



This newsletter is sent to you by **Insideout**, as part of our commitment to building greater understanding of monitoring and evaluation practice. We hope that the information will be helpful to you in the work that you do.

GREETINGS FROM INSIDEOUT!

"Participatory evaluation approach" is a term that is frequently used, but not always understood. Yet it is an approach that is widely accepted as being valuable and of increasing the likelihood of evaluation findings contributing to learning within organisations. Evaluation Associations in the United States, and across South America, Africa and Europe endorse the approach.

This issue explores participatory evaluations more closely and attempts to answer the following questions:

- What is participatory evaluation?
- What are the differences between participatory and more traditional evaluations?
- What are the principles of a participatory evaluation approach?
- What are useful tools for conducting participatory evaluations?

ISSUE #2: PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION APPROACH

What is participatory evaluation?

Participatory evaluation highlights the importance of stakeholder involvement and provides various methods and tools to give a greater spectrum of stakeholders a voice, including the poor and disenfranchised.

*"Participatory evaluations involve the **collective examination and assessment** of a programme or project by stakeholders and beneficiaries. Participatory evaluation is **people-centred** whereby project stakeholders and beneficiaries are the **key actors** of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation. Participatory evaluations are **reflective, action-oriented** and seek to build capacity by:*

- (1) Providing stakeholders and beneficiaries with the opportunity to reflect on a project's progress and obstacles;*
- (2) Generating knowledge that informs practice and leads to corrective actions;*
- (3) Providing beneficiaries and stakeholders with the tools to transform their environment. *"*

Notes:

**Campos, J. & Coupal, F. (1998) Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation for Community-driven Projects, *U.S. Agency for International Development THE REENGINEERING DIGEST, On Track Vol 3, April 1998*

What is the difference between participatory and more traditional evaluations?

In highly **participatory evaluations**, evaluators facilitate a process through which stakeholders:

- Determine the evaluation questions;
- Participate in the collection of data and its analysis; and
- Present the findings.

In more **traditional evaluations**:

- Stakeholders only provide information.
- The terms of reference and the methodology are pre-determined by the donor in order to hold the programme accountable and to ensure funds have been well spent.
- Importance is placed on the reliability and validity of collected data.

However, the main disadvantage of traditional evaluations is that the findings may not be widely read or used. Practitioners of participatory evaluations argue that the involvement of stakeholders in the process improves the utilisation of results*.

In summary, participatory evaluations differ from more traditional evaluations in the levels of end-user involvement. These differences are outlined in the table below**.

Level of participation	Low	Medium	High
Evaluation initiator	Commissioned or obligatory evaluation typically part of programme development. Meets institutional needs. Evaluation done to, on or about people.	External evaluator invites end-users to assist in one or more evaluation task(s).	Evaluation in which end-users collaborate with external facilitator or among themselves to assess, review and critically reflect on strategies formulated for them.
Purpose	To justify or continue funding, and to ensure accountability.	To gain insights into development activity from end-users' perspective. Shift focus from institutional concerns to end-user needs and interests.	To promote self-sufficiency and sustainability by linking end-users to evaluation planning cycle. Develop relevant, effective programme decision-making based on end-user views, opinions and recommendations. Increase ownership in and responsibility for success-failure of development interventions.
Question-maker(s)	Agency heads, administrators, outside clientele, people based at offices far from the evaluation site.	Questions generally determined by the evaluator, but end-users give input at various stages of the evaluation.	End-users, external facilitator, persons most affected by development intervention.
Method(s)	Established research designs, statistical analyses, reliance on various quantitative methods.	Qualitative methods favoured but also includes quantitative methods. Values a process focused on open-ended inquiries.	Relies on highly interactive qualitative methods but does not disregard quantitative tools. "The process is the product". Inventiveness and creativity encouraged to adapt the methods to the context being evaluated.
Evaluator's versus	Evaluator takes the lead in designing the evaluation. Formulates questions/survey forms with no input from those evaluated. Assumes objective, neutral, distant stance.	Evaluator works collaboratively at various stages with end-users. Is partner in evaluation and imparts evaluation skills. Shares leadership role with end-users.	Evaluator becomes more of a facilitator. Facilitator acts as catalyst, confidante, collaborator. Takes lead from end-users. Has few if any pre-determined questions.
Impact/Outcome	Reports, publications circulated in house. Findings rarely circulated among end-users. Findings loop into planning stage with little input from end-users.	Shared data-gathering but limited participation in data analysis. End-users' input feed into planning stage. Increased understanding of end-users' experiences.	End-users more capable of meaningful decision-making based on effective involvement in the evaluation. Findings become property of end-users or community. Participation in analysis is critical.

Notes:

* Coupal, F. (1997) Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation for Community-driven Projects, *U.S. Agency for International Development THE REENGINEERING DIGEST, On Track Vol 3, April 1997*

** The table is a modified version of an expert from the useful 1997 UNDP handbook on participatory evaluations, (Eds. Sharon Capeling-Alakija, Carlos Lopes, Abdenour Benbouali and Djibril Diallo) (1997), Who Are the Question makers: A Participatory Evaluation Handbook, <http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/who.htm>).

What are the principles of a participatory evaluation approach?

According to Michael Patton (2002: *Evaluation for Development: An Advanced Course in Evaluation*) the following are key principles of a participatory evaluation approach:

- The evaluation process involves participants in **learning evaluation logic and skills**, e.g. goal setting, establishing priorities, focusing questions, interpreting data, data-based decision-making, and connecting processes to outcomes.
- **Participants** in the process **own the evaluation**. They make the major focus and design decisions. They draw and apply conclusions. Participation is real, not token.
- **Participants focus the evaluation** on process and outcomes they consider important and to which they are committed.
- **Participant's work together as a group** and the evaluation facilitator supports group cohesion and collective inquiry.
- **All aspects of the evaluation**, including the data, is understandable and meaningful to participants.

- Internal, self-accountability is highly valued. The evaluation, therefore, **supports participants' accountability** to themselves and their community first and external accountability secondarily, if at all.
- The evaluator is a facilitator, collaborator, and learning resource, while are **participants decision makers and evaluators**.
- The evaluation facilitator recognises and values participants' perspectives and expertise, and works to help **participants recognise and value their own and each other's expertise**.
- **Status differences** between the evaluation facilitator and participants are **minimised**.

What are useful online resources for conducting participatory evaluations?

Participatory evaluations take many different forms depending on the theory that informs them, including - among many others- stakeholder based, feminist, appreciative enquiry, utilisation-focused, empowerment, practical participatory, and transformative evaluations. Below is a **list of online resources** that can be useful for anyone who wishes to conduct a participatory evaluation, no matter which theory informs the evaluation.

1. The World Bank Group website on Participatory Evaluation provides links to three participatory methodologies and their associated tools and techniques commonly used in participatory M&E, namely **Beneficiary Assessment, Participatory Rural Appraisal** and **SARAR: Self-esteem, Associative strength, Resourcefulness, Action Planning and Responsibility**. These can be found at:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTISPM/A0,,contentMDK:20190347~menuPK:412148~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:384329,00.html>

2. A very useful guide which outlines the steps involved in a participatory evaluation: "**A Guide to Project Evaluation: A Participatory Approach**" for the novice evaluator can be found at: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/phdd/resources/guide/. This practical guide provides examples from health programmes, but the information is applicable to all programmes. The guide also provides evaluation questions, tools and worksheets to work with, as well as suggested activities to introduce participatory evaluation to project staff, how to write project objectives, define indicators, interpret data, and suggestions for keeping project staff informed of the findings of the evaluation on an ongoing basis.

3. Another useful resource is the UNDP handbook on participatory evaluations, "**Who Are the Question makers: A Participatory Evaluation Handbook**". The handbook provides an overview of participatory evaluation and discusses the differences between participatory evaluations and other approaches. It also contains a section on how to conduct participatory evaluations and provides tools, examples, exercises and case studies. This handbook can be found at: www.undp.org/eo/documents/who.htm

4. An interesting tool is the **Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique**. This process involves collecting significant change stories from the field and the systematic selection of the most significant of these by a panel of stakeholders or staff. Details and reports of this technique can be found at www.clearhorizon.com.au under the publications section. "**A User Guide for the Most Significant Change Technique**" by Davies and Dart can be downloaded from this site.

5. Register on the **Virtual Resource Center of Participatory Development** www.pdforum.org/vrc/ and search for "evaluation" to access interesting articles, papers, book reviews and resources on participatory development including participatory evaluations such as:

- *Participatory Project Design: Its Implications for Evaluation. A Case Study from El Salvador*, by Françoise P. Coupal.
- *Results-based Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation*, by Françoise P. Coupal.
- *Foundations of Empowerment Evaluation*, by David Fetterman.

6. An article, by Maya Haviland (2004) "**Doing Participatory Evaluation**" provides a broad model of principles and stages of participatory evaluation and can be found at: www.aifs.gov.au/sf/pubs/bull6/doing.pdf

7. Visit the **Evaluation Centre** website www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/checklistsm for useful checklists on utilisation-focused, deliberate democratic, constructivist evaluations, all of which value stakeholder involvement.

WHO IS INSIDEOUT?

Insideout is a consultancy, specialising in services including:

- Conducting programme evaluations
- Developing monitoring frameworks
- Running M&E training courses

CONTACT US

t: +27 21 448 4577 | **f:** +27 21 447 1040 | **e:** natasha@insideoutresearch.co.za | www.insideoutresearch.co.za
a: 225 Lower Main Road, Observatory, 7925, Cape Town, South Africa.

You are receiving this newsletter because you signed up telephonically or at www.insideoutresearch.co.za. If you want to unsubscribe to this newsletter, please send an email with UNSUBSCRIBE as the subject to chantel@insideoutresearch.co.za. Feedback and comments are very welcome.