

SESSION 16

Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation

Session Objectives

By the end of this session, you will...

U...Be able to differentiate between monitoring and evaluation

U....Be able to define Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation (PM&E)

U...Apply your knowledge of PM&E in an analytical exercise



CONTEXT: *Once a community begins to implement activities outlined in its action plan, it will need to begin monitoring and eventually evaluating them. The plans for monitoring and evaluation should be developed before the activities begin.*

Monitoring and Evaluation Reflection

Although they are very similar, it is important to distinguish between **monitoring** and **evaluation**.

Monitoring is an ongoing process of data collection that allows project managers and the community to examine positive and negative trends and readjust their strategies accordingly. Monitoring focuses on measuring outputs--process and products related to the project implementation. It is done on a regular basis throughout the life of a project and helps ensure that the project stays on track. One way to monitor a project is to track process indicators or output indicators. Examples of these types of indicators include:

- g Number of latrines constructed
- g Number of condoms distributed
- g Percentage of households that attend awareness-raising meetings
- g Number of women joining a garden cooperative
- g Amount of money raised for an emergency medical fund

The term "evaluation" is used in many contexts. It can be used to describe...

- The initial assessment or appraisal of a situation;
- The monitoring of the progress of a project; or
- The measurement of the overall impact of a project.

For the purposes of this course, the term evaluation will refer to the measurement of project outcomes (short-term effects) or impacts (long-term effects). In other words, evaluation measures whether the project has met its objectives. Examples of outcome indicators and impact indicators include:

- g Percentage of girls who complete primary school (outcome)
- g Percentage of men who remain faithful to their wives (outcome)
- g Percentage of children who are immunized (outcome)
- g Level of maternal mortality (impact)
- g Incidence of diarrhoea-related deaths among children (impact)

In practical terms, monitoring and evaluation are very similar. In fact, monitoring is sometimes referred to as "on-going evaluation." Both monitoring and evaluation can be conducted using the same methods, which will be discussed below.

Making M&E "Participatory"

While monitoring and evaluation of development projects have traditionally been done for the benefit of donors or sponsoring agencies (SAs), the main goal of **participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E)** is to build the community's capacity to track the progress of its own development. Data are collected about the progress of activities so that the community can make its own decisions about what...

- What is working well;
- What is not working well; and
- How to proceed next.

Community members are the key players and decision-makers in the PM&E process, although this does not exclude outsiders from the SA or donors. On the contrary, successful PM&E requires the support from the highest levels of these organisations. Staff of the SA only play only an advisory role, however, and leave the actual monitoring to the community members.

In many development programmes in the past, M&E has not been conducted with the full participation of community members. This does not mean that the M&E has not been valuable or valid. The information gathered through traditional M&E has improved programmes and provided valuable lessons. While traditional M&E may still be appropriate in certain situations, it is not ideal for measuring the progress or outcomes of projects that have been created by communities through PLA.

How is PM&E conducted?

PM&E is a *continuous process*, and not a one-time event. During the PLA workshop, the PLA team and the community work together to come up with a list of indicators which can be monitored on a regular basis by the community members. The action plan committee (APC) is responsible for ensuring that this monitoring takes place, in collaboration with the SA.

The same participatory techniques used during the initial PLA workshop can be used for PM&E.

There is no set formula for *which* PLA techniques to use for PM&E. Each community project will be different and will require different data to be collected. Below are examples of how some development organisations have used PLA techniques for M&E:

Mapping

- How many households have participated in the CAP activities
- How many people have used new health services
- Reductions or increases in disease patterns
- The percentage of girls enrolled in school

Diagramming

- Venn diagram to illustrate which projects have been most useful
- Venn diagram to illustrate new collaborations between organisations as a result of the project
- Flow diagrams to show the progress of the project implementation
- Flow diagrams to show how the project has affected the community in other ways

Ranking/Scoring

- Using matrix scoring to compare successful projects with unsuccessful projects according to various criteria (e.g., number of people who donated labour, amount of external resources obtained, number of times the community met to work on the project)

Seasonal Calendars

- Illustration of trends in disease patterns or product outputs (e.g., number of trees planted)

Semi-Structured Interviews

- Discussions with community members about their perceptions of the project's success
- Discussions about problems with project implementation
- Discussions about the direct and indirect effects of the project on the lives of community members

Pie Charts

- Illustration of the increases or decreases in the percentage of people engaging in health-related behaviours

Communities can be confident that their PM&E will give a true picture of the progress they have made only if they are able to compare the information that was gathered in the initial PLA workshop with information that is gathered through PM&E. Therefore, the PLA team should encourage the APC to keep copies of all of the material (e.g., maps, diagrams, interview notes) that was created during the initial PLA workshop. Much of this information will be recorded in the workshop report written by the PLA team. By keeping this information, the APC will be able to refer to it later for comparison purposes.

One monitoring strategy is for the APC to convene regular community meetings to discuss the project. During the meetings, each of the activities are evaluated in a systematic manner, such as the following:

1. Review of implemented activities (using participatory techniques)
2. Problems encountered
3. Suggested solutions to the problems
4. Planning for the next cycle

Ideally, these meetings are facilitated entirely by members of the APC. If the APC does not feel comfortable enough to facilitate the participatory techniques, however, SA staff may be asked to attend and act as facilitators for the first couple of meetings, until the community members are able to facilitate the activities themselves. The frequency of these meetings will be decided by the community in collaboration with the SA.

SESSION 17

Field Work Preparation

Session Objectives

By the end of this session, you will...

U...Have a basic understanding of the field site and the agency sponsoring the field work

U...Prepare yourself as a team for the first day of field work



CONTEXT: *Before the start of the PLA workshop, the PLA team normally makes a preliminary site visit to the community (Stage 3 of the PPD process). Because of the time limitations of this course, it is not possible for the field practice to include a day just for the preliminary site visit. This session is therefore designed to give you an introduction to the community where you will be working and to help you prepare for the first day's activities.*

Presentation by a Representative of the Sponsoring Agency

A representative of the sponsoring agency (SA) who will be hosting the field work will come and give a presentation about the community and the local culture. Use the space below to take notes:

Strategy for the First Day

Since you will probably not be able to do a preliminary site visit, you will have to introduce yourself to the community and explain the purpose of your visit. Ideally, a representative from the SA will accompany each team in order to serve as a liaison with the community, but you will still need to decide as a team how you would like to introduce yourselves.

One suggestion is to remain as vague as possible and say that they have been invited by the SA to come to learn about the community. It is important that you do not raise the community's expectations about receiving money or other types of assistance. While the SA may be able to offer this type of assistance, the community needs to understand that you are not able to do so.

On the first day, a good activity to do is **mapping**, since it serves as an icebreaker and the whole community can participate. Men and women may need to do separate mapping activities if this is culturally appropriate.

If you have only a few hours in the community, it may not be possible to do more than one activity. Therefore, you shouldn't plan too many activities or rush in order to fit in more activities. It is better to do one activity thoroughly than to do many activities hurriedly.

Each team should meet in the evening in order to discuss your experiences and summarize their data. It is helpful to complete **activity report forms** and the **daily activity matrix** to summarize what you have done every day (the trainers will give you copies of these forms).

ACTIVITY REPORT FORM²⁰

Facilitator(s): _____

Note taker/recorder: _____

Name of activity: _____

Date and place conducted: _____

Materials used: _____

Process: _____

Key Findings: _____

²⁰Adapted from Pretty, J. et al. 1993. p. 108.

Daily Summary Matrix²¹

Below is a sample of a daily matrix, which summarizes the results of activities conducted by the field sub-teams. The trainers can draw the matrix on flip chart paper and have participants fill it out at the end of every day, *in addition to the activity summary sheets*. The information captured in the matrix can be adapted to the trainer's needs.

	Sub-team/Activity/Community group			
Issues Addressed	Sub-Team A Resource Map Men	Sub-Team B Resource Map Women	Sub-Team C Resource Map Community Leaders	CONCLUSIONS
Main problem				
Other problems				
Constraints in using available resources				
Potential new resources				
Other important information				

²¹Adapted from Schubert et al. 1994b.

SESSION 18

Presentations and Closure

Session Objectives

By the end of this session, you will...



U...Learn about the field experiences of the other participants

U...Appreciate the challenges of implementing PLA in urban areas

U...Identify institutional barriers to implementing PLA

U...Be able to see how your knowledge and attitudes about PPD have changed during the course

U...Evaluate this course

Implementing PLA in Urban Areas

Although participatory learning and action has traditionally taken place in rural areas, it can also be adapted to urban and peri-urban areas. The PLA process can be very fruitful in these areas, especially when the issues being addressed by the programme are urban-based (e.g., AIDS and commercial sex workers, urban sanitation). Urban and peri-urban areas may pose special challenges, however, as discussed below:

Different Definition of "Community"

While rural residents tend to share the same background and have a strong sense of community, urban residents come from a wide variety of backgrounds and geographic regions. Urban residents may have little in common with their neighbours, but they may be linked to other residents through work, studies or a common interest. Therefore, a different type of community may exist, which is defined not by geographic boundaries, but by other criteria.

Members of such communities may be less familiar with the geographic characteristics of their neighbourhood than they are with other characteristics, such as available resources. Therefore, some activities such as mapping will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Scheduling

Urban and rural residents have different labour patterns. Urban residents may work long hours in the formal sector or informal sector, and may spend a lot of time commuting between their work and their home. In addition, some urban residents, such as commercial

sex workers, may work at night. Due to these varying work schedules, the trainers need to be flexible and creative when scheduling PLA activities. It is essential that trainers thoroughly inquire about community members' work patterns to determine whether or not the field practise will fit in with the community members' schedules.

"Ground Work"

It may be hard to conduct some of the participatory activities on the ground in urban areas, because of unsanitary conditions or lack of large, open spaces. Therefore, it may be helpful to bring a large, collapsable table which can be used for visual activities such as mapping and diagramming. Instead of drawing on the ground, moveable objects can be placed on the table.

PLA "Out of the Vacuum"

In this session, you and your teammates will present the results of your field work. You probably found the field work to be both challenging and rewarding. Although you may have faced some difficulties, the course trainers and other participants were supportive of your work. This is because they are committed to community participation and strongly support the use of PLA.

This may not be the case when you return to your own organisation, however. Many people who take PLA courses find it difficult to implement PLA in "the real world", because they do not have the support that they need from their supervisors or co-workers. For this reason, it is important to recognize that *PLA cannot be conducted in a vacuum*. Within an organisation, the participatory programme development process is affected by existing policies, working mechanisms, hierarchies and organisational philosophy. Each of these factors can either help or hinder the implementation of PLA. Therefore, the success of PLA requires more than just the training of one or two staff members. There is a need for a serious commitment to participation within all levels of the organisation. In other words, junior level field workers must be empowered to facilitate PLA, just as communities must be empowered to promote their own development. This successful institutionalisation of PLA may take many years and prove to be very challenging.

Following are some obstacles that you may face when trying to implement PLA in your organisation²²:

²²Absalom, E. et al. 1995, p. 5, and Adhikari et al. 1996.

- Lack of senior management's commitment to community participation
- Pressure from donors and/or senior management for "instant" results
- Emphasis on products instead of processes
- Rigid hierarchy that discourages decision-making by field workers
- Operating procedures that discourage creativity and flexibility
- Top-down planning processes
- Lack of respect for community knowledge and abilities (i.e., belief in the superiority of "technical experts")
- Lack of local capacity building as an institutional goal
- Emphasis on quantitative evaluation indicators that may not accurately reflect the success of PLA
- Frequent changes in staff (i.e., lack of continuity)

Perhaps one of the biggest obstacles is the desire for a "blueprint" or "recipe" for participatory programme development, or a predetermined procedure and set of techniques for conducting PLA in every community. Every community is different, however, and every PLA workshop will be different. Some techniques may be appropriate for one community yet inappropriate for another. It may be very hard for some organisations to accept this need for flexibility and the lack of a blueprint or recipe.

There are several strategies that can help organisations to institutionalize PLA²³:

- Exposing senior management and field work supervisors to PLA philosophy (e.g., through short orientation workshops)
- Rewarding staff who use participatory methods in their projects
- Placing importance on processes instead of products
- Increasing recognition of the value of qualitative indicators
- Decreasing time pressure to implement projects and allowing more time for the early development stages of projects
- Promoting continuity in job posts

²³ Absalom, E. et al. 1995, p. 5, and Adhikari et al. 1996.