Learning from Experience of Participatory Evaluation

Foundations of participatory evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are "distinct but complementary".

Monitoring gathers information to compare progress against a plan, or with reference to an established baseline or some other comparative historical or contemporary 'benchmark'. Monitoring can be an exercise in its own right, but as we saw in Unit 3, when we looked at the 'project cycle', just as monitoring follows planning, it is often a building block for evaluation. In evaluation, the judgement or assessment that takes place is deeper than that undertaken in monitoring. This depth can take various forms: including asking whether what was planned in the first instance, or whether the original goals, aims, objectives and consequent activities were right in the first place. As one of our sources put it in Unit 1, whereas monitoring is assessing whether we are "doing things right", valuation will be asking, among other things, "are we doing the right things?"

Stages, cycles, purposes and scope

The cycle

Let us remind ourselves of a few other things here. We have noted in earlier Units that monitoring and evaluation exercises, whether conventional or participatory, can focus on different points or stages of the inputs>activities>outputs>outcomes>impact> objectives>goal chain. Generally speaking, monitoring alone will be sufficient to deal with the first three. Evaluative assessments and judgements, however will be focused on any or all of the last four. And, through the various stages of the continuous cycle of ideas> planning> implementation>monitoring>evaluation>new ideas and revised plans, there will be a feedback process so that what is learned is utilised.

The purposes

We have also noted at various points in previous units how there can be various purposes for an evaluation, stated in terms, such as 'impact evaluation' or 'impact assessment' or as being 'results-based'. Words like 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' also figure prominently in the language of evaluation, the former being an assessment of outputs in relation to inputs and the latter being an assessment of how far delivering outputs actually achieved outcomes (Bakewell, Adams and Pratt, 2003). All these words and terms indicate a focus on judging what is being achieved, and if not why not, or if so why so. All this reflects the fact that many evaluations are done at the behest of those who are funding the activities on which they are focused as a means of ensuring accountability. Closely related to these purposes are those of judging relevance (the 'are we doing the right things?' question) and sustainability ('will the changes being brought about last over the long term?').

But we need to remind ourselves that as a form of participatory research, participatory evaluations can and do have many other (and possibly multiple) purposes: learning, promoting participative collective action, building human and organisational capacity, empowering people, achieving transformation, improving communication with others; as well as those to do with accountability to funders. In addition, we have noted that participatory approaches have advantages with regard to all the various purposes. They are particularly appropriate to those which have the purpose of knowledge- and/or capacityand/or collective action-building and 'empowerment'.

The context and scope

Evaluation takes place in a variety of different contexts. The evaluation may be of a discrete activity, such as a project, or of a programme within which such projects operate, or of a community or collection of communities where projects are located. Or the evaluation may be of an organisation, or of an aspect of the organisation's work. Or it may be of a broad policy. Or, finally, it may take in elements of a number of these contexts.

Learning

Whatever the scope of participatory evaluation, the one purpose that is central is learning. Whichever of the other purposes are also to be pursued, learning will always be involved. As Choudhary and Tandon (2001) put it:

"Participatory evaluation is…a process of individual and collective learning….it is an educational experience. It is learning about one's strengths, about one's weaknesses; learning about social processes and developmental outcomes; learning about social reality and intervening in the same; learning about [the] creation and development of organisations and ensuring their relevance and longevity. It implies clarifying and re-articulating one's vision and perspective about the….work we are involved in. This educational thrust of participatory evaluation implies that [the] various parties involved experience [it] as a learning process for themselves. And, the process is designed and structured in such a way that it ensures learning. It is not merely the outcome…which provides insights and learning, it is also the very involvement in the process of participatory evaluation the becomes the basis for learning…this is a crucial distinction between participatory and conventional evaluation methodologies…[it is] an educational experience as opposed to a regulatory mechanism of control over people, programmes and resources."

Determining the purpose: what are the objectives?

The first step in any participatory evaluation-or indeed any form of evaluation-is to determine its purpose, or in other words, its objectives: is it to judge whether of not the stated outputs, outcomes or

impact of an activity have been achieved (and why they have or have not been); to improve performance; to inform decision-making; gather knowledge and learning; build capacity; empower people; done for reasons of accountability It is important to be clear, and as we have noted, multiple purposes may be involved. The determination of purposes needs to be participatory and also to focus not narrowly on purpose alone, but on such closely related matters as why an evaluation is needed, whom it is to benefit, what problems it may lead to within the project, programme or organisation concerned, what information is needed and who should provide it, collect it and analyse it, and what questions need to be asked in order to elicit it (Chuddar and Tandon, 2001; Narayan-Parker 1993).

These preliminary issues are usually addressed at one or more initial workshops involving all those who will be involved in the evaluation.

Information: what's needed, what are the sources, and how do we obtain it?

The next step is to identify what kind of information is needed. If a monitoring regime is in place, then the kinds of tools and techniques discussed in the previous unit will already be in place. But if this is not the case, then the indicators will need to be established, and the sources and kinds of information relevant to them will need to be identified. For example, if the purpose of an evaluation is to assess the outcomes or impact of services established to improve child health, then information on infant mortality rates will be needed. It may be found in different places and obtained through different means, from written records that have already been kept by those involved, to gathering new information through surveys, interviews and group discussions as discussed in the previous unit.

The collection of information may need to be accompanied by activities that stimulate its provision. Conventional surveys and questionnaires, group discussions and even one-to-one interviews are by no means necessarily suitable for everyone, particularly those lacking confidence, or basic literacy and communication skills, or in circumstances where culturally- entrenched norms and mores (such as those concerning the status and role of women) or sheer time constraints (where people are working hard for their living) deter or exclude the participation of some. These techniques can, therefore, in themselves be disempowering. In participatory forms of evaluation, where the whole thrust is to empower people, innovative approaches, which deal with these problems, can be found. We will examine them in a moment.

Analysis and reflection: who does it?

This is at the heart of evaluation. It is at the heart of the issue of power, for if 'information is power', then those who control and own its analysis are even more powerful. Hence, in participatory forms of evaluation, it is crucial that analysis is as much a collective and participatory process as the determination of purpose and the collection of information. In conventional evaluations, the

process of analysis and reflection often rests with outsider evaluators, acting on behalf of external donors and institutional stakeholders (Gaventa and Estrella, 1998). In participatory evaluation, it is important that analysis and reflection is a collective process, so that both become a shared rather than an individual responsibility. Furthermore, the collective analysis thus reached needs to be disseminated to all those from whom the information was gathered (Choudhary and Tandon, 2001).

When carrying out participatory forms of evaluation, some of the analytical tools and techniques used-such as Cost-Benefit Analysis and SWOT Analysis-are adaptations of those which were developed primarily for conventional approaches, while others-such as ValuesBased Analysis-are primarily associated with participatory approaches.

As we have seen in the previous unit, one of the most prominent adaptations concerns the role of the 'evaluator', who when participatory methods are used becomes a 'facilitator' in that the role, enabling participation and learning among the participants rather than controlling, directing or 'doing'.

Reporting: by what means and for what purpose?

In the 'classic' conventional evaluation, the evaluator will draw up a written report, which will commonly be shared only with the donors or other 'higher level' institutional stakeholders that have requested or commissioned the evaluation, and with senior project/ programme/ organisational staff.

Such a report will, typically, begin with an executive summary. Its main sections will consist of an introduction, followed by an account of the evaluation's purpose and methods. The next section will set out the findings-the quantitative and qualitative data collected-followed by the analysis and the judgements and assessments derived from it. A final section will concentrate on recommendations for change (Rubin, 1995).

In participatory evaluation, 'reporting' is usually a much more dynamic process. Like all other stages, it is participatory in nature. If participation has been involved from the outset, it follows that those involved will themselves have built up a body of knowledge as to what has been found, an increased capacity to turn it into action and very likely, they will have formed their own conclusions as to what needs to be done. In participatory evaluations, therefore, 'reporting' becomes a matter of sharing and of collectively creating future scenarios and directions (Choudhary and Tandon, 2001). There may indeed be no formal, written report at all. Instead, there will be meetings and discussions as evaluation findings and recommendations are fed back to the beginning of the cycle we set out in Unit 2 in the form of new or revised plans, objectives and goals. And the desired or needed changes may well take forms other than 'bullet points' in staid written reports. They may be displayed visually or

presented artistically through other innovative techniques.

International Case Studies

Case study 1: Building water tanks in Bangladesh (adapted from Timm, 1988)

The role of an 'external facilitator' is illuminated in this case study.

With funding (partly in the form of loans) provided by an international aid agency, a group of 23 marginal and landless farmers excavated a tank for fish culture purposes in 1984 (marginal farmers being defined as those owning less than 2 acres). The farmers contributed 10 per cent of the total costs and excavated the tank with the help of landless labourers. The fish culture began the same year. The group had earlier been involved in a tubewell project funded through loans to members from a government agency. The external evaluator/facilitator, visiting the project in its early stages, noted that the group was "much better situated economically than most of the hundreds of [other] groups of the landless [funded by the tank programme]".

From the outset, evaluation of the project had three elements: all funded groups were required to undertake participatory evaluation as part of an annual process, as did each local project management committee. Also, the regional project committees established by the aid agency to oversee the entire project had a role in evaluation.

At each level, the purpose of the evaluation had several elements:

- assessing the organisation and functioning of the group using indicators including group cohesion and group understanding of project objectives;
- activities - such as improved technical skills, production and other outputs;
- impact - economic benefits to members, improved equality and social justice; and
- change - in terms of power relationships and balances in the community. The roles of the 'external facilitator' were:

- to determine the levels of understanding and ability of the different groups to practice and use the results of their evaluations, and how they feel about it;
- to compare and analyse the results of the three levels of evaluation and have discussions with them about their findings and plans for change; and
- to compare how the participatory process works with and without an external facilitator. The findings were many and varied, but those of the evaluator included:
- "The [farmers] group had sufficient training and self-awareness to evaluate the project themselves without outside help, (even) though it was the first time they were making such an evaluation. They understood clearly the essential issues and problems…"

- "The trust among (farmers group) members broke down in 1986 after the secretary was discovered using the funds for himself"
- "The evaluator added nothing to the process of evaluation…."
- "The (regional) project committee added helpful information….but none of their comments (added to) a clear understanding of the project"
- "As a result of the evaluation, the (group) and the (aid agency) understood clearly that the main problem (that had emerged) was the disparity between the marginal farmers and the landless (members of the group). Both appreciated the need to separate from each other….The landless want to go their own way and feel that they are sufficiently cohesive and trained to work well together…..the landless were incisive and logical in their criticism of what was wrong with their group"

Drawing lessons about PE from the Bangladesh case study

The study is illustrative of many points we have made about PE and PME throughout this course. Three stand out:

- innovation and flexibility: the use of the facilitator to compare and bring together the findings from each of the three levels;
- values: while we have not gone into the similarities and differences of the perceptions of each of the three levels, it is clear that each of the three levels had a different value base on which to source its assessment of success and failure; and
- abilities: regardless of their poverty and illiteracy, the people involved were able to do the evaluation themselves.

Case study 2: Self-evaluation of a support organisation in India (adapted from Bhasin, 1998)

What are often called 'intermediary support NGOs' exist in many countries, the purposes of which are not to directly establish and manage projects providing services to people, but rather to provide specialist support and expertise to other NGOs and CSOs that do so.

One such organisation, which we will call the Community Resource Centre (CRC - not its real name), was established in India in 1972 to provide "technical and managerial solutions to the problem of poverty and injustice" through its professional staff.

In its early years, some CRC staff began to raise questions about the adequacy of this technical and professional role. In 1978, a small group of 8-10 staff began to debate the issues and identified problems related to CRC's work. These included communication within the organisation and between it and the ultimate beneficiaries; the status, inequalities and differences among staff within the CRC; its decision-making processes and structures, which among other things were not broadly participatory.

The membership of the group slowly expanded to 18-20 members. Suspending their own work, they sat and discussed the issues almost every day over a six-week period. While some other staff members viewed all this with suspicion and even mistrust, eventually, a group of about 40 people held two our-day discussion sessions, together with some trusted 'outsiders', who helped facilitate and guide the sessions. Although progress was slow, decisions were made: to narrow down the organisation's objectives; to work with the poor, to establish participatory decision-making processes, and to evaluate themselves once a year.

There were also meetings in villages with people and organisations with whom CRC had been working.

Although this led to several changes in CRC's work, structures and processes, the main conclusion was, as one participant put it, "there was a role for an institution like ours….in development"

Drawing lessons about PE from the India case study

This example shows that PE can be a simple-in this case, perhaps, rather long-winded and time-consuming-process. Here, "are we doing the right things?" is clearly the question being addressed. What it all boiled down to was a discussion-that slowly attracted increased participation, it should be noted-lasting over a long period of time.

Organisational evaluations such as this can be any or all of self-preoccupied, introvert and

destructive, resulting in nothing more than a period of fruitless contemplation, or at worst self-destruction. Involving outsiders clearly helped avoid this, as, more significantly, did the realisation that 'participation' meant also involving the beneficiaries.

Case study 3: Evaluating a Women and Development project in the Caribbean (adapted from Ellis P, 1998)

A pilot project for the Integration of Women in Rural Development, commonly known as the 'Rose Hall Project' was established by the Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the University of the West Indies in the small village of Rose Hall (population 1,200) on the island of St. Vincent. The objectives were to establish a participatory 'bottom-up' development process to assess, plan, instigate and evaluate community-based projects; and through engaging rural women in the development process, enable them to raise their understanding of the role they play in the evelopment of the community, develop their desires and abilities to take on leadership and decision-making roles, and generally improve the quality of their own lives and that of the community. The project was managed by a community working group.

Ten years after its inception, the Working Group decided to have a participatory evaluation (facilitated by an external evaluator from WAND, who had been the project's original coordinator and was thus familiar with it) to examine the past as well as help plan for the future. The Group identified the purposes of the evaluation and the questions it would address. The purposes were:

- to review what had happened over the 10 years as a result of the project;
- to reflect on and analyse the project's processes, outcomes and impact on individuals and the whole community;
- to begin to develop a plan for the future development of the project.

The questions were:

- What had been the project's achievements?
- What conditions and factors have contributed to them?
- In what ways has the project affected people's lives and that of the community as a whole?
- What problems and setbacks have been faced?
- How has the Working Group developed and how can it become more self-sufficient?

The Group also decided that the methodology of the evaluation should include a series of consultations with various community groups, focusing on reflection/ evaluation/ analysis of the past and renewal, visioning and planning for the future. As well as small and large group discussions and workshops, role plays, skits, song and poetry were used. Apart from collecting information by these means, there was a constant process of feedback. There were eight workshops involving over 200 people. The workshops included three with the Working Group itself; two for young people aged 12-30; and others with members of the coordinating committees that had been established for four of the project's ventures: a pre-school group, a bakery, an adult education programme and a shop. There were also two community meetings during the evaluation, attended by over 100 men, women and children.

In addition, the evaluator carried out one-to-one interviews and informal discussion with individuals in the community. A photographic exhibition was used to stimulate people's memories of what had been done and who had been involved over the years.

The evaluation revealed the great changes that had been brought about by the project over its lifetime. These included:

Among individuals:

- Improved personal relations between people - more caring, respectful, and willing to cooperate;
- Broadened horizons and aspirations - for higher education for example.
- Improved male-female relations;
- Increased technical, interpersonal and analytical skills and improved senses of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth;
- Improved quality of life; and
- Improved problem-solving abilities.

Across the community as a whole:

- Improved physical appearance of the community through new constructions and upgrading efforts by householders;
- New facilities - telephones, TVs, water supplies, pre-school, bakery, community centre;
- Various successful development projects accomplished;

- Greater community 'togetherness' - cooperation, cohesion, commitment to community development; and
- Emergence of commonly shared goals and value systems, based on caring and cooperation.

Drawing lessons about PE from the Rose Hall case study

The evaluator's summary conclusion was:

"The evaluation provided yet another opportunity for people in Rose Hall to participate in assessing and defining their own development. Through it, they have been able to recreate and relive the history of the project and to:

- systematically analyse and reflect on their community, identify indicators and assess the project's effects and impacts on their lives;
- make judgements about the operations of the Working Group and its efficiency;
- gain deeper insights into and understanding of the complexity of development;
- generate new knowledge about individuals and groups in the community and about their goals, aspirations, needs and concerns;
- begin to identify new development goals and to develop a 5-year plan for their community; and
- show yet again that ordinary people do have the ability and can successfully carry out evaluation research and can use the results to plan future development programmes that respond to and meet their needs"

Case study 4: Evaluating the condition of an NGO supporting tribal people in India (adapted from Choudhary and Tandon, 1989)

The Tribal Development Society (TDS) has been working with the indigenous, tribal, peoples of southern Bihar in India since 1983, initially through a health care programme. Through it, TDS staff learned about the wider problems and forces that was marginalising the tribals. Principal among these was the way in which moneylenders and liquor merchants captured their assets, thus forcing the tribals to become indebted and then bonded to them.

TDS staff discussed this with the tribals and started to mobilise them so as to empower them to

organise themselves to combat the forces of exploitation and oppression. Over two years, these mobilisation efforts developed into a large-scale people's movement, involving 90 tribal villages and over 10,000 people. A Tribal People's Organisation (TPO) under local leadership was formed. As well as building the capacity of its leaders, TDS helped the TPO take advantage of government legislation and programmes in their struggle to get back their assets. As this happened, the need for more appropriate forms of credit for consumption and credit became apparent, and TDS helped arrange this from local banks.

Over time, TDS became involved in many programmes and after five years, it was not clear as to what path it should take: should it continue helping the tribals? If so, how? If not, then what? By this time, there were 10 core staff, and 10 field staff, who all functioned very much as a family, with informal decision-making. But the lack of overall clarity as to direction was creating a sense of dissatisfaction, stagnation and frustration among the staff. A process of critical reflection and evaluation was needed to clarify future directions.

Two facilitators were contacted to do the evaluation, which after a preliminary visit by the facilitators, was divided into three phases. In each phase, the facilitators raised concerns and provided perspectives but left the staff to then work things through in detail.

During the first phase, the purpose, scope and issues to be addressed by the evaluation were worked out through discussions, some of which involved only core staff and others all the staff. This process of reflection led to the identification of major achievements, limitations and shortcomings of TDS as well as a re-articulation of the directions for the future.

Strengthening TPOs was identified as a major priority, together with the building of better organisations of youth and women; the enhancing of the culture of the tribals; and the provision of primary and non-formal adult education.

In the second phase, the TDS staff went out to share and discuss the results of the first phase with the tribal villagers, through a series of village camps (including some for women and youth), fairs and meetings, spanning three months. Feedback from the community was thus obtained. This encouraged the core team to think in more detail about the programmes and organisational structures through which to accomplish its future directions. These were developed further by the staff through a week-long workshop. A systematised planning process and a formal mechanism for organisational functioning were established by the workshop.

Over the third phase, lasting three months, the core staff began implementing the decisions taken. At the end of the period, a further meeting involving all staff to further clarify the new system and structure was held: this revealed the revitalised strength of the organisation and its staff.

Drawing lessons about PE in the organisational setting from the TDS experience

As we have seen earlier with the case of the 'CRC', these kinds of organisational evaluations can easily be self-destructive. Here, the important factor in the building of a climate of openness, sharing and reflection among the staff, who were demoralised, suspicious, cynical and angry, was done through the early and then continued intervention of outside facilitators.

It is also significant that here again the organisation involved its beneficiaries in the process and this no doubt helped avoid an overly introspective approach.

Case study 5: A cautionary tale from Mexico (adapted from Whitmore, 1998)

Our last study is illustrative of how not to go about-or at least to prepare the ground forparticipatory evaluation!

"Several years ago, I was asked to be the evaluator for Phase I of a project to assist dairy goat farmers in developing a cooperative….located in a small village near the US border. (Since) the project was designed to be participatory, those involved wanted the evaluation to be consistent with this…"

The overall goal of the project was to "revitalise community life by increasing participation" and the objective of the evaluation was to assess the degree to which this had been achieved as well as to assess the extent to which a number of 'concrete' outcomes had been achieved, including a model dairy herd and a cheese-making factory.

The evaluator was an American woman. She proposed on her initial visit that an evaluation committee of local people be formed to work with her to design the evaluation. The people would then gather that data so that during the evaluator's second visit, all would participate in analysing the data and drafting a report.

It did not work out at all like that. On her first visit, the evaluator discovered that not only had there been no discussion of the evaluation at meetings of the cooperative's members, but that the local people also had no idea about who she was and what she was there for. In addition, the two founder/managers (who had designed the project and got the funding for it) had not only failed to involve the cooperative members in this as well as many other aspects of decision-making, but were in "disagreement on just about every issue". On top of this, the evaluator was told by a local woman that it would not be culturally appropriate for her to talk with the men in the village! Fortunately a (male) facilitator had also been brought in to help with the evaluation, so the evaluator was able to interview villagers and cooperative members with his help. From them, she learned that nobody knew what was happening, including who was getting the government funds, and that since the two managers insisted that

cooperative meetings take place in English, most people had stopped attending them. In short, people in both the village and the cooperative felt left out and their expectations were not being met. How, the evaluator concluded, could a participatory evaluation be done in such circumstances?

Eighteen months later, the evaluator returned for her second visit. No evaluation team having been formed during her first visit, no data had been collected. The funding of the project was also over. Nevertheless, the evaluator hoped to be able to conduct an evaluation with the cooperative and community members. She had four days to do it. On day one, the evaluator was able to explain her task for a few minutes at the end of a full day's cooperative members meeting. An evaluation meeting involving all the community was scheduled for the next day. On day two, initially the turnout was extremely low. So, the members rounded up the others to eventually make the meeting 25 persons. After collectively agreeing to the 'rules' for the meeting (both languages to be used, right to speak for all, no personal attacks, etc.), the group broke into small groups to discuss what the project had achieved in terms of the concrete tasks and reported back.

On day three, the meeting reconvened and addressed the more sensitive subject of the functioning of the cooperative and again small groups were formed. A report-back/discussion session concluded the day.

By the beginning of day four, many more people were fully engaged in the discussion and even women participants turned up. There was a focus on how the cooperative should actually work. Overall, their conclusion was summed up by one participant: "we need to rebuild this house": an evaluation of a specific project thus ended up being more concerned with the future of the cooperative as an organisation!

Sometime after all this, the evaluator learned that the group had split into two separate cooperatives, each led by one of the founder/managers.

Drawing lessons about PE from the Mexico story

The lessons from this are mostly self-evident. Those of the evaluator herself-who must be commended for making something out of what was nothing-included:

- "I would not attempt such an evaluation again. I don't think PE can be done short-term; (it) needs to be built in from the very beginning of a project and the process takes time and sustained contact"

- "A participatory approach (to evaluation) does not work with an organisation that is not

participatory"

- "The whole question of gender and the issues raised by our differences were exemplified by not even being allowed, at first, to talk with the men"

- "What is needed is a collaborative relationship in which all parties are able to contribute their understanding and knowledge in an atmosphere of respect and mutuality. Such a relationship is formed only when all members share a deep respect for the abilities, characteristics and culture of one another…..As one of the [founder/managers] concluded in the final meeting: 'I'm so impressed with these people. They are much more intelligent than I thought!"

What can one possibly say about this latter observation?

Emerging Issues

To conclude, it will be significant to reflect on some key issues regarding the practice of Participatory Evaluation, as effectively highlighted by Choudhary and Tandon (1989):

1. Difference between methodology and method.

Participatory Evaluation is a methodology, which aims to enhance the capacity of ordinary people, projects and groups to carry out systematic and critical reflection and evaluation process of their own activities, programmes, organizations and perspectives on a regular and ongoing basis. It aims at demystifying the process of Evaluation and in strengthening capacity of grassroots to undertake evaluation. Within the context of this overall methodology the different tools, techniques and methods for data collection, for facilitating reflection, and for improving analyses are situated. The choice of method is based on the specific context of the given Evaluation intervention.

2. Nature of data

It is important to note that both qualitative as well as statistical and quantitative information can be part of a Participatory Evaluation exercise. The type of information necessary to carry out a systematic process of reflection and critical analysis depends on a given Participatory Evaluation exercise and its specific objectives. The information thus can be statistical, cognitive, perceptual, qualitative, etc. Depending on the type of information one needs, the type of data collection methods will have to be created.

Some generic trends have shown that Participatory Evaluation exercises largely focusing on programmes tend to be utilizing methods of information collection that are highly quantitative and

structured i.e. instruments and questionnaires, and collection of statistical information from records and document .On the other hand, those Participatory Evaluation exercises where the focus primarily is on clarifying, sharpening or modifying perspectives and directions of an organization, its teams, people's movement, etc., much more interactive and dialogue methods of information collection and analysis have to be utilized i.e. indepth interviews, informal, small group discussions, dialogues, and other interactive and open-ended methods .The data collection methods should facilitate greater involvement and participation, in the reflection and analysis process, of the members of the organizations and the group whose involvement is critical in the Participatory Evaluation exercise .

3. Who participates?

Who participates in the Participatory Evaluation process depends on the specific situation and on the concrete objectives of the Participatory Evaluation exercise. The party whose interests are directly and primarily influenced by the focal objectives of a given Participatory Evaluation exercise must be involved. However it does not imply involvement of all the parties in an identical. manner.

To illustrate in a grass-roots non-governmental organization/s field programme and the focus of evaluation is programmatic, then most crucial actors in the evaluation exercise would be field workers of the NGOs and the local people and beneficiaries. If, however, the focus or evaluation is clarifying the perspective of the NGO then the involvement of members of staff of the NGO is more important than involvement of local population.

Within a given Participatory Evaluation exercise, different parties can be involved at different stages as well as in different ways, and it is not necessary that every party who is a stake-holder in the Participatory Evaluation exercise gets involved in the same way.

4. Role of donors

The needs of resource providers and donors in terms of evaluation have to be recognized as legitimate, in a Participatory Evaluation process. The concerns and needs of donors should be taken into consideration, especially at the initial stage of setting the objectives of evaluation. Due to the specific knowledge and understanding of a given project or a programme the donors can also contribute at a stage where the critical analysis and reflection process has progressed and broad findings are being articulated and future directions are being evolved.

For Participatory Evaluation to be effective it is helpful if funding is de-linked from the evaluation process. This will ensure that the process will be genuine, authentic and critical It is also helpful if facilitating agencies do not become agents for the donors. They should behave as facilitators of

the reflection process of the project or the NGO, and not managers of a process on behalf of the donors.

5. Role of outsiders

The issue of the outsider in a Participatory Evaluation exercise gets posed in the context-of subjectivity and objectivity. Many people believe that a project, an organization or movement on its own cannot be critical enough of its own experiences, practices and programmes, and that its self evaluation may be biased. This is not true, especially in the case where they themselves are interested in critically reflecting on their own experiences. It is in its own interest to make the process critical, reflective and open.

“The issue is, can, without any external assistance, a project, a group, a movement or an organization facilitate the entire process of critical reflection on its own? Will it have the capacity, the competence and the resources to ensure that appropriate and relevant parties and individuals are involved in setting of the objectives, collection of information, in analysis of their information and in acting on the basis of that analysis?” (Choudhary and Tandon 1989).

Choudhary and Tandon highlight how in some cases this has been possible. It is also possible that some groups, projects or organizations may not have that capacity and that is where an outside agency or individual could facilitate this process. The role of the outsider' in such a situation could be to help raise issues and questions which may otherwise not get raised or may be difficult to raise, to bring into the open, information and concerns which are generally not so clearly stated, to help in. articulating the objectives of an evaluation, to help create methods of information collection and analysis and to help the project or the organization take charge of its own evaluation and use it in its own interest, and in many cases to prepare the report, especially in the case of grassroots groups

Thus the specific role of the outside agency to individual varies considerably, depending on the given situation and the specific objectives for the evaluation exercise. Any simplistic and universal prescriptions about the outsiders' roles are not warranted in such circumstances.

6. The continuity of evaluation

Choudhary and Tandon (1989) emphasize that a Participatory Evaluation exercise should be seen as an ongoing process of critical reflection within an organization, programme or people's movement. It should be continuous as well as periodic. After a few years of experience in one area or in one programme or with a certain methodology, it is possible to take time off to reflect on it critically. And this may become an issue-based or event-based evaluation exercise.

According to them, the follow-up of the Participatory Evaluation exercise begins to take place

during the exercise itself. They emphasise the need to concretely plan steps for followup from the evaluation exercise. In many cases, broad directions are agreed upon and it is here that future steps in planning and implementing those directions need to be set up at the end. of a Participatory Evaluation exercise. The role of the outside facilitator or facilitating agency can continue in the follow-up period, but it may need to be re-negotiated as facilitating a reflection exercise and providing inputs to implement new programme require different role and competencies.

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