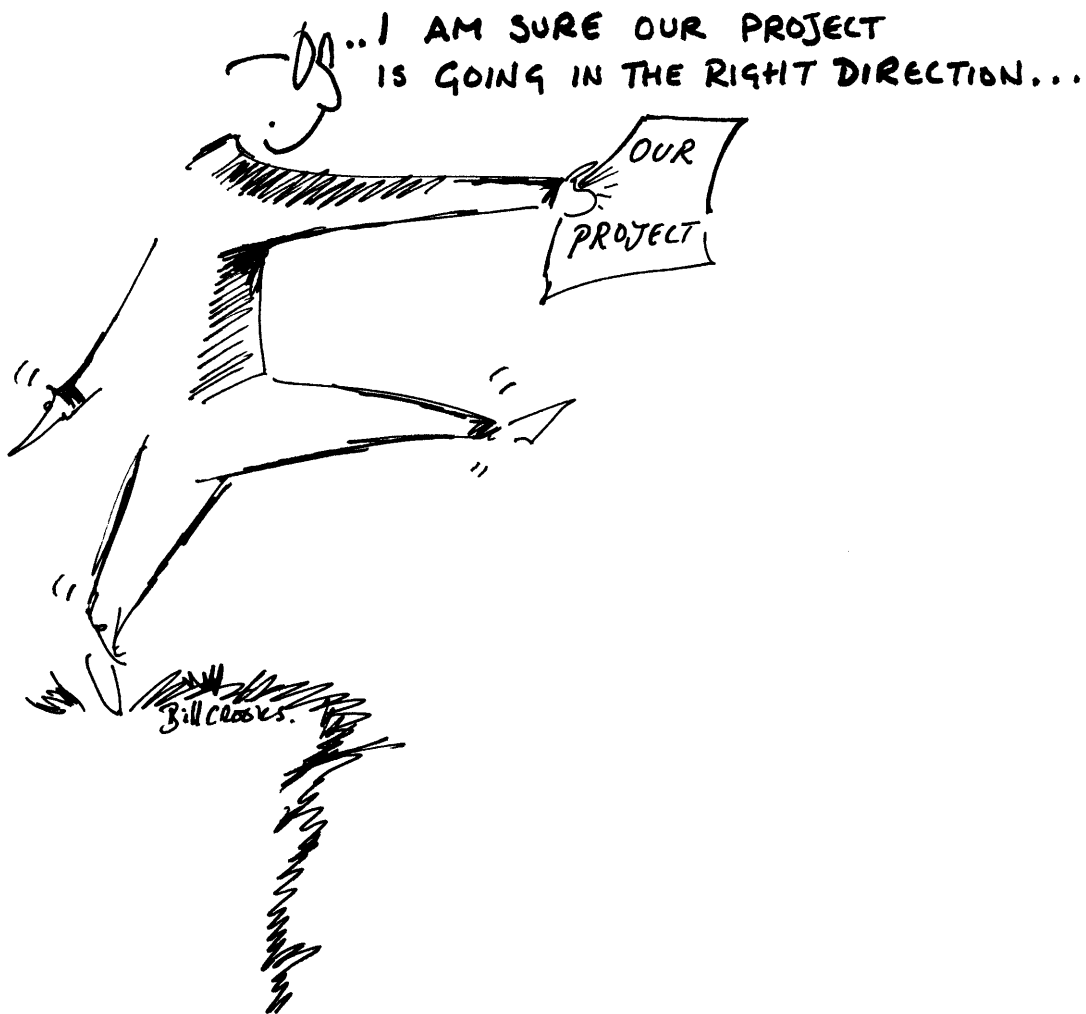


Introducing Evaluation



Introducing Evaluation

These notes are designed for people in churches, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or charities who are considering evaluating their work. This guide gives some brief answers to questions that people frequently ask.

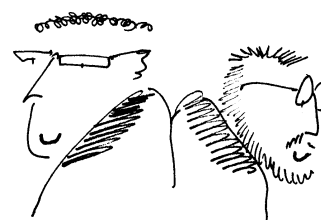
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WHAT IS AN EVALUATION?

An evaluation looks at whether the desired changes have taken place

An evaluation happens when people stop to try and find out:

- whether the objectives of the work have been achieved
- whether there have been any long-term changes
- what lessons can be learned and whether there needs to be any changes to the design and direction of the work.¹

It is about reflecting on what has happened in order to influence the future.

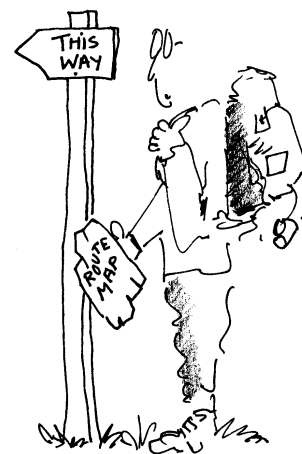
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MONITORING AND EVALUATION?

Monitoring is continuous, whilst evaluation is at one point in time

Monitoring is the on-going collection and analysis of information to find out whether a project is moving towards achieving its objectives. The information is collected throughout the life of the project.

An **evaluation**, however, is at one point in time, uses the monitoring information and may also question the overall direction of a project, as well as the objectives themselves.

Imagine a person setting off on a journey. During the journey they will check to see whether they are following their planned route, whether they are going at the right speed and whether they have enough resources (fuel and food) in order to arrive at their destination. This would be **monitoring** the journey. At the end or middle of the journey, however, they might stop to see how far they have come and ask whether they have chosen the right route to get to that place. At this point they might also ask whether they need to continue on the same route or whether circumstances have changed so they need to adjust the whole journey. This would be **evaluating** the journey.



A clear and organised system for collecting and analysing information is needed throughout the life of a project. This will enable monitoring to be done, providing information which can later be used for evaluation.

Get a clear system for gathering the most important information



¹ Eade D and Williams S (1995) *The Oxfam Handbook of Relief and Development*, Oxfam

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AN EVALUATION?

Evaluation helps learning and accountability

An evaluation can:

- help provide advice to the people making decisions and show a way forward
- help people learn what is working best so that resources can be used effectively
- reveal the needs of the project, for instance training of staff
- strengthen accountability – by showing to church leadership, funders and local people how the project is changing the situation
- assess whether the original objectives are still worth trying to achieve
- help people’s ability to reflect and learn from the work of the project – this can help to improve monitoring
- help to show whether the money, time and effort are worthwhile.²

To summarise the above, an evaluation is undertaken for two main reasons: **learning and accountability.**

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE INVOLVED IN EVALUATIONS?

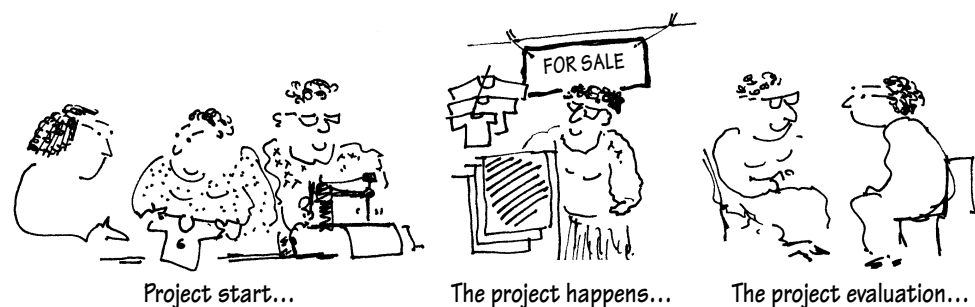
In the Bible there is a clear call to reflect on what we do. Psalm 26:2 says ‘Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind.’ There is also an emphasis on being prepared to account for what we do and on being honest with each other about our actions. Romans 14:12 says ‘So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.’³ We can help each other reflect, learn and be accountable.

WHEN SHOULD THERE BE AN EVALUATION?

It is good to plan an evaluation to follow each important phase in the life of the project. This might be every two years or every five years, depending on the type of the work and when results are expected. An evaluation is also usually undertaken at the end of a project. Sometimes an evaluation may be requested a



Evaluations should follow every major phase in a project



² adapted from Raistrick T (2000) *Church, Community and Change*, Tearfund

³ NIV Study Bible

few years after the project has finished – to look at the longer-term changes that have taken place. At the beginning of the project, therefore, it is always important to ask how it will be monitored and evaluated.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT WAYS TO HOLD AN EVALUATION?

Most evaluations fall into one of the following three categories:

Self evaluations –
decisions made
mainly by project staff

Self evaluation This is when project staff seek to evaluate their own work. It may be carried out by one member of the organisation or a team, or responsibility may be spread across the organisation.⁴ An external facilitator may be needed to support the process. People may wish to treat the results of self evaluations as confidential, or may use the findings as the basis of reports and proposals to donor agencies.⁵

Joint evaluations –
decisions made mainly
by implementing and
donor organisations

Joint evaluation This type of evaluation is jointly planned by those managing the project and any donor(s). The person directly responsible for the evaluation is sometimes called the Client, or Commissioning Manager. This person may be in either the implementing agency or the funding agency. The advantage of a joint evaluation is that it can allow clear communication and understanding between the agencies about the progress of the project. The disadvantage is that it can sometimes be seen as a ‘policing’ exercise by the donor.

CASE STUDY OF A JOINT EVALUATION

The time for the evaluation was approaching, but for a number of reasons little had yet been organised. There was a need to draw up a Terms of Reference (ToR) but lack of time meant this kept being postponed. Finally a ToR was circulated to the other agencies. It was re-drafted and agreed upon by all stakeholders.

As the time for the evaluation came closer, the management staff found that dealing with a number of problems within the organisation was requiring much time. The recruitment of experienced consultants for the evaluation was also becoming a real problem and was taking longer than expected. At the same time, relationships between the staff on the project were worse than ever (due to an issue of corruption being exposed). As a result of the corruption, a special audit had to be undertaken. It had been planned that the project leader would leave soon after the evaluation, but due to the corruption it was realised this would not be possible. Establishing a new structure and vision became the first priority.

By the time the evaluation took place, all the staff were extremely tired and only three of the four consultants had been recruited. There was also disagreement with the donor as to who should be on the evaluation team. The evaluation unfortunately also coincided with the special audit which could not be delayed. On looking back, the project manager reflected it would have been better to have postponed the evaluation, but at the time he had not felt able to tell the donors that the timing of the visit was inconvenient.

⁴ Russell J (1998) *Self Evaluation*, Discussion Paper 3: Charities Evaluation Services

⁵ Eade D and Williams S (1995) *The Oxfam Handbook of Relief and Development*, Oxfam

Participatory evaluations – decisions made mainly by those benefiting from the project

Participatory evaluation There can be different levels of participation by beneficiaries in an evaluation.

- Asking people for their views, perhaps through interviews or discussion groups.
- Involvement of beneficiaries in the design of the evaluation, for example asking them to help define key questions and criteria for evaluation.
- Involvement of beneficiaries in the design, and also in carrying out parts of the evaluation, for instance doing interviews.
- Handing over responsibility for the evaluation to the beneficiaries.⁶

Participatory evaluation generally refers to the last two types of evaluation. This type of evaluation has many advantages, but it can only work well when there is the same level of participation throughout the life of the project.

The Principles of Participatory Evaluation⁷

- The evaluation process involves participants in using their skills – for example setting goals, establishing priorities, selecting relevant questions, analysing data, making decisions on the data.
- The participants in the process own the evaluation. They make the major decisions on the focus of the design of the evaluation. They come to their own conclusions.
- Participants make sure the evaluation focuses on methods and results they consider important.
- Participants work together as a group and any evaluation facilitator supports group unity and group questioning.
- All aspects of the evaluation, including the data, are understandable and meaningful to participants.
- Self-accountability is highly valued.
- Any facilitators act as resources for learning. Participants are decision makers and evaluators.



⁶ Russell J (1998) *Involving Users in Evaluation*, Discussion Paper 4: Charities Evaluation Services

⁷ adapted from Patton M, (1997) *Utilization-focused Evaluation*, London: Sage. Secondary ref: Russell J (1998) *Involving Users in Evaluation*, Discussion Paper 4: Charities Evaluation Services

CASE STUDY OF A PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

Each of the 19 selected villages in Cambodia had elected five or six members of their community to represent them in identifying, analysing and solving individual and community needs. After two years of activities within the villages, a participatory evaluation was recommended and arranged. Project staff facilitated the three day workshop which all representatives enthusiastically attended. It was packed with stimulating participatory activities and opportunities to meet one another. Those attending could share what had happened in their villages, and think about their ideas for the future and their understanding of development. Through the process, they became affirmed and inspired in their roles.

The workshop stimulated enormous energy and creativity which is still having an impact years later.

SHOULD WE USE EXTERNAL PEOPLE?

In any of the above approaches to evaluation, it may be decided to recruit an external person or team to undertake or facilitate the evaluation. External people may be consultants, researchers or from other organisations.

Advantages of using external people

- They can bring new ideas, new perspectives and specialist skills.
- They may be seen to be more 'objective' than insiders.
- They can have the ability to compare the situation with other similar projects.
- Donor requirements sometimes include the need for external people.
- It can be easier for external people to highlight difficult issues (eg: gender sensitivity).
- Staff/beneficiaries may feel more able to voice their opinions to external people.
- There is less risk of an 'atmosphere of blame' than when using internal people.
- It is possible to select people with proven evaluation or facilitation skills.

External people can see things objectively...

...yes, but do they know our culture?



They can bring ideas from other places...

...yes, but their recommendations may be inappropriate!



Disadvantages of using external people

- It takes time and effort to recruit and manage consultants.
- External people may lack knowledge of the organisation, project or local culture.
- External people cannot provide support to the follow up of recommendations if recruited for a short period of time.
- Sometimes it is hard to find the right people.
- Consultants can be expensive.
- The evaluating skills of staff and beneficiaries may not be developed.
- Staff/beneficiaries may not be committed to recommendations made.
- The presence of external people can be threatening.

Tearfund operating principles adapted for those involved in assessment

- ✓ We will try to treat those with whom we work with love and respect and without distinction.
- ✓ We want to show the character and godliness of Christ.
- ✓ We are committed to advocacy – speaking up on behalf of the powerless and enabling the poor to speak up for themselves.
- ✓ We recognise the danger of imposing our cultural values on others.
- ✓ We acknowledge that the gospel challenges and transforms all cultures including our own.
- ✓ We will strive to develop good relationships – this requires mutual accountability, trust and transparency.
- ✓ We want to act as facilitators with humility and a commitment to the needs of others above our own.
- ✓ We want to enable people to make choices and become agents of change.
- ✓ We want to include in the process the marginalised and excluded – women, children, older people and people with disabilities, valuing their contribution.
- ✓ We believe sustainability is a continuing process of individual and community change, not simply financial independence or the endurance of the physical products of development.
- ✓ We will co-operate and work within the community whilst not forgetting linkages with all other groups.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO NOW IN ORDER TO RUN AN EFFECTIVE EVALUATION LATER?

- Gain a clear idea of how the project will be monitored and evaluated, and then think about who will be responsible for making the evaluation happen.
- Make sure there are clear project aims and objectives against which progress can be measured.
- Think about whether a baseline is needed which shows the situation before the start of the project.
- Make sure there are clear and reliable 'indicators' to help measure progress.
- Keep documents and data, and record people's views in a way that is easy to find again.
- Think about the cost of the evaluation in time and money and make sure it is planned in the budget.⁸

FURTHER READING

Brown S (1997) *Manual for a Workshop on Planning, Monitoring and Reporting*, Tearfund

Carter I, ed (1996), *Participatory Learning and Action, Footsteps 29*, Tearfund

Feuerstein M (1986) *Partners in Evaluation*, Macmillan Education Ltd

Hallam A (1998) *Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance Programmes in Complex Emergencies*, Overseas Development Institute

Rubin F (1995) *A Basic Guide to Evaluation for Development Workers*, Oxfam

Russell J (1998) *Involving Users in Evaluation*, Discussion Paper 4: Charities Evaluation Services

⁸ adapted from Raistrick, T (2000) *Church, Community and Change*, Tearfund

