

## **PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND IMPACT EVALUATION OF WATERSHED PROJECT**

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### **Watershed Project Cycle:**

Any project has six distinct phases, viz., project identification, project appraisal (financial, technical, economic, social and environmental), project implementation, project monitoring and project evaluation. This is commonly known as project cycle. Monitoring and evaluation are very important, integral and inseparable part of any project cycle, without which cycle will not complete itself.

### **Monitoring**

In order to keep track of the project activities and progress monitoring is an important management tool used to provide timely information on the progress of the project in the process of implementation. It is concerned with the progress of the project in relation to its objectives, and directing and controlling it during implementation for the purpose of effective project management. It refers to the gathering of information on utilization of inputs, on unfolding of project activities, on timely generating of outputs, and on circumstances that are critical to the effective implementation of the project. It provides timely signals focused selectively on crucial problem areas, offering early warning about implementation problems, which require corrective action. It is an internal project activity and an integral part of day-to-day management. Not only it supplies current information for project management but also a basis for the assessment of project impact on overall results.

### **Evaluation**

It is concerned with the project effects and impact and it assesses the overall project effects both intentional and unintentional and their impact. Effects and impact shade each other – the difference is largely one of degree along the dimensions of time, scale and scope. The effects will show through sooner, apply to the direct beneficiaries and relate to specific aspects. The impact measures the final total result, taking into account the direct and indirect effects and allowing for diffusion that produce changes in the community as a whole. It requires the development of a series of data commencing before the project is implemented and continuing well past the completion of the implementation period. In addition to the analysis of data series over time, it will usually require in-depth studies of validity of certain assumptions implicit in the project justification.

### **Participatory Monitoring and evaluation – A backdrop:**

The Global consultation on Agricultural Extension highlighted that Monitoring and Evaluation are important yet frequently neglected function in most of the organizations (FAO, 1990a). They have recommended strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism for improving extension performance. But the outcome of standard quantitative monitoring and evaluation is often divorced from needs, the indigenous wisdom, values, expectations and interest of the stakeholders and that leads to irrelevant findings.

Conventional monitoring and evaluation is top-down conception. The conceptional approach of top-down development and centralized planning over the years could not solve the problems of rural people to a significant extent leading to the frustration and finally rethinking about the whole approach. The World Conference of Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development (WCARRD) in Rome in 1977 was the landmark since FAO, World Bank, WHO and many other Government agencies and NGO's realized the need for more participatory and people focused approach in place of long established external, professionally led styles of project interventions (Chander, 1997). It has been argued that agricultural problems should be approached from local knowledge bases (Kloppenburn, 1991). The extractive process of conventional evaluation being a source of complaint is now thought to have little enduring and positive impact for projects (Coupal, 1997). So it is imperative to move toward a monitoring and evaluation system having greater local value those who are at the core of the programme and it keeps in view the people's expectations, values and interests. It must open up greater transparency and decentralization to the poor (Basu et al., 1997). People on the receiving end are the best judges of the impact whether benefits have been produced or not (Uphoff, 1992).

Hence, there emerges a new approach of monitoring and evaluation, the participatory monitoring and evaluation which assumes a democratic process along with greater autonomy on the part of the learner and educators at the local level (Green, 1988).

#### **Goal of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Is participatory monitoring and evaluation merely an attempt to assess the impact of a given activity through mere creative set of tools and techniques? Does it have a broader mission in view?

It is generally felt that Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation is not merely a technical exercise with set tools and techniques to collect and analysis data to reach some conclusion. It is seen as a political process with –

- Overall mission of empowering the masses, the poor oppressed.
- Ability to help people to value their own experience and knowledge.
- Attempts to regenerate critical faculties and reflection capacities of the powerless masses so that they can analysis.
- It is a tool.
- For developing their own terms of reference rather than given terms of reference.
- For promoting leadership among the powerless people.
- That helps to link micro echelons within macro perspective.



### **Objectives of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation may be done:

- Because of increasing accountability to serve the project beneficiaries.
- Because of building capacity: Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation helps to build capacity among the participants by training in participatory methodology and approaches.
- Because PME has been planned: Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation can be planned for set times throughout the life of activities.
- Because there is a crisis: Participatory Evaluation impacts / can help to avoid a potential crisis as well as help in providing a chance for discussing the important issues.
- Because a problem has become apparent: Participatory Monitoring provides an early warning, which identifies problem at the early stage. It may provide more information that can help people determine why there is a problem and/or how to overcome it.
- Because where participation is new: In a project where participation has not been a feature, participatory evaluation may be the beginning of the participatory approaches (Goupal and Simoneau, 1997: FAO, 1990).

### **What is Participatory Monitoring?**

#### **Participatory Monitoring Measures Progress:**

Participatory monitoring is the systematic recording and periodic analysis of information that has been chosen and recorded by insiders with the help of outsiders. The main purpose of participatory monitoring is to provide information during the life of the project, so that adjustment and/or modification can be made if needed.

#### **Participatory Monitoring Provides Information For Decision – Makers:**

Keeping track of activities by recording information on daily, weekly, monthly or seasonal basis and taking the time to stop and analyze the information monitored can provide important, immediate feedback, and can be used in future for Participatory evaluation.

#### **Information is periodically analyzed:**

Participatory monitoring is not only keeping records, it is also stopping at set times to analyze (add up, discuss, integrate) information. The time to stop and analyze will vary according to the nature and/or seasonality of activities.

#### **Insiders choose the terms of measurement:**

When the terms of measurement (Kilos, Gram, Guntas, Sacks, Cans, Pounds, Bundles etc.) are chosen by insiders the information is better understood.

**Broadly examines progress towards objectives and activities:**

Insiders, given the opportunity have their ability to combine qualitative (descriptive) information with quantitative (numbers) information, providing a more comprehensive data base (FAO, 1990).

### **What is Participatory Evaluation?**

**Insiders take the lead in Participatory evaluation:**

A participatory evaluation is an opportunity for both outsider and insider to stop and reflect on the past in order to make decision about the future. Insiders are encouraged and supported by outsiders to take responsibility and control of:

- (a) Planning what is to be evaluated
- (b) How the evaluation will be done
- (c) Carrying out the evaluation
- (d) Analyzing information and presenting evaluation results.

**Outsiders facilitate Participatory Evaluation:**

Outsiders assist insiders in planning and conducting the evaluation. They lead but do not direct. They can provide the focus, the idea and some help, intervening when assistance is required.

**Information to guide management decisions:**

A participatory evaluation should not be thought of as a final judgement on whether activities are successful or unsuccessful. The information should encourage changes and adjustment either during the life span of the activities, for future phases of the activities or for future new activities.

**Both objectives and activities are considered:**

In a participatory evaluation, the overall and immediate objectives, their continued relevance and the effectiveness of the activities are all taken into account.

**Degrees of Evaluation:**

The degrees of evaluation were explained by Reddy, 1997 as follows:

**A. Informal:**

- I. Casual every-day evaluation
- II. Self checking evaluations
- III. Do-it-yourself evaluation

**B. Formal:**

- IV. Extension studies
- V. Scientific research

- I Casual every-day evaluation: We make value judgments everyday. (A good meal; best show I ever saw; one of the worst speeches I ever heard). Simple observations are important for something, but have their limitations. We must be careful to distinguish what is actually present from what we think we see.



- II. Self-Checking evaluations; make conscious attempt to apply principles of evaluation; e.g. checking on ordinary observations, talking with others, getting other people's judgments.
- III. Do-it-yourself evaluation: These involve more careful planning, apply principles of evaluation and are more systematically done. They usually require surveys, or score cards.
- IV. Extension studies: More complex, use more scientific approach.
- V. Scientific research: Experimental studies scientifically carried out to determine cause-and-effect relationships. Must be
  - i. Factual (or Valid): Measure what you think you are measuring
  - ii. Analytical: Analyze the relationships of various factors
  - iii. Reliable: Sample representative of population; consistency of results
  - iv. Objective: Free of bias-others get similar results

#### Participatory vs. Conventional Monitoring and Evaluation

Participatory monitoring and evaluation	Conventional Monitoring and evaluation
➤ Stakeholders are central to the process and the process is multidimensional. The role of evaluation dramatically changes to that of a facilitator.	➤ Role of stakeholders is passive providing information but not participating in the evaluation itself. It is more donor focused and linear.
➤ It plays emphasis both on process and final output, the report.	➤ It emphasizes only on the final output, the report.
➤ Participatory monitoring and evaluation involves stakeholders in its design	➤ Its design is defined by the donor in isolation or with some input from the project
➤ Control and decisions are made by program/project beneficiary	➤ Donor control of resources and decision
➤ Collective learning process	➤ An extractive process, outsider's perspective
➤ More labour intensive and time consuming	➤ Not so labour intensive and time consuming
➤ It reveals community skills that develops analytical skills needed to make decisions	➤ It is not possible in conventional evaluation as here the insiders are passive

#### Steps in participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME)

- Step I: Understanding goal/objectives of local development project/programme.
- Step II: Identifying activities to achieve objectives.
- Step III: Identifying measurements to assess results or show extent of progress achieved.
- Step IV: Developing measurement indicators.
- Step V: Identifying methods and techniques of collecting information.
- Step VI: Selecting formats/visual tools for presenting information

**Step I Goal: *sustainable increase in productivity of sub-watershed within local community***

***Objectives***

- Soil conservation techniques adopted by 50 percent households.
- Rehabilitation of 40 percent of identified, critical soil erosion sites.
- Trees planted by users' groups in 300 ha.
- Protection of 500 ha of forest by users' group.
- Increase in capability of 100 users' groups to identify, plan and manage watersheds.

**Step II**

***Activities***

- Planting fodder, fuel wood trees, sowing grass, improved cropping.
- Check dams, landslide control, wall to protect riverbank.
- Establish nursery; seedling production; planting trees.
- Discussion on forest protection, handing over forest to community and prepare forest protection measures.
- Training for users' groups, workshop/seminar, observation tour.

**Step III**

***Assessment measures***

- Percentage of farmers using soil conservation.
- Percentage of critical soil erosion sites rehabilitated.
- Area under forest plantation.
- Capability of users' groups to plan and manage conservation programmes.

**Step IV**

***Developing measurement indicators***

- Hold group discussions among farmers and share common experiences.
- Use brainstorming methods (list all possible ideas and select suitable ones).
- Develop indicators for each activity designed to achieve specific objective.

**Step V**

***Identifying methods of collecting information***

***At community level***

- Group discussion among people.
- Direct observation of site activities.
- Interviewing individuals.

***Tools***

- Resource map
- Pie chart
- Bar chart

- SSI (Semi-structured interview)
- Venn diagram and others

***Remember to collect data in***

- Simple form
- Local language
- Regular interval (monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or yearly, etc.)
- Remember PRA guidelines

**Step VI**

***Selecting formats/visual tools for presenting information***

- Charts/graphs/diagrams.
- Visual presentation is easier for village people to understand.

**Categories of Tools for PM&E:**

The variety of tools and techniques available for use in PM&E include both more conventional tools from the social sciences and more recently-developed PRA tools. Most of the PRA tools were originally developed for use in initial community assessments (participatory rural appraisals etc.), however, most of them can also be used for planning, documenting and reporting on program activities. The purpose of these tools is to elicit group discussion, reflection and sharing and to stimulate groups of program stakeholders to formulate conclusions and plans for action. Estrella and Gaventa (1998) propose the following categorization of participatory tools and techniques that can be used in PM&E:

**1. PRA and PRA-related tools**

- Visualized analysis
- Venn diagrams
- Pie diagrams
- Matrix scoring
- Transect walks
- Rating scales
- Un-serialized posters
- Community mapping
- Flow diagrams
- Seasonal calendars

**2. Audio-visual tools**

- Videos
- Story telling
- Popular theatre
- Songs



### 3. Quantitative tools

- Community surveys
- Structured observations

### 4. Tools derived from the anthropological tradition

- Participant observation
- Oral testimonies

#### Steps of participatory monitoring:

Preparation and planning for monitoring helps everyone to know why they are monitoring and how it will be done. The first meeting to plan for monitoring can include all the directly involved groups in the activities as well as other interested groups but concentration will be given on those who are directly involved or those selected by the groups who will be responsible for monitoring. Respective participatory monitoring requires a framework, which is explained in the following steps.

#### First step: Discuss reasons for monitoring:

The benefits and purpose of monitoring should be reviewed to help the insiders in deciding for themselves whether monitoring will be useful for them.

#### Second step: Review objectives and activities:

If the projects are in participatory approach, then the objectives and activities have been established during participatory assessment. If insiders have not been involved previously, the objectives and activities established by outsiders must be discussed and reviewed by the insiders.

#### Third step: Develop monitoring questions:

After the review of objectives and activities discussion is required on the information for knowing whether the activities are going well. Some monitoring questions should be focused like "what do we want to know?" and what do we monitor that will tell us this?" The monitoring questions generated around each objective and activity should be agreed by the group. If many questions are generated they can be ranked in order of importance.

#### Fourth step: Establish direct and indirect indicators:

For each monitoring questions, determination of direct and / or indirect indicators that will answer the monitoring question is required.

#### Fifth step: Decide which information gathering tools are needed:

The most appropriate information gathering tools must be chosen for each indicator or monitoring questions. One tool can gather information that answers many monitoring questions. Some of the information gathering tools useful in participatory monitoring are:

- Community environment assessment
- Survivals surveys



- Farmer's own records
- Self-help group's different register
- Community financial account

**Sixth step: Decide who will do the monitoring:**

People with specific skills such as book keeping or mathematics are required for monitoring. It also requires certain amount of time from the people. So people with such skills and time can be selected for monitoring.

**Seventh step: Analyze and present results:**

The information gathered by participatory monitoring should be analyzed at set times throughout the activities. The analysis can be discussed at community meeting, posted or put in community newsletter. This community will be then aware of whether or not activities are progressing as planned or if changes or modifications are required.

**Steps to participatory evaluation:**

There are numbers of key steps when undertaking a participatory evaluation. Preparation and planning for participatory evaluation help every one to know why they are evaluating and how they can do it. But different authors have described these steps in different ways.

However, the first group meeting should be open to all beneficiaries and others in the community, as well as other interested groups from outside the community. This meeting is very important as in this meeting it is to be discussed and decided why they are evaluating, what they want to know, how to evaluate and who will do it. The steps are as follows:

**Step 1: To understand the socio-economic and political context:**

Participatory approaches do not operate in vacuum. The socio-economic and socio-political condition of a particular area can affect the degree of participation, openness and questioning by project staff and recipients. It is also important that project recipients understand the importance of being inclusive in all levels of decision-making (Coupal, 1995).

**Step 2: Review objectives and activities:**

The community's long-term and immediate objectives and activities to meet these objectives can be reviewed. If the project is already under participatory approach then the objectives and activities established under participatory assessment can be reviewed. If the activities have not been participatory, the objectives, as established by the outsider, can be reviewed. It is important to review from the beginning of the experience the stakeholders and beneficiaries have had with the project, the accomplishments and impact of the object and key constraints (Coupal, 1995; FAO, 1990).

**Step 3: Review reasons for evaluation:**

After the objectives and activities are reviewed, it is required to be discussed why the evaluation is to be done and what is wanted to be known.

**Step 4: Develop evaluation questions:**

Around each objective and activity, the evaluation questions should be developed and the group should agree with this question. If many questions are generated the questions should be ranked in order of importance (FAO, 1990).

**Step 5: Decide who will do the evaluation:**

In larger group meeting, it should be decided who will do evaluation and who will want to know the result. It is also needed to be decided whether to include whole community (especially if it is small community), or only the beneficiaries or delegate the responsibility for the evaluation to an evaluation team. The composition of evaluation team should be decided by the interested larger group in the first group meeting. If it is found that some minority group is not represented then the facilitator may encourage the representation of the spokesperson in the evaluated team. The larger group should decide who needs the result of evaluation and when the result should be ready.

**Step 6: Identify direct and indirect indicators:**

Direct and indirect indicators are chosen for evaluation question which are generated in the first meeting. Stakeholders play a central role in setting verifiable indicators to be used.

**Step 7: Identify the information sources for evaluation questions**

For each evaluation question and indicator that has been chosen, the evaluation team identifies where the information is available or if it is not available how it will be made available. The information may be available from participatory monitoring.

If information is not readily available some information gathering tools can be used to obtain information. Some of them useful in participatory evaluation are as follows:

- Community case study
- Semi-structured Interview
- Ranking, rating and sorting
- Community environment assessment
- Farmer's own records

The choice of tools depends on the kind of information needed. Where groups have a low level of literacy, one may need to use other technique like mapping, folklore, songs, or theatre to evaluate activities so that stakeholders are not left out.

**Step 8: Determine the skills and labour that are required to obtain information**

The assistance of people with the specific skills like interviewing, mathematics, art/or drama as well as certain amount of time (labour) will be required. The evaluation team must decide which skills and resources are available to them and what they can develop and actually what resources they need.

**Step 9: Determine when information gathering and analysis can be done:**

Information gathering and analysis should be done within the time frame given to evaluation team, so that the results can reach decision makers on time. The timing of evaluations must take into account factors such as: seasonal constraints (planning and



harvesting times); religious holidays; field staff availability, and community labour demands. For each tool how much time required and when to do are to be decided by the evaluation team.

**Step 10: Determine who will gather information:**

For gathering information some skills are needed. The individual or groups of individual with some specific skills like proper use of information gathering tools should be identified. When the specific dates, the required time and skills are known, then the tasks can be delegated to individuals or small working groups.

**Step 11: Analyze and present results:**

After the completion of all tasks, analysis and synthesis of information will be necessary for presentation. While generally every stage of participatory evaluation involves some types of workshop. The analysis of the data collected and the findings are critical. It is important that the stakeholders should be involved in the analysis of the data and have an understanding of the findings. The analysis and recommendations made by the participants can be consolidated in the final report.

**Step 12: Feedback and using evaluation findings :**

Stakeholders must have an opportunity to comment on the final report. The report must be a reflection of key findings, recommendation and a future plan of action. A good evaluation should provide stakeholder with concrete tools and recommendations for stakeholder to reorient the project with or without donor finding.

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