A Basic Guide to Evaluation for Development Workers

Frances Rubin

Oxfam

First published by Oxfam UK and Ireland in 1995

Reprinted by Oxfam GB in 1996, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2003

ISBN 0 85598 275 6

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Available from:

Bournemouth English Book Centre, PO Box 1496, Parkstone, Dorset, BH12 3YD, UK
tel: +44 (0)1202 712933; fax: +44 (0)1202 712930; email: oxfam@bebc.co.uk

USA: Stylus Publishing LLC, PO Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605, USA
tel: +1 (0)703 661 1581; fax: +1 (0)703 661 1547; email: styluspub@aol.com

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tel: +44 (0)1865 311 311; fax: +44 (0)1865 312 600; email: publish@oxfam.org.uk

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Published by Oxfam GB, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK.

Printed by Information Press, Eynsham.

Oxfam GB is a registered charity, no. 202 918, and is a member of Oxfam International.

This book converted to digital file in 2010

5 Putting evaluation into practice

5.1 Developing evaluable projects and programmes

The aim of this guide is not only to explain what evaluation can and cannot do, but to help people to make sure that when evaluation is carried out, it is useful, and lessons can be learned from it.

Evaluation reports often say that 'it was difficult or practically impossible to do a "proper" evaluation'. The usual complaint is that there is no statement of how things were at the start of a project, no idea given as to what kind of changes were hoped for, or what indicators could be used to measure change. If information has not been collected during the project, it is difficult to trace changes in direction, or measure achievements. Occasionally evaluators complain of an overload of unfocused information.

Remember that evaluation is a tool for learning and better management. The aim is to assess what has taken place in order to improve future work. Evaluation needs to be thought about, discussed and negotiated from the very early stages of a project because:

- It can be a highly sensitive event, often bringing together people with different agendas.
- It depends on information generated at several stages of a project.

5.2 The key questions

Asking a few key questions during the appraisal and planning stage of a project will help to make evaluation an integral part of the design and methodology of the project, and to plan for future information needs.

1 **Why and for whom:** the purpose of the evaluation; why is it being done, and who is asking for it?

2 **When:** the timing of the evaluation; at what point in the life of the project or programme will it take place?

3 **What:** what is the scope and focus of the evaluation; what will it look at, what are the key questions to answer?

4 **Who:** who is responsible for managing the exercise, who is going to carry it out (do the evaluating)?

5 **How:** how is the exercise to be carried out, how will information be gathered; how long will it take; what criteria and indicators will be used?

6 **How much:** what resources will be needed, financial and other?

7 **What then:** how will findings be reported and to whom; how will findings be shared and presented to different audiences; what is the procedure for follow up?

These questions should be asked when considering a project proposal for funding, or deciding how best to organise an operational project. In the case of funded work, it will be important to distinguish between monitoring and evaluation that are internal to the organisation of the project, and that which relates to expectations or agreements with the funders or sponsors. A funding NGO must be explicit about how it is going to judge a partner organisation's performance over time, and what its expectations are in terms of evaluation. It is equally important that an NGO, when receiving funds, is clear about what commitments it is making to a particular organisation, and how its own performance will be judged. These expectations should be the subject of negotiations when financial and other support is discussed.

Each question will now be looked at in more detail.

5.3 Why and for whom is an evaluation to be done?

5.3.1 Why is the evaluation being done?

The reasons for doing evaluations can be grouped as follows:

i To improve performance
This is 'formative' evaluation, helping to 'form' or shape work while it is still going on. This kind of evaluation is useful for those directly involved in, or in charge of work. It can identify problems, and things that are working well and can be built on. It can also check whether or not objectives have evolved, and be a way of keeping the different people involved in the project informed about progress or the need for change.

ii To make choices and decisions
This is 'summative' evaluation, a summing-up of a project to make a judgement of how effective it has been in achieving results. Information from such evaluations can be used to compare different ways of doing things, to help people make choices between types of development action. This kind of evaluation can be used by funders to decide on whether to continue support or not.

iii To learn lessons
The prime purpose of an evaluation may be learning, so that the results can be shared within a project, between projects, between organisations and so on. For example, a funding NGO may evaluate a variety of work with a particular sector of the population, to see which approaches have the best results, and why.

iv To increase accountability
Evaluations may be a condition of receiving funds, as donors want to be sure that their funds are being used effectively. They may also want to find out if there are alternative ways of doing the work.

Evaluations to promote accountability of donors and implementing agencies to the women and men they are supporting are rare. Improving the way evaluations are set up can encourage greater two-way accountability.

An evaluation may have more than one purpose, but it is important for stakeholders to agree on the priority purposes. This can help to limit the scope of an evaluation and make it more manageable. Identifying stakeholders, and making sure that they agree about the main purpose of an evaluation, is essential in order to decide on the approach and methods to be used in actually carrying it out.

5.3.2 Who wants the evaluation?

There are different people who might want an evaluation done. The people who have an interest in the work being evaluated, the 'stakeholders', could be:

- those involved in managing and carrying out a project
- the women and men targeted/taking part in a project
- funding agencies
- major co-funders eg EEC/ODA
- advisory units in an agency
- individuals in organisations carrying out similar work
- government departments
- policy makers.

Stakeholders need to be clear about what they expect from an evaluation. The process of negotiating the purpose of an evaluation is very important, and time should be spent on this. It may not be possible to reconcile the wishes of all stakeholders, and skill is needed in managing evaluation processes to deal with tensions that might occur.

5.4 When should the evaluation take place?

Evaluation should happen at regular intervals in the life of a project, to build up a clear picture of progress and impact.

The type of programme will affect timing. For example, if objectives are long-term it may be two years before any useful assessment of progress can be made. A short-term intervention will need to have an evaluation done immediately, to look at how it was carried out, and the results. If the longer-term impact of a project is important, evaluation will have to happen some time after the project is finished.

5.4.1 When, in the life of a project, should evaluation take place?

Gathering information for monitoring and on-going evaluation should be built into project work as a continuous process. But there are special times in the project's life when more organised 'stand back' evaluations take place:

i. Appraisal or ex-ante evaluation
Information collected before a project starts, or in the very early stages, helps to define what is to be done, and provides a baseline from which to measure change.

ii. On-going evaluation
Monitoring indicates whether activities are being carried out as planned and what changes are happening as a result. Monitoring should be accompanied by on-going evaluation, which analyses the information in order to improve performance during a project. If a project has been conducting regular on-going evaluation, and this is well-documented, more formal evaluations may be unnecessary.

iii. Mid-term evaluation
This may be timed to take place after a particular stage of a project, to see what has happened so far, and make adjustments for the next stage, particularly when activities are planned to go on for two years or more. This kind of evaluation tends to concentrate on management and the balance of inputs and outputs. Donors may sometimes make payments for a second year conditional on a mid-

term evaluation. An annual report, written by a project manager, can be a useful evaluative document.

iv. Final evaluation
This will happen at the end of a project, in order to learn lessons about how the project has been implemented and the results. A final report of a project written by a project manager can be evaluative, comparing objectives with what was achieved.

v. Ex-post evaluations
These happen some time (often two years or more) after a project has finished. They look at impact and sustainability. They also consider broader 'policy' issues. This kind of evaluation is rare in NGOs, and more effort should be put into promoting such studies.

5.4.2 Other times when evaluations take place

An evaluation may be called for when:

i A problem is identified by monitoring or on-going evaluation, and it is decided to investigate further.

ii. A donor, for example a major co-funder, may request an evaluation to fit in with their own institutional requirements.

iii. An organisation decides it wants to look at a particular aspect of work, maybe in relation to areas identified in its programme plan.

5.4.3 Other important factors relating to timing

There are other time-related factors to consider at an early stage, particularly when planning a large and expensive evaluation, that involves a lot of different people:

i. Climate, seasons and key events in the calendar

- When are the key religious festivals? When do people have other commitments? When might it be inappropriate to do field work, or schedule meetings?

- What political events can be foreseen, eg elections, party congresses?

- What are the busy times in the year for organisations and projects and government departments, eg end of the financial year.

- Are there times in the year when access to particular project areas is impossible? Or when it is so hot that people will have difficulty concentrating in discussion sessions?

- Are there significant patterns of work over the year? There may be periods when there are few men around, because they have migrated for work. The women left behind may have little time to spare for evaluation sessions.

- When are the harvest and 'lean' periods? How do they affect women and men and their capacity to engage in an evaluation?

ii. Use of people's time, or opportunity cost

- Do project staff and beneficiaries feel there will be a benefit to them in participating in an evaluation exercise, even though they have plenty of other things to do?

- Are there some days when people are especially busy? Are there significant differences between men and women's timetables?

- Are particular interest groups unavailable at certain times?

iii. The availability of external evaluators

If people from outside the project/organisation are going to be involved, they may well be in demand, and only available during specific periods.

iv. The length of time the evaluation will take

Regular on-going evaluation may only involve project staff in a couple of days every month or every few months. Formal evaluations will need several months of preparation (but should not last beyond one year, because there is a risk of losing continuity if people change their jobs). The time will depend on what information is available or needs to be prepared, and how many weeks of field work are necessary. When the evaluation has been done, several weeks or months may be needed to study the results, prepare the report, and discuss it with those involved. The amount of time needed for more formal exercises should not be underestimated. It is important to plan this into work.

Field visits need to be long enough to enable the collection of necessary information and should avoid the 'fly in-fly out' style of development. Discussion time should not be forfeited to endless journeys to make a fleeting visit to the most far-flung group. The more actively involved the women and men who participate in a project are in the evaluation, the longer the exercise is likely to take.

5.5 What is the scope and focus of the evaluation?

Three sets of questions should be built into any evaluation:

- What changes have taken place, and are these changes the ones which the original plan hoped for? Evaluations should give an account of what the project has achieved, or not achieved, and compare this with expectations.
- What were the reasons for the success or failure? It is important to know why things happened as they did, and analyse the factors which influenced the way the project progressed.
- What actions should now be taken? Evaluators should suggest courses of action, in the light of answers to the first two questions.

5.5.1 The focus of an evaluation

At the planning stage of a project decisions can be made about what to focus on in particular evaluations. The focus might be:

- a geographic area
- groups of beneficiaries
- types of activities
- time period
- a particular kind of activity over a group of projects to compare effectiveness (a thematic evaluation)
- a group of projects all working in the same area to see how they interact with each other.

Some projects may be so small that such divisions are inappropriate.

Nearer the time of preparing for the actual evaluation, it will be necessary to review, and possibly to change, the focus.

If monitoring and evaluation are taking place within projects, this information can be gathered together for a thematic evaluation. This is one way of making resources spent on evaluation go further. It also helps to build up a picture to enable evaluation of overall programmes.

There are a number of 'levels of interaction' which could be the focus for an evaluation: the funding NGO's relationship to the project, or the implementing agency; or agency relationships with project participants.

Sometimes it may be appropriate to have a much narrower focus. For example, those in charge of a project may be aware of a problem but not sure exactly what it is. A 'process' evaluation may be carried out which will look at how a project is functioning, and its management.

In some instances an evaluation is not appropriate. If there are serious doubts about a particular project, then a project audit might be in order. An audit will examine whether a project conforms with required policies and procedures, and whether resources are being used as planned.

5.5.2 What is the role of the funder in an evaluation?

The interests of the funder may dominate the evaluation process, given its relative power. If an NGO is a sole funder, it may wish to evaluate the whole of the project. If it is only funding part of a project, it may only feel able to evaluate that particular aspect of the work. In this case it may be worthwhile to involving all the funders in an evaluation, so that donors' demands are coordinated, resources are pooled, and they gain a shared understanding of the work.

However important the role of the funders, the implementing organisation must also be able to state its views.

5.5.3 What criteria should be used for evaluation?

The criteria that are commonly used as a focus for shaping evaluation questions are:

i. Effectiveness: how far is the project or programme achieving objectives? For example, the project might be concerned with the training of primary health care workers to improve their technical skills, or disseminating information about sustainable agricultural practices. Achievements at this level are project outputs, or what was done. The inputs are the human, financial and material resources that were provided, to achieve the objectives.

ii. Efficiency: what is the cost of achieving the objectives?
A project may be very 'effective' in working towards its objectives, but it may be doing so at very high cost (both socially and economically), which is neither replicable or sustainable. There may be ways of achieving the same things more cheaply. This may involve looking at how things are organised, what type of technology is being employed, as well as financial management.

iii. Relevance: is the project relevant?
A project may or may not prove to be appropriate to the needs of the women and men it is designed to help. There might be other problems that should take priority. The overall approach and strategy of the project should be consistent with the problem and intended effects.

iv.Impact: what are the effects of the project?
The impact of a project is the social, economic, technical, environmental and other effects on individual men and women, and communities directly or indirectly involved in the project. The impact on women and on men may be different. Part of the impact may have been changes in the institutions involved. The number of people affected should be estimated.

Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, immediate or long-term. They can operate at the micro level (for example, at household level) or macro level (they may affect a whole sector).

Sometimes a distinction is made between shorter-term results (outcomes) and longer-term results (impacts). For example, outcomes could be a change in the way people do things as a result of the project, e.g. domestic servants may no longer be prepared to work for less than minimum wages. However, if the overall impact hoped for is an improvement in standard of living, and basic health, through improved income and conditions, it could be very difficult to prove the causality between the intervention of a small project and what actually happens. So many other external influences can have an effect.

v. Sustainability: will project activities and benefits continue after external support is withdrawn?
Many types of work cannot be financially self-sustaining. The issue is how far the men and women directly involved can take charge themselves of finding the resources necessary. There are two key aspects of sustainability for social development programmes: social/institutional and economic.

Another aspect of sustainability is the effect the project has on the environment and natural resources.

vi. Progress: is the project achieving the original objectives, or have these changed?
An evaluation can also question the objectives and design of the project itself. It may be concluded that a project is progressing very well, even though it is far from meeting the original objectives. These may have been too ambitious, or irrelevant. The evaluation may also look at who was involved in setting objectives: was it only project leaders or were staff and beneficiaries also involved?

5.5.4 Who chooses the criteria?

Different people involved in a project may have different perceptions of what is 'success'. Funders and funded should be open about the criteria that each will use for determining change and progress, and how these criteria will be translated into indicators relevant to a particular situation. Project organisers should also be allowed to state how they will judge their own work, given what they say they are setting out to do.

Much more work needs to be done to enable the women and men at the grassroots level to be able to state what 'measures' they will use to judge the progress of projects designed to benefit them.

5.5.5 What indicators should be used?

Indicators, which show that change has taken place, are of different sorts. Indicators can be used simply to track what is being done, and how; these are termed 'process indicators'. They will tend to focus at the level of inputs and outputs, monitoring the use of resources and recording the activities being carried out. 'Impact indicators' refer to those indicators that show whether the project efforts are having any effect, whether any changes have taken place as a result of the project activities. This type of indicator can show the extent to which project objectives are being met, and if there is progress towards overall aims.

Indicators can be quantitative, concerned with numbers or amounts, for example, the child mortality rate, the incidence of disease in a particular community; or qualitative, concerned with descriptions and attitudes, and with what people feel they can achieve as the result of a project. To look at qualitative indicators, qualitative methods and techniques of information gathering will probably be necessary.

5.5.7 When should indicators be chosen and who should choose them?

Ideally, indicators should be identified at the outset of a project. The careful thought required to define what indicators will be evidence of progress and change in line with objectives can be salutary. If indicators are identified at the start, then information about them can be collected as part of the regular activities of the project.

It is useful to select both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Just because quantitative indicators are easier to measure, for example, number of courses held, numbers of people attending each training, they should not dominate. Quantitative information needs qualifying with information about why people attend courses or not, and how they are using what they have learnt.

There is often a temptation to define long lists of indicators at the planning stage of a project, and then to find that collecting information becomes so burdensome that it is abandoned. It is better to concentrate on the really significant factors, which show that change is taking place. Sometimes it may be helpful to identify these crucial indicators by using ranking exercises.

There is some debate about the extent to which indicators should be objectively verifiable; that is, that different people would take the same view about how change can be measured. At the initial planning stage, the different participants in a project should help to choose the indicators. Different groups of people are likely to choose different indicators according to what they think the project is trying to do, and the terms in which they see positive change. It is especially important to elicit the views of both women and men. It may be difficult to reach agreement on how change should be measured, but unless everyone involved is clear about what the project is trying to achieve, and the changes which should result, it is unlikely that the project will operate without conflicts which could damage its effectiveness. Discussion about the choice of indicators can reveal the different expectations among participants, and negotiations should continue until a satisfactory conclusion is reached.

As well as choosing indicators, decisions need to be made at the planning stage about how the information about them will be collected. This could be through regular reports and the keeping of registers, as part of the routine administration procedures; by research studies; or by special workshops. Indicators should be 'tracked' during implementation, as part of systematic monitoring, and it is likely that some may prove to be inappropriate and can be dropped. In some situations, tracking indicators can identify the distributional effects of a project, for example, the different effects of a forest protection project on people who are totally dependent on forest products compared to those who have other sources of livelihood.

In the case of project proposals whose objectives are initially very vague, such as 'to improve the quality of life' or 'to help people understand the forces that affect their lives', the process of deciding on indicators can be very helpful. By defining the actual changes which would need to take place in order for these objectives to be achieved, the objectives themselves can be made more realistic. 'Improving the quality of life' could be made more precise by identifying the indicators which would show the detailed improvements that are expected.

If programme objectives and indicators were not defined at the outset of a project then it will be necessary to define them when carrying out an evaluation. This can be done by asking the various parties involved to identify what they are actually doing, and what results they are expecting.

5.6 Who will manage the evaluation and who will carry it out?

Deciding who should be involved in any evaluation and on what terms, can be a cause of conflict. The decision should be negotiated in principle during the appraisal and planning stages of the project. The people who might be involved are:

- the men and women beneficiaries/users of the project
- project staff
- project management
- representatives of funding agencies: eg foreign NGO, UN, EEC, bilateral and multilateral agencies, local corporate donors
- local or national government officials
- consultants.

The different responsibilities, depending on the type and size of the project and the proposed evaluation, are:

- deciding that evaluation will happen
- funding the evaluation
- managing the evaluation
- carrying out the evaluation
- providing information.

Responsibility for ensuring that an evaluation is carried out will largely be determined by who is controlling it. This may be the implementing agency, project staff, the funders, the men and women at the grassroots, or a combination of these.

5.6.1 What skills are needed within the evaluation team?

Skills needed may be some or all of the following:

- ability to write a clear, concise report in language X
- ability to lead and manage an evaluation
- facilitation skills and knowledge of group dynamics
- capacity to analyse
- insight into the local situation, practices, beliefs
- knowledge of the country and the locality
- knowledge and experience of a particular type of work
- experience of participatory methods
- ease of access to women and men in the project area
- wide knowledge of the NGO scene in the country
- sound understanding of how interventions can affect men and women differently.

In an evaluation team, it is better to have members with different skills rather than expect to find one evaluator with every skill needed. Teams should be in proportion to the size of the work to be evaluated. Two to four may be a reasonable number, allowing different evaluators to look at different aspects of work. If there are evaluators who need translators this will also affect the team size. Obviously if the project or evaluation is very small then it is likely that one evaluator will be sufficient.

In some areas, projects and organisations have engaged in 'inter-project' evaluation, when staff of different organisations, undertaking fairly similar work, have evaluated each other. This is only effective where staff can trust each other.

5.6.2 *Who can do the evaluation?*

The choice of who should evaluate, will depend to a large extent on the purpose of the evaluation and the stage of the project at which the evaluation happens. (See Appendix 5 for the pros and cons of external and internal evaluation.)

Many women and men involved in a variety of development projects are actively involved in monitoring and evaluating their work (self-evaluation). But sometimes community members and project staff collect information to be analysed by other people, and never see the results. If they do eventually receive a report it may be in a language that they have difficulty understanding. If this happens evaluation can be seen negatively as something that is done by and for 'somebody else'.

The people who actually carry out the evaluation may be external evaluators, who are not part of the project, or staff members who have training or experience in evaluation, or a combination of these.

i. External evaluation

Traditional evaluation relies on formal short-term exercises done by outside 'experts', often reporting directly to the funding agency. The assumption is that people with no relationship to the project or organisation will make a more 'objective' assessment.

Formal external evaluation is appropriate when looking at issues of accountability, or if there is a need for particular expertise or experience which an external person might have. Such evaluations can be expensive, particularly when contracting international consultants who may cost many times more than locally contracted consultants in some places.

ii. Internal evaluation

Project staff with suitable training can carry out an evaluation, or a special evaluation function can be given to a group of staff. (A person from another part of the same organisation, but not directly involved in the project, may still be considered internal.)

Internal evaluation can contribute to increased understanding and better planning within a project, and help to strengthen the organisation, because reflection and learning is done by those people responsible for carrying out the work.

iii. Self-evaluation

A group of people can evaluate and make judgements and suggestions about work they are directly responsible for. Internal self-evaluation is valuable if done regularly as part of the normal project work, perhaps six-monthly or annually.

An outsider can be asked to help with the process. The outsider in this case is not an evaluator passing judgement, but someone who can help the group itself in its questioning.

iv. Joint evaluation

An evaluation can be undertaken jointly by different stakeholders. For example, the directors of a funding agency and the head of an implementing organisation may decide to carry out an evaluation. They would agree the terms of reference (see below) together and the evaluation could be carried out by one or more people chosen by them, either members of the organisations or external consultants. However, there is a danger that the evaluation team may become too large to function efficiently, because all the different stakeholders involved want to appoint someone to the team who will represent their views.

Many funders have tried to do this kind of evaluation in the spirit of partnership. But if the evaluation is insensitively imposed, and is closely related to questions of renewed funding, it is not truly a partnership.

5.6.3 Participatory evaluation

Participatory (or sometimes participative) evaluation involves the women and men staff and beneficiaries of a project. It can be an internal or external evaluation. True participation is when those involved are deciding and have control of the evaluation. They decide when it should happen, how it should be carried out, and by whom.

In its ideal form participatory evaluation is a way of doing evaluation which makes it an integral part of the planning and implementation of development action. The women and men directly involved in the project are at the centre of the process of evaluation. As a group, they come together to think about the project and what it has achieved.

Participatory evaluation is based on a people-centred approach to development and the belief that ordinary men and women have the capacity to change things. It is a form of learning, where the experience of the process of evaluation is as important as the findings. It is part of a whole approach to development, rather than a tool or technique that can be applied (as an afterthought) in any context. Project staff in a conventional top-down organisation cannot suddenly be expected to be confident participants in an evaluation; nor can they necessarily be expected to enable the confident participation of beneficiaries, when this has not previously been part of their way of working.

As with all evaluation, it is important to define clearly who is participating and on what terms. People often ask how they can make an evaluation 'as participative as possible', and if there are 'participatory techniques' they can use. But such questions show a lack of understanding about what participation really means, and its full implications.

Sometimes what is called participatory evaluation should more correctly be termed consultation. Different groups of men and women are asked their views about a project, or a community hosts the team of evaluators as they go about their field work. There is currently a growing interest in using so-called 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' techniques in an evaluation; but simply using the techniques will not in itself achieve real participation. Without real input and control in the design and implementation of the evaluation, people cannot be said to be truly participating.

However, there are occasions when a participatory approach is probably not appropriate; for example, when an audit is being carried out, or if there are serious management problems to be investigated.

5.6.4 User evaluation

This is a process in which the male and female beneficiaries or their representatives assess an organisation and/or the work it is promoting. These evaluations can be organised by the project participants themselves or by project staff, or by an external consultant.

It is important to ensure that the questions discussed are relevant to the participants, and the organisers should be honest about how much change is possible. Many apparently 'open' evaluations of this type have ended in demoralisation for the people taking part because of the limits to change.

Feeding back findings is important in all evaluation, but especially in this kind of exercise, where participants are being asked their views. It is important for project participants to know the reaction of project organisers to the findings. Such evaluations are a way of increasing accountability of funders and implementers to project beneficiaries, and require confidence on the part of project managers and staff.

5.7 How will the evaluation be done?

Answering questions about why and for whom an evaluation is being done, and who should do it, should make it easier to decide the approach that is appropriate and what methods and tools should be used. You will need to make choices about:

i. Formal or informal methods?

Formal methods:

- are carefully planned evaluation exercises, which have formal terms of reference(TOR)
- are special events at a particular stage of a project (eg, mid-term, final, ex-post)
- use external evaluators for increased accountability (this is often demanded by funders or government departments)
- cost more than informal exercises because of the need to contract consultants, the detailed preparation and the scope
- need a final comprehensive report
- can be disruptive to the rhythm of the project.

Informal methods:

- are simpler and do not require as much preparation as formal methods
- tend to be undertaken by people from the project itself or those associated with it
- may occur as regular events throughout the project, or as one-off events as and when needed
- are most appropriate for providing information for making decisions about the way a project is being implemented
- may need a short report documenting discussions, conclusions and recommendations, often only useful to those who participated. (Final project reports prepared by project staff, or half yearly internal evaluation meetings would fall into this category.)

ii. External or internal evaluators?
In the discussion on 'who' should be doing the evaluation (section 5.6), we looked at the relative pros and cons of internal and external exercises, as well as issues around participation. (See also Appendix 5.)

5.7.1 What information will be needed?

At the planning stage of a project, and certainly when discussing a proposal for support, it is important to build in the gathering of information, for on-going monitoring and later evaluation.

Information needs are shaped by the purpose, scope and focus of an evaluation. They should relate to available resources, time frame, research and evaluation capacity at different levels.

i. Baseline information
The initial project document should provide information on a particular situation, location, the men and women who are the focus of a project, implementing agency and so on. Baseline information provides a point from which to measure change, to enable 'before' and 'after' comparisons to be made. Participatory appraisal studies are being increasingly used to provide this type of information.

If this is not possible an evaluation may compare the target group with similar groups of men and women who have not been involved in the project; but because of all the other factors affecting people's lives, it is difficult to identify causal links between the project and any differences which may be found.

ii. On-going information gathering

Workplans which state as clearly and simply as possible the objectives and what is expected of different project activities help to focus information gathering. At the planning stage of a project an evaluation plan can be worked out, which defines points in the life of projects (say quarterly, six-monthly or yearly) when results of activities and progress towards goals will be assessed. The plan should state how information on progress is to be gathered and by whom, what indicators will be used, and how the results will be fed back into on-going work.

It is helpful if yearly work plans fit into a system of longer-term goals. In this way progress can be reviewed annually, and overall direction modified as needed. Doing this can help projects bring work down to a more realistic level.

It is quite acceptable for project objectives and strategies to change as a result of on-going monitoring and evaluation. Any changes need to be agreed between the people concerned, recorded, and the reasons given. In terms of learning from development, it is as important to understand the processes at work, as to reflect on results.

iii. Existing information

Some of the evaluation questions may be answered by existing information. This could be:

- documents such as the diaries and notes of project workers, field visit reports, team meetings, and reports of evaluations that have been conducted at other times

- administrative documents of project staff

- information collected by other bodies that could provide background and comparative data eg official reports and research from government, UN and independent research institutes

- reports from other similar projects, especially data disaggregated by gender, area, age, or ethnic group.

iv. New information

It is important for issues of cost, time, practicality and usefulness to try and define *how* new information will be used, *when* it is needed and *the level of accuracy* required. The value of the information must match the resources needed for gathering it.

There are two main ways of collecting new information:

- questioning people through interviews, focus groups and conducting surveys
- observing people and things on site visits.

These techniques are often combined, for example the growing practice of rapid appraisal/assessment (RRA/PRA); knowledge, attitude and practice surveys (KAP); and case studies.

v. Quantitative or qualitative measures?

A good evaluation will use both quantitative and qualitative information. (See also the earlier discussions on measuring quantity and quality in section 4.3, and section 5.5.5 on the choice of indicators.) Quantitative information is often described as 'objective', yet someone has made a subjective judgement about what measure should be used as the standard! The relation between the two types of information is that quantitative data can be used for measuring 'what happened' (the changes which took place), and qualitative information can be used for analysing 'how and why' things happened.

Qualitative methods include observing activity, interviewing, and trying to gain a more complete understanding of complex changes. A criticism of qualitative data is that it is not 'representative', or scientific, and therefore generalisations cannot be drawn from it.

Studies are being done to compare information generated through these two methods, to see what the difference is in findings, versus relative costs.

5.8 How much will the evaluation cost, and what resources are needed?

At the planning stage of any project a budget should be drawn up to provide the resources needed for both monitoring and evaluation.

5.8.1 Budgeting for evaluation

When drawing up a budget, try to estimate all the expenses which might be incurred:

i. Financial costs
These will depend on the nature and size of the project or programme and the type of monitoring and evaluation envisaged. They will include:

- salaries of any people engaged for specific exercises
- daily expenses, travel costs (hire of vehicle, petrol)
- costs of meetings and workshops
- materials for production of reports and other methods of feedback.

If an organisation is planning an internal evaluation, the costs of this should be put into the budget. Costs might include the salary and expenses of a consultant to come and work with the team.

ii. Non-financial costs
There will be opportunity costs for project staff and participants, and others who may be asked to collaborate. People may be asked to spend time talking to external evaluators, or attending workshops, which will mean that other work will have to be rescheduled.

5.8.2 Matching scope to resources

The amount of money available will affect the scope and methods of evaluation. Some more formal quantitative techniques, such as full-scale surveys, can be more expensive than some of the less formal qualitative techniques carried out by project holders and participants themselves.

Evaluations with a greater degree of participation of the people concerned are likely to cost more in terms of time, and therefore of opportunity costs, at different stages of the evaluation process.

Clarity of purpose will help in deciding what resources should be used. For example, if evaluation is to provide information for internal decision making a less detailed exercise will probably be adequate. If the evaluation is to improve accountability, then the results should be detailed enough to provide this, and the cost of the evaluation will be correspondingly greater.

When drawing up a budget for a project, it can be helpful to have an agreed sum allowed for evaluation. Some of the official aid agencies allocate 5 per cent of programme budget for evaluation activity. For small projects, evaluation can be a relatively high percentage of overall costs.

5.9 Reporting back and follow up: how to make sure evaluation information is used

Deciding at the planning stage who needs to be told about the findings of the evaluation, and in what form, makes it more likely that an evaluation will be useful and have a positive effect. Different stakeholders will need different sorts of information, in different forms, for different uses.

5.9.1 The uses of evaluation results

Results can be used to:

- Improve organisation and management, particularly through enhanced communication between different levels of staff as a result of the evaluation exercise.

- Help in decision making, by indicating where action should be taken, where training or specialist help is needed, or where further research would be useful.

- Improve planning, by providing information about past performance, and influence policy making.

- Provide information for fundraising and advocacy, by demonstrating how needs can be met as a result of development activities, or by showing how some major constraints on development require action at national or international level.

- Improve public accountability, by demonstrating that resources have been used effectively.

5.9.2 How will findings be presented?

The product of internal and more informal exercises that are part of the ongoing routine of a project team may simply be a record of key discussion points and actions agreed, why and by whom.

More formal evaluation studies should produce a report. The format and style of the report should be made clear to whoever is responsible for writing it. (See terms of reference, section 6.3.2..) It may be necessary to present the report, or the summary, in a different form to the beneficiaries, perhaps by pictures or video to non-literate groups.

Resources may be needed for feedback workshops, seminars, preparation of reports and popular booklets, translated if necessary, as part of a strategy for sharing the findings of the evaluation with others working in similar fields.

5.9.3 Follow up

The evaluation should not be expected to come up with clear-cut, ready-made solutions. Evaluation can only provide the material for decision making, the decisions have to be made by those managing the project.

All those involved in the project should meet to discuss the issues raised by the evaluation and report, and decide about the follow-up measures, including a time frame for implementation. It may or may not be appropriate for staff of the funding NGO to attend such a meeting, or act as a facilitator, depending on what has been their role in the evaluation.

Beyond the level of the project, the results can be used to build up a picture of what does and does not seem to work in particular areas of work. This can feed into debates on policy and overall programme planning. It is also important to identify if there is information that could be valuable for larger debates on public policy, with major official funding agencies or government.

5.9.4 Who owns evaluation and evaluation results?

This relates to who is in charge of the evaluation process, and the way in which different people take part. If an outside agency carries out an external evaluation with little or no dialogue or negotiation with the project in question, it is likely that the project participants will not 'own' the process or findings. (They may also feel resentment at being used for someone else's research.) This is especially likely if there is no feedback of data to them. If the evaluation is intended to be truly participative, then a commitment to collective and individual ownership of the process and its outcomes is vital.

Where there are several major parties involved, conflict can arise where there has been insufficient clarity as to the purpose of the exercise. This may cause confusion regarding the relative emphasis to be given to the process of the evaluation compared to the product. For example, where one objective that has been identified is 'learning', then everyone also needs to be clear who is to do the learning, and in what way. Is the intention for the participants to learn from the experience of being involved in the process of evaluation, or are the funders anxious to learn, from a detailed report, whether their money is being wisely used? Or is the evaluation designed to enable both kinds of learning to take place? The team leader needs to be capable of interpreting the learning for the different parties.

There are ethical questions to be considered in relation to the use of information generated through evaluation. If a consultant is contracted to do an evaluation, or facilitate an internal exercise, clear rules must be established about what they can and cannot do with information gathered during the exercise. People giving information also need to feel sure that it will not be used against them, by getting into the wrong hands. Trust is an important ingredient in all evaluation work.