2021

M&E Policy, Procedures

Justice for Equality

Revised & approved February 2021

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1. Introduction to the Policy

This Monitoring and Evaluation Manual is designed to help project managers, monitoring and evaluation coordinators, and project implementers in Justice for Equality in Afghanistan Organization (JEAO) gain familiarity with basic monitoring and evaluation concepts. The manual includes broad overview information, as well as details regarding how to make monitoring and evaluation plans and how to carry out specific monitoring and evaluation methods, such as surveys and qualitative research. Considerable emphasis is given to preferred tools, surveys, and approaches used by development institutions working with the community.

The objectives of this manual are as follows:

1.1 Objectives

- Equip JEAO and partners to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan.
- Develop JEAO and partners' ability to plan and conduct baseline, midterm, and final evaluations.
- Develop JEAO and partners' ability to use qualitative approaches for monitoring and evaluation.
- Enhance JEAO and partners' skills related to modifying current projects based on monitoring information and using lessons learned from previous projects when designing new projects
- Enhance JEAO and partners' ability to include project participants in designing and implementing M&E systems

Resources for monitoring and evaluation, including step-by-step instructions and tools, are included in this manual, as well as many links to external resources which provide further detail for surveys, information systems, and other monitoring and evaluation needs. Along with project managers and M&E staff, JEAO's Technical Services staff is also responsible for ensuring that monitoring and evaluation is carried out appropriately in projects. Technical Services staff is available to provide monitoring and evaluation support and assistance to field staff as needed.

1.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) of development activities provide better means for learning from past experience, improving service delivery, planning and allocating resources, and demonstrating results as part of accountability to key stakeholders. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation functions within organization is to ensure that programs undertaken by the organization are mission-driven, outcome-focused, effective, and efficient. Programs and new initiatives should be the result of planning activities which provide a clear statement of program goals and objectives, phased program implementation steps, and desired outcomes and performance measures.

Program implementation shall be monitored to ascertain the degree to which target populations are being reached, whether the services are consistent with the program planning documents, and what resources are being or have been used in service delivery. Program or outcome evaluation assesses the extent to which planned activities produce the desired outcome among a target population.

1.3 Monitoring

Monitoring is an on-going activity during the life of the project. It is through monitoring that the project is able to determine what progress has been made in relation to the work plan. Monitoring helps in ascertaining whether the project is on track, and also in determining whether the project needs to make any changes in its strategies or activities so that it can be as successful as possible.

Program monitoring is directed at three key questions: (1) the extent to which a program is reaching the appropriate target population; (2) whether or not the delivery is consistent with the program design specifications; and (3) what resources are being or have been expended in the conduct of the program.

As a part of monitoring, regular observation and recording of activities will take place through which a process of routinely gathering information on all aspects of the Programme (or projects within the Programme) will be undertaken. It will check on how activities are progressing and thereby will result in a systematic and purposeful observation.

Monitoring provides information that is useful in:

- Analyzing the situation in the community and its project;
- Determining whether the inputs in the project are well utilized;
- Identifying problems facing the community or project and finding solutions;
- Analyzing the programme activities for different prospects such as gender, regional etc.
- Ensuring all activities are carried out properly by the right people and in time;
- Sharing experiences; ***and***
- Determining whether the way the project was planned is the most appropriate way of solving the problem at hand.

1.4 Evaluation

A systematic analysis of the impact of the delivery of services with regard to targeted populations and outcomes to determine if the goals of a program are realized.

1.4.1 EXTERNAL EVALUATION

These are done by external agencies and donors, which are for whole of the programme, region specific and / or for specific projects. These studies may include

- Interim Evaluation
- Impact Assessment

1.4.2 INTERNAL EVALUATION

Internal evaluation will be done through Impact Studies and Social Audit.

1.5 Role of PM&E Section in Programme Management

PM&E section will play a key role in design, planning and implementation of the programme that includes;

1.5.1 SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Before any attempts to implement new activities, PM&E assists the management and beneficiaries in setting up goals and objectives. It will assist in identifying the constraints that may be faced by the field staff in executing the project and how they can overcome them. Based on the extent of the constraints and positive forces, the IRM management will decide to continue with the project or do away with it.

1.5.2 GENERATING STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES

PM&E section assists the management in deciding on how they are going to implement a project or formulate the strategy. It involves determining all items (inputs) that are needed to carry out the programme, defining the different groups or individuals and their particular roles they are to play in the programme. These groups and individuals that undertake particular roles in the project are called "actors."

Generating the structures and strategies therefore involves:

- Discussing and agreeing on the activities to be undertaken during implementation;
- Defining the different actors and their roles;
- Distributing materials necessary to implement the programme.

After establishing the appropriateness of the decisions, the management discusses and agrees on how the project will be implemented. PM&E will also assists the management in identifying the monitoring indicators i.e., Input; Output; Outcome***; and*** Impact indicators:

1.5.3 SITUATION ANALYSIS

Situation analysis is a process through which the general characteristics and problems of the community are identified. It involves the identification and definition of the characteristics and problems specific to particular categories of people in the community. These could be people with disabilities, women, youth, peasants, traders and artisans.

Situation analysis is done through collecting information necessary to understand the community as a whole and individuals within the community. Information is collected on what happened in the past, what is currently happening, and what is expected to happen in the future, based on the community's experiences.

2. Planning Monitoring & Evaluation Process (Planned)

The project cycle: Conventional Versus Participatory

What is a project cycle?

Project cycle refers to the process through which a project evolves, from its outset to completion. In the early stages of project development, certain steps logically precede others; for example, it is critical to collaborate with community members to identify needs before thinking about activities and strategy. But once a project is underway, it is desirable to learn from your experience and adapt the project's strategies and activities as you go. Typically, a project organized along more conventional lines, that is, with limited involvement of beneficiaries goes through.

The **project cycle** for a participatory project is somewhat different from that used in a conventional project. A participatory project builds on the involvement of the community at every stage of the project process. It's important to point out here that participatory development is an incremental process – i.e. it builds, and grows, step by step – and it is best to follow these steps in a sequence. The best results are achieved when a project adopts a participatory approach as a way of working, i.e. follows a participatory approach at all stages of the project. There are limited benefits in trying to introduce participatory monitoring when the project was not designed with the active participation of the communities it wants to serve. Therefore, if a NGO is desired to introduce PM&E in its project, it is best to start with participatory design and planning.

Participatory development is not a new idea. Considerable experience exists around the world in participatory development processes. The **1990's** in particular witnessed an explosion of new ideas, methods and experiments in participation. There also exists a rapidly growing body of literature on participatory development. There is a general dearth of documentation on participatory monitoring. The focus of this manual, therefore, will be on participatory design, monitoring and evaluation. Both conventional and participatory M&E seek to determine if a project is on course and whether the project has achieved or will likely achieve the objectives set out in the beginning. The difference between the two M&E approaches is that with conventional M&E the donor and implementing agency usually drive the process. Naturally, donors and implementing agencies need information on a regular basis to judge how well a project is performing.

Once the project is designed, the donor and/or implementing agency define expected outcomes, and designate indicators against which to measure achievement as well as the acceptable means of measurement. The donor also defines reporting frequency – how many times a year a report must be filed.

What tends to happen is that NGO staff who collect monitoring data are not always sure why they are collecting the information, and pass it up the chain of supervisors until it is eventually incorporated into a report for the donor. Monitoring data collected under these circumstances are not often analyzed by field staff and are therefore infrequently used to make decisions about adapting the project’s strategy or activities. At the end of the project, the donor normally requires an external project evaluation, which is carried out by a team of experts who visit the project site and collect the necessary data. While many donors recognize the importance of sharing evaluation reports with development partners and local communities, it is not unusual for these stakeholders to not receive a copy.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation significantly differs from conventional M&E in that the community, beneficiaries and people involved in designing and implementing the project, are involved in monitoring and evaluation throughout the project’s duration. In the monitoring process, in consultation and collaboration with donors, the community and beneficiaries together with implementers decide what will be monitored and how the monitoring will be carried out. They together analyze the information gathered through monitoring and assess whether the project is on track in achieving its objectives. Based on this information, they decide together whether the project should continue in the same direction or if it needs to be modified. Participatory monitoring enables project participants themselves to generate, analyze and use information for their day-to-day decision-making as well as long term planning.

In participatory evaluation, just as in participatory monitoring, the beneficiary community and CSOs and/NGOs together decide how to conduct the evaluation – its timing, scope, methodology and so on. The group also determines what they would like to find out through evaluation; in other words, they decide the issues and indicators that will be covered by the evaluation; they help formulate the questions to be asked; they participate in collecting and analyzing data, and presenting the findings. If a project follows a participatory approach from the beginning, it’s easy to carry out a participatory evaluation at the end. While conventional monitoring and evaluation focus on measurement of results – service delivery, information dissemination, behavior change and so on —participatory monitoring and evaluation focus on both results and process.

The main characteristics of this process are inclusion, collaboration, collective action and mutual respect. Participatory M&E encourages dialogue at the grassroots level and moves the community from the position of passive beneficiaries to active participants with the opportunity to influence the project activities based on their needs and their analysis. In addition, information is shared both horizontally and vertically within the implementing organization.

It is generated by the community group and shared first with the larger community, and then with the donor. In contrast to conventional monitoring where information moves vertically – from the NGO to the donor – in participatory monitoring, information is much more widely shared, particularly at its source which is the community.

2.1 WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL?

Participatory appraisal refers to the process that enables communities to analyze and share their knowledge, experiences, views, and concerns on different topics related to their physical, economic and social conditions. This analysis is usually carried out at the village/hamlet level in rural areas or neighborhoods in urban locations.

2.2 WHY DO WE NEED PARTICIPATORY APPRAISALS?

Participatory appraisals generate information needed in the design of project activities, and they provide the basis for developing a participatory monitoring and evaluation system.

2.3 WHO CONDUCTS PARTICIPATORY APPRAISALS?

Someone who works in the JEAO in charge of the project will lead the participatory appraisal. This person helps guide the process, but ultimately it is community members who define and give shape to the issues that come out of the appraisal. By involving the community in analyzing their own situation, and enabling them to take part in deciding the activities that will be implemented, the participating communities will also own the process. Such participatory processes have a better chance of succeeding in the short and long run.

2.4 WHEN SHOULD A PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL BE CARRIED OUT?

Participatory appraisals should be carried out **before** designing project activities. In fact, a participatory appraisal should be carried out as the first step in a project development process.

However, it is possible that some of you using this manual may already be in the midst of implementing projects. In such cases, it will probably not be possible or efficient to start the design process again from the beginning. However, it would **still be useful** to conduct a participatory appraisal even at this stage, as findings from the appraisal can be used to modify planned activities and the implementation process as needed.

For NGO that have already carried out participatory appraisals, there is no need to repeat the process if the community has records of the appraisal and the information is available for the community to prepare a monitoring plan.

2.5 PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND DESIGN

Participatory planning is the process whereby an activity or a project is designed jointly by all the partners, i.e. the participating communities (who will be the direct beneficiaries of the activity or project) and the project functionaries. This means that all the key decisions regarding the project will be taken jointly by the community participants and the project staff. These include:

Objective of the project -- what the project hopes to achieve;

Activities that will be implemented;

Implementation process -- how will the trainings be carried out, how will participants be selected, how will training needs be determined, what type of support will be given to households, who controls the funds, how will the funds be disbursed, etc.;

Size of the project – how many communities or households or individuals will the project work with?

Location of these selected communities – where will the project work; and

Timeline for the project – how long will the project run, and a work plan for implementing each of the activities.

2.6 HOW TO CARRY OUT PARTICIPATORY PLANNING?

The participatory planning process at Justice for Equality in Afghanistan Organization (JEAO) will start with **participatory appraisals.** This analysis should indicate community members' *key concerns or problems* at the local level regarding that particular topic. Such an analysis also brings out any gaps in information and knowledge, or any misinformation that the communities, or a group within the community, may have. As the appraisal process is coming to a close, facilitators can ask community members to generate suggestions for tackling these problems and concerns. This list of problems and suggestions forms the basis for developing a plan for action.

If a project plans to work with several communities (for example, different villages or several neighborhoods in an urban area), it is useful to complete the participatory appraisal process in all the communities, and then invite representatives from each community for a meeting to begin planning the project.

2.7 BASIC STEPS IN DEVELOPING INDICATORS AS PART OF AN A M&E SYSTEM

There are various approaches to defining indicators. The model below is one example:

Step 1: Make sure that targets associated with strategy goals, objectives and actions are clearly defined and agreed upon; and that the inputs necessary carry out actions are identified.

Step 2: Define indicators for each target based on stakeholder consultations and on criteria, Such as relevance, reliability, and cost-effectiveness. Involve stakeholders who cause or are affected by the problem or issue addressed in the target; who have relevant information or expertise; and who will be responsible for implementing indicators.

Step 3: Select indicators to track human and financial resources and ensure that they are being disbursed and used efficiently.

Step 4: Check to make sure that indicators relate clearly to targets, and that these in turn support the achievement of actions, objectives and goals. Identify and fill gaps. Refine indicators and/or targets as necessary. This step may involve taking an inventory of indicators that are already in use in the country to eliminate redundancies, and also considering the relationship of national M&E efforts to international monitoring programs—such as the World Water Assessment Programme.

Step 5: Calculate human and financial resources needed to apply the indicator package. Evaluate whether the package is a good investment, i.e. the human and financial resources required are commensurate with the value of the various indicators employed.

Step 6: Agree on the agencies/institutions that will be responsible for applying the different indicators, how, and how often.

Step 7: Determine how the information resulting from the different indicators will be managed: how it fits into decision-making processes, both specifically related to the strategy but also ongoing policy and planning processes; how information will be amalgamated to get a more comprehensive picture of progress; and how it will be communicated to stakeholders.

Step 8: Include requirements for M&E package in capacity building plan, budget, and staff allocation.

‘**Indicator’** is a word that we hear very often in monitoring & evaluation. It’s not an exaggeration to say that M&E revolves around indicators. Both in participatory and conventional M&E, indicators play an important role. In this part we will learn about: indicators and their selection, and indicators and their use in monitoring.

2.8 WHAT ARE INDICATORS?

The word indicator is indeed a very literal word: indicators ***indicate or tell*** something about something Indicators are signals: they signal status of something, or change in something; they work as markers like milestones on the roadside, which tell us how far we have gone on, or where we are at a given point.

We discussed earlier in the manual that monitoring is an activity that we all do all the time in our everyday lives even though we don’t call it ‘monitoring.’ We monitor our own activities. We monitor how the rice cooks, whether our children are growing up according to their age, whether our crops are growing as they should—name any activity, we know that there is monitoring involved.

Indicators are milestones or markers that show where we are in an activity, that we are making progress, and that we are heading in the right direction.

2.8.1 STAGE INDICATOR

When we implement projects, we use indicators to check project progress and results. Indicators are ‘measures’ that we use to demonstrate progress and results to ourselves, to the beneficiary community, and to the donors.

2.8.2 PROCESS AND CHANGE INDICATORS

In most projects there are two types of indicators: one type indicate or tell at what stage we are in implementing the project—in other words, they show our progress in completing planned activities. These are called **process indicators**. They indicate how much work we have done. The other type of indicators describes the level of change that we have achieved through our activities. These are called **change indicators**. They are also referred to as results indicators since they indicate the results that achieved through the project’s intervention. Indicators are, therefore, used to track progress and change.

2.8.3 FOUR TYPES OF INDICATORS

There are four types of indicators generally used in project monitoring and evaluation: numerical; scaling or ranking; classifying; and, descriptive. Each type of indicator is described below.

Numerical provides exact numbers. Numerical indicators are also called quantitative indicators. Examples of numerical indicators are: number of people trained; number of orphans served; the data for these indicators are counted.

Scaling or ranking provide graduated descriptions of assessment. For example, people can rank sexual satisfaction when using water from clean drinking water supply scheme on a scale of 1 to 4, where 4 is highly satisfying and 1 is not satisfying at all.

Classifying provides answers in categories: Yes or No; Male or Female;

Descriptive indicators are qualitative because they describe the state of something in words. Examples of descriptive indicators are:; HIV-positive children are allowed to attend school; the inheritance rights of widows are fulfilled.

It is **important** to define the indicators clearly at the very beginning. This is even more important in the case of qualitative indicators so that everyone has the same understanding, and that they are not interpreted differently by different people. While numerical indicators are easy to adapt, count and report, they are not necessarily the most useful and meaningful indicators.

Indicators that will be monitored over a period of time need to remain relatively stable over time. Sometimes project staff will write a proposal with one set of indicators in mind, and then find better or more practical indicators once they move on to project implementation. This is not unusual, and is acceptable practice. Efforts should be made, however, to maintain the same set of indicators once monitoring begins.

2.9 WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY BASELINE INFORMATION?

Baseline refers to information describing aspects of communities, households or individuals that help explain the situation before starting project activities.

When the project is over, the same information can be collected once again. In comparing the “before” information with the “after” information, you can see what changes, if any, occurred as a result of project activities.

2.10 WHY DO WE NEED BASELINE INFORMATION?

Baseline information serves three important purposes:

1. It helps in defining community needs and priorities before you start. This understanding contributes to designing project activities that are best suited to the community.

2. Once the project ends, baseline data can be used to measure the changes that may have occurred due to the project activities. This makes it easier to carry out an evaluation at the end of the project.

3. Baseline can contribute to the design and establishment of a monitoring system.

Baseline data usually includes information that is easily measurable and that can be quantified, such as number of household who report using boiled water for cooking. However, it can also include information that is not as easy to quantify, but still provides valuable insight into aspects of people's lives or their concerns— such as perceptions about, or behavior related to, new schooling system. Such indicators can also be included in the baseline. Baseline information can be collected at community, group, household and individual levels.

3. REPORTING MONITORING DATA

It is important to report the progress and results of the project to the staff who implemented the project, those who head your organization, to community members and to the donor. In this section we will focus on how to report monitoring data. In all donor-funded projects, the donor who provides the funding asks the recipient organization to report on their progress and achievements. It's important for us to understand why donors ask for reports. Let's consider an example from everyday life. Suppose you send a child to school. You buy a uniform, books and school supplies; you may hire a tutor to help your child with homework. The government provides a trained teacher, classroom furniture and a curriculum. Naturally, given all of this investment, you expect your child to learn. The teacher's assessment report of your child's progress is useful to you in terms of deciding whether your investment has been well spent and whether you should invest further in your child's development.

For any activity that we do, we expect a result. Similarly, when donors provide funding and technical support for project activities, they expect measurable results. Reports are a means by which donors follow project implementation.

This information also helps the donors in planning future funding and technical support activities. There's a saying that 'information is power. Monitoring information is power for donor program officers who need to report to their supervisors, who need to report to the head of the agency, who needs to report to either a board of directors or government body.

The organization should report on the progress of your project-planned activities and their results. As stated elsewhere in the manual, your activities depend upon your objectives. Based on this action plan, you will report on the progress of these activities.

When the entire project is completed, you will write a brief report describing how the project went, how it was received, the challenges you faced (if any) in implementing the project activities, and, based on the experience of the project, what recommendations you might make for future projects. It's always useful to include a section that discusses lessons learned. This final report is called ***end-of-the-project report***. This report need not be long. For small grants and one-off-event grants, a two page report may be enough; for larger grants, longer reports are usually expected, depending upon the scope of the project.

3.1 WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION?

Participatory evaluation refers to the process of evaluation where all project partners i.e. community participants and project staff — are involved. Instead of having a team of outsiders visit the project to carry out the evaluation, the project partners themselves conduct the evaluation. If an outsider is involved, her or his role should be to facilitate the process and serve as a technical resource.

In participatory evaluation, all key decisions regarding the evaluation are made by the project partners. These include:

Timing, when to carry out the evaluation;

Process, indicators and analysis;

Sharing and reporting and using the findings.

Participatory evaluation is most effective when the project design and implementation have also been carried out in a participatory manner. Participatory design of the project implies that all the partners jointly decided the project scope and activities, and share the same vision regarding the project objectives and expected results. This ensures that from the very beginning all project partners have been involved in deciding the indicators on which the project will be monitored and evaluated. Likewise, when it is time for the evaluation, all partners should be clear about why and how the evaluation will be carried out.

Very few projects, however, follow a complete participatory process. While it is possible to carry out a participatory evaluation even when project design and implementation have not followed a participatory process, this requires more time, and has to be planned differently.

The process should start with a discussion among participating community and project staff about designing such an evaluation process. Sometimes we hear examples of 'participatory evaluation' where community members are involved in answering questions framed by outside evaluators, or where community members are asked to analyze issues determined by outside evaluators.

3.2 WHY DO WE NEED PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION?

Participatory evaluation is the logical culmination of a participatory process.

Starting with participatory design, and continuing with participatory project implementation and monitoring, leads to the stage of participatory evaluation at the end of the project. Just as involving communities was critical in designing an appropriate project, their involvement is critical in understanding the effectiveness of the project once it is over. This means not just involvement in terms of answering questions posed by outside evaluators, but involvement in designing the evaluation – what questions to ask, who to ask, etc.

A good, and useful, evaluation should include the perspectives of all concerned– community participants, project staff, donors, and outside 'experts.' These perspectives on the same project may be very different, and the complete picture emerges only when we are able to bring together all of these perspectives.

If we depend on an evaluation designed and carried out by outsiders, the process will have limited value for the people for whom the project was intended. Participatory evaluation ensures that communities are involved in not only the design and analysis of the information, but in controlling the process of evaluating activities that they designed and took part in.

Participatory evaluations are also by nature more flexible than conventional evaluations. Conventional evaluations are externally determined and are usually designed on the basis of information available in project documents.

During a participatory evaluation, we have an opportunity to go beyond the stated objectives in the project document, and to include issues and indicators from people's experience with the project. Sometimes there are issues that were not foreseen before project implementation began. These can be determined during a participatory evaluation.

3.3 ANALYZING INFORMATION

Data analysis can be carried out in three stages:

Stage 1

Collect all data from different sources (monitoring reports, baseline, repeat survey, workshops, etc.), and arrange it in a comparable format. This means putting together data on the same indicator for before and after the project. To ensure that the comparison is accurate, the same indicator and the same units of measurement must be used.

Stage 2

The second step is to compare all data available. One obvious axis of comparison is over time (for example, behavior patterns before and after the project). There can be other types of comparison:

Stage 3:

The final step is to document your analysis. A report is usually prepared at the end of an evaluation. Unless the data and its analysis are properly documented, it will be difficult to put together such a report.

3.4 SHARING INFORMATION AND KEY FINDINGS

Sharing of information is key to the participatory evaluation process. Sharing is carried out with partners, and with others not directly involved with the project. Such a sharing process helps in several ways:

Communicating the different perspectives among the partners;
Developing an output that is acceptable to all;
Enabling joint decisions on future action;
Sharing experiences with others who may be implementing similar projects.
Hence, there is 'sharing' both during and after the evaluation process. Sharing and communicating during the evaluation process enables understanding issues from different perspectives. Sharing and discussing results from the repeat baseline survey will allow project partners to discuss findings that were not adequately explained in the survey report.

Any discussion of evaluation results should focus on gathering suggestions for future projects, or on the future of the project, if the donor is willing to consider funding a new phase. This includes discussing why some activities worked better than the others, why some activities failed, which activities need further testing, whether some of the activities could have been done differently, and so on.

Such sharing and discussion create an output that is owned by all partners. It is important to remember that evaluation is not simply to determine success or failure, but to determine ways to do the same things better, and to learn from the process.

It is useful to share these results more widely – with local and national policy makers, for example – so that experiences generated at the community level can be considered while making policy decisions.

4. Some Tools, Methods and Approaches for PM&E

Within the development community there is a strong focus on results, this helps explain the growing interest in Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E). Yet there is often confusion about what PM&E entails. The purpose of this PM&E overview is to strengthen awareness and interest in PM&E, and to clarify what it encompasses.

This sample entails PM&E tools, methods, and approaches outlined here, including their purpose and use; advantages and disadvantages; costs, skills, and time required; and key references. Those illustrated here include several data collection methods, analytical frameworks, and types of evaluation and review. The PM&E Overview discusses:

- Formal surveys
- Rapid appraisal methods
- Participatory methods
- Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis
- Impact evaluation

This list is not comprehensive, nor is it intended to be. Some of these tools and approaches are complementary; some are substitutes, some have broad applicability, while others are quite narrow in their uses. The choice of which is appropriate for any given context will depend on a range of considerations. These include the uses for which PM&E is intended, the main stakeholders who have an interest in the PM&E findings, the speed with which the information is needed, and the cost.

4.1 WHAT ARE FGDS?

Focus group discussions are meetings held with small groups of participants to discuss a few selected topics. These discussions are conducted in an informal setting, and all participants are encouraged to present their opinions, experiences, views, and/or concerns on the selected topics. This is an important method used in most participatory processes, and it also has to be used with nearly all the other methods.

Usually a group of 8-15 is a good size for these discussions. However, it is common to have large turnouts at the community level during a participatory process. While it is possible to have a visual analysis, like a social map, prepared in a large group, it is preferable to break up in smaller groups for the discussions and analysis.

4.2 WHY ARE FGDS USED?

Group discussions are important as a means to engage all the community participants in the monitoring process. FGDs also provide an opportunity for the group to use various visual methods that help in focusing the discussions and analysis on a particular topic. Therefore, a FGD can include discussions, as well as the preparation, and discussion of a visual. These group discussions also provide an opportunity to discuss results, including visuals, from another group. This is often an important means of verification, i.e. understanding whether results from one group are any different from another, and why.

4.3 HOW TO CONDUCT A FGD?

A list of topics for discussion should be prepared beforehand. These are introduced one by one by the facilitator. Once the facilitator introduces the topic, s/he allows the group to discuss the issue among them without too much interruption. The facilitator's role is of critical importance in conducting a FGD. This person should be able to listen attentively, ask probing questions, observe the participants and ensure that no one dominates the discussion.

Open-ended probing questions often begin with: why, when, how, where, how much, who, or what. While the facilitator should try to ensure that the list of topics is covered during a discussion, it is possible that new issues emerge during the FGD. The facilitator should be flexible and allow some diversions from the plan and at the same time ensure that the overall direction of the discussions is not lost.

5.1 RAPID APPRAISAL METHODS

What are they?

Rapid appraisal methods are quick, low-cost ways to gather the views and feedback of beneficiaries and other stakeholders, in order to respond to decision-makers' needs for information.

What can we use them for?

- Providing rapid information for management decision-making, especially at the project or program level.
- Providing qualitative understanding of complex socioeconomic changes, highly interactive social situations, or people's values, motivations, and reactions.
- Providing context and interpretation for quantitative data collected by more formal methods.

Advantages:

- Low cost.

- Can be conducted quickly.
- Provides flexibility to explore new ideas.

Disadvantages:

- Findings usually relate to specific communities or localities—thus difficult to
- Generalize from findings.
- Less valid, reliable, and credible than formal surveys.

Rapid Appraisal Methods

- **Key informant interview**—a series of open-ended questions posed to individuals selected for their knowledge and experience in a topic of interest. Interviews are qualitative, in-depth, and semi-structured. They rely on interview guides that list topics or questions.
- **Focus group discussion**—a facilitated discussion among 8–12 carefully selected participants with similar backgrounds. Participants might be beneficiaries or program staff, for example. The facilitator uses a discussion guide. Note-takers record comments and observations.
- **Community group interview**—a series of questions and facilitated discussion in a meeting open to all community members. The interviewer follows a carefully prepared questionnaire.
- **Direct observation**—use of a detailed observation form to record what is seen and heard at a program site. The information may be about ongoing activities, processes, discussions, social interactions, and observable results.
- **Mini-survey**—a structured questionnaire with a limited number of close ended questions that is administered to 50–75 people. Selection of respondents may be random or 'purposive' (interviewing stakeholders at locations such as a clinic for a health care survey).

5.2 PARTICIPATORY METHODS

What are they?

Participatory methods provide active involvement in decision-making for those with a stake in a project, program, or strategy and generate a sense of ownership in the PM&E results and recommendations.

What can we use them for?

- Learning about local conditions and local people's perspectives and priorities to design more responsive and sustainable interventions.
- Identifying problems and trouble-shooting problems during implementation.
- Evaluating a project, program, or policy.
- Providing knowledge and skills to empower poor people.

Advantages:

- Examines relevant issues by involving key players in the design process.
- Establishes partnerships and local ownership of projects.
- Enhances local learning, management capacity, and skills.
- Provides timely, reliable information for management decision-making.

Disadvantages:

- Sometimes regarded as less objective.
- Time-consuming if key stakeholders are involved in a meaningful way.
- Potential for domination and misuse by some stakeholders to further their own interests.

5.3 COMMONLY USED PARTICIPATORY TOOLS

1. **Stakeholder analysis** is the starting point of most participatory work and social assessments. It is used to develop an understanding of the power relationships, influence, and interests of the various people involved in an activity and to determine who should participate, and when.

2. **Participatory rural appraisal** is a planning approach focused on sharing learning between local people, both urban and rural, and outsiders. It enables development managers and local people to assess and plan appropriate interventions collaboratively often using visual techniques so that non-literate people can participate.

3. **Beneficiary assessment** involves systematic consultation with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders to identify and design development initiatives, signal constraints to participation, and provide feedback to improve services and activities.

4. **Participatory monitoring and evaluation** involves stakeholders at different levels working together to identify problems, collect and analyze information, and generate recommendations.

5.4 COST-BENEFIT AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

What are they?

Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis are tools for assessing whether or not the costs of an activity can be justified by the outcomes and impacts. **Cost-benefit analysis** measures both inputs and outputs in monetary terms. **Cost-effectiveness analysis** estimates inputs in monetary terms and outcomes in non-monetary quantitative terms (such as improvements in student reading scores).

What can we use them for?

- Informing decisions about the most efficient allocation of resources.
- Identifying projects that offer the highest rate of return on investment.

Advantages:

- Good quality approach for estimating the efficiency of programs and projects.
- Makes explicit the economic assumptions that might otherwise remain implicit or overlooked at the design stage.
- Useful for convincing policy-makers and founders that the benefits justify the activity.

Disadvantages:

- Fairly technical, requiring adequate financial and human resources available.
- Requisite data for cost-benefit calculations may not be available, and projected results may be highly dependent on assumptions made.
- Results must be interpreted with care, particularly in projects where benefits are
- Difficult to quantify.

5.5 IMPACT EVALUATION

What is it?

Impact evaluation is the systematic identification of the effects – positive or negative, intended or not – on individual households, institutions, and the environment caused by a given development activity such as a program or project. Impact evaluation helps us better understand the extent to which activities reach the poor and the magnitude of their effects on people’s welfare. Impact evaluations can range from large scale sample surveys in which project populations and control groups are compared before and after, and possibly at several points during program intervention; to small-scale rapid assessment and participatory appraisals where estimates of impact are obtained from combining group interviews, key informants, case studies and available secondary data.

What can we use it for?

- Measuring outcomes and impacts of an activity and distinguishing these from the influence of other, external factors.
- Helping to clarify whether costs for an activity are justified.
- Informing decisions on whether to expand, modify or eliminate projects, programs or policies.
- Drawing lessons for improving the design and management of future activities.
- Comparing the effectiveness of alternative interventions.
- Strengthening accountability for results.

Advantages:

- Provides estimates of the magnitude of outcomes and impacts for different demographic
- Groups, regions or over time.
- Provides answers to some of the most central development questions – to what extent are we making a difference? What are the results on the ground? How can we do better?
- Systematic analysis and rigor can give managers and policy-makers added confidence in decision-making.

Disadvantages:

- Some approaches are very expensive and time-consuming, although faster and more
- Economical approaches are also used.
- Reduced utility when decision-makers need information quickly.
- Difficulties in identifying an appropriate counter-factual.

Examples of Impact Evaluation Designs

Randomized evaluation designs, involving the collection of information on project and control groups at two or more points in time, provide the most rigorous statistical analysis of project impacts and the contribution of other factors. But in practice it is rarely possible to use these designs for reasons of cost, time, methodological or ethical constraints. Thus most impact evaluations use less expensive and less rigorous evaluation designs. The following table describes four approaches to impact evaluation designs in development evaluation. The first is an example of a randomized evaluation design; the second is a quasi-experimental design in which a "non-equivalent" control group is selected to match as closely as possible the characteristics of the project population; in the third example the project population is compared with a non- equivalent control group after the project has been implemented; and the fourth is a rapid assessment evaluation which combines group interviews, key informants, case studies and secondary data. Each successive model sacrifices methodological rigor, in return from which there are significant reductions in cost and time requirement