Foundation for Sustainable Development

Monitoring and Evaluation Guide for Research

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Overview: Why Do We Need M&E?

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in community-driven development (CDD) operations is crucial in order to provide information for decision-making and improve project management, to assess development effectiveness and demonstrate results, and of particular relevance in the CDD context that FSD supports, to empower communities and ensure greater transparency and accountability. Especially in the research context, it is an essential process.

Objective

This guide will give you a better understanding of monitoring and evaluation, particularly in a participatory research context. With this, you will be better able to see the kind of effects your project is having on the community, and make sure that you are seeing the results that you want. By monitoring and evaluating, you and the community will be able to see what is working and what needs improvement, and what can be achieved.

What is Monitoring and Evaluation?[1]

Monitoring refers to the regular collection and analysis of data on specific indicators to assist timely decision making, ensure accountability and provide the basis for learning. It is a continuing function that provides management and other stakeholders with valuable feedback on what is working, what isn't and why, and early indications of progress and achievement of objectives. Ongoing monitoring is integral to a flexible and responsive CDD program, and should serve as a management tool and as a means for advancing CDD goals of accountability, transparency and inclusion.

Impact **evaluation** assesses changes in the well-being of individuals that can be attributed to a particular project, program or policy. Despite the inherent challenges of conducting impact assessment of CDD programs, there is a growing recognition of the importance and the need for evidence of the actual impact of such programs and a need for insights on how to improve project performance. In order to ensure the rigor of such evaluations, it is important that they follow good practice in terms of identifying comparison groups, establishing a baseline, and mixing quantitative and qualitative methods.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation involves local beneficiaries in measuring, recording, collecting, processing and communicating information to assist local development project extension workers and local group members in decision-making.

[1] Source: http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/communitydrivendevelopment/brief/cdd-monitoring-evaluation

Key Differences between Monitoring and Evaluation[2]

	MONITORING	EVALUATION
TIMING	Continuous throughout the project	Periodic review at significant point in project progress- end of project, midpoint of project, change of phase
SCOPE	Day to day activities, outputs, indicators of progress	Assess overall delivery of outputs and progress towards objectives and impact
MAIN PARTICIPANTS	Project staff and partners, stakeholders	External evaluators/facilitators, project staff, donors, stakeholders
PROCESS	Regular meetings, interviews, monthly, quaterly reviews etc.	Extraordinary meetings, additional data collection exercises etc.
WRITTEN OUTPUTS	Regular reports and updates to project management, partners and stakeholders; and donors	Written report with recommendations for changes to project – presented in workshops to different stakeholders

What is normally monitored/evaluated in CDD Projects?
Progress against work-plan (inputs, outputs), for example:

- Are funds being used as planned?
- Are project interventions reaching the intended beneficiaries?
- Quality of inputs?
- Are poor, women, and vulnerable groups participating in the process

Steps in participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME)[3]

Step 1	Understanding goal/objectives of local development project/program.
Step 2	Identifying activities to achieve objectives.
Step 3	Identifying measurements to assess results or show extent of progress achieved.
Step 4	Developing measurement indicators.
Step 5	Identifying methods and techniques of collecting information.
Step 6	Selecting formats/visual tools for presenting information

[2] Adapted from Water Aid (2007), The Advocacy Sourcebook. www.wateraid.org/-/media/Publications/advocacy-sourcebook.ashx
[3] http://www.thp.org/our-work/measuring-our-work/participatory-monitoring-evaluation/

Monitoring

Monitoring provides real time feedback, allowing the project to learn by doing and to adjust design to ground-level realities. A well designed monitoring system can often strengthen the baseline data required or in some cases complementing a baseline survey by adding more project-related data

Challenges you may face

Because of the way that CDD projects are designed and operated, monitoring can be challenging since:

- Participant communities may be unknown beforehand.
- Outputs are usually unknown beforehand.
- Measuring multiple results in CDD (multi-sectoral) can be difficult
- Objective of good governance and building social capital necessitates evaluating less easily measurable goals (e.g. transparency, accountability, empowerment)

Three questions to start with

1. What will your monitoring and evaluation activity focus on?

- Formative appraisal at the start of your project
- Ongoing processes
- Impact and outcomes at the end of your project
- All or a combination of these?

2. What is it you want to find out?

3. Are all stakeholders aware of what questions need to be asked?

How do you prepare for an evaluation?

Choosing a suitable methodology

How will you measure success?

- You will need to decide what indicators to use to measure your project's success. If you are considering participatory research methods, it is a good idea to involve your target audience in deciding how success will be measured.

Examples of Measurement Indicators: Scorecard

Community score cards have been used widely as an interactive monitoring tool to empower the community by eliciting their perceptions on the quality, accessibility and relevance of various elements of a particular project. The following five indicators are examples that can be scored using a 5 point score (1= Very poor; 2= Poor; 3= Fair; 4= Good; 5= Excellent) or actual quantifiers.

Indicators of organizational strength	***Indicators of group participation***	***Indicators for gender issues (women in development)***	***Indicators for environmental issues***
Number of villagers who know or who have heard about organization or groups	Number of groups or rural organizations	Funds allocated for women in development activities	Degree of rehabilitation of degraded areas
Frequency of attendance of participants in the meeting	Socio-economic composition of groups	Women's share in benefit	Community forests protected, managed and utilized
Number of meetings held each month	Number of person/days of labor contributed	Women's participation in decision making	Forest area increased
-	Material and money contributed by group	Women trained in various activities	Bio-diversity increased and protected
-	Joint funds collected from local sources and used for maintenance work	Change in time spent by women in domestic and farm activities	Landslide, soil erosion and floods decreased
-	Participation of farmers	Change in women's income, expenditure and savings	Water-source increased and protected
-	Capacity to maintain local facilities	Position of women in different states	Decrease in incidence of environment-related diseases/disasters

How do you get the information you need for your evaluation?

Will you use quantitative or qualitative methods?

Monitoring and evaluation methods are either quantitative or qualitative, but you can use a combination of the two approaches. Many people use quantitative methods to define audience characteristics and to analyze statistical findings. Then they add depth and texture using qualitative methods - which answer 'how' and 'why' questions using a section of the target audience.

Essential tools for participatory monitoring and evaluation

For example, a multi-method process of measurement to collect data could look like a combination of:

1. Questionnaires/surveys
2. Observation (usage & site)
3. Focus Groups
4. Interviews
5. Exit polls/intercept interviews
6. Keeping Logs
7. Document analysis
8. Other participatory tools

Overview of Methods to Collect Information

The following table provides an overview of the major methods used for collecting data during evaluations.

METHOD	OVERALL PURPOSE	ADVANTAGES	CHALLENGES
Questionnaires, surveys, checklists	When you need to quickly and/or easily get lots of information from people in a non-threatening way	• can complete anonymously • inexpensive to administer • easy to compare and analyze • administer to many people • can get lots of data • many sample questionnaires already exist	• might not get careful feedback • wording can bias clients' response • are impersonal • in surveys, many need sampling expert • doesn't get full story
Interviews	When you want impression of how program operates without interrupting the program; is from review of applications, finances, memos, minutes, etc.	• get comprehensive and historical information • doesn't interrupt program or client's routine in program • information already exists • few biases about information	• often takes much time • info may be incomplete • need to be quite clear about what looking for • not flexible means to get data; data restricted to what already exists
Documentation Review	When you want impression of	• get	• often takes much

	how program operates without interrupting the program; is from review of applications, finances, memos, minutes, etc.	comprehensive and historical information • doesn't interrupt program or client's routine in program • information already exists • few biases about information	time • info may be incomplete • need to be quite clear about what looking for • not flexible means to get data; data restricted to what already exists
Observation	To gather accurate information about how a program actually operates, particularly about processes	• view operations of a program as they are actually occurring • can adapt to events as they occur	• can be difficult to interpret seen behaviors • can be complex to categorize observations • can influence behaviors of program participants • can be expensive
Focus Groups	Explore a topic in depth through group discussion, e.g., about reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints, etc.,; useful in evaluation and marketing	• quickly and reliably get common impressions • can be efficient way to get much range and depth of information in short time • can convey key information about programs	• can be hard to analyze responses • need good facilitator for safety and closure • difficult to schedule 6-8 people together
Case Studies	To fully understand or depict client's experiences in a program, and conduct comprehensive examination through cross comparison of cases	• fully depicts client's experience in program input, process and results • powerful means to portray program to outsiders	• usually quite time consuming to collect, organize and describe • represents depth of information, rather than breadth

Other techniques

Exit polls/intercept interviews

Researchers stop members of the target audience and ask fairly structured questions to gather opinion about a programme, service or product. Respondents are sometimes randomly selected by choosing every nth user or passer-by.

Role-playing, drama and story-telling

These methods can be used to gauge how people respond to sensitive issues that might be best represented through allegory or exaggerated representations of the issue. Stories can be validated by asking repeat questions of the storyteller, comparing one person's account with that of another and by checking the factual accuracy of stories

A Successful Anecdote[4]

One evaluator, for instance, tells this story: "I was hired to help community members evaluate HIV/AIDS services in the community. The community members here were a mixed group mostly agency folks, but some nonagency people living with HIV /AIDS. I asked for some volunteers to plan the evaluation together with me, and was pleased when about half a dozen came forward.

"When we met, I set most of the agenda, raising the basic questions, such as 'What do we want to evaluate?' and 'How do we want to evaluate it?' We decided on a survey. Then the next questions became what kind of survey we needed, how it should be administered, who should administer it, and how the data should be collected. Our work style was to put each of these main questions on newsprint, to discuss them together, to write down ideas, to decide on the best option, and to move on. We ran systematically and very efficiently down the question list. When we finished, after about three one-hour meetings, the evaluation had basically been planned."

[4] source: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluation/choose-evaluators/main

What would we like to evaluate for impact?

Some examples include:

Poverty/Welfare Dimensions

- Has CDD been effective at reducing poverty? Has it reached the poor?
- What are the impacts on livelihoods and employment?

Infrastructure

- Has CDD improved access to services, quality, utilization?
- Are CDD projects cost effective compared to other mechanisms?
- Is the infrastructure maintained?

Local Governance/Empowerment

- Do CDD projects promote improvement in local governance?
- Does it build stronger, more responsive local institutions?
- Transparency, participation, inclusion especially of women/vulnerable groups

Social Dynamics

- Do CDD projects improve social relations and cohesion?
- Does it reduce incidents of conflict?

Project Specific

- After a public education initiative, are significantly more children being vaccinated this year than last?
- Are learners in a literacy program gaining proficiency in reading, writing, and math?
- What percentage of participants in a substance abuse treatment program is still substance-free after a given period of time?

More Complex

- Was it the initiative, or some other factor, or a combination that resulted in increased vaccination rates?
- What are the environmental factors that influence literacy learners' progress?
- What do the substance abusers who backslide have in common?

Important Things to Find Out

In general, information-gathering and analysis should cover the three areas we discussed early in the section: process, implementation, and outcomes. The purpose here is both to provide information for improving the project and to provide accountability to funders and the community.

- ***Process*.** This concerns the logistics of the project.
  - Was there good coordination and communication?
  - Was the planning process participatory?
  - Was the original timeline for each stage of the project - outreach, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation - realistic?
  - Were you able to find or hire the right people?
  - Did you find adequate funding and other resources?
  - Was the space appropriate?
  - Did members of the planning and evaluation teams work well together?
  - Did the people responsible do what they were expected to do?
  - Did unexpected leaders emerge (in the planning group, for instance)?
- ***Implementation*.**
  - Did you do what you set out to do - reach the number of people you expected to, use the methods you intended, provide the amount and kind of service or activity that you planned for?
  - This part of the evaluation is not meant to assess effectiveness, but only whether the project was carried out as planned - i.e, what you actually did, rather than what you accomplished as a result. That comes next.
- ***Outcomes*.**
  - What were the results of what you did?
  - Did what you hoped for take place?
  - If it did, how do you know it was a result of what you did, as opposed to some other factor(s)?
  - Were there unexpected results?
  - Were they negative or positive?
  - Why did this all happen?

How do you make sense of the information collected?

Once you've collected all the information you need, the next step is to make sense of it. What do the numbers mean? What do people's stories and opinions tell you about the project? Did you carry out the process you'd planned? If not, did it make a difference, positive or negative? This feedback will either validate what you are doing or identify areas where changes may be needed.

Qualitative Data

Analyzing qualitative data is challenging and interesting, and great care has to be taken to ensure that the data are analyzed and interpreted accurately. The guidelines for analyzing qualitative data involve with issues such as making the good notes, drawing out themes and patterns, content analysis, summarizing qualitative data, controlling bias, affinity with diagrams and concluding thoughts on qualitative data analysis.

Qualitative data can be summarized into a common theme. Sometimes qualitative field notes can be classified under isolated ideas or perspectives that researchers want to highlight. Controlling the bias is a crucial part when working with qualitative data. In the process of bias control, it helps to have another person analyzing the data and trying to compare the two analyses. As a result, new themes or different ways of understanding data may emerge, and bias therefore can be controlled.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data analysis is used for any numerical data collected as part of monitoring and evaluation. Quantitative data are normally analyzed by statistical methods. Like qualitative data, quantitative data can be analyzed for patterns and recurring themes that could suggest correlation, causation, etc. between certain research findings and situations. Descriptive statistics methods should be used in order to prove a theory and/or a hypothesis that may have impact on policies or future program implementation.

Presenting Results and Reflections

Transparency: Empowering Communities to Participate

An essential part of participatory M&E is to share the data collected with communities, which promotes transparency and accountability between staff, communities, and investors. Community-led, informed analysis of results allows community members to identify their needs, set their own development priorities, and participate in tracking their progress on these goals over time.

Once the monitoring/evaluation plan is functioning, the project has been implemented, and the data has been successfully collected and analyzed, you must disseminate the results back to the community and other constituencies, and work together with a diverse group of stakeholders to apply the results through changes in practice and/or policy. Without dissemination and application, results and outcomes have little value to community partners.

For this process, community meetings that are open to anyone in the public are recommended. Stakeholders, project staff, investors (if applicable), and affected populations should be encouraged to be present so that they can be a part of the conversation on making improvements and changes from the findings of the monitoring & evaluation process. During the meeting, the presenter should be clear about the positive and negative findings of the evaluation, and also make clear what new recommendations could be. Participants can use the information to assess the project's performance and work together to set targets for continuation or sustainability of the current project, or for follow-up projects.

Other References

"Monitoring and Evaluating Information and Communication for Development (ICD) Programmes" OECD, Department for International Development, http://www.oecd.org/dev/devcom/46388330.pdf

Developing and Sustaining Community-Based Participatory Research Partnerships: A Skill-Building Curriculum, University of Washington, https://depts.washington.edu/ccph/cbpr/u6/u61.php

http://www.thp.org/our-work/measuring-our-work/participatory-monitoring-evaluation/