



INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPATORY IMPACT EVALUATION

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Training Overview: Participatory Impact Evaluation

The purpose of the 2-part practical knowledge and skills building session on Participatory Impact Evaluation is to provide a broad overview of developing and conducting a participatory impact evaluation.

For Part 1, the trainer will elicit shared language for the meaning and measurement of impact, types, indicators, evidence, and evaluations. The trainer will broadly discuss the purpose, timing, benefits, and challenges of impact evaluation.

For part 2, the trainer will briefly share a step-by-step guide to conducting a participatory impact evaluation. Then the trainer will support group consensus to participate in one pre-implementation activity and one implementation activity, and more depending on group capacity, time, and interest. Online resources and handouts will be provided.

What is the meaning of “impact”?

“positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended”

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (2010)

References:

<https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/themes/impact-evaluation>

https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/resultate-wirkung/impaktevaluationen_EN.pdf

What is the difference between impact evaluation and project evaluation?

- **Intervention (Exemplar):**
 - Project/program development that aims to improve child health through the construction of public water pumps.
- **Impact (effect)evaluation question:**
 - How much lower is the incidence of diarrhea compared to what would have happened without the installation of the water pump?
 - Demonstrates whether measurable changes in people's lives **can be attributed** to a particular development project/program
 - “Not about” quantifying the effect of a project/program on big overarching development goals – such as climate change reduction or poverty alleviation (indirect effects related to the intervention)
- **Project/program evaluation:**
 - Focuses on “whether implementation of operations or provision of service delivery was successful
 - Determines success as defined by # of water pumps built and # of people using them
- **Impact evaluation:**
 - Aims to assess whether the construction of water pumps led to improved health as measured by reduction in the number of new cases of diarrhea among children in the community where the water pumps exist.
- **Monitoring data** and “before-after comparisons” are often not sufficient to establish the causal effect between a development project/program and its related outcome
 - Why? No consideration of external factors.

References:

<https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/themes/impact-evaluation>

https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/resultate-wirkung/impaktevaluationen_EN.pdf

Why conduct an impact evaluation?

- To generate data to drive evidence-based policy making.
- To shift the focus from activities to results.
- To improve or reorient an intervention (i.e., for formative purposes).
- To inform decisions about whether to continue, discontinue, replicate or scale up an intervention (i.e., for summative purposes).
 - A summative evaluation produces findings about ‘what works’ and provides relevant information for about what is needed for facilitate optimal change for different groups in different settings with different structural and social determinants of health/needs and distributions of determinants
- To conduct a formative evaluation if an intervention is ongoing → improve project/program design or implementation
 - Ex. Continuous Quality Improvement - the findings of an impact evaluation conducted during implementation of an intervention can be used to improve program/policy/practice implementation ”in real” for the next intake of participants by identifying critical elements for monitoring management, and mitigation.
- To compare different projects/program based on their effectiveness

References:

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When to do an impact evaluation? Only when one can...

- Clearly identify anticipated or actual areas of alignment and misalignment between institutional intention and community impact (“experience”), w/n context of power relations, dynamics, and differentials between institutions and communities:
 - *accessibility to resources*
 - *decision making capacities*
 - *timeline & deliverables*
 - Too little, too late – when conducted too late, the findings hold little value or power to inform decisions
 - Too much, too soon – when conducted too early, the wealth of information provides an inaccurate and imprecise snapshot of the impacts
 - Ex. Underestimation of impact due to inadequacy of time for optimal development
 - Ex. Overestimation of impacts when they decline over time
- Describe socio-cultural, political, legal, and relational relevance of the evaluation to the organizational/development strategy

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When to do an impact evaluation? Only when one can...

- Conduct an evaluability assessment might need to be done first to assess these aspects.
 - <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/themes/evaluability-assessment>
 - assessment of the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion.
- Explain potential utilities including translation of findings into advocacy or accountability requirements
- Guarantee written action plan from org leadership or policy makers to use/translate findings → meaningful and mutually beneficial practices, programs, policies, protocols, or procedures
- Delegate resources to conduct a culturally and scientifically comprehensive, rigorous, responsive, and relevant impact evaluation with high “approachability, acceptability, availability and accommodation, affordability, and appropriateness” including high data quality and accessibility and additional time, money, expertise to collect more

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What are the intended uses and timings?

- Impact evaluations demand lots of time and human and non-human resources
 - “Not all projects, programs, and policies requires an evaluation with regard to their impact.”
 - “Avoid if no intended uses or users”
 - Ex. If decisions have already been made based on existing credible evidence OR if decisions need to be made before completion of a high-quality impact evaluation
- A positive answer to at least one of the following questions is an indication that a project/program can benefit from an impact evaluation:
 - Is there potential to scale-up the project/program?
 - Is the project/program strategically relevant for the organization for replication or learning purposes?
 - Is this an innovative project/program that is in need of evidence to demonstrate efficacy?
 - Can the results be used to inform national or global policy making?

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Who to engage in the evaluation process?

- Who should be involved, why and how?
 - There is no SINGLE method for participatory impact evaluations because our communities who utilize our programs do NOT live SINGLE issue lives
 - Participatory approaches can be used in any impact evaluation design, and with both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods.
- 3 important questions to ask during the exploratory phase, prior to design or allocation of resources including funding:
 - (1) What purpose will stakeholder participation serve in this impact evaluation?;
 - (2) Whose participation matters, when and why in this impact evaluation?; and
 - (3) When is participation feasible?

References:

https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/Participatory_Approaches_ENG.pdf

<https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/participatory-evaluation>

Who to engage in the evaluation process?

- **Manage:** Lead an evaluation (or a series of evaluations), including deciding who will conduct the evaluation and who will make decisions about it.
 - Who should be invited to participate in managing the impact evaluation? Who will be involved in deciding what is to be evaluated?
 - Who will have the authority to make what kind of decisions?
 - Whose values will determine what a good quality impact evaluation looks like?
- **Define:** Develop a description (or access an existing version) of what is to be evaluated and how it is understood to work.
 - Who will be involved in revising or creating a theory of change on which the impact evaluation will reflect?
 - Who will be involved in identifying possible unintended results (both positive and negative) that will be important

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Who to engage in the evaluation process?

- **Frame:** Set the parameters of the evaluation – its purposes, key evaluation questions and the criteria and standards to be used.
 - Who will decide the purpose of the impact evaluation?
 - Who will set the evaluation questions?
 - Whose criteria and standards matter in judging performance?
- **Describe:** Collect and retrieve data to answer descriptive questions about the activities of the project/program/policy, the various results it has had and the context in which it has been implemented.
 - Who will decide whose voice matters in terms of describing, explaining and judging impacts?
 - Who will help to identify the measures or indicators to be evaluated?
 - Who will collect or retrieve data?
 - Who will be involved in organizing and storing the data?

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Who to engage in the evaluation process?

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- ***Understand Causes:*** Collect and analyze data to answer causal questions about what has produced the outcomes and impacts that have been observed.
 - Who will be involved in checking whether results are consistent with the theory that the intervention produced them?
 - Who will decide what to do with contradictory information? Whose voice will matter most and why?
 - Who will be consulted to identify possible alternative explanations for impacts?
- ***Synthesize:*** Combine data to form an overall assessment of the merit or worth of the intervention, or to summarize evidence across several evaluations.
 - Who will be involved in synthesizing data?
 - Who will be involved in identifying recommendations or lessons learned?
- ***Report & support use:*** Develop and present findings in ways that are useful for the intended users of the evaluation and support them to make use of findings.
 - Who will share the findings?
 - Who will be given access to the findings? Will this be done in an audience-appropriate ways?
 - Which users will be encouraged and adequately supported to make use of the findings?

How to plan and manage an impact evaluation?

- Formal planning and management as a distinct project with:
 - well defined decision-making processes and management roles, responsibilities, and relationship, AND
 - integrated within an existing monitoring, evaluation and research plan and system that generates and makes available a range of evidence to inform decisions
- Planning and managing include:
 - Describing what needs to be evaluated and developing the evaluation brief
 - Identifying and mobilizing resources
 - Deciding who will conduct the evaluation and engaging the evaluator(s)
 - Deciding and managing the process for developing the evaluation methodology
 - Managing development of the evaluation work plan
 - Managing implementation of the work plan including development of reports
 - Disseminating the report(s) and supporting use

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What methods can be used to do impact evaluation?

- Determined by purpose and/or questions
- Frame the boundaries of the impact evaluation
 - *Learning*: Who are the intended learners? How will they be engaged in the evaluation process to ensure it is seen as relevant and credible? What are the decision-making factors that determine where and how this learning is expected to be applied?
 - *Advancing accountability*: Who is being held accountable? To whom? For what?
- Determine your evaluation values that govern attitudes, principles, language, and behavior
 - Relevance
 - Effectiveness
 - Efficiency
 - Impact
 - Sustainability
 - Equity
 - Gender Inclusion
 - Anti-Racist Praxis
 - Anti-Misogyny/Anti-Misogynoir
 - Trauma-Informed
 - Anti-Shame/Anti-Stigma/Anti-Stigmatization
 - System Focused Awareness, Analysis, Actions & Accountability

References:

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What are your key evaluation questions (KEQs)?

KEQ1: What was the quality of the intervention design/content?
[assessing relevance, equity, gender equality, human rights, anti-racism, anti-misogyny, anti-misogynoir]

KEQ2: How well was the intervention implemented and adapted as needed? *[assessing effectiveness, efficiency]*

KEQ3: Did the intervention produce the intended results in the short, medium and long term? If so, for whom, to what extent and in what circumstances? *[assessing effectiveness, impact, equity, gender equality, human rights, anti-racism, anti-misogyny, anti-misogynoir, trauma-informed, anti-stigma]*

KEQ4: What unintended results – positive and negative – did the intervention produce? How did these occur? *[assessing effectiveness, impact, equity, gender equality, human rights, human rights, anti-racism, anti-misogyny, anti-misogynoir, trauma-informed, anti-stigma]*

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What are your key evaluation questions?

KEQ5: What were the barriers and enablers that made the difference between successful and disappointing intervention implementation and results? [*assessing relevance, equity, gender equality, human rights, anti-racism, anti-misogyny, anti-misogynoir, trauma-informed, anti-stigma*]

KEQ6: How valuable were the results to service providers, clients, the community and/or organizations involved? [*assessing relevance, equity, gender equality, human rights, anti-racism, anti-misogyny, anti-misogynoir, trauma-informed, anti-stigma*]

KEQ7: To what extent did the intervention represent the best possible use of available resources to achieve results of the greatest possible value to participants and the community? [*assessing efficiency*]

KEQ8: Are any positive results likely to be sustained? In what circumstances? [*assessing sustainability, equity, gender equality, human rights, anti-racism, anti-misogyny, anti-misogynoir, trauma-informed, anti-stigma*]

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What are the different types of questions within the KEQS?

Descriptive questions

ask about how things are and what has happened, including describing the initial situation and how it has changed, the activities of the intervention and other related programs or policies, the context in terms of participant characteristics, and the implementation environment.

Causal questions

ask whether or not, and to what extent, observed changes are due to the intervention being evaluated rather than to other factors, including other programs and/or policies.

Evaluative questions

ask about the overall conclusion as to whether a program or policy can be considered a success, an improvement or the best option.

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What are the reported benefits of participatory approaches in impact evaluation?

- To improve accuracy and relevance of reported impacts by:
 - listening to the lived experiences of program participants and local implementers, to confirm if impact was achieved as intended, but also has it emerged through unintended positive and negative impacts
 - validating findings, and agreeing relevant lessons learned or recommendations.
To establish and explain causality – by listening to different perspectives on causal chains,
 - synthesizing these and verifying these with different stakeholder groups.

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What are the reported benefits of participatory approaches in impact evaluation?

- To improve understanding of the intervention, especially among decision makers and senior staff – by involving decision makers in participatory data collection, analysis and feedback.

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What are the reported benefits of participatory approaches in impact evaluation?

- To improve project performance through active, adaptive implementation of the intervention by project staff and program participants or those living with policy changes, by:
 - making them curious about performance through involvement in setting locally relevant evaluation questions and in data analysis
 - joint generation of recommendations to build on emerging impacts (or lack thereof). To improve the interventions that have been evaluated by:
 - having more accurate findings of change and causal explanations
 - validating and revising the theory of change with program participants and implementers, and basing the intervention on an up-to-date and robust understanding
 - developing leadership, building team understanding and building local capacity to reflect critically.

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What are additional concepts to explore?



Defining success to make evaluative judgements



Using a theory of change



Deciding the evaluation methodology



Strategies and designs for determining causal attribution



Data collection, management and analysis approach



Reporting findings & supporting use of findings

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Group Consensus

- Pre-implementation Activity
 - 25 min skills building and application
 - 10 min reflection, discussion, Q&A
- Option 1: Change impact assessment
- Option 2: 3 Question “Engagement Assessment”
- Implementation Activity
 - 25 min skills building and application
 - 10 min reflection, discussion, Q&A
- Option 1: Working through KEQ
- Option 2: Design your own agency and/or community specific KEQs

WILD CARD: We can do whatever you like!!



THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS, REFLECTIONS, & DISCUSSION

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