EYF (Re)generation

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Tools prepared by participants at the seminar

Methods for Monitoring and Evaluation

The success of a project fundamentally depends on how much effort you are able to put into its planning, monitoring and evaluation. An effective system of monitoring and evaluation not only allows you to keep a careful eye on the progress of your project, alerting you to any potential problems, but is also a means of assessing whether it meets the objectives that it set out to achieve. However, this is not an evaluation's only purpose. Don't forget that evaluation can also help to improve your work in the future through helping you understand which approaches and practices work best in a given situation. In this way, your evaluations may also be of use to other organisations looking to run a similar project or replicate the one that you've just completed.

But how can you actually evaluate the different dimensions of a project? What methods exist, and are they suited to specific applications? Here are a few ideas to get you started…

Measuring Changes in Project Beneficiaries

Changes in the people with whom you are working normally focus on their knowledge ("I know…"), skills ("I can do…") and attitudes "(I think…"). These changes – positive or negative – can be measured in a number of different ways:

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one of the most popular tools for assessing the impact of a project on participants, but the data that they produce is only as good as their design! There are a number of different ways in which you can use questionnaires, among which the most popular is before and after an intervention (pre and post). This allows you to measure changes in participants' knowledge, skills and attitudes.

To learn more about how else you can use questionnaires, visit:
http://evaluationtoolbox.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58&Itemid=154

Participant Observation

A qualitative method of data collection that is best suited to monitoring how well project beneficiaries engage with specific activities. Participant observation is typically conducted by project staff during delivery of project activities. This can include whether participants seem attentive, disinterested, are emotionally affected, or whether a specific topic inspires discussion. The information is often used alongside and in support of other data, such as post-activity surveys.

For more information, visit here:

http://www.robertsevaluation.com.au/2013-09-12-04-14-44/observation-techniques

Semi-structured interviews (SSIs)

A qualitative method of inquiry, SSIs are used to better understand how interventions actually work and how they could be improved. Unlike a structured questionnaire, an SSI does not limit respondents to a set range of answers. Instead the questions are designed to prompt open discussion that allows the flexible exploration of particular themes or topics of interest, in addition to giving participants the opportunity to raise issues/concerns. They often produce reliable, comparable data that can be included within project reports.

The successful conduct of a SSI requires practise, but here's a handy guide full of tips to get you started: http://www.crpspc.qc.ca/Guide_entretien_versionWEB_eng.pdf

Fulfilment of tasks

A simple and practical method that gives you a clear picture of whether the project beneficiaries are able to implement the skills and knowledge that they have learned as a result of the intervention. The tasks always should be carefully chosen in order to be suitable for the action that you want to evaluate.

Most Significant Change (MSC)

MSC is a participatory monitoring and evaluation technique that is best used to learn lessons from a project, rather than measuring/assessing its specific impact. It involves the collection and analysis of stakeholders' stories regarding what they considered to be the most significant change over the course of a project, before these stories are then selected, shared and discussed. This method is primarily about increasing your understanding of different stakeholders' perspectives of a project, but can also useful for discovering unintended impacts of projects.

A complete guide to its use can be found here:

http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

Evaluation Methods with Young Participants

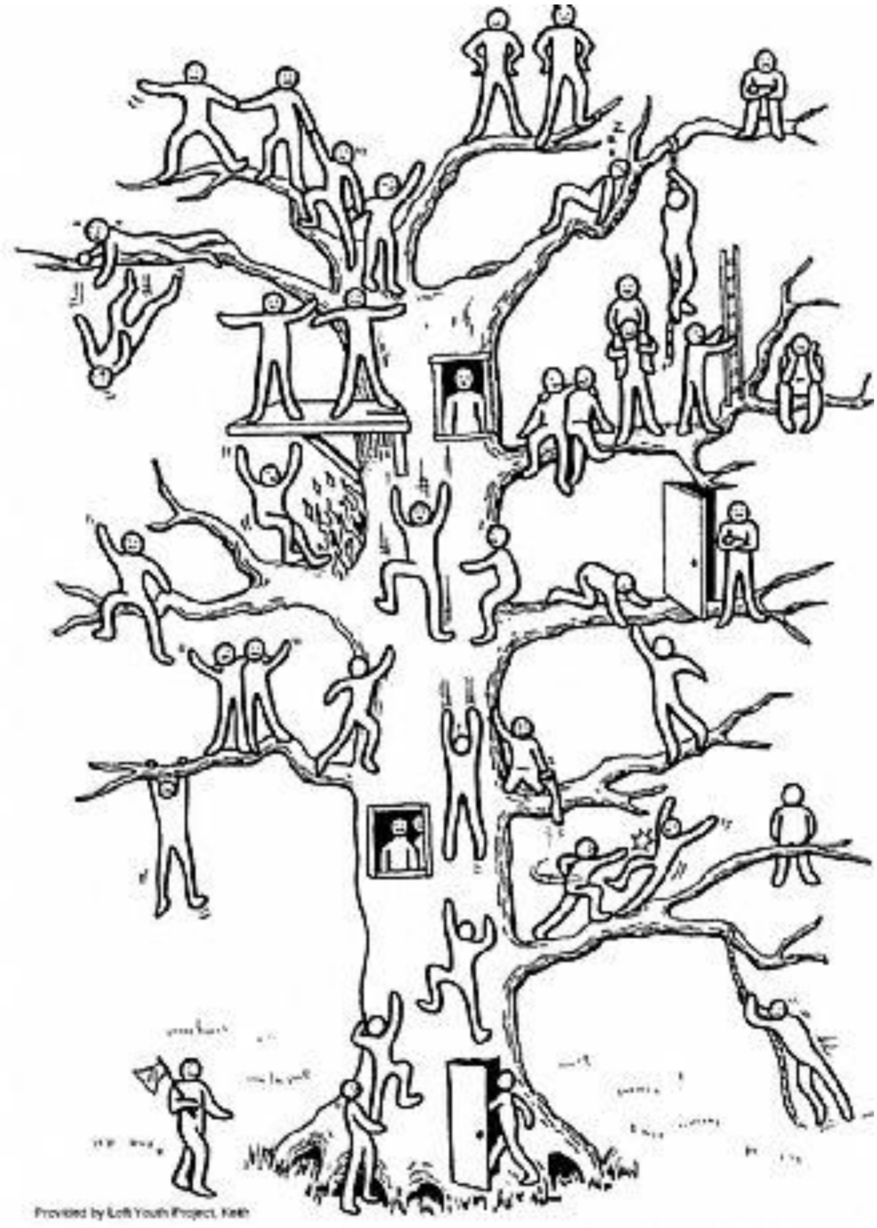
Working with young participants can present specific challenges when it comes to evaluating a project. They may not understand how to complete some of the exercises listed above, or be too shy or unable to express their views. Below is a list of creative exercises specifically designed to evaluate changes in young project beneficiaries:

Darts

This is visual, creative tool that is best used to help young people evaluate their satisfaction with a project. It is simple: instruct project participants to take a dart arrow. If they are satisfied with the provided programme they should put the dart arrow on the darts closer to the centre, if they are not satisfied the dart arrow should be in the area far from the centre.

Evaluation Tree

The evaluation tree is another tool that is particularly suited to working with young children or individuals who respond better to visual tools. Use a print-out of the tool and ask participants which character represents how they feel – you can then ask them to explain further and also ask them which character they'd most like to be. You can also repeat this exercise at regular intervals to record change.



Other examples:

Letter to myself

Picture drawings

Wishing Box

Measuring a Project's Reach

Whilst a lot of projects are primarily concerned with participant-centred changes in a limited environment, the success of many also depends on who they reach, how many people they reach. To assess a project's reach – including its level of inclusivity – use some of the following methods.

Collection of Participant Data

The collection of participant data is best used to assess the inclusivity of a project, though it must be remembered that data often only highlights phenomena rather than explaining the reasons behind it. The most common form of data collected during projects typically concerns participants' demographics: age, gender, race, class, education level background etc. For example, the collection of demographic data might reveal that your project is excluding a key stakeholder – for example, rural youth - from participating in your project. You would then need to use another methodology such as SSIs to find out why and fix the problem.

Outreach Indicators

Outreach indicators are best used to assess a project's scope and are best used within projects that are seeking to raise awareness of a particular issue. At its simplest, this concerns just how many people your project has reached, but can also be far more complex in terms of assessing their level of engagement. For example, you could measure the number of visits a particular page on your website has received, as well as use an analytics program to measure just how long they stayed on the page and with which items they interacted. Another example would be engagement through social media, conducting a content analysis of Facebook comments in addition to the number of 'likes'.

Media Content analysis

Content analysis of media reports is a methodology best used to gauge how a project is being received by local stakeholders, including both media organisations – be it print, television or online outlets - and the interactions of the general public on social media sites. It involves the categorisation and examination of texts and transcripts and can provide valuable insights into how key stakeholders are interpreting and promoting your work. However, it is heavily reliant on the skill-set of the researcher and is often beyond the capacity of local NGOs.

Core M & E Methods

Logical Framework

Also known as a logframe, a logical framework is a tool that can be used within any project to plan, manage, monitor and evaluate all phases of implementation. It looks like a table and presents information about the key components of a project in a concise, logical and systematic way. The use of a logframe encourages clear and specific thinking about what your project aims to do, how it aims to achieve it and how this achievement will be measured. It can also act as a useful summary to help staff, partners, donors and other stakeholders quickly understand your project.

For a comprehensive introduction on to how to use a logframe, visit here:
http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/logframe

Internal Milestones

Milestones are used to monitor the progress of a project, measuring the delivery of a project against a planned timeline. For example, the completion of a major activity or set of activities as determined in your project proposal. Although they provide little detail about the progress of a project, they are a quick and easy method for assessing the 'health' of a project, i.e. did you deliver all that you promised?