into future decision-making and programming processes. Raks Thai Foundation's evaluation efforts focus on both program and project evaluations.

- Project evaluations cover projects, which are time-bound sets of activities aimed at delivering a set of agreed conservation and human wellbeing results. A project rests within a programme unit and contributes to the intended results of that programme and the respective Programme Strategy. A project evaluation will assess the impact of the project in addition to the DMEL Principles (below). Project evaluations are normally conducted at the mid-term of the project and at its termination.
- Programme evaluations cover thematic programmes areas. Programme evaluation assesses impact of the programme in addition to the DMEL Principles (below), according to Programme Strategies, which define a series of programme level outcome and impact indicators of strategic importance.

**Learning** is the process of collecting and sharing evidence or experience to motivate Raks Thai Foundation staff, and facilitate improvement and across the organization. Learning occurs throughout the project cycle through sharing of experience, presentations of evaluations and monitoring reports, site visits, formal capacity building, and reflection on what works well and what could be done differently.

## COVID-19 Context

It is critical that all Raks Thai staff understand the situation and regulations in Thailand relating to work, health and movement. All staff, including volunteers or other project support people, must follow Raks Thai Foundation policies, Ministry of Public Health guidance, particularly relating to handwashing and distancing, and other national guidance relating to work, transport, movement and gatherings.

Some important reference websites include:

- <https://ddc.moph.go.th/viralpneumonia/index.php>
- <http://covid19.th-stat.com/>
- <https://sites.google.com/view/covid-19-educationalmaterials/home>

This document specifically aims to provide DMEL guidance and should be followed based on judgement from each respective project manager, in conjunction with all formal policies, procedures and laws as referenced above.

This document may be updated as new information emerges or additional actions are required. The date of update can be found in the footnotes of the cover page.

## Immediate Actions

There are a number of activities within this manual that can be adapted to the current remote-work context, however there are four immediate actions that should be taken by all project managers, and communicated to relevant staff within the program and project areas. These actions are:

**1**

Communicate with the project donor to understand their flexibility and inform them of any foreseeable delays to implementation. You should inform them that any non-essential data collection efforts which require contact with communities should be postponed.

**2**

Review performance or logical monitoring frameworks, including indicators and targets, to make any adjustments to reflect changes or delays in project implementation

**3**

Review M&E plans to identify M&E activities which can be postponed, and to adapt any critical field-based M&E activities according to the recommendations in this manual

**4**

Facilitate an information sessions with all staff working on the each project or program to ensure they understand the changes during the remote-work period, and to clarify any concerns.

## On-site DMEL

The first step in determining whether DMEL activities should be conducted according to routine or moved to remote methods, is to follow Raks Thai Foundation policies, Ministry of Public Health guidelines and policies from other relevant authorities.

Secondly, project managers should conduct a Risk Assessment to identify potential problems before they occur so that risk-handling activities may be planned and invoked as needed across the life of the project to mitigate adverse impacts on achieving objectives. Project managers are responsible for developing a risk management plan, however all staff are responsible for contributing to the plan, and to regularly monitor the risks associated with their project. The process includes:

- Identification of hazards and risk factors that have the potential to cause harm.
- Analysis of the risk associated with that hazard
- Determination of appropriate ways to eliminate the hazard, or control the risk when the hazard cannot be eliminated. In this case, remote DMEL may be a solution.

Guidance on conducting a risk assessment is available on the Participatory Learning Platform (PLP) at: <https://www.raksthaip.org/risk.html>

Where a risk assessment has determined that on-site DMEL activities can occur, or where DMEL activities must occur, it is important to plan and coordinate effectively to ensure limited contact with communities or other staff members, and the maximum amount of accurate information is collected during the period of data collection. Key considerations include:

- Identify potential opportunities to collaborate or coordinate with other project teams who may be working in the same implementing area, or with the same populations. It may be possible to designate tasks to others, or split tasks between different teams to minimize the number of travel times or staff who may need to travel.
- Use existing relationship with trusted community based leaders or staff to collect relevant information. Consider contacting them remotely (e.g. Line) to discuss areas for intervention.
- If you must travel, it is compulsory to follow all relevant organization policies, guidance from the Ministry of Public Health and policies and laws from other relevant authorities.
- While conducting DMEL activities on-site, you must keep a safe distance (2 meters) during all in-person interactions, wear a mask at all times, and wash your hands regularly with soap and water or an alcohol based solution.

## Remote DMEL

### Data Collection

Where possible, project teams should consider remote options for data collection. This will require use of available technology including phone calls, SMS, Line, Skype, Zoom, MS Teams, email, and any other relevant tools used by project beneficiaries or staff.

During the period of remote working and social distancing, there may be value in increasing qualitative data collection and analysis using key informant phone interviews or online focus groups, as a means of understanding the results of project implementation.

It is also important to reduce the amount of information collected by identifying priorities and reducing the number of questions. Remote DMEL methods require consideration of language and technological literacy, as well as broader challenges faced within each implementing context including access to electricity, internet, and phone service, and ownership of computers or devices.

Some additional considerations include:

- Fee-free services to ensure that participants are not charged for their time (e.g. phone calls)
- Persons of lower socio-economic status or remote areas may not be able to participate due to limited access to the required technologies.
- Persons with disabilities, including hearing and vision impaired who may be unable to use existing Raks Thai Foundation technologies for online or phone based data collection
- Reduce the sensitivity of question content as participants and surveyors cannot control factors influencing privacy of provide support.
- Consider inherent biases in remote data collection which are a result of mistrust of online or phone based privacy, gender and age differences in access to technology.
- Account for a higher non-response rate when designing a sampling strategy as there will likely be a higher non-response rate or a higher likelihood of interviewing the incorrect person.
- Conduct a follow-up call to 5%-10% of participants (phone surveys, online focus group discussions) to verify key information already collected. This should be done by a different interviewer. Major discrepancies should be discussed and addressed.
- Conduct quality checks on partially submitted data (online surveys) to identify any major discrepancies. You may need to re-train staff using online training methods (see section above). Consider pairing a weaker staff member with a stronger staff member, while ensuring they maintain a safe distance (2 meters), if they are working in the same building.
- Provide clear guidelines for staff about who is acceptable to participate. Depending on the context, the person answering the phone may not be the intended target. For example, It is clear that we're interviewing the wrong person if a man answers a call meant for a woman, but this would require a bit more screening if a person of the same sex answers the phone.

**Important:** Following any data collection method using phone, or computer based methods, all participants should be instructed to wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, or an alcohol based solution, particularly if they are using a shared device.

**Important:** Informed consent must still be obtained prior to conducting any remote data collection methods. Details on informed consent are included in the section below

## Phone Surveys

If your project requires information to be collected by phone call, Raks Thai staff should consider the following points to maintain acceptable levels of data quality:

1. Prioritised information that you ‘must have’ rather than routine information collection
2. Use existing trained program staff to conduct the survey in order to avoid additional barriers related to training or access to phones
3. Consider scale-up of qualitative data collection to better understand quantitative data.
4. Carefully consider sampling to ensure that the data reflects the different sub-populations in your project.
5. Simplify questions to reduce time as participants may become bored or distracted during phone calls. Some evidence suggests that 15 minutes is an appropriate time for phone surveys to ensure meaningful engagement.
6. Consult the DMEL Team to ensure that your questions limit bias, are designed well to respond to your research question, and are clear.
7. It is important that you remain flexible. Identify times of the day which yield greater results from project beneficiaries (in each sub-group), adjust survey length where methodologically appropriate, and reduce the complexity of questions where possible.
8. Please note that for phone interviews it is not always possible to ensure privacy, as the interviewer cannot guarantee where participants have joined the call or who else may be listening.

Basic details of each call should be recorded in an excel file, including the name of the data collector, the start and end time of the call, the questions asked as well as a unique identifier of the participant where appropriate which includes age and sex.

**Important:** Informed consent must be obtained prior to conducting any phone surveys. Details on informed consent are included in the relevant section below



## Online Surveys

If your project requires information to be collected by an online survey, Raks Thai staff should consider the following points to maintain acceptable levels of data quality:

1. Prioritised information that you ‘must have’ rather than routine information collection
2. Use a recognized survey site like Survey Monkey (example below) or Google Forms which have training and guidance widely available online to support with set-up and implementation
3. Consider use of qualitative data collection to better understand quantitative data.
4. Simplify questions to reduce time as participants may become bored or distracted during phone calls. Some evidence suggests that 15 minutes is an appropriate time for phone surveys to ensure meaningful engagement.
5. Consult the DMEL Team to ensure that your questions limit bias, are designed well to respond to your research question, and are clear.
6. Ensure that your survey link is distributed to the correct populations, which requires targeting through multiple communication sources (e.g. email, Line, QR)
7. It is important that you remain flexible. Adjust survey length where methodologically appropriate, and reduce the complexity of questions where possible.

Survey Monkey:

- Available at: [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)
- Survey Monkey is an online survey to measure and act on feedback/survey results. This software allows you to conduct online surveys (with a link or QR code) with participants of projects, conduct research, or survey of staff at workshops. Survey Monkey also provides a simple analysis of the information collected, including graphs and charts.
- The DMEL team has purchased 1 year access to Survey Monkey. It only allows 3-users at a time, so if you would like to use the system, please contact the DMEL Team to request an access password and support to set-up on your computer.

**Important:** Informed consent must be obtained prior to conducting any online surveys. Details on informed consent are included in the relevant section below

## Focus group discussions

Online focus group discussions can be used in place of in-person focus group discussion. This can be completed through Skype, Line, Zoom or Google Hangouts. It is recommended to select a system that allows for recording for transcription purposes. Please note that recording should be audio only and never include video recording.

If your project requires information to be collected by an online focus group discussion, Raks Thai staff should consider the following points to maintain acceptable levels of data quality:

1. Prioritised information that you 'must have' rather than routine information collection
2. Use a recognized systems such as Skype, Line, Zoom or Google Hangouts which have training and guidance widely available online to support with set-up, and which are familiar to many participants.
3. Simplify questions to reduce time as participants may become bored or distracted during online video/audio.
4. Work with an additional staff member to support with mute/unmute, commenting and other technical aspects of moderating an online focus group discussion.
5. Consult the DMEL Team to ensure that your questions limit bias, are designed well to respond to your research question, and are clear.
6. It is important that you remain flexible. Adjust survey length where methodologically appropriate, and reduce the complexity of questions where possible.

Focus group discussions are already complicated, and online methods add an additional level of challenges. It is important to keep in mind the following

- There will not be a sign in sheet, as such each participant should introduce themselves by saying their name, age, sex and nationality, as well as any other basic disaggregation required by the project or donor
- Participants often have technical problems, which can disrupt other participants in the focus group
- It is challenging for the facilitator to identify non-verbal prompts and there is likely to be fewer interactions between participants, therefore reducing the complexity of data collected and possible reducing the time and opportunities for probing.
- It is not possible to ensure privacy, as the facilitator cannot guarantee where participants have joined the call or who else may be listening.

Basic details of each focus group should be recorded in an excel file, including the name of the facilitator, name of note taker, the start and end time of the focus group, the questions asked as well as a unique identifier of the participant where appropriate which includes age and sex.

**Important:** Informed consent must be obtained from all participants prior to conducting a focus group discussions. Details on informed consent are included in the relevant section below

## Online workshops and training

If there is a possibility of conducting planned workshops or training online, please use a recognized systems such as Zoom or MS Teams which have guidance widely available online to support with set-up, and which are familiar to many participants. Online workshops and training can be challenging for facilitators and participants as there is limited opportunity for interaction and often many technical difficulties.

If you are able to proceed with online workshops or training, Raks Thai staff should consider the following points to maintain effectiveness and engagement

1. If participants require materials to participate, consider digital copies, home deliveries, or distribution at a predetermined time and location as appropriate.
2. Work with an additional staff member to support with mute/unmute, commenting and other technical aspects of moderating an online session.
3. Always start with some form of ice-breaker
4. Use the various features within the online system to encourage participation. For example, Zoom allows trainers or facilitators to break participants into groups, which can allow for practice exercises in small groups or pairs.
5. Allocate an activity at the end of each session to debrief, which will give an opportunity for participants to discuss any challenges, obstacles, lessons learned. You could consider the After Action Review (AAR) approach which is available on the Raks Thai PLP at <https://www.raksthaip.org/after-action-review.html>
6. It is important that you remain flexible. Adjust session length where appropriate, and reduce the complexity of activities where possible.
7. All meetings should be recorded with detailed Minutes and shared to all participants following the meeting.

### Important considerations

- Participants should use their organization email address and correct name on the system
- Where possible, you should record the session for participants who had technical difficulties or those unable to attend for other reasons.
- Participants often have technical problems, which can disrupt other participants in the focus group. There are also likely to be distractions with participants work or home environments which need to be considered.

**Important:** If it is not possible to conduct a planned workshop or training remotely, you should consider postponing the activity.

The Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (DMEL) Team in the Program Quality Department (PQD) also hosts the the Participatory Learning Platform (PLP), which has been designed and set-up for situations like remote access or limited resources:

- The PLP is a multi-modality initiative which supports Raks Thai staff with building capacity through e-learning, accessing important tools, sharing experiences and exploring data. The PLP can be accessed at [www.raksthaip.org](http://www.raksthaip.org)
- The PLP is available to all Raks Thai staff on completion of the capacity assessment survey.

## Learning and sharing initiatives

During remote work, it is still important to conduct regular learning and sharing initiatives. These can be both formal and informal. If there is a possibility of conducting learning sessions, please use a recognized system such as Zoom or MS Teams which both have guidance widely available online to support with set-up, and which are familiar to many participants.

Online learning can be challenging for facilitators and participants as there is limited opportunity for interaction and often many technical difficulties. If you are able to proceed with online sessions, Raks Thai staff should consider the following points to maintain effectiveness and engagement:

1. If participants require materials to participate, consider digital copies, home deliveries, or distribution at a predetermined time and location as appropriate.
2. Work with an additional staff member to support with mute/unmute, commenting and other technical aspects of moderating an online session.
3. Always start with some form of ice-breaker and the facilitator should also share their experience first in order to provide an example to others.
4. There are many ways to conduct a learning session. Similar to a focus group discussion, participants can build on each other's ideas, but there should still be an overall structure and objective. You could consider the After Action Review (AAR) approach which is available on the Raks Thai PLP at <https://www.raksthaiplp.org/after-action-review.html>
5. It is important that you remain flexible. Adjust session length where appropriate, and reduce the complexity of activities where possible.
6. All meetings should be recorded with detailed Minutes and shared to all participants following the meeting.

#### Other considerations

- Participants should use their organization email address and correct name on the system
- Where possible, you should record the session for participants who had technical difficulties or those unable to attend for other reasons.
- Participants often have technical problems, which can disrupt other participants in the focus group. There are also likely to be distractions with participants work or home environments which need to be considered.

**Important:** Each department should, at a minimum, host a weekly sharing meeting at the beginning of each week for staff to share details about their tasks and identify opportunities for collaboration

## Formal assessments including baselines and evaluations

Most projects implemented by Raks Thai Foundation require a baseline assessment and final evaluation. This has been regular practice, and is also a requirement of the Raks Thai Foundation DMEL Policy. During a remote working context, conducting formal assessments will be challenging.

There are a number of considerations and actions that project managers should be aware of when planning any formal assessments during this time. These include:

- If the project is scheduled to complete an evaluation, the project manager should immediately communicate with the donor about expectations and options for delay
- If the project plans to hire an external consultant or conduct an evaluation using Raks Thai Foundation staff, consider the risks associated with travel disruption and delays. Consider reducing the scope or changing some aspects of the evaluation to be completed remotely.

**Important:** If it is not possible to conduct a formal assessment remotely, you should consider postponing the activity.

## DMEL with project partners

According to the Mission of Raks Thai Foundation, we often work in partnership, connecting the strengths of various communities, civil society, private, public and international sectors. This means that for most projects, we implement activities in collaboration with sub-recipients or consultant. In order to conduct DMEL activities with partners, project managers should consider:

- Work with partners to develop a remote verification plan that includes the tasks and documentation that will demonstrate that each activity occurred to the quality agreed upon by Raks Thai Foundation and the implementing organization. It is important to note that quality verification (post-test, photos, participation satisfaction etc.) is not the same as proof of activity implementation (e.g. registration list, receipt).
- Outline a plan for Raks Thai Foundation staff to review the submitted documentation and follow up with the partner if necessary
- Create a clear plan for regular communication between Raks Thai and partners about progress. This should include reports as follows:
  - Narrative of the previous period of implementation and plans for the coming period which includes details on beneficiary numbers disaggregated by sex, age and activity
  - Finance report
  - Performance framework or logical monitoring framework
- This may include reports that can be checked against monitoring data so teams can work together to understand any differences between the monitoring data and report. Consider regular partner reports that include:
- Consider remote training (see section above) to address partner capacity gaps or data quality concerns. These activities are most successful if they are designed to be participatory and engaging.
- Soft copy of documents (in PDF version) should be accepted as primary reporting methods during the remote DMEL period. If hard copy documents are still required, these should be secondary and sent when appropriate to do so. A usual method is to identify a single person from the Department to receive all documents and store at their place of residence until routine is resumed. This limits the spread of information across multiple sites allows for improved data security and privacy as well as limits potential loss of documentation.

## Informed Consent

Informed consent is the process for getting permission from a project or activity participant before conducting the project or activity. Informed consent is only accepted if the participant clearly understand the facts, implications and consequences of participation.

Below is an example statement that should be read to the participant(s) prior to commencing any phone or video based interview or focus group discussion, or included at the start of any online survey:

Hello. My name is **[name]** and I work with Raks Thai Foundation. Raks Thai Foundation is a local civil society organization that contributes toward a society where all people enjoy quality of life, rights and equality. In your **[province of participant]**, we implement **[description of the project activities relevant to the participant]**. We are conducting **[description of the activity e.g. a survey of households and have randomly selected yours]**. The purpose **[include purpose of activity e.g. of the survey is to learn more about your community so that we can improve our programs in the area]**. Participation in the survey is voluntary and you are free to decline to answer any or all questions. We will use the information provided to **[how data will be used e.g used by the research team to help Raks Thai Foundation do better work in this area]** but will not release your name or any identifying information to anyone. This **[method e.g. focus group, call]** usually takes about **[estimated time]** to complete and will not affect your participation in **[other projects/upcoming activities]**. If you have any questions, comments or would like us to change or delete any information about you, please contact **[name of point of contact]** at **[phone]** or **[email]**. Are you willing for us to spend approximately **[estimated time]** with you carrying out this **[method e.g. focus group, call]**?

Key considerations include:

- During remote activities it is not possible to have a signed statement from participants, therefore recorded verbal consent is required.
- Participants should be informed that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as it is not possible for the facilitator or caller to know who else may be listening in the background.

Important: Informed consent is compulsory. No actions should be taken unless there is documented evidence of this process

Additional details on informed consent, including a short e-learning training can be found on the Raks Thai PLP Website at: <https://www.raksthaiplp.org/consent-form.html>

## Data Security and Privacy

In accordance with routine DMEL activities, Raks Thai Foundation is often required to process data, including personal data, to improve impact and report to relevant authorities. In processing personal data there are inherent risks such as accidental or unauthorized loss or disclosure.

Raks Thai Foundation staff must apply the same strict data security and privacy principals used the office as when processing data from a remote environment. These principals include:

- Necessity: does the information need to be viewed, analysed or shared now?
- Confidentiality: is all data anonymised, without any way to identify the individuals?
- Security: is all data transferred, analysed and stored using a secure system?

During the work from home period, Raks Thai Foundation staff must pay addition attention to the necessity, confidentiality and security of data. Requirements include:

- Do not transfer or upload any data using email or third party websites, including Dropbox, Google Drive, or MS Teams. Transfers should be made using a Raks Thai Foundation device (usb or other storage device) and kept in a secure place or on your person at all times
- Do not use a personal computer or personal storage device to transfer, store or analyse data. Raks Thai Foundation devices should be used at all times as they have updated security software and cannot be easily misplaced or used by other members in your household.
- Do not transfer or take any data home that is not necessary during the work from home period.
- Computers and storage devices which contain personal or project data must be kept in a locked cupboard during your work from home period.

## Software Licences

In order to facilitate efficient remote DMEL activities, it is recommended that department or team purchase licences for use of software packages. These software can be used during remote DMEL as well as upon return to routine work, and therefore a valuable investment for DMEL and broader project management.

### Zoom

Zoom is a video communication software, with an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, collaboration, chat, and webinars across mobile devices, desktops, telephones, and room systems. Zoom Rooms is the original software-based conference room solution used around the world in board, conference, huddle, and training rooms, as well as executive offices and classrooms.

Zoom can be used online, or with an app on your computer or smart device. Participants do not require a Zoom account to join a meeting, however the host requires an account.

Zoom can be used for free for up to 100 participants at a time, however if additional add-ons are required including meetings longer than 40 minutes and recording, then **a licence can be purchased for US \$149.90 per year per host.**

### Survey Monkey

SurveyMonkey is an online survey builder which allows you to easily create surveys, quizzes, and polls for any audience and will automatically analyse your results or provide an option to explore to excel.

SurveyMonkey can be used online, or with an app on your computer or smart device. Participants do not require a SurveyMonkey account to complete a survey, however the survey designer requires an account.

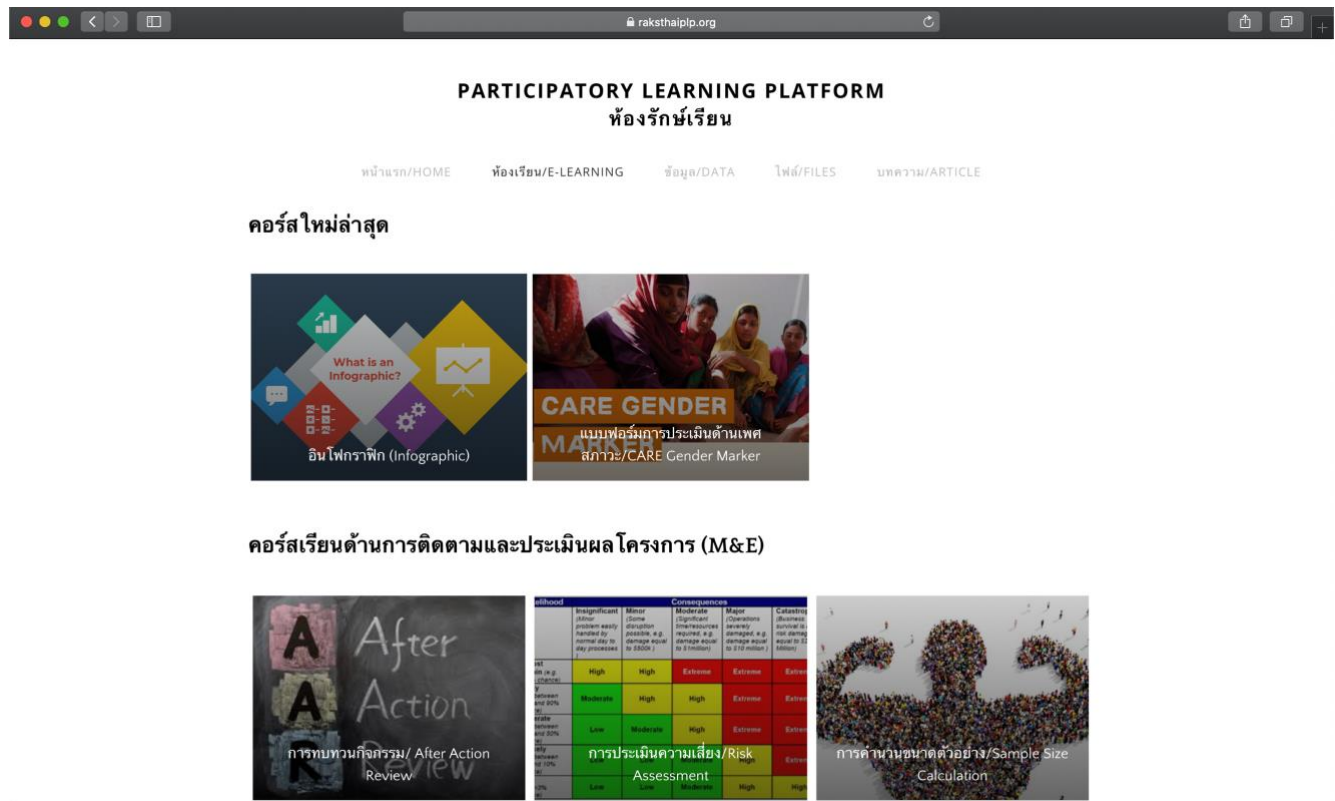
SurveyMonkey can be used for free to create a survey with maximum 10 questions, and allows for unlimited responses. However, if additional add-ons are required including more than 10 questions, detailed customisation and explore of data to excel, then **a licence can be purchased for 8,028 THB per year for two users at a time.**



## Additional Support

The Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (DMEL) Team has developed a number of resources to support with remote work at all levels of the organization, with specific details found below.

The Participatory Learning Platform (PLP) is a multi-modality initiative which supports Raks Thai staff with building capacity through e-learning, accessing important tools, sharing experiences and exploring data. The PLP can be accessed at [www.raksthaiplp.org](http://www.raksthaiplp.org)



For any additional support relating to the following matters, all staff can contact the DMEL team at [dme@raksthai.org](mailto:dme@raksthai.org):

- Development or use of monitoring and evaluation tools
- Collecting and understanding project data
- Guidance for facilitating learning sessions
- Conducting ongoing research initiatives
- Participating in eLearning or coaching related to DMEL