Monitoring and Evaluation

Approaches, Methods and Tools

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1.0 Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of development activities provides government officials, development managers, and civil society with better means for learning from past experience, improving service delivery, planning and allocating resources, and demonstrating results as part of accountability to key stakeholders. This guide highlights three key approaches that can be used in monitoring and evaluation of projects.

2.0 Monitoring and Evaluation Approaches

2.1 The Logical Framework Approach

The logical framework (LogFrame) helps to clarify objectives of any project, program, or policy. It aids in the identification of the expected causal links—the "program logic"—in the following results chain: inputs, processes, expected outputs, outcomes, and impact. It leads to the identification of performance indicators at each stage in this chain, as well as risks which might impede the attainment of the objectives. The LogFrame is also a vehicle for engaging partners in clarifying objectives and designing activities. During implementation the LogFrame serves as a useful tool to review progress and take corrective action.

Use

- Ensures that decision-makers ask fundamental questions and analyze assumptions and risks.
- Engages stakeholders in the planning and monitoring process.
- When used dynamically, it is an effective management tool to guide implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Evaluation Plan

Objectives	Expected Output	Performance Indicator	Methodology/ Instruments	Time	Responsible/ Involved	Budget Yr 1	Yr 2

2.2 Rapid Appraisal Approach

Rapid appraisal methods are quick, low-cost ways to gather the views and feedback of beneficiaries and other stakeholders, in order to respond to decision-makers' needs for information.

Use

- Providing rapid information for management decision-making, especially at the project or program level.

- Providing qualitative understanding of complex socioeconomic changes, highly interactive social situations, or people's values, motivations, and reactions.
- Providing context and interpretation for quantitative data collected by more formal methods.

Methods

Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire with a limited number of closed ended questions that is administered to a number of people (50–75). Selection of respondents may be random or 'purposive'

Key informant interview*:* a series of open-ended questions posed to individuals selected for their knowledge and experience in a topic of interest. Interviews are qualitative, in-depth, and semi-structured. They rely on interview guides that list topics or questions.

Focus group discussion*:* a facilitated discussion among 8–12 carefully selected participants with similar backgrounds. Participants might be beneficiaries or program staff, for example. The facilitator uses a discussion guide. Note-takers record comments and observations.

Direct observation: use of a detailed observation form to record what is seen and heard at a program site. The information may be about ongoing activities, processes, discussions, social interactions, and observable results.

2.3 Impact Evaluation

Impact evaluation is the systematic identification of the effects – positive or negative, intended or not on individual households, institutions, and the environment caused by a given development activity such as a program or project. Impact evaluation helps us better understand the extent to which activities reach the poor and the magnitude of their effects on people's welfare. Impact evaluations can range from large scale sample surveys in which project populations and control groups are compared before and after, and possibly at several points during program intervention; to small-scale rapid assessment and participatory appraisals where estimates of impact are obtained from combining group interviews, key informants, case studies and available secondary data.

Use

- Measuring outcomes and impacts of an activity and distinguishing these from the influence of other, external factors.
- Helping to clarify whether costs for an activity are justified.
- Informing decisions on whether to expand, modify or eliminate projects, programs or policies.
- Drawing lessons for improving the design and management of future activities.
- Comparing the effectiveness of alternative interventions.
- Strengthening accountability for results.

Methods

The four approaches to impact evaluation designs in development evaluation include the following:

Randomized pre-test post-test evaluation: This involves the collection of information on project and control groups at two or more points in time. It provides the most rigorous statistical analysis of project impacts and the contribution of other factors. But in practice it is rarely possible to use the design for reasons of cost, time, methodological or ethical constraints.

Quasi-experimental design: This is whereby a "non-equivalent" control group is selected to match as closely as possible the characteristics of the project population.

Ex-post comparison of project and non-equivalent control group: the project population is compared with a non-equivalent control group after the project has been implemented.

Rapid assessment evaluation: This combines group interviews, key informants, case studies and secondary data.

3.0 Conclusion

There are various other approaches and methods that are used in monitoring and evaluation of projects. These include but not limited to formal surveys, performance indicators approach, Theory-based evaluation, Participatory methods and Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis. The choice of the approach or method to use depends upon a number of factors: Cost, time and skills required.

Further Reading

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