Monitoring and Evaluation

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**IDENTIFICATION**
- Surroundings, Secondary data & RRA
- Socio-economic systems, Workshop
- Information on HH-level, Participants group discussion on villages

**Interpretation of data: from problems to causal factors**
- Participatory workshop with key team and facilitators and short surveys with HH

**Ex-ante evaluation, planning and preparation of interventions**
- Institutions, donors, NGO’s, contractors with representatives of local communities

**EVALUATION**
- Participatory workshop with representatives of communities, with project staff, key team and external advisor

**Implementation**
- HH’s in community & donors
  - NGO
  - Government
  - Project staff

**Negotiation and feedback**
- Communities, Donor, NGO, government, project staff

**End of Project**

**New project starts**

**Monitoring starts** (participation of communities)

**Technical appraisal**
- External e.g.w. key team and communities
**Definition and concepts**

Although the framework for monitoring and evaluation is not exactly the aim of this manual we give a brief introduction. The reason for that is that the logic behind the evaluation of food security projects is very much based on the analysis of the target group and on the planning of interventions. Besides, even the tools to do the evaluation are similar, just as the different levels that are involved. We can even state that preferably the monitoring and evaluation should be built into the scheme during the planning phase.

To clarify some of these statements, some conventional definitions of 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' are described first. The two processes are management tools but are different in nature and happen at different stages in the project cycle. Consequently, they will be integrated in the planning scheme at a different stage too.

The evaluation tries to describe the changes in life and wellbeing of the final users. In the best case one tries to compare the situation ex-ante and ex-post and analyse the positive or/and negative evolutions. Often an evaluation contributes to the decision to stop certain activities or to add others. In the evaluation process, external factors that can interfere with the activities to reach a certain impact on the target group, are also taken into account.

A monitoring system can be defined as an observation system for the project managers to verify whether the project activities are happening according to planning and whether means are used in a correct and efficient manner. The system must supply the project management with a continuous flow of information throughout the course of the project to make it possible to take the right decisions. Monitoring is limited to the relation between the implementation of the activities and the results, in which the results are directly and only determined by the project activities.

The cycle of evaluation is depicted in the picture below. Note that evaluation is a process and does not depend on one single moment in the project cycle only. The question of what to evaluate is intrinsically linked to the project cycle and especially to the planning phase of a project. The evaluation process might be viewed as a series of cycles or a spiral, with each cycle leading the project to a higher level of achievement.
Integrating monitoring and evaluation in the project cycle

One can start with a rough outline of the monitoring and evaluation in the planning phase. In the 'general workshop' indicators for monitoring and evaluation can be added to different models and tables (per system!). If necessary, the determination of indicators can happen in a separate workshop. For monitoring the dynamic model can be a basis to add indicators. Also for evaluation the dynamic model can be used as far as measurement of external factors is considered. For evaluation especially, indicators will have to be added to the efficiency evaluation, where the impact on the target group (outcome) occupies a central place. Indicators for evaluation are never situated at the intervention level purely but at the level of the target group.

While setting the priorities concerning the information that is needed, it is also important to consider the information flows: who will give which information to whom, what happens with the information at different levels, which information is gained where, how is the feedback organised, when will policy decisions be taken and by whom? All these information flows must be decided on in the workshop.
If the initial analysis and planning of the interventions have not been done within the framework described in the manual, then still it is possible to use this method for the evaluation of projects. In a workshop the same tools as for planning can then be used for evaluation (causal model, dynamic model and efficiency table). The disadvantage of starting the procedure at a later phase - when projects have already started - is: 1) means might have been wasted already by a non-targeted approach of the problem; 2) it might be difficult to take distance from the existing projects and to think in a broader sense about causes, problems and opportunities; 3) a lot of questions on how to achieve the anticipated impact on the target group will remain unanswered if no decent analysis of the target group has been made before the workshop.

However, the process of evaluation doesn't stop with setting these indicators in the planning phase. These indicators are a first impression of the participants of the workshop and are mainly based on the logic of the analytical framework. It is advisable to also involve the target group at grass-root level. It is possible that the same communities occur as involved in the analysis of poverty (step 3). It is important that they are also actively involved in defining what, how and when to evaluate. They can even be useful in the actual process. Participation of the target group is especially feasible in case the activities have short-term and direct impact (for the target group is then immediately affected by the interventions, which makes it easier to think about possible impact). In the monitoring process also the analysis and discussion of the data is participatory. The (part of) the target group that is involved in a certain activity or in data collecting is also involved in analysing the data and will at least get a decent explanation about the results gained from the data.

But even if the target group is not involved in setting the indicators for evaluation - then they will still be involved. As mentioned before, it is important to find information on the impact at the bottom line: with the target group. Note that impact measurements (evaluation) can only be conducted when the monitoring indicates that activities were implemented as planned. Again, measurements of impact can be made quantitatively (see step 5) or qualitatively in group discussions with common PRA-tools. Use participatory methods wherever possible. If less sophisticated methods are acceptable, use them! Be more creative with methods, e.g. accept photo documentation as evidence. Always check first if there is enough human capacity to carry out the desired evaluation.

Be careful not to take the participation at grass-root level for monitoring and evaluation too easy in case of poverty projects. It is not obvious that poor households will be involved in case of common introduction of participation in communities. For evaluation this can be important. Two ways to handle this problem are suggested. First of all, as mentioned before, one can design selective short-term activities for poor individuals in order to get a group together that includes poor people. Secondly the indicators can be set in the workshop at medium level - based on logical consequences of the analysis of poverty. The groups in the communities can then only discuss these indicators and add information for them. Ask them explicitly to also discuss the impact on poor households in their evaluation.
Making the bottom-up approach operational

Once the fine-tuned information on the different indicators has been sampled and discussed at grass-root level, the challenge consists once again of ‘moving’ the information towards higher levels of the project cycle and environment. Therefore we advise discussing this information from the grass-root level, at least once per year in a workshop (progress workshop on medium level) similar to the planning workshop described in this chapter. The modelling and schemes of the previous workshop can then be revised and adapted, based on the information on results and impact. Preferably you work with the same participants as in the planning workshop. Activities and indicators can then be changed or added, based on the discussion and consensus reached in the workshop. Don’t restrict yourself to a discussion of the contents. The process, too, must be discussed. A consensus must be reached about information flows, responsibilities and reporting the information. From that workshop information can go two ways again: first upwards to higher levels, for example to donors to report on the progress; and second down again, to start activities (and monitoring) with the target group. This iterative process of information and participation going up and down between the different levels is visualised in the pyramid.

Flow of information on analysis of poverty
Project Planning and preparation, negotiation
Information on monitoring and evaluation
New project cycle: planning and preparation, negotiation
Policy strategy of the specific donor or government

Strengthening of processes in one group and between levels
Priorities start at grass-root level. Information on their lives and causes of poverty flows to the level of policy makers and implementing organisations (1). They report those needs to the donor. Based on this information rough outlines for projects are prepared and planned at 'medium' level (2). Those are then negotiated with the communities for detailed planning of implementation. Monitoring can start as soon as the activities have started at local level. After some time also the data for the evaluation start from the bottom, and climb one level to be discussed also at higher levels (3). These data and conclusions are reported to the donor. Based on the data from monitoring and evaluation new funds can be added, new activities and goals are prepared: a new project cycle starts (4). Note that donors influence the whole process by setting a basic framework based on their specific strategies and policies.

However, not only the agenda of these different phases is important. As mentioned before: the whole bottom-up approach doesn't make much sense if the structures and processes are not strengthened as canals for information flow and if the people involved are not trained for participation. In the pyramid, thick arrows present these processes. Also this process of empowerment and level of interaction in and between the different groups involved must be monitored. Or to make things short: monitor the monitoring! These processes can be evaluated in workshops at different levels with PRA-tools. Venn diagrams are very useful in this context.