ROTARACT CLUB OF KATHMANDU METRO (RID 3290)

This document was prepared by Rtr. Bhuwan K.C. for E-course on Project Management. This document introduces participants to the concept of evaluation and monitoring of projects.

Project Management

E-Course

Module 3

2007

KATHMANDU, NEPAL

Evaluating a project and reporting on it

Introduction

In this module you will:

A. Learn what evaluation is, why we evaluate and different approaches to the evaluation of a project or action.

B. Identify the different stakeholders to be involved and consider how to involve them.

C. Learn to identify the types of information or evidence that will indicate that you have achieved each of your original objectives.

D. Learn about a range of different evaluation methods and techniques and learn to identify the most appropriate ones to use for your project.

E. Learn how to structure evaluative reports.

F. Practice developing an evaluation plans for your project.

At the end you will have an evaluation plan to be implemented as part of your project.

What is evaluation?

Evaluation can be defined as, judgement about the value of the project plan and what has been achieved. At its most basic level, evaluation traditionally refers to the assessment undertaken at the end of a project's life, or several years after implementation.

As a Project Coordinator, your primary responsibility is to evaluate the degree to which your project has achieved its aim, objectives and outcomes. Evaluation generally asks the question: 'Have we achieved the outcomes we set out to achieve?' (This is called summative evaluation.) However, evaluation is increasingly being conducted during the life of the project, usually to inform future actions (this is called formative evaluation). Generally, evaluation is concerned with assessing the impact, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of projects, programs and policy interventions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is referred to at the end of the first module, 'Implementing and monitoring your project.' It is defined as the assessment of progress according to the original (or updated) plan.

The differences between monitoring and evaluation are NOT about when they happen, the type of data gathering technique used or who does it, rather the difference between monitoring and evaluation is the type of assessment or judgement being undertaken.

Evaluation is often distinguished from monitoring by its emphasis on assessing the longer term outcomes and impact of a project – testing underlying assumptions or the logic underpinning a project – and by its emphasis on learning. The timing of evaluations is also generally less frequent than for monitoring (e.g. mid project, at completion or after project completion).

It is much easier to evaluate a project at the end if good systems for monitoring and information collection are in place during the life of the project.

What is Impact Assessment?

It is useful for any Program Coordinator or activist who is interested in achieving lasting change to have a basic understanding of impact assessment. While this module mainly focuses on evaluation, it provides a brief introduction to the topic of impact assessment.

Case study: Building wells in Malawi

The project to build a well in the village had been completed and an evaluation undertaken. The evaluation showed that the project had met its entire original objectives. The well was now in place and functioning efficiently, local people had been trained in its maintenance and importantly, the village women no longer had to walk for 2 – 3 hours for water each day. The project had met all of its objectives.

However, the interviews with village women had revealed that the impact of the project on the women (the primary beneficiaries) had not entirely been positive. The interviews revealed that time the women were saving by no longer walking for water was being used to do other household duties and that many women felt that they no longer had time for themselves and time to chat to the other women. The evaluation revealed that the daily walk for water had an important social function amongst the women in the community and gave them important time to themselves away from the home.

Impact assessment is defined as the systematic analysis of the lasting or significant changes – positive or negative, intended or not – in people's lives brought about by a given action or project/s. As you set about evaluating your work, it is important to consider that it is possible to achieve all the original objectives and outcomes of your project, and yet still have no understanding or evidence of the impact of your work.

Impact assessment has traditionally been undertaken before a project or program begins or is implemented. For example, at the project design stage, impact assessment is carried out in order to determine likely future impacts, normally for the purposes of avoiding negative environmental and social impacts. Impact assessment has also been undertaken as an element of evaluation at or after the completion of a project. More recently, impact assessment is seen as a more continuous and integral part of the program or project cycle and thus the increasing use of the phrase 'impact monitoring.' We will return briefly to the topic of impact assessment at the end of this module.

Why evaluate?

"One of the ways of ensuring that a project facilitates learning is by continuous evaluation monitoring and assessment. I believe that is one of the most important steps for ensuring that a project is making an impact in the community."
-Duncan Moeketse, OIYP 2004 Action Partner, South Africa

Evaluation forms a crucial part of the project cycle. Evaluation is understood to have three possible purposes:
• **Accountability** – being accountable to all the stakeholders who support your work. In this case evaluation has a type of audit function;
• **Improvement** – taking the time to reflect on what worked and what did not work in order to improve the way you do things in the future. The improvement is normally focused on your immediate project or organization but may also be related to external improvements in community / society such as changes in policy or practice; and
• **Learning** – learning from and sharing key lessons about your work usually for a wider audience such as other communities and organizations. In this case evaluation begins to overlap with wider social research processes.

So evaluation is a judgement about the value of the outcomes of a situation or project for the purpose of accountability, learning or improvement (and sometimes all three).

Approaches to evaluation

Evaluations come in many forms. As outlined, they can be ongoing throughout the life of a project or only happen at the end. They can be conducted by people who are internal to the project or external or a mixture of both. They can be focused on outcomes or process (where we got to or how we got there) or both. As you work through this module you will consider what kind of approach you will take to the evaluations you do and what the implications are of different approaches.

Planning an evaluation

A sound evaluation should be planned at the same time as the initial project planning. There are a number of key steps that should be considered in designing and planning an evaluation.
They include:

- Identifying the purpose and scope of your evaluation
- Considering who should be involved and how
- Identifying the indicators of achievement
- Planning your information collection
- Choosing the evaluation methods and techniques to be used
- Identifying important logistical and resources considerations (time, money and people)
- Analysing the outcomes and information
- Reporting on and communicating the project outcomes and learning

Below each step is considered in more detail and is accompanied by case studies and some key questions you and your team can consider as you develop your evaluation plan. Consider making notes as you read through each step.

Step 1: Identifying the purpose and scope of your evaluation

Many evaluations are designed mostly as a way to ensure accountability (often to donors). It is important to think broadly about what you and all the project stakeholders want to gain from the evaluation. Will you evaluate simply to meet their requirements or are you genuinely interested in learning more about how to bring about the most effective change in peoples lives? Being clear about the purpose and scope of your evaluation will assist you in focusing your time and effort.

What is the purpose of your evaluation?
Accountability?

- Who are you accountable to?
- What requirements do they have of your evaluation?

Improvement?

- Do you want your evaluation to produce recommendations about how you, your team and your organization can improve what it does?
- Do you want your evaluation to produce recommendations to improve your community / society more broadly? Eg. To influence policy
- What kind of recommendations?
- Will the evaluation feed into any operational decisions? Eg. whether or not to proceed with the project / a certain strategy.

Learning?

- What assumptions do you want to test?
- What do you want to learn more about in your work for change?
- Do you want to link your evaluation into an area of research?
- Who do you want to share your learning with others? How?

The purpose of your evaluation may be a combination of the above or may be more heavily focused on one particular area. It is important to be realistic about what you will cover. When considering the scope of the evaluation think about what will and will not be evaluated. You may choose to focus more attention on a particular aspect of your work rather than take on too much.

Step 2: Stakeholder involvement: Who should be involved?

Different stakeholders in your project will bring different perspectives to the evaluation. Ideally, your evaluation should involve a range of different stakeholders and seek to get diverse perspectives. Stakeholders include:

- Beneficiaries of the project (men, women, young people etc.)
- Project team members (staff and volunteers)

- Partner organizations
- Donors
- Other interested parties (academics etc)

A sound evaluation is always based on a variety of sources so consider how amongst each group you will ensure you get diverse perspectives. For example, if you are interviewing members of a community you should look for a good mix of men and women and different ages. Equally, if you are surveying young people who took part in training program you should consider surveying any who dropped out as well as those who successfully completed the training. Their perspectives and feedback are likely to be very different.

❖ Who are the key stakeholders in your work?
❖ What criteria do you use to rank their significance?
❖ What will they want to know from an evaluation / assessment of your work?
❖ (Remember what a donor wants to know may be very different from a project beneficiary)
❖ Given their ranking and what they want to know, how will you involve them?
❖ What will you and your team do to ensure that the views / experiences of the primary beneficiaries are heard and prioritized?

Evaluation Plan Case Study: Developing an evaluation plan for an income generation project in the Solomon Islands, Pacific.

Project Title: Job life skill training for Marau Ex- combatant (women & girls)
Programme Coordinator: Emma Warahiru, OIYP Action Partner.

Background to project: The project targets 50 women in Marau, East Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands in the Pacific. The women were victims of the tension in the Solomon Islands. During the tension, the villagers' houses and property were destroyed. The community needs to rebuild after the tension, but does not have any funds / income to fund the reconstruction. The aim of the project is 'To empower 50 women and girls from Marau to contribute to the reconstruction of their community following the tension in the Solomon Islands.' The project proposes to achieve this by training the women in garment-making and business management skills, enabling them to set up small income-generating businesses which will in turn enable them to better financially support their families and contribute to the reconstruction of the community.

Purpose and scope of the evaluation: The purpose of my project evaluation is to share with OIYP (a partner & funder) the outcomes and impact of the project and to provide them with accurate information about how the money was spent. Through the evaluation I also want to learn more about the needs of the women in Marau and identify any ongoing issues that prevent the women from generating an income using their new skills (e.g. access to materials / markets etc). Through actively involving the women in the evaluation I hope they will feel better about themselves and feel more empowered to shape their future. In doing the evaluation I also want to review what worked well and what did not go to plan so I can improve my ability to design and run good projects.

Stakeholder Involvement: The following people will be involved in the evaluation:

Women of Marau - We will continue to involve the women by asking for feedback during and at the end of the training. Dyphna and Kakasu, participating women, will also talk to and gather statements from all the participants in the workshop about what they achieved.

Emma Warahiru - As Programme Coordinator, I will be managing the evaluation and writing up of a final report. Additionally, I go back to Marau every 6 months (I am from this community) and will check on the progress of the project.

Veronica Saumara, President, Marau Council of Women - She lives in the community and talks to the other women and will report back to the me on the continued progress of the project after the workshops
Brian Apato, Community Chief - We will interview Brian after the workshop to get his views.

OIYP (Partner & Funder) - OIYP will provide guidance and support in the planning of the evaluation. They can provide a report format for us to use in writing up the final report. They read the final evaluation report and can give feedback and may ask additional questions.

Indicator/s of achievement:
Objective 1: 50 women and girls from Marau have new skills in garment-making and business management, enabling them to set up small income-generating businesses.
Indicators:

- The number of women who successfully complete the training with new skills
- The number of women who set up small businesses that generate income

Evidence Required	How Often	Obtained from
1. Number of women / girls who start the training. 2. Number of women / girls who complete training. 3. Statements from workshop participants about what they gained from attending the training. 4. Written proceedings of training 5. Photographs of the participants, the activities done during the workshop and the garments the women make. 6. Statements from women community leaders about 7. Statement / Quotes from Chief in the community about the project and its impact 8. Names & stories of women who set up income generating businesses. training	-At start - At end of training - At end of training - At end of training - Through out 3 & 6 months after training - 3 & 6 months after training - 3 - 6 months after training	Emma. Warahiru Veronica. Saumara Emma. Warahiru Dyphna. Kakasu Brian Apato Veronica. Saumara

Objective 2: Through income generated, these women and girls are able to provide for their families' everyday needs and contribute to rebuilding Marau.
Indicators:
Women have more money to pay for their families' everyday needs
Income earned is used to contribute to rebuilding of Marau
• As income earners, women are more respected and participate more in family and community decision-making

Evidence Required	How often	obtained from
• Stories collected from women community leaders about the project and its impact	- 3 - 6 months after training	Veronica & Emma
• Statement from the Chief in the community about the project and its impact	- 3 - 6 months after training	Veronica & Emma
• Interviews with women who set up income generating businesses. Information gathered should include figures detailing how much money they are earning (minus expenses i.e. Profit) and information on how they are using the money. As well as info on what the impact has been on them and their families of having a small business.	- 3 - 6 months after training	Veronica & Emma

Baseline information: We have a needs assessment report that details the situation before the project started which we can refer to during the evaluation. However, before starting the training we need to gather information about any small businesses that already exist and information about any income the women currently have and how they use it. This will form our baseline information.

Evaluation tools and techniques: We will get feedback each day during the training to make sure the women are getting the most out of it We will use visual rating systems to stimulate discussion at the end of each day because questionnaires would not be appropriate due to literacy levels. At the end of the training and both 3 and 6 months after the training we will conduct semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Veronica or I will take notes of people answers. We will also hold a stakeholder meeting after six months to review what has been achieved.

Logistical & resource considerations:
Time – OIYP have requested a written report be sent before July 2005 which gives us 2 months after the training to write up results and report on progress towards setting up of businesses. In reality the evaluation will be ongoing as results may not be seen for 3 – 6 months. I will return after 6 months to the community and will communicate with Veronica about developments.

Money – Main costs will be film for photographs, follow-up travel and a small amount for food for the 6 month follow-up meeting.
People – I will manage the evaluation as this is a small project but will get assistance from OIYP and the Solomon Islands National Women's Council.

Analysis of information: Any conclusions about the success of the project, what worked, what did not etc will be discussed with Veronica and the women in Marau before being written up. Some potential issues we are already aware of and need to look out for include:

- Women don't have the materials to start up small sewing businesses (due to lack of money to come to Honiara to buy fabric etc)
- Access to markets to sell items made
- Income earned not being used for families' needs: eg husbands use money to buy alcohol etc

Reporting and communication of outcomes / learning: The main report will be one produced for OIYP however we will continue to see results from the project after this is due. Depending on the success of this model we may write it up into a case study or step by step guide for other communities that the SI National Council of women are working with. I also want to share the results of the project and what I learnt with other Action Partners here in the Solomon Islands. I will try and organise a meeting.

Step 3: Identifying indicators of achievement

Indicators assist you to measure and assess the degree to which the project is achieving its objectives and overall aim. Identifying indicators of achievement for your project is crucial for two key reasons:

1. To help you clarify what evidence and information you will need to gather during the project.
2. To have measures upon which to base your judgements when you evaluate the success of the project.

During the project design and planning phase you will have identified your project aims, objectives, activities, the outcomes you expect from your project and the indicators / measures that will assist you to make judgements about whether or not you have achieved your objectives.

Good indicators will have certain qualities. In order to test or improve upon the indicators you have identified for each of your objectives, return to each indicator or measure and ask the following five questions:

- Is the indicator valid? (i.e. Does it measure what it is intended to measure or is there some other influence?)
- Is the indicator feasible? (i.e. Can the information can be realistically collected with the resources available?)
- Does the indicator include a statement of quantity?
- Does the indicator include a statement of quality? (Against relevant standards)
- Does the indicator include a statement of time?

In Emma's project, one of the indicators of achievement was the 'Number of women who set up small businesses that generate income'. Applying the five questions to this indicator it is possible to make it more specific in the following ways:

Validity – by adding 'as a result of the training workshops' to the end of the indicator it ensures the evaluation only measures the results of the workshops and not businesses set up due to other influences.
Feasibility – It is feasible to gather information about the number of businesses set up after the workshops.
Quantity – We assume the indicator will measure the number of women out of the 50 women trained who set up small businesses.
Quality – The indicator does give a statement of the quality when it describes the businesses as ones that 'generate income'. Words such as 'successful' or 'sustainable' could also be used to describe the quality of the businesses.
Time – The indicator does not give any statement of the timing around the set up of the businesses. It could be modified as follows, 'Number of women who set up small businesses that generate income as a result of the training, within the first year.'

Step 4: Planning your information collection

Having identified valid and feasible indicators of success for your project, it is also crucial to identify the different types of information you will need to gather as evidence that you have met your objectives. Planning in advance what information you want to gather, when and how to collect it is crucial for an effective evaluation. Information can be quantitative or qualitative; the table below gives examples of each.

	Description
Quantitative	Information that describes quantities e.g. figures, percentages, measures of time, weight, distance, growth etc *In Emma's example it includes: the number of women who started the training, the number who finished, any ratings they gave the training, the number of women who start small businesses, the amount of income generated, % profit etc*
Qualitative	Descriptive information, e.g. quotes, interviews, stories, media articles, photos etc *In Emma's example it includes: the women's stories, quotes and testimonies from the village chief and the women, written proceedings from the training, photos etc*

It is good to aim to gather a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative information.
In Emma's evaluation plan she has identified indicators of achievement for each of her objectives. She also identifies:

- What evidence / information is required,
- Where it should come from, including
- Who should be involved and
- When the evidence should be collected

Your primary intention in collecting information is to gather evidence that can be used to assess the degree to which you have met your objectives. As you list the information needed for your evaluation remember to include any information specifically requested by the funders or other key stakeholders. The purpose of your evaluation will inform the type of information you gather.

One of the reasons organizations are not able to prove their impact or even show how their work as added value to a situation is because of the failure to adequately capture what the situation was like before they started their activities. Baseline information is a term used to describe information that illustrates the context and situation at the outset of a project and details what the project is trying to change. Getting baseline information before you start your project is essential so that you have something to measure any changes or progress against. It involves asking the question what is the situation like now? In the example of

Emma's evaluation plan, she identifies both some information she already has which describes the situation before her project started but she also identifies some information she wants to gather before starting the project.

- How will you know if anything has changed as a result of your project?
- What differences will you see, hear, and feel? Your answers will help you identify your indicators of achievement.
- What indicators / measures will best demonstrate that the project has met its objectives?
- Are they valid? Feasible? Do they contain statements of quantity, quality and time?
- What types of information do you need to gather as evidence?
- Who will gather it? When and how often?
- What baseline information exists about the situation before you started your project?
- Is there any additional baseline information you will need to effectively assess and measure any changes?

Step 5: Choosing evaluation tools and techniques

Part of the art of evaluation understands what techniques are useful for what aspect of the evaluation process. Usually good evaluation makes use of a range of different techniques.

Techniques should be chosen on the basis of the knowledge required at the particular stage of an evaluation.

At the beginning of an evaluation it is useful to build a general picture of the context and key issues. Sometimes this is a good point to generate overall numbers. Useful techniques include: surveys / questionnaires, mapping and timelines.

Later in the evaluation it is often necessary to follow up specific issues. Useful techniques for this stage include: focus groups, semi-structured interviews and ranking.

Towards the end of the evaluation you should be concerned with crosschecking information, comparing differences, correction, refinement and further analysis. Useful techniques include: stakeholder meetings and feedback processes.

The key is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of various techniques and how they might contribute to evaluative knowledge throughout the process. Good evaluators will be able to use a wide range of techniques and will be able to use both traditional techniques of social inquiry such as surveys, interviews and documentation review as well as the participatory and creative techniques such as PRA (participatory rural appraisal); drama, story telling etc.

Case study: The NYC Local Jam, organized by the Global Youth Action Network

What it is: The São Paulo Local JAM was a program to unite the local youth movement and to increase youth participation in civil society in São Paulo, Brazil.
The JAM aimed to build greater cooperation among youth organizations by creating a city-wide network for sharing information, resources and coordinating efforts in closer collaboration. The JAM also aimed to improve access to and information about local youth organizations and improve the effectiveness of their efforts through the use of the internet, monthly gatherings, roundtable discussions and an annual weeklong retreat for leading youth activists.

Monitoring & Evaluation: The coordinating team of the Local JAM realized the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation during the different phases of preparation of the meeting of the Local JAM, including outreach, selection process and preparation of the Work Groups. The report they wrote is an evaluation of the one week living-together of the JAM itself. Some of the more typical monitoring and evaluation methods included written documentation, end-of-the-day surveys for participants, written evaluations from the working groups and filming of the jam.

Additionally, they also used media activists, such as local journalists, to regularly maintain notes and make a publication on the event. Also, after the JAM, the organizers facilitated smaller mini meetings to discuss follow up activity and sustainability of the network. A creative evaluation technique was to have participants fill out a survey at the first day of the jam and compare it with a survey given out at the last day of the JAM. This enabled the organizers to get a good understanding of whether participants' expectations were ultimately met.
One other unique method they used to monitor was a Board Diary - the participants received a notebook to take notes during the meetings to keep track of impressions, learning and difficulties during the process. This tool was of private and personal use to the participants and helped record important issues that weren't necessarily discussed in the group, but could be transmitted individually through personal conversations. At the end of the JAM, participants volunteered to hand in their diaries, giving the project organizers an in-depth and distinct perspective into the participants' experiences and value-added components of the JAM.

Please see the helpful form that JAM organizers used to do their evaluation at the end of this module. The form is also posted under the 'Documents' section of the Project Page.
For further information on monitoring and evaluation tools and techniques visit:
www.evaluationtools.org
www.theoryofchange.org

Step 6: Identifying important logistical and resource considerations

As you document your evaluation plan, you will need to identify all the key logistical and resource considerations and build them into your plan. Use the questions below as a guide to help identify the key considerations regarding time, money and people.

Time / Timing of evaluation

- When in the project cycle will you conduct the evaluation? In stages or upon completion of the project only? Be specific about dates where possible and add them to your timelines.
- Will it have stages? e.g. compiling of results, analysis of results, communicating results, getting feedback / checking conclusions.
- How much time will you allow for the evaluation process?
- How much time will you allow for communicating results and sharing learning?

Money

As a general guide any project should budget a minimum of 5% of its total budget towards monitoring and evaluation costs.

- What will your monitoring and evaluation process cost to implement?
- Will you have material expenses? E.g. paper, pens, video / audio tape, camera / video film etc
- Are there expenses that relate to getting input and feedback from stakeholders during the evaluation? E.g. meeting / travel expenses.
- Are there expenses that relate to communicating results and sharing learning from the evaluation?

People

- Who will manage the evaluation? Insiders? (Eg. Program Coordinator, team and beneficiaries) Outsiders? (E.g. external volunteer / consultant) Men? Women?
- What skills / experience do they need?
- What support assistance do they need? When do they need it? E.g. Assistance with data entry, compiling / analysing information, writing up findings / case studies etc.

Identifying the resources you will need to carry out an effective evaluation will help ensure your evaluation work is a dynamic and integral part of your project and not simply a last minute burden.

Step 7: Analysing outcomes and information

Evaluation and monitoring are ‘political’ activities because they involve making judgements about the value of an action or intervention. The best data collection means nothing without adequate and careful analysis. For this reason it is crucial to consider how you will analyse the information and the outcomes of your project as you plan your evaluation. Who does the analysing is as important as what is done. Different project stakeholders will bring different perspectives to analysing information and assessing results. Where possible include the people and communities you are working with in the monitoring and evaluation, data collection and analysis. Using participatory evaluation tools such as stakeholder meetings and feedback processes will help you do this.

When analysing, results refer to both qualitative and quantitative information. For example, look at the facts and figures but also take time to listen to and understand information gathered form discussions, interviews, feedback sessions etc as this is generally more difficult to analyse.

- How will information be analyzed?
- Who will be involved in the analysis? (Refer to Stakeholder involvement)
- During analysis consider:
- What was not proven?
- Is further research needed?
- What was discovered? Based on what evidence? (Note: techniques such as triangulation, cross checking, comparing results to external standards and comparing results to your baseline information will help to prove (or not) what has changed / been achieved by your project.)

Step 8: Reporting and communicating project outcomes and learning

"The learning of the project must be shared with the community who has given their time and other resources to the completion of the project. I always believe that organizing dissemination seminars with all the stakeholders of the project is the best way to present the learning."

-Monisha Vaid, OIYP2004 Action Partner, India

Planning how to report on and communicate your project is the last step in documenting your evaluation plan. While things will change over the life of your project, there may be key reporting deadlines you need to work around or you may identify future opportunities to share your learning / results such as special days, media events, particular meetings or conferences you would like to present results at. Use the questions below to identify all the key dates and considerations around reporting and communicating project outcomes and add them to your evaluation plan.

Reporting and outcomes from evaluation process:

- What evaluation reports and / or financial statements and records will you produce?
- What other media will you produce as outcomes of your evaluation process? (eg. CD Rom, a song, a video, a play, a learning resource etc)
- When do they need to be completed by? Who will be responsible?

Communicating results:

- Who do you want to communicate the project results to?
- Why? E.g. to influence policies / practice, as a form of advocacy, for further funding, to share learning etc
- How will you do this?
- Have key stakeholders been consulted about how this will be done?
- Learning:
- Are there specific types of recommendations you want the evaluation to produce?
- How will you share lessons learnt with stakeholders and others?
- How can you insure learning from the project is taken into account when you, your organisation or others start designing future projects?

Writing an evaluation report

"*My organisation has developed a habit of sharing resources and materials with other institutions and organisations that we share a common aspiration or platform. One way of doing this is sharing reports of any activity that we conduct such as events or projects. We do this through the consortiums (inter agency meetings) that we belong to or directly with individual organisations. This process enables these organisations to learn best practices from our organisation and vice versa.*"
-Lamin Camara, OIYP2000 Action Partner, the Gambia

A project report is a significant part of the legacy of the project. After the project is completed and after the Program Coordinator and project team is no longer involved with the organisation, the project report is a learning tool which continues the life of the project and so continues the learning opportunities for the community. The project report could be in written form, or if you have access to the technology, it could be a video or in digital form such as a CD-ROM or as a web site. Access to technology, though, should never be the main reason for choosing a particular form. You should think about your audience and how they will best be able to appreciate the achievements documented in the report.

The report itself is made up of different kinds of evidence, as you will already have read, and it is important not to confuse the evidence with the conclusions of the report.
Too often, evaluation is considered a bothersome activity that has to be carried out after the project has finished and which leads to the writing of a report. In a well-managed project, evaluation is part of the project itself and the report writing for the final report is a continuation of a process already in place.

An evaluation report is intended to show to what extent the project was successful and to interpret or comment on the factors which led to its success or which affected the project team's ability to achieve what they had planned. There is no need for it to be a long report, but it must show that the Program Coordinator has been accountable for the resources of the project and how they have been used.

The most common process in writing the report is to state:

- Brief context to project & introduction to the purpose of the evaluation (report)
- Your project aim / intention (i.e. what you intended to achieve)
- The activities (i.e. what you did)
- The results (i.e. what was actually achieved)
- The successes and lessons learnt (i.e. what worked and what did not and why)

In writing the report you use the documentation and evidence you collected through the evaluation plan. Then you will report on the use of resources. Finally, you will draw a conclusion, often proposing the key recommendation for future work and projects.

If you only partly achieved your objective, you need to state what you did achieve (your SMART objectives will help you here). Then it is important to analyse why you did not meet your objectives, giving an open and honest evaluation of the reasons. Feedback from project beneficiaries and other stakeholders will give you good insight into why objectives were not met. Module 1 provides a list of common reasons why projects are less successful than they might have been. Your involvement in this workshop will have helped you to avoid most of the problems.

Ideally, your evaluation report will have a one-page executive summary, which will show the overall achievements of the project, summarise the use of resources, and suggest a next step.

It will also acknowledge the contributions of key sponsors or community groups.

Case study:
An example of an executive summary for a project that aimed to raise the income level in a community by ensuring that people understood the government benefits and pensions they were eligible for, and that they completed the forms properly and supplied the appropriate documentation.
"The project was an overwhelming success. During the twelve month period of the project, 5% more applications for benefits were made by members of the community and no applications were rejected for any reason. This compared with a 12% rejection rate over the previous twelve months, for reasons such as inappropriate application, application form incomplete, documentation incomplete. The overall gain in income for the community was over $300 per month.

The resources allocated for the project were not fully utilised, with a savings of $500 on staff costs. Brochures in straightforward language supplemented the open forums and workshops held at the beginning of the project. The cost for these was $250 as noted in the budget request. The cost of mentoring for the first three months was $300, and this involved bringing a mentor from outside of the community. The community members who were helped to complete application forms in the first two months of the project were perceived as experts and became mentors for others as soon as their success was known in the community. Each community member who took on the role of mentor was paid a nominal amount for each application they helped to prepare (to a total of $400). This was thought to be more effective than bring someone from outside of the community to act as mentor after the first three months.

This project will now be self-sustaining, because the members of the community have a good understanding of the government benefits and pensions schemes and of the requirements of official applications. It will be important for the organization to keep a watching brief on the various government schemes, and to alert the community to any changes.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Shining Light group who gave us the use of their meeting room each Thursday afternoon throughout the year, as a place to conduct the original forums and workshops and as a base for the mentors and applicants to work on the forms, make copies of the documentation and so on."

In the example, you can clearly see what was achieved as a result of the project in terms of the SMART objectives. Next, you see the summary comments on the use of money, time and people—the three types of resources. Then you see the next step for the project for the community and for the organization. Finally, you see the acknowledgement of support of another group.

Reporting on your objectives

Reporting on the outcomes of your project forms the foundation of an evaluation report. If you have met your objectives and have gathered a good range of evidence, the process is straightforward. If you have not met your objectives, then you may need to think carefully about what can be done to improve the situation, particularly if people have been disadvantaged as a result or if it appears that the principles and values of the organization have not been followed.

Despite all the hindrances, Soufyan accounted that project, "Has given hope to poor women and given

Case study: A project aimed at assisting marginalized women to sell their crafts through the establishment of a fair trade Boutique, Ouarzazate, Morocco.

Soufyan, an OIYP Action Partner and his organization developed a project, designed to assist marginalised women in Morocco. His plan was to create the Tiwizi Boutique, a fair trade outlet, which would specialize in the sale of the artistic goods produced by the women. One of the objectives was for the women to generate an income through the sale of their crafts at the boutique. Soufyan succeeded in opening the Tiwizi boutique that operated on a fair trade system however he experienced significant difficulties with the project.

He reported his on objectives in the following way:
"We decided to close the Tiwizi Boutique in July 2002, after 8 months of operation. Given the financial situation at the moment, the project can only exist online, as on the one hand we can't commit to renting a shop and the costs associated with this. During the 8 months the boutique was open I had to work to make money, and my work was in another village. I found out that the people responsible for the Tiwizi Boutique did not adhere to the opening and closing hours (of the boutique) and sometimes didn't even open at all."
In describing what went wrong he explained, "There is a lack of people wanting to take responsibility for the project or willing to devote time to the maintenance of the boutique as well as get publicity in popular tourist sites and other places. Bad price estimation means that the product is too expensive for the locals and only targets a tourist clientele."

Through the project Soufyan explained that he was able to realise his strengths and weaknesses. He explained, "It is our first experience to develop a socio-economical project, and I think we didn't do enough study on the market situation in Ouarzazate." Soufyan also encountered people and organizations who claimed to be interested in the aim of the project, yet later realised that they were really only interested in the benefits and not in the promotion of the welfare of the marginalised Ouarzazate women.

us a plan for the future." He continued to work on setting up an on-line boutique to sell the women's craft and raise awareness of his fair trade project.

Discussion questions:

- What are some of the reasons the project did not meet its objectives?
- What lessons can be learnt from this situation?
- Soufyan was very open and honest about what did not work in his project.
- If you were in a similar position, what would you do to improve the situation and ensure people were not disadvantaged as a result of any difficulties?
- If a project you are involved with does not meet its objectives, how will you report on the outcomes?
- What principles are important to you when it comes to project reporting?

Showing accountability

"*The project happens in the real world. If we are to be real then we should not expect to present a perfect project without critical problems... My experience over the years with some donors is that, even if they fund projects with whooping amounts, it is clear that there may be some problems. In their report you need to state your constraints and how you manage to get over those constraints….From this whoever intends to learn from us would already know our short comings and in the area of collaboration or funding who knows maybe some form of technical or financial assistance will be made available to the organization."*
James Hallowell, OIYP2004 Action Partner, Sierra Leone

As Program Coordinator, you need to show in the evaluation report that you have used wisely the resources of time, money and people. As James suggests, you should also be honest and open about any difficulties and constraints you faced, how you managed them and what you learnt.

Accounting for time

To account for time, it may be sufficient to say that the objectives were met on time. On the other hand, it may be necessary to go into details to explain short-comings. This is important for the community to learn from the mistakes:
"Too much time was allocated for the preparatory phase. Of the 30 hours allocated, only 20 hours were used. Not enough time was allocated for the processing of applications for the workshop and the issuing of receipts. A change in the procedures at the bank meant that instead of taking 5 minutes per application as in the past, it took 15 minutes. With 100 applications, this added an extra 16 and half hours to the estimate. The time allocated to the running of the workshop was accurate."

Accounting for money

Importantly, your financial report must show what you requested money for and what you spent the money on. As already noted in Module 2, it is your responsibility as Programme Coordinator to ensure that the money has been spent on those items for which it was granted.

If you were forced to change the allocation of financial resources, in the first instance, you should make contact with the funder and seek permission to do so, and you should provide a justification showing how spending the money in a different way will still lead to the same outcome. If you just changed your mind about what you were going to do and spent the money in some other way, the consequence is likely to be that you will not receive any more funding from that organization. The project management values of transparency and visibility are crucial in reporting on the use of money as a resource.

When you make the financial report, you will need to show the original sum allocated and the actual amount spent. It may be appropriate to do this through an appendix to the report or the report may be short enough to be included in the text of the report. The case study example below shows how and why variations in expenditure may occur.

Case study: Financial report for workshop

Description of item	Budgeted cost	Actual cost
Cost of room hire	$720	$720
Accommodation and food for speaker	$250	$175*
Air ticket and taxis to and from airport	$750	$578**
Food for participants	100@$27.50 $2,750	$2,750
Pens and note pads $165	$165	$135***
Technology hire	$250	$0‡
Contingency	$20	$50†
Total	$4905	$4408^

Explanations for the variations in the budget:
* Special rate for Chinese New Year
** Corporate discount rate
*** Specified pens sold out, only cheaper pens available.
‡ Cost of hire of technology and technical staff donated.
† Participant taken ill – ambulance covered by health insurance, cost of taxi to hospital and return for workshop organiser.
^ You will notice the final costs came to $4408, which is $497 under budget. After the workshop we had $497 left in our budget. We are proposing to use this towards follow-up costs for the workshop. Specifically, we are requesting permission to use the money in the following way: $200 towards follow-up phone calls to participants and $297 towards a manual we want to produce to allow future participants to run components of the training within their own organizations.

In this case study you will notice the report writer is requesting permission to use the surplus money in a specific way.

Accounting for people

When you report on the use of staff and the effectiveness of training, it is important to remember that you are trying to create a legacy and document lessons for people coming after you to learn. You should provide as much background material as you can, in the form of appendices or of a project file. Importantly too, you need to include as many perspectives on involvement in the project as you can. Again, the appendix is likely to be a good place to include this material.
The intention of the evaluation report is to be brief, to show accountability and to be open and fair. It is important therefore not to make comments that can be linked to individuals, unless they are strongly positive.

Therefore, it is recommended that in future facilitators be employed to input names into the database.

Case study examples: Accounting for people

Project 1: "There was some discussion about whether it was better to hire someone with less experience because the salary costs would be less or to hire someone with experience because they would be able to contribute more to the project. The decision was made to hire an experienced person. This seems to have been a good decision because she was able to do the tasks in less time than estimated and therefore she was able to write some training materials for the next time the project is run."

Project 2: "If a similar project is run in the future, we do not recommend the appointment of a data entry operator. Although there is substantial clerical work involved in adding new participants to the data base, the facilitators felt they knew very little about participants until they received the printout.
Participants indicated that there were a number of errors in the spelling or form of their names. Facilitators would probably have identified these because of their greater familiarity with names from a variety of cultures.

Training in updating and maintenance of the database will also have to be included in their tasks."
Acknowledging people

In some cultures it is important to acknowledge people by name, while in other cultures it is the role or function that is more important than the person. You will know the best way to acknowledge involvement in a project. It is important to ensure that there is consistency in the way you present the acknowledgements. People can be hurt and offended if they believe that their contribution has not been recognised when what other people have done has been mentioned. Again, an appendix listing the names of all project members may be best.

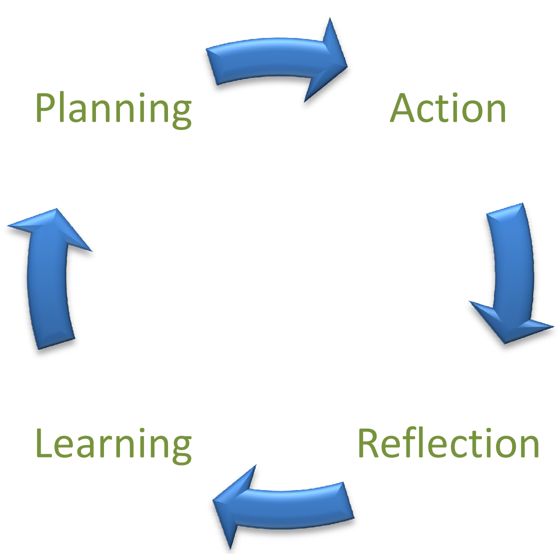
Asking the difficult questions

"A project should have resulted in some positive changes to the community. It should reach the goal where we direct it to, but on the other hand it should also become a learning process for the community itself and for other communities as well as for us who run the project."
-Jen Nie, OIYP2004 Action Partner, Indonesia

As discussed at the beginning of this module it is possible to achieve all the original objectives and outcomes of your project, and yet still have no understanding or evidence of the impact of your work. Impact studies generally start with the questions "Has there been change in peoples lives? And how do we know?" and does not ask specifically about the project but instead asks, "What has brought about this change?"

One of the key challenges of working for social change is that our knowledge of any particular issue or situation is always incomplete. In addition to this, the context in which we work is often changing and influenced by larger social, economic and political forces that are often beyond the influence of an individual project.

Given this, if we stick rigidly to implementing plans developed at the beginning of the project with out regularly reflecting and adjusting our approach we are less likely to succeed in achieving real change. So while a good Program Coordinator will have SMART objectives and well planned projects and evaluations, if they forget to ask the difficult questions such as "Are we achieving positive and lasting change in peoples lives?" they run the risk of missing the point of their work for social change.



Achieving lasting and positive change generally takes time and is the result of ongoing cycles of planning, action and reflection. Each cycle leads to adjustments to the initial project design in response to lesson learnt, outcomes achieved and changes in context. As Jen Nei from Indonesia points out, it is important to focus on the goals of a project but it is also important to see it as part of a learning process for all involved.

Conclusion

Evaluation is a crucial part of the project cycle. The completion of an evaluation process and production of a final report should be a cause for celebration in a community, almost as much as the completion of the project itself. A useful evaluation report is the outcome of an effective evaluation plan, which is ideally developed at the start of a project.

Good monitoring and evaluation contribute to the process of reflection and learning and lead to better future plans and action. Ideally, this process enables us to have a real impact and create positive and lasting change in people's lives.