

4 EVALUATION

Evaluation generally implies measurement, appraisal, or making judgements on the output and impact of the project in terms of the objectives. Evaluation will determine a project's relevance, effectiveness, and benefits to the target community.

Evaluation is different from monitoring. Monitoring checks whether the project is on track; evaluation questions whether the project is on the **right** track. Therefore, evaluation looks more at long-term effects of project objectives.

We can discern two types of evaluation: process evaluation and impact evaluation.

4.1 *Process Evaluation*

It may be helpful to think of process evaluations on two levels:

In an internal project review the team conducts a periodic self - evaluation of the project, including a review of goals, strategies and work plans. Many organizations do yearly program evaluations, using a variety of methods, usually without the help of an external consultant. One of the main purposes of an internal project review is to document progress and problems as a basis for planning the next phase of work (usually the next year). Some of the most important results of internal review are team building, improved communication, and re-planning of yearly goals.

Program review takes a broader look at multiple aspects of a program or an organization. It can also be used for reviewing a country program of an international development agency. This is usually a larger undertaking than project review, and is done less frequently, perhaps every three or four years. Program review covers a variety of elements related to the program or organization's goals and priorities. Possible areas of focus might include relationships between program staff, beneficiaries, and management. Sometimes it is important to look at decision making and communication within the organization or project staff. Or there may be a need to evaluate the organization's goals and structure. Usually this is an internal process, but it may be helpful to have the services of an outside consultant. A consultant for this kind of evaluation should be skilled at organization development and team building.

Example of questions to be asked in this kind of evaluation:

- What is the basic approach of the project organization to community development? How has the organization changed through this experience? Is there clarity of organizational goals and work methodology?
- What is the quality of the relationships between the technical team and the community? Are the field staff accepted by the community? How do the community leaders and the project team work together?
- How well has the project organization done in reporting and communicating? What problems need attention?
- How are the community organizations working? How democratic are they? How well is the leadership functioning? What parts of the community are represented in the cooperative membership? How sustainable is it?
- What are the criteria and/ or expectations of the funding organization? How well has the project fulfilled these? Are the criteria/expectations appropriate to priorities and goals of this project?

4.2 *Impact Evaluation*

Impact evaluation is the last step in the project cycle and assesses the outcome of the project sometime after the completion of the project. It is often used as the basis for expansion of the project, or in the case of a pilot project, for the scaling up of the project. Evaluations are usually more comprehensive than monitoring, and require information from outside the project.

In an impact evaluation one measures whether or not a project achieved its goals and attempts to look at what impact the project had on its participants. The emphasis is on measuring if sustainable development has taken place as a result of the project. Usually a team, including an independent consultant, will conduct impact evaluations. The scope of work should be agreed upon by the several parties who have the most at stake in the outcome. These "stakeholders" will normally include the donor agency, the international cooperating agency and their in-country representative, and the local project organization. Very importantly, representation and participation of beneficiary community should also be sought.

Impact evaluations require collecting and analysing data, aiming to be more objective than in routine reporting. Several methods can be used, including case studies, cost-benefit analysis, rapid rural appraisal, or surveys. The participatory approach advocated in this manual, though more time consuming, helps the project organization gain more ownership of the results. In addition, an important by-product of participatory impact evaluation is that the staff learns the process of evaluation by participating in it. Many international development organizations have increasingly emphasized this type of evaluation in order to improve overall results of their programs and to better report to their constituents.

4.3 *The Evaluation Design*

Most evaluations call for the writing of a scope of work. This is, essentially, a plan for carrying out the evaluation. The scope of work in traditional external evaluations is usually written and agreed upon by a limited number of persons interested in the project, especially from the funding agency. In participatory evaluation, those who are involved in the implementation of the project are given a chance to have input in the design of the evaluation. In fact, the evaluation is first and foremost for the benefit of those closest to the project, including community participants, if possible.

The evaluation design proposed in this handbook is flexible. There are six essential parts of this design, steps that are not always as sequential as they appear here. The following synopsis should be helpful to conceptualise the evaluation process. If all of these parts are adequately thought out, a well-defined scope of work should be the result.

Step 1. Define the PURPOSE of the evaluation.

Who wants the evaluation? Why do they want it? How are they going to use the results? What assumptions do the various parties have about this evaluation? The answers to these questions will help define the purpose of the evaluation. A clear statement of purpose should result, i.e. "The purpose of this evaluation is....." Once the purpose is decided, it is a good time to decide whether an outside facilitator (consultant) is needed, so that, if possible, this person can be involved in choosing the priority areas. If so, discuss and decide on the role of this person.

Step 2. Define the PRIORITY AREAS to be evaluated.

In this step you will decide on the most important areas to evaluate. Based on the purpose of the evaluation, what is the focus? In other words, what exactly will be evaluated? Possible areas include the project's progress toward reaching its goals and objectives, the project's impact on the community and participants, technical aspects of the project, the training program, the

structure of the project organization, and communications. Looking at the project's key vulnerabilities, strengths and opportunities can help to define specific focus areas.

Step 3. The INFORMATION COLLECTION plan.

Here it is important to use the focus areas and list a) What key factors (indicators) will be researched on each area, and b) The source of information (i.e. the data collection tool and where that information is to be found).

Step 4. The IMPLEMENTATION plan.

Decide who will participate. Who will make up the evaluation team and which team members are responsible for each task? Also, you will need to make a budget. In summary, the result of the third step will be: a list of participants, a detailed calendar of tasks and responsibilities, including a target date for report completion, and a budget for the evaluation. If instruments (interviews, surveys, etc.) are needed, these can be designed immediately after the planning session, and field-tested according to the plan.

Step 5. ANALYSE and ORGANISE the information.

How is the information to be analysed and by whom? Who will develop the final conclusions and recommendations? Make an outline of the final report. Decide how much data will be needed, and what limits of time and other resources affect the work of tabulation.

Step 6. COMMUNICATING the FINDINGS and MAKING FOLLOW- UP PLANS.

After the evaluation is implemented, it is important to schedule a meeting to discuss results and decide on follow-up plans, including who needs to receive reports. A follow-up plan should include a) an agreement on specific tasks/actions that must be taken by the donor agency, the project implementer, and the beneficiary organization to meet the evaluation's recommendations, b) designation of persons to do each follow-up activity, c) an estimate of dates for implementing each activity, and d) the date when the activity is to be completed. A well-justified decision to ignore a particular recommendation is also possible. By holding this meeting and designing a follow-up plan, the evaluation's results and recommendations are systematized into the project's normal procedures. The use of evaluation results for re-planning are better assured if this step is followed.