INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

Initiative in Education & Lifelong Learning

Certificate Programme

International Perspectives In Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation

Unit 5

Learning From The Experiences Of Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation

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Units Of Certificate In International Perspectives In Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation

Unit 1: A Conceptual Understanding Of Monitoring And Evaluation

- Defining Monitoring And Evaluation
- Purposes Of Monitoring And Evaluation
- Understanding Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation

Unit 2: Methodological Aspects Of Monitoring And Evaluation

- Theory Of Change
- Redefining Scope: Project And Organisation
- Project Management And Planning
- Participatory Impact Assessment
- Organisational Strengthening Or Institutional Learning
- Building A PM&E System: Methodology

Unit 3: Method, Tools And Techniques Of Monitoring And Evaluation - I

- Result-Based Management (RBM)
- Logic Framework Analysis (LFA)
- Outcome Mapping (OM)
- Most Significant Change (MSC)

Unit 4: Method, Tools And Techniques Of Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation - II

- Participatory Learning And Action (PLA)
- Citizen Report Card (CRC)
- Community Score Card (CSC)
- Citizen Monitoring (CM)

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Unit 5: Learning From The Experiences Of Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation

- Foundations Of Participatory Monitoring
- Foundations Of Participatory Evaluation

Unit 6: Contemporary Issues In Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation

- Purpose-Related Issues
- Methodology- Related Issues
- Application-Related Issues

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Table Of Contents

S. No.	Contents	Page No.
	Introduction	5
	Learning Objectives	5
5.1	Foundations Of Participatory Monitoring	6
5.1.1	International Case Studies	6
5.1.2	Key Learnings	25
5.2	Foundations Of Participatory Evaluation	27
5.2.1	International Case Studies	32
5.2.1	Key Learnings	46
	Summary	50
	Recommended Readings	50
	References	51

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Introduction

Having formed an understanding on the conceptual and methodological aspects of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E), this Unit shall focus on the practices of PM&E. We shall understand how this approach is put to practice and what the important lessons that emerge from the practice of this approach are.

The Unit will revisit the foundations of PM&E, followed by illustrations from across the world which will help us deepen our understanding of the practical approaches of PM&E. The illustrations included are, however, only indicative. You are encouraged to refer to other such illustrations drawn from your own context and experience. In conclusion, we shall comprehend the key learnings emerging from the practice of PM&E.

Learning Objectives

After completing this Unit, you will be familiar with:

- The foundations of participatory monitoring and evaluation;
- A range of practical approaches to participatory monitoring and evaluation, through case studies (from Asia, South America, Africa, Central America and the Caribbean) from which lessons are drawn; and
- The key learnings from these studies.

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5.1 Foundations Of Participatory Monitoring

To begin with, let us remind ourselves of what we learned in Unit 1. We defined monitoring as a systematic assessment process, which shows whether things are progressing according to plan or not, and enables changes to be made.

We also noted in Unit 1 that planning and monitoring are integrally connected. A plan is not an absolutely essential foundation for monitoring, for there are alternatives. A baseline study (as described in Unit 3 and which we will examine here in more detail) can also form the basis on which progress can be assessed; or an approach, which is comparative in nature, can be adopted, comparing the progress of two or more similar activities, projects or organisations with one another.

In Units 3 and 4, we described various methods and tools which can be used in monitoring. These include different types of surveys and ways in which they are administered; the use of descriptive case studies; and "rapid appraisals". As you will find from the case studies in this unit, any or all these different tools and methods can be assembled together to create a monitoring process or system for any given circumstance; there is no "model" or "blueprint". Through the case studies, we will also be reminded, as discussed in earlier Units, that "participation" is not an absolute dimension of monitoring. There are degrees of participation, as we will see. In addition, we will see applications of other important monitoring concepts and practices, including the choice and use of indicators, and the development and application of innovative methods.

5.1.1 International Case Studies

A. Planning

As with all other aspects of monitoring, there are conventional and participatory approaches to planning. Here, we will discuss only the latter. As with the other

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elements of participatory monitoring we will discuss in this Unit, we will first give a summary of an actual example and then draw out lessons.

Our first case study is illustrative of an application of the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) technique outlined in Units 2 and 3.

❖ ***Case Study 1: Participatory Planning (PRIA, 2001)***

The Krishak Bharati Cooperative (KRIBHCO) is a large cooperative in Western India that manufactures and distributes fertilisers to farmers. KRIBHCO established a project, the overall objective of which was to improve the livelihoods of poor farmers in a drought-prone area through the participatory development of farming systems. The project used what is called a "process" approach, which allows for flexibility in project planning and design, where even the objectives are not set in stone but are developed as the project proceeds. (This is in contrast to what is called the "blueprint" approach to development, which has fixed objectives from the outset and pre-determined outputs to be achieved).

The participatory planning approach used by KRIBHCO consisted of a number of steps, which are summarised in *Illustration 1*.

Illustration 1: The KRIBHCO Participatory Planning Process

Step 1: Cluster/Village Selection

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Step 2: Village Entry and Rapport-Building

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Step 3: Participatory Rural Appraisal

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Step 4: Community Problem Analysis

↓

Step 5: Identification of Development Options

Small scale activities set up to gather information build rapport and enhance cooperation and participation

↓

Step 6: Prioritisation of Development Options

↓

Step 7: Negotiation of Village Work Plan

↓

Implementation

Source: PRIA, 2001

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Step 1: Cluster/Village Selection

The project workers analyse available data in order to select clusters of six or ten villages and then appraise these before finalising them. In each cluster area, local community organisers (COs) are then located. They visit each village and interview a cross section of men and women and also local leaders, teachers, health workers, cooperative employees etc., in order to identify key development issues in each village, including leadership patterns, conflicts that may hinder development and general levels of support or opposition the project might encounter.

Step 2: Village Entry And Rapport-Building

The COs introduce and discuss development issues with villagers through informal discussions and meetings focusing on local concerns, so that the community understands the nature of the proposed project, its benefits and the need for the people's active involvement in it.

Step 3: Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

A PRA is conducted to collect baseline data on social organisations and farming systems. The data includes the production of a village and a natural resources map, information on local weather patterns, soil, plants and livestock, yearly farming and socio-economic calendars, household data, village kinship diagrams, village history, land and livestock owner patterns, and division of labour patterns.

Step 4: Community Problem Analysis (CPA)

The COs arrange further meetings with men and women from all sections of the community in order to take forward the understanding developed by villagers during the PRA and to identify the nature and significance of issues of concern to particular sections. The COs then produce a critical review of the identified issues, grouping them into a) those that can be immediately and inexpensively tackled; and b) those that are more complex and related to farming development systems. The latter are then examined and clarified in more detail through further

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discussions between COs and members of the community, and through additional PRAs aiming to gather information on wealth, livelihood, women's roles, needs and knowledge of farming systems, forms of community organisation, cropping systems and land types, tree and forest use, importance and use of livestock, and the interest of farmers in conservation.

At this stage, small-scale development activities are also set in motion to develop rapport and cooperation and to demonstrate the project's approach.

Step 5: Identification Of Development Options

Those involved in the PRAs assess the information gathered and identify if any views have been excluded. A set of development options that are technically feasible, affordable and socially viable are then identified.

Step 6: Prioritisation Of Development Options

The villagers, along with the COs, prioritise the project activities for the first two years of implementation. The first year will focus on activities that need minimum levels of cooperative organisation among farmers, like activities that support women and the poor. At the same time, planning of more complex farming development activities is taken up for implementation in the second year together with any new locally planned and agreed activities.

After extensive local discussions, the COs draw up a report justifying the agreed plan, which is then reviewed through a village meeting.

Step 7: Negotiation Of Village Work Plan

The COs work with activity-focused groups in the community to carry out detailed planning, raise awareness, build links with other projects, clarify implementation arrangements and determine training needs, including leadership and team work skills. Any resolutions are formally documented and formal approval sought from KRIBHCO.

This work leads to the drafting of village work plans by the COs.

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Drawing Lessons About Participatory Planning From The KRIBHCO Case Study

A number of lessons can be drawn from this study. These include:

- The way in which a participative approach can be built into what could otherwise have been a “top-down” initiative of the implementing agency, KRIBHCO;
- The facilitating and enabling roles played by the COs;
- How effectively PRA can be used as a planning tool;
- The value of a flexible, process-driven approach;
- The constant use of meetings and discussions through which awareness and understanding are raised, knowledge gained and confidence and sense of ownership developed; and
- The value of prioritising actions.

B. Monitoring

❖ *Case Study 2: Social Development Monitoring*

Social development monitoring (SDM) “entails periodic observation and action by socially disadvantaged groups or citizens for ensuring efficient service delivery and promoting [the] responsiveness and accountability of governance institutions” (Anand, 2002).

SDM was used in a social development project established in 2001-02 in a district of Jharkhand state by an NGO known as the Child Labour Elimination Society (CLES), assisted by two external NGOs, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and Lok Jagriti Kendra (LJK), who provided community facilitation skills. The focus of the project was on providing non-formal education to children,

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with the overall aim of reducing child labour in areas where it was high. The project was funded by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India through the National Child Labour Elimination Project. Through it, learning centres known as *Bal Shramik Vidyalayas* (BSV), or schools which child labour can attend, were established in selected villages to provide:

- Learning opportunities to working children between the ages of five and fourteen years through the BSVs. For every fifty students, the BSVs had two teachers and a helper/cook/cleaner;
- Classes in Hindi, Maths and other subjects;
- A small monthly stipend, deposited in a savings accounts, to each student;
- Mid-day meals;
- After three years, entry into government primary schools provided the necessary levels of achievement were attained.

The project also had the aim of building capacity among the parents of the children, through training, systematic reflection and exposure visits, so as to strengthen the village committees, which comprise the primary unit of administration of the BSVs.

The first step was an exploratory study prepared by CLES. This was presented at a workshop, attended by the various stakeholders. These included local administration officials, teachers, parents, academics, media people and representatives of other local community-based organisations. For the parents, this was their first contact with the other stakeholders and exposure to the aims and provisions of the project.

Further village meetings followed wherein monitoring by parents, with the help and support of local facilitators, was identified as being viable. A committee of five to eight parents was formed for each BSV, and these committees decided upon the indicators and how monitoring would be carried out. During the pilot phase (May

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2001-May 2002), three of the eleven centres were monitored, with the remaining eight included during the extension phase (July-August 2002).

The development of the indicators involved much discussion. The parents wanted to keep the indicators to a minimum – to those relating to nutrition, health and education. The stipend was seen as of little or no importance. Three indicators emerged:

- The presence (or absence) of teachers during school hours;
- The serving of mid-day meals;
- Health check-up of children by the local health department.

The parents agreed that the first two of these indicators should be monitored four-five times per month, with the health checks being done once a month. A format for recording the data, using a pictorial system, was devised, so that it could be used by parents with limited literacy. Given that the monitoring involved parents "checking up" on the work of teachers, the parents came to realise that it was important to do this in a non-threatening manner to enable building of trust between the parents, teachers and other stakeholders. An understanding was built through constant dialogue that the aim of the monitoring was not to judge who was to blame for things that had gone wrong but rather to see how things could be put right for the benefit of the centres and the children.

As the process went on, the confidence, ability and power of the parents grew. They began to make demands on the local administration about other needs and aspects of their lives, such as their need for loans for self-employment and better drinking water facilities in the centres.

Drawing Lessons From The BSV Case Study

Among the lessons as drawn by Anand (2002) from the BSV case study were:

- Community-based monitoring, if done vigorously and righteously, provides a

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very good platform for community mobilisation to demand accountability from local officials;

- The perspective and capacity of [the] local facilitators to facilitate the SDM process has a deep impact [but]…capacity building of the[m] is not only an ongoing but also an extremely slow process (Anand, 2002)

Other lessons derived from the study include:

- The importance of full participation by local people in the selection of the indicators to be used in the monitoring;
- The building of rapport and trust among the stakeholders, in particular between parents and teachers;
- The value of having a "pilot" phase to begin with, from which lessons learned could then be applied to the wider implementation phase;
- The way in which skills, knowledge and confidence is built among the people, as a result of their engagement in a project having a specific nature and purpose could be transferred to other purposes.
- Here again, we see the way in which what could easily have been an imposed, top-down initiative was made into a participatory one.

❖ ***Case Study 3: Participatory Monitoring (Livingstone, 1998)***

Established in 1990, with funding from the government of Ghana and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation (GWSC) Assistance Project in West Africa aimed to establish community and district-based schemes for the management of urban water supplies in fourteen small towns, including establishing and training local-level water management boards in each community. From the outset, external monitoring by CIDA took place at regular intervals, with the aim of measuring compliance of the project's performance to planned activities and outcomes.

This was a ground-breaking project, there being no precedents for community management of water supplies. As a result, there were many uncertainties. It was

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therefore decided at an early stage to have not only external monitoring in place but also to establish an effective internal monitoring and evaluation system in order to assess whether the project's three main objectives were being achieved. These were:

- To establish an appropriate, effective and sustainable community management strategy;
- To establish effective training activities for members of the community management committees; and
- To ensure that the project was sensitive to gender equity issues.

Overall, the monitoring also aimed to identify needed modifications to activities or new activities that would enable the project to reach optimal outcomes. It was realised that internal monitoring and evaluation would need to be a fully participatory exercise, involving stakeholders at all levels.

The methodology employed involved internal monitors conducting participatory discussions and structured interviews with key individuals and groups, both within the implementing institution (GWSC) and in the fourteen communities. The questions asked aimed to gather information about perceptions of the extent to which the three main project objectives were being achieved.

The first task was to complete a baseline study in 1993, and for this, 58 people were interviewed at the community level and forty at the institutional level. The interviews involved asking questions designed to seek the respondents' views on changes in respect of the achievements of each objective from one period to the next, using this simple scale:

Answer to question is:	
	Score
No	1
Generally No	2
Partly	3
Generally Yes	4
Yes	5

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An example of a question was: 'In your view has the community management capacity in [the project] developed and evolved efficiently?' The monitoring process was then repeated each year, using the same approach so that progress (or lack of it) against each objective could be measured. After each annual monitoring round, the data was analysed quantitatively (adding up the scores on each question, the higher the total the more the progress indicated); and qualitatively. The latter meant a short descriptive statement to clarify or add to the quantitative numbers for each question, plus an overall reflective commentary on each objective.

For example, on the community management objective, the 1,993 baseline interviews (which cumulatively scored 68 out of a possible maximum of 105) indicated that "overall, the project's community management strategy has been [only] partly appropriate and sustainable to date" (Livingstone, 1998).

Drawing Lessons From The Water Supply Case Study

This is an example of a monitoring exercise that is:

- Programmatic in nature;
- Involves both institutional and community elements. In other words, it is monitoring both the internal and external evidence of achievement of objectives, within the implementing organisation and in the involved communities;
- Long-term, through annual monitoring exercises;
- Complementary to external monitoring, rather than an alternative to such an approach.

While the extent of community/beneficiary "participation" was clearly limited to the provision of information (there is no sign of participation in design and planning, or in the framing of objectives, indicators and survey questions, as was done in earlier case studies), this is an example that shows how quantitative data can be collected through regular surveys, involving one-to-one interviews rather than more impersonal questionnaires.

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❖ *Case Study 4: An Innovative Approach To Gathering Information (Kassam, 1998)*

An evaluation of a rural development project for assetless, poor rural people in Bangladesh run by the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), a government agency, combined participatory and survey methodologies. Of particular interest was its use of what it called the "dialogue method", which is described as "intended to complement, supplement and enrich the quantified data obtained through the interview questionnaire, case studies and file review… the dialogues provided 'flesh and blood' on the impacts… and overall project performance that could not possibly be obtained by conventional instruments. Further, arising out of the priority placed on the gender dimension of the project, the dialogues were also intended to give a voice to women beneficiaries" (Kassam, 1998).

Each dialogue used open-ended and non-leading questions,[1] and was recorded and transcribed. A non-leading question is an unbiased question that does not push the response in a certain direction.

Given below is a transcript of excerpts of one of the dialogues:

Illustration-2: Dialogue

The following dialogue was conducted with Ms. Mosarnmat Jainab Bibi, the manager of Shahapur Bittaheen Women's Cooperative Society in Jamalpur district, Bangladesh.

Ms. Bibi joined the society in 1984 *and is now the manager. She has studied up to Class* III *and has one son and two daughters. Her son attends Class* X *and one daughter is married. She is involved in paddy-husking and poultry-rearing activities. She received training on members' education, cow rearing, and poultry. She is also attending the manager's training regularly.*

[1] Leading questions are questions that suggest the answer or contain the information that the person who is questioning is looking for. On the other hand, are non-leading questions that contain no such information and it left open to the person who is answering.

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I joined the society in 1984. Mr. Tara, the local *upazila* official, had distributed fifteen wheat feeding cards among fifteen vulnerable female villagers. One day he told us to mobilise another fifteen women to form a society. We did it and he helped us to form a BRDB society. We deposited 1 taka per week as savings. We were not united then. We did not know each other. When the other fifteen women joined us we held a weekly meeting.

We continued it and Mr. Tara would also attend. We generated a little fund and Mr. Tara and we deposited it at the BRDB office. With our consent, he formed a BRDB society for us. We deposited Tk. 1 or 2 as savings in 1984. We did everything by ourselves like raising savings, depositing them at the bank, issuing verity vouchers, taking receipts from the bank, etc. We registered our society on 30th March.1985. It is nearly seven or eight years that we have been running our society.

Look, we are poor. We had no dignity in the local area. We worked in others' houses. At that time they helped us know the path of life. They invited us to receive training from BRDB so we could run the society smoothly. Our husbands were very cruel to us then. They threatened us in many ways. They challenged us, saying what sort of law the government had established that all the women should have to hold meetings, neglecting all their household work. Not only that,-the rich also taunted us and ostracised us.

We requested the BRDB to help us with credit support so that we could husk paddy. My husband works all day. We thought if we could husk paddy by taking a loan we could deposit Tk. 1 or 2 as savings besides repaying the loan. Considering our request, they provided each of us with Tk. 500 as credit support. We bought 2 mounds of paddy each and husked it. We repaid the loan instalments and deposited Tk. 1 or 2 as savings from the profits we earned by paddy husking. We had no poultry so we bought some through the profit money.

We take a loan every year and husk paddy, which provides us with some profit. We spend a little of that for the education of our children. Previously, the Railway School

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> was completely reluctant to admit our children. The directors of BRDB asked us once: "How many are you?" We answered we were forty-six. They replied that means at least forty-six children and advised us to go and admit our children in the Railway School and gave us hope that they would help us. When we went there, the teachers started to panic. We asked them: "Why do you not want to admit our children? Is it because we are poor? Since we have no clean clothes? Why do you admit rich children?" Then the teachers agreed to admit our children.
>
> (Kassam, 1998, pp. 112-113)

After the interview was recorded, it was played back to the interviewee. The dialogues have a number of benefits. They are a means of participation where people themselves are treated as central subjects and actors in the development process. They help capture and portray the dynamics of social and economic transformation of the beneficiaries of a project. And in itself, the dialogue is a liberating experience for the interviewee.

Drawing Lessons About The Use Of The Dialogue Method

The complete transcript of the above dialogue revealed how a woman and her cooperative society benefited and were empowered by their participation, and how the members tackled various problems and issues, including confronting authorities.

It shows how the knowledge they acquired was used and how their awareness of various matters, including the importance of education for their children, was raised.

Naturally the conduct, transcribing and translation of an extended dialogue is time-consuming and expensive; in fact, the excerpt of the above dialogue is one conducted with only ten out of a total survey sample of over 2,000 beneficiaries! This raises questions about how "representativeness" can be achieved in such a

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small sample, but nonetheless there is clear value to be obtained from the approach.

❖ ***Case Study 5: Use Of A Combination Of Monitoring Tools And Methods (Marsden, Oakley & Pratt, 1994)***

Over the years, the International Centre for Education and Human Development, (CINDE), has been implementing community-based approaches to early childhood care and education in Colombia. The programme began by encouraging groups of mothers from the poorest sections of the communities to stimulate the development of their pre-school children by playing games with them at home. During the meetings, the mothers started to identify other problems related to health, nutrition and income generation. Over time, the project evolved into an integrated community development project addressing such issues. Despite the widespread poverty in the area in which the programme operates, the focus of the work was on educational and organisational processes. The work was led in each community by a *promotoro*, or facilitator, many of whom were mothers from the poorest sections of the community. These *promotoro*s were the main educational agents in the programme.

On the outset, parents were involved in the management of the programme. Monitoring and evaluation were an integral part of the programme, not only to improve and assess the work, but also as a fundamental strategy to build the capacity of the individual participants and the communities. The monitoring system used various approaches, including:

- *Reporting and recording meetings*: Each group kept an individual record or log. For example, during meetings with pre-school mothers, a point was made of evaluating the work done by each mother since the last encounter and how it had affected the development of her children. In the nutrition programme, the children were weighed and measured each week, and a simple graph was developed by the mothers so that they could see the

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progress. The group discussed the records, reflecting on why there had been any improvement or decline. In addition, the *promotoro*s and CINDE staff wrote reports on activities, in which they noted their observations with respect to the objectives, achievements and any difficulties faced.

- *Survey/diagnosis/questionnaire*: A baseline survey was undertaken by the community to evaluate the situation before the programmes. For example, at the start of a campaign for the installation of latrines, the community developed a map, locating houses with latrines and those without, and which showed the altitude of different sections of the community to indicate the possibility of underground septic tanks. This helped stimulate the community to visualise the problem, locating the areas where the problem was more severe and created a basis against which to monitor their progress.

- *Group discussions*: Meetings and activities were evaluated through group discussions, which provided an opportunity to discuss collective views on activities and the changes taking place.

- *Key informants*: Individual discussions with one or two *promotoro*s or community leaders were used as a way of monitoring developments and checking the validity of previous findings.

- *Workshops*: At least once a year, workshops were organised with the *promotoro*s and CINDE staff to analyse development, to check that the project was on course and to make necessary changes.

Drawing Lessons From The CINDE Case Study

These include:

- The critical roles played by the facilitators;

- The use of multiple means of information-gathering, including dairies/log books, surveys, group discussions and workshops. These different approaches served to help the community reflect and visualise their

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problems, and to stimulate and motivate them to continue with activities or develop new actions, as well as serving as a means of continuous monitoring of project activities.

- ***Case Study 6: Citizen Monitoring In A Village In India (PRIA, 2002)***

In 2000-2001, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) with a local partner organisation, the Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC) initiated a study of the effectiveness of village-level governance institutions in two districts in the state of Uttarakhand. These institutions aimed to enable people's ownership of the services provided, giving them control of them and autonomy to run them in their own way. Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) were among them, having local control over a World Bank-funded project that aimed to:

- Promote and deliver sustainable health and hygiene benefits to people through improved water supply and sanitation services;
- Improve rural incomes;
- Test alternatives to existing supply side-driven service delivery mechanisms; and
- Promote sanitation and gender awareness.

Project implementation was through a District Project Management Unit (DPMU), under which the VWSCs operated. The study revealed that the effectiveness of the village governance institutions (including the VWSCs) depended on a number of factors, including community leadership and trust, good communication between committee members and their communities, good accountability and transparency, and good relationships with other village institutions.

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The study revealed that in one village, Dharali, conflicts between its VWSC and the community were so deep that the project was not very effective. Among the problems that were identified were:

- Pipes and stand-pipes were being stolen;
- Some people objected to the project because community contributions in cash or kind were required;
- The election process of the VWSC was considered to be flawed;
- There were accusations of corruption;
- Women were under-represented on the VWSC (women were completely excluded in the planning stage and little effort had been made to build their capacity for participation).

With HARC, PRIA initiated a participatory monitoring process in Dharali as a response to the problem and all throughout, facilitated as well as worked to build the capacities of the community to implement the process and the action that followed. The steps that the process followed were as follows.

Step 1: Identification of the problems: this was done through the original study, as above

Step 2: Engaging the key stakeholders such as the VWSC members, village head and other community members in identifying the problems and concerns through a series of consultations and discussions. Initially, the meetings resulted in pro- and anti-project factions making allegations against each other, but it was eventually agreed to mount a monitoring exercise on one identified problem: ineffective water supply (in terms of continuity and quality).

Step 3: Identifying a core monitoring group of four people to be responsible for the collection of monitoring information. Through a large meeting in the village, it was agreed that those undertaking this task should meet these criteria:

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- Representative of each ward in the village;
- People showing interest in development work;
- People who are not members of the VWSC; and
- Be a resident of the village.

Step 4: Indicator identification: The two external organisations, with the community, identified indicators and the core group arranged them into five categories:

- Regularity of water supply;
- Functioning stand-pipes;
- Quality of the water;
- Condition of the pipes; and
- Contributions by the community.

Step 5: *Collection and analysis of information*: Information on each of the five indicators was collected by the core group every day for a year, by visiting each stand-pipe, through individual interviews and group discussion and observation. A monthly meeting, usually late in the evening in the agriculture season to enable maximum attendance by community members, was convened by the village headman and the findings were presented and discussed during the meetings and, most importantly, to identify and agree the action that needed to be taken. For example, it was agreed that the problem of poor quality of water should be dealt with by:

- Raising the height of the tank to stop silting;
- Enabling afforestation around the water source;

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- Covering the tank; and
- Regularly using bleaching powder in the tank.

The meetings also identified who would be responsible for each action – among the community, the VWSC, the DPMU, the village *panchayat* (local government institution) – and what would be required to take it forward (in terms of skills, knowledge, resources etc.).

Step 6: Taking action: The action taken was also subject to monitoring in order to continue the process of building the capacities of the involved parties, particularly the community members. This was done through meetings, awareness–raising camps, visits to other communities and the showing of a video, *Pani ki kahaani* (The story of the water).

Drawing Lessons From The Citizen Monitoring Case Study

Among the lessons that PRIA and HARC drew from this exercise were:

- Facilitating monitoring by a community, which is disillusioned by [the project's] responsiveness and its ability to deliver, is a serious challenge for the facilitators in the beginning… But once the process is set [in motion], it triggers concrete actions.
- Capacity building holds the key to monitoring: it not only helps in the identification of problems and concerns but also helps the community to analyse, reflect, and collect useful data and act.
- Small cross dialogues among the stakeholders are very useful in trust building… Building an atmosphere of trust between the stakeholders holds the key to result-oriented-action…For the process to continue without hindrance, it is essential that all stakeholders must be acknowledged in their due place and that the process should continue in a non-threatening manner.
- Monitoring for monitoring's sake is of no value. Community empowerment can emerge from informed reflection and discussion within the group and

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outside… more so, when monitoring becomes [a] questioning [of] the powerful groups having control over resources (PRIA, 2002, pp. 13).

5.1.2 Key Learnings

In conclusion, and by way of drawing further lessons from the studies we have presented, let us briefly examine the key questions that need to be addressed when a participatory monitoring process is established. Bakewell, Adams and Pratt (2003) summarise them as:

- *What information is needed?* This will, of course, also involve the critically important question of what indicators are to be used for each of the links in the log frame sequence. It is important to collect no more and no less information than is needed and to have a flexible approach so that changes can be made to the system over time, as and when needed. It is important that the beneficiaries as well as other stakeholders are involved in asking and answering this question as well as those that follow.
- *Who will collect the information?* Again, this needs to be thought about carefully from the very outset. In particular, the question of whether those who generate information can or should also collect it must be addressed. Tensions may well arise, as we saw with the parents collecting information about teachers in the Bangladesh case study.
- *How will the information be collected?* We have discussed the use of various techniques and tools for data collection in this and other units. Choices need to be made, bearing in mind that multiple techniques allow for “triangulation” (see Unit 2) but involve more time and effort. The balance to be struck between quantitative and qualitative approaches also needs early consideration.
- *Who will organise and analyse the monitoring information?* This also needs careful thought. If only one stakeholder does the analysis (who has a particular value or interest base), then will it be credible for all stakeholders? Again, a participative approach involving multiple stakeholders will have value.

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- *How will the findings be used?* As we have noted earlier, there is no point in having a monitoring process if there is no willingness or ability or process for its results to be used.

We invite you to ask each of these questions for the six case studies given in this unit.

THINK TANK

In Unit 2, we set out ten key principles/characteristics that feature in participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation:

- Learning;
- Negotiation;
- Flexibility;
- Collaboration;
- Generating knowledge;
- Problem-solving:
- Releasing creativity;
- Using multiple and innovative methods;
- Involving experts as facilitators;
- Participation.

We now invite you to examine each of the case studies we have presented and assess them in terms of the extent to which these principles and characteristics can be found in them. You can either use the chart to make your own notes, an/d or assess them by "marking" them on each feature using a scale of you own design.

	Case 1	*Case 2*	*Case 3*	*Case 4*	*Case 5*	*Case 6*
Learning						
Negotiation						
Flexibility						
Collaboration						
Generating knowledge						
Problem-solving						
Releasing creativity						
Using multiple and innovative methods						
Involving experts as facilitators						
Participation						

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5.2 Foundations Of Participatory Evaluation

In Unit 1, we noted that monitoring and evaluation are "distinct but complementary". Monitoring gathers information to compare the progress against a plan, or with reference to an established baseline or some other comparative historical or contemporary "benchmark". Monitoring can be an exercise in its own right, but as we saw in Unit 3, when we looked at the "project cycle", just as monitoring follows planning, it is often a building block for evaluation. In evaluation, the judgement or assessment that takes place is deeper than that undertaken in monitoring. This depth can take various forms, including asking whether what was planned in the first instance, or whether the original goals, aims, objectives and consequent activities were right in the first place. As one of our sources put it in Unit 1, whereas monitoring is assessing whether we are "doing things right", evaluation will be asking, among other things, "are we doing the right things?"

❖ Stages, Cycles, Purposes And Scope

The Cycle

Let us remind ourselves of a few other things here. We have noted in earlier units that monitoring and evaluation exercises, whether conventional or participatory, can focus on different points or stages of the *inputs → activities →outputs → outcomes → impact → objectives → goal* chain. Generally speaking, monitoring alone will be sufficient to deal with the first three. Evaluative assessments and judgements, however, will be focused on any or all of the last four. And, through the various stages of the continuous cycle of *ideas → planning → implementation → monitoring → evaluation → new ideas and revised plans*, there will be a feedback process so that what is learned is put to good use.

The Purposes

We have also noted at different points in previous units how there can be various purposes for an evaluation, stated in terms such as "impact evaluation" or "impact

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assessment" or as being "results-based". Words like "efficiency" and "effectiveness" also figure prominently in the language of evaluation, the former being an assessment of outputs in relation to inputs and the latter being an assessment of how far delivering outputs actually achieved outcomes (Bakewell, Adams and Pratt, 2003). All these words and terms indicate a focus on judging what is being achieved, and if not why not, or if so why so. All this reflects that many evaluations are done at the behest of those who are funding the activities on which they are focused as a means of ensuring accountability. Closely related to these purposes are those of judging relevance (the "are we doing the right things?" question) and sustainability ("will the changes being brought about last over the long term?").

But we need to remind ourselves that as a form of PR, participatory evaluations can and do have many other (and possibly multiple) purposes: learning, promoting participative collective action, building human and organisational capacity, empowering people, achieving transformation, improving communication with others, as well as those to do with accountability to funders. In addition, we have noted that participatory approaches have advantages with regard to *all* the various purposes. They are particularly appropriate to those that have the purpose of knowledge- and/or capacity- and/or collective action-building and 'empowerment'.

The Context And Scope

We noted in Unit 1 that evaluation takes place in a variety of different contexts. The evaluation may be of a discrete activity, such as a project, or of a programme within which such projects operate, or of a community or collection of communities where projects are located. Or the evaluation may be of an organisation, or of an aspect of the organisation's work. Or it may be of a broad policy. Or, finally, it may take in elements of a number of these contexts.

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❖ Learning

Whatever the scope of participatory evaluation, the one purpose that is central is *learning*.

> Participatory evaluation is… a process of individual and collective learning…. It is an educational experience. It is learning about one's strengths, about one's weaknesses; learning about social processes and developmental outcomes; learning about social reality and intervening in the same; learning about [the] creation and development of organisations and ensuring their relevance and longevity. It implies clarifying and re-articulating one's vision and perspective about the… work we are involved in. This educational thrust of participatory evaluation implies that [the] various parties involved experience [it] as a learning process for themselves. And, the process is designed and structured in such a way that it ensures learning. It is not merely the outcome… which provides insights and learning, it is also the very involvement in the process of participatory evaluation the becomes the basis for learning…this is a crucial distinction between participatory and conventional evaluation methodologies… [it is] an educational experience as opposed to a regulatory mechanism of control over people, programmes and resources.
> (Choudhary and Tandon, 2001)

❖ Determining The Purpose: What Are The Objectives

The first step in any participatory evaluation – or, indeed, any form of evaluation – is to determine its purpose, or in other words, its objectives: is it to judge whether or not the stated outputs, outcomes or impact of an activity have been achieved (and why they have or have not been); to improve performance; to inform decision-making; gather knowledge and learning; build capacity; empower people; done for reasons of accountability. It is important to be clear, and as we have noted, multiple purposes may be involved. The determination of purposes needs to be participatory and also to focus not narrowly on purpose alone, but on such

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closely related matters as why an evaluation is needed, whom it is to benefit, what problems it may lead to within the project, programme or organisation concerned, what information is needed and who should provide it, collect it and analyse it, and what questions need to be asked in order to elicit it (Choudhary and Tandon, 2001; Narayan-Parker 1993).

These preliminary issues are usually addressed at one or more initial workshops involving all those who will be involved in the evaluation.

- **Information: What's Needed, What Are The Sources, And How Do We Obtain It?**

The next step is to identify what kind of information is needed. If a monitoring regime is in place, then the kinds of tools and techniques discussed in the previous unit will already be in place. But if this is not the case, then the indicators will need to be established, and the sources and kinds of information relevant to them will need to be identified. For example, if the purpose of an evaluation is to assess the outcomes or impact of services established to improve child health, then information on infant mortality rates will be needed. It may be found in different places and obtained through different means, from written records that have already been kept by those involved, to gathering new information through surveys, interviews and group discussions as discussed in the previous units.

The collection of information may need to be accompanied by activities that stimulate its provision. Conventional surveys and questionnaires, group discussions and even one-to-one interviews are by no means necessarily suitable for everyone, particularly those lacking confidence, or basic literacy and communication skills, or in circumstances where culturally-entrenched norms and mores (such as those concerning the status and role of women) or sheer time constraints (where people are working hard for their living) deter or exclude the participation of some. These techniques can, therefore, in themselves be disempowering. In participatory forms of evaluation, where the whole thrust is on

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empowering people, innovative approaches that deal with these problems can be found.

❖ Analysis And Reflection: Who Does It?

This is at the heart of evaluation. It is at the heart of the issue of power, for if "information is power", then those who control and own its analysis are even more powerful. Hence, in participatory forms of evaluation, it is crucial that analysis is as much a collective and participatory process as the determination of purpose and the collection of information. In conventional evaluations, the process of analysis and reflection often rests with outsider evaluators, acting on behalf of external donors and institutional stakeholders (Gaventa and Estrella, 1998). In participatory evaluation, it is important that analysis and reflection is a collective process, so that both become a shared rather than an individual responsibility. Furthermore, the collective analysis thus reached needs to be disseminated to all those from whom the information was gathered (Choudhary and Tandon, 2001).

When carrying out participatory forms of evaluation, some of the analytical tools and techniques used, such as cost-benefit and SWOT analyses, are adaptations of those developed primarily for conventional approaches, while others, such as value-based analysis, are primarily associated with participatory approaches.

As we have seen in the previous Units, one of the most prominent adaptations concerns the role of the "evaluator", who, when participatory methods are used, becomes a "facilitator" in that the role involves enabling participation and learning among the participants rather than controlling, directing or "doing".

❖ Reporting: By What Means And For What Purpose?

In the "classic" conventional evaluation, the evaluator will draw up a written report, which will commonly be shared only with the donors or other "higher level" institutional stakeholders that have requested or commissioned the evaluation, and with senior project/programme/organisational staff.

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Such a report will typically begin with an executive summary. Its main sections will consist of an introduction, followed by an account of the evaluation's purpose and methods. The next section will set out the findings, the quantitative and qualitative data collected, followed by the analysis and the judgements and assessments derived from it. A final section will concentrate on recommendations for change (Rubin, 1995).

In participatory evaluation, "reporting" is usually a much more dynamic process. Like all other stages, it is participatory in nature. If participation has been involved from the outset, it follows that those involved will themselves have built up a body of knowledge as to what has been found, an increased capacity to turn it into action and very likely, they will have formed their own conclusions as to what needs to be done. In participatory evaluations, therefore, "reporting" becomes a matter of sharing and of collectively creating future scenarios and directions (Choudhary and Tandon, 2001). There may indeed be no formal, written report at all. Instead, there will be meetings and discussions as evaluation findings and recommendations are fed back to the beginning of the cycle we set out in Unit 2 in the form of new or revised plans, objectives and goals. And the desired or needed changes may well take forms other than "bullet points" in staid written reports. They may be displayed visually or presented artistically through other innovative techniques.

5.2.1 International Case Studies

❖ ***Case Study 1: Building Water Tanks In Bangladesh (Timm, 1988)***

The role of an "external facilitator" is illuminated in this case study. With funding (partly in the form of loans) provided by an international aid agency, a group of twenty-three marginal and landless farmers excavated a tank for fish culture purposes in 1984 (marginal farmers being defined as those owning less than two acres). The farmers contributed 10 per cent of the total costs and excavated the tank with the help of landless labourers. The fish culture began the same year. The group had earlier been involved in a tube well project funded through loans to

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members from a government agency. The external evaluator/facilitator, visiting the project in its early stages, noted that the group was "much better situated economically than most of the hundreds of [other] groups of the landless [funded by the tank programme]".

From the outset, evaluation of the project had three elements: all funded groups were required to undertake participatory evaluation as part of an annual process, as did each local project management committee. Also, the regional project committees established by the aid agency to oversee the entire project had a role in evaluation.

At each level, the purpose of the evaluation had several elements:

- Assessing the organisation and functioning of the group using indicators including group cohesion and group understanding of project objectives;
- Activities – such as improved technical skills, production and other outputs;
- Impact – economic benefits to members, improved equality and social justice; and
- Change – in terms of power relationships and balances in the community.

The roles of the "external facilitator" were to:

- Determine the levels of understanding and ability of the different groups to practice and use the results of their evaluations, and how they feel about it;
- Compare and analyse the results of the three levels of evaluation and have discussions with them about their findings and plans for change; and
- Compare how the participatory process works with and without an external facilitator.

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The findings were many and varied, but those of the evaluator included:

- The [farmers] group had sufficient training and self-awareness to evaluate the project themselves without outside help; (even) though it was the first time they were making such an evaluation. They understood clearly the essential issues and problems.
- The trust among (farmers group) members broke down in 1986 after the secretary was discovered making use the funds for personal purposes?
- The evaluator added nothing to the process of evaluation.
- The (regional) project committee added helpful information… but none of their comments (added to) a clear understanding of the project.
- As a result of the evaluation, the [group] and the [aid agency] understood clearly that the main problem [that had emerged] was the disparity between the marginal farmers and the landless [members of the group]. Both appreciated the need to separate from each other… The landless want to go their own way and feel that they are sufficiently cohesive and trained to work well together… the landless were incisive and logical in their criticism of what was wrong with their group (Timm, 1988).

Drawing Lessons About Participatory Evaluation From The Bangladesh Case Study

The study is illustrative of many points we have made about participatory evaluation and PM&E throughout this course. Three stand out:

- *Innovation and flexibility*: the use of the facilitator to compare and bring together the findings from each of the three levels;
- *Values*: while we have not gone into the similarities and differences of the perceptions of each of the three levels, it is clear that each of the three levels

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had a different value base on which to source its assessment of success and failure; and

- *Abilities*: regardless of their poverty and illiteracy, the people involved were able to do the evaluation themselves.

❖ ***Case Study 2: Self-Evaluation Of A Support Organisation In India (Bhasin, 1998)***

What are often called “intermediary support NGOs” exist in many countries, the purposes of which are not to directly establish and manage projects providing services to people, but rather to provide specialist support and expertise to other NGOs and CSOs that do so.
One such organisation, which we shall call the Community Resource Centre (CRC – not its real name), was established in India in 1972 to provide “technical and managerial solutions to the problem of poverty and injustice” through its professional staff.

In its early years, some CRC staff began to raise questions about the adequacy of this technical and professional role. In 1978, around eight or ten staff members began to debate the issues and identified problems related to CRC’s work. These included communication within the organisation and between the organisation and the ultimate beneficiaries; the status, inequalities and differences among staff within the CRC; its decision-making processes and structures, which among other things were not broadly participatory.

The membership of the group slowly expanded. They sat and discussed the issues almost every day over a six-week period, suspending their own work. While some other staff members viewed all this with suspicion and even mistrust, eventually, a group of about forty people held two four-day discussion sessions, together with some trusted “outsiders”, who helped facilitate and guide the sessions. Although progress was slow, decisions were made: to narrow down the

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organisation's objectives; to work with the poor, to establish participatory decision-making processes, and to evaluate themselves once a year.

There were also meetings in villages with people and organisations with whom CRC had been working.

Although this led to several changes in CRC's work, structures and processes, the main conclusion was, as one participant put it, "there was a role for an institution like ours… in development."

Drawing Lessons About Participatory Evaluation From The India Case Study:

- This example shows that participatory evaluation can be a simple – in this case, perhaps, a rather long-winded and time-consuming process. Here, "are we doing the right things?" is clearly the question being addressed. What it all boiled down to was a discussion – that slowly attracted increased participation, it should be noted, lasting over a long period of time.
- Organisational evaluations such as this can be any or all of self-preoccupied, introvert and destructive, resulting in nothing more than a period of fruitless contemplation, or at worst self-destruction. Involving outsiders clearly helped avoid this, as, more significantly, did the realisation that 'participation' meant also involving the beneficiaries.

❖ ***Case Study 3: Evaluating A Women And Development Project In The Caribbean (Ellis P, 1998)***

A pilot project for the integration of women in rural development, commonly known as the Rose Hall Project was established by the women and development unit (WAND) of the University of the West Indies in the small village of Rose Hall (population 1,200) on the island of St. Vincent. The objectives were to establish a

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participatory “bottom-up” development process to assess, plan, instigate and evaluate community-based projects, and through engaging rural women in the development process, enable them to raise their understanding of the role they play in the development of the community, develop their desires and abilities to take on leadership and decision-making roles, and generally improve the quality of their own lives and that of the community. The project was managed by a community working group.

Ten years after its inception, the working group decided to have a participatory evaluation (facilitated by an external evaluator from WAND, who had been the project’s original coordinator and was thus familiar with it) to examine the past as well as help plan for the future. The group identified the purposes of the evaluation and the questions it would address. The purposes were to:

- Review what had happened over the ten years as a result of the project;
- Reflect on and analyse the project’s processes, outcomes and impact on individuals and the whole community;
- Begin to develop a plan for the future development of the project.

The questions were:

- What had been the project’s achievements?
- What conditions and factors have contributed to them?
- In what ways has the project affected people’s lives and that of the community as a whole?
- What problems and setbacks have been faced?
- How has the working group developed and how can it become more self-sufficient?

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The group also decided that the methodology of the evaluation should include a series of consultations with various community groups, focusing on reflection/ evaluation/ analysis of the past and renewal, visioning and planning for the future. As well as small and large group discussions and workshops, role plays, skits, song and poetry were used. Apart from collecting information by these means, there was a constant process of feedback. There were eight workshops involving over 200 people. The workshops included three with the working group itself; two for young people between the age group of twelve and thirty years; and others with members of the coordinating committees that had been established for four of the project's ventures: a pre-school group, a bakery, an adult education programme and a shop. There were also two community meetings during the evaluation, attended by over 100 men, women and children.

In addition, the evaluator carried out one-to-one interviews and informal discussion with individuals in the community. A photographic exhibition was used to stimulate people's memories of what had been done and who had been involved over the years.

The evaluation revealed the great changes that had been brought about by the project over its lifetime. These included:

Among Individuals:

- Improved personal relations between people – more caring, respectful, and willing to cooperate;
- Broadened horizons and aspirations – for higher education, for example.
- Improved male-female relations;
- Increased technical, interpersonal and analytical skills and improved senses of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth;
- Improved quality of life; and
- Improved problem-solving abilities.

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Across The Community As A Whole:

- Improved physical appearance of the community through new constructions and upgrading efforts by householders;
- New facilities – telephones, TVs, water supplies, pre-school, bakery, community centre;
- Various successful development projects accomplished;
- Greater community "togetherness" – cooperation, cohesion, commitment to community development; and
- Emergence of commonly shared goals and value systems, based on caring and cooperation.

Drawing Lessons About Participatory Evaluation From The Rose Hall Case Study

The evaluator's conclusion was:

"The evaluation provided yet another opportunity for people in Rose Hall to participate in assessing and defining their own development. Through it, they have been able to recreate and relive the history of the project and to:

- Systematically analyse and reflect on their community, identify indicators and assess the project's effects and impacts on their lives;
- Make judgements about the operations of the working group and its efficiency;
- Gain deeper insights into and understanding of the complexity of development;
- Generate new knowledge about individuals and groups in the community and about their goals, aspirations, needs and concerns;
- Begin to identify new development goals and to develop a five-year plan for their community; and

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- Show yet again that ordinary people do have the ability and can successfully carry out evaluation research and can use the results to plan future development programmes that respond to and meet their needs" (Ellis, 1998, pp 216**)**

❖ ***Case Study 4: Evaluating The Condition Of An NGO Supporting Tribal People In India (Choudhary And Tandon, 1989)***

The Tribal Development Society (TDS) has been working with the indigenous tribal people of southern Bihar in India since 1983, initially through a health care programme. With the help of the programme the TDS staff has learnt about the wider problems and forces that were marginalising the tribal population. Principal among these was the way in which moneylenders and liquor merchants captured their assets, thus forcing the tribes to become indebted and then bonded to them.

TDS staff discussed this with the tribal people and started to mobilise them so as to empower them to organise themselves to combat the forces of exploitation and oppression. Over two years, these mobilisation efforts developed into a large-scale people's movement, involving ninety tribal villages and over 10,000 people. A tribal people's organisation (TPO) under a local leadership was formed. As well as building the capacity of its leaders, TDS helped the TPO take advantage of government legislation and programmes in their struggle to get back their assets. As this happened, the need for more appropriate forms of credit for consumption and credit became apparent, and TDS helped arrange this from local banks.

Over time, TDS became involved in many programmes and after five years, it was not clear as to what path it should take: should it continue helping the tribal population? If so, how? If not, then what are the alternatives they have? By this time, there were ten core staff, and ten field staff, who functioned very much as a family, with informal decision-making. But the lack of overall clarity as to direction was creating a sense of dissatisfaction, stagnation and frustration among the staff. A process of critical reflection and evaluation was needed to clarify future directions.

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Two facilitators were contacted to do the evaluation, which, after a preliminary visit by the facilitators, was divided into three phases. In each phase, the facilitators raised concerns and provided perspectives but left the staff to then work things through in detail.

During the first phase, the purpose, scope and issues to be addressed by the evaluation were worked out through discussions, some of which involved only core staff and others all the staff. This process of reflection led to the identification of major achievements, limitations and shortcomings of TDS as well as a re-articulation of the directions for the future. Strengthening TPOs was identified as a major priority, together with the building of better organisations of youth and women; the enhancing of the culture of the tribal people; and the provision of primary and non-formal adult education.

In the second phase, the TDS staffs went out to share and discuss the results of the first phase with the tribal villagers, through a series of village camps (including some for women and youth), fairs and meetings, spanning three months. Feedback from the community was thus obtained. This encouraged the core team to think in more detail about the programmes and organisational structures through which to accomplish its future directions. These were developed further by the staff through a week-long workshop. A systematised planning process and a formal mechanism for organisational functioning were established by the workshop.

Over the third phase, lasting three months, the core staff began implementing the decisions taken. At the end of the period, a further meeting involving all staff to further clarify the new system and structure was held: this revealed the revitalised strength of the organisation and its staff.

Drawing Lessons About Participatory Evaluation In The Organisational Setting From The TDS Experience

As we have seen earlier with the case of the ‘CRC’, these kinds of organisational evaluations can easily be self-destructive. Here, the important factor in the building

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of a climate of openness, sharing and reflection among the staff, who were demoralised, suspicious, cynical and angry, was done through the early and then continued intervention of outside facilitators.

It is also significant that here again the organisation involved its beneficiaries in the process and this no doubt helped avoid an overly introspective approach.

- ***Case Study 5: A Cautionary Tale From Mexico (Whitmore, 1998)***

Our last study is illustrative of how *not* to go about – or at least to prepare the ground for – participatory evaluation.

The overall goal of the project was to revitalise community life by increasing participation and the objective of the evaluation was to assess the degree to which this had been achieved as well as to assess the extent to which a number of "concrete" outcomes had been achieved, including a model dairy herd and a cheese-making factory.

The evaluator was an American woman. She proposed on her initial visit that an evaluation committee of local people be formed to work with her to design the evaluation. The people would then gather that data so that during the evaluator's second visit, all would participate in analysing the data and drafting a report.

It did not work out at all like that. On her first visit, the evaluator discovered that not only had there been no discussion of the evaluation at meetings of the cooperative's members, the local people also had no idea about who she was and what she was there for. In addition, the two founder/managers (who had designed the project and got the funding for it) had not only failed to involve the cooperative members in this as well as many other aspects of decision-making, but were in

"disagreement on just about every issue". On top of this, the evaluator was told by a local woman that it would not be culturally appropriate for her to talk with the men in the village. Fortunately a (male) facilitator had also been brought in to help with the evaluation, so the evaluator was able to interview villagers and

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cooperative members with his help. From them, she learned that nobody knew what was happening, including who was getting the government funds, and that since the two managers insisted that cooperative meetings take place in English, most people had stopped attending them. In short, people in both the village and the cooperative felt left out and their expectations were not being met. How, the evaluator concluded, could a participatory evaluation be done in such circumstances?

Eighteen months later, the evaluator returned for her second visit after no evaluation team had been formed during her first visit and no data had been collected. The funds for the project were also over. Nevertheless, the evaluator hoped to be able to conduct an evaluation with the cooperative and community members. She had four days to do it. On day one, the evaluator was able to explain her task for a few minutes at the end of a full day's cooperative members meeting. An evaluation meeting involving all the community was scheduled for the next day. On day two, the turnout was extremely low at first. So, the members rounded up the others to eventually have the meeting with twenty-five people. After collectively agreeing to the "rules" for the meeting (both languages to be used, right to speak for all, no personal attacks, etc.), the group broke into small subgroups to discuss what the project had achieved in terms of the concrete tasks and reported back.

On day three, the meeting reconvened and addressed the more sensitive subject of the functioning of the cooperative and again small groups were formed. A report-back/discussion session rounded off the day.

By the beginning of day four, many more people were fully engaged in the discussion and even women participants turned up. There was a focus on how the cooperative should actually work.

Overall, their conclusion was summed up by one participant: "we need to rebuild this house". An evaluation of a specific project thus ended up being more concerned with the future of the cooperative as an organisation.

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Sometime after all this, the evaluator learned that the group had split into two separate cooperatives, each led by one of the founder/managers.

Drawing Lessons About Participatory Evaluation From The Mexico Story

The lessons from this are mostly self-evident. Those of the evaluator herself – who must be commended for making something out of what was nothing – included:

- “I would not attempt such an evaluation again. I don’t think participatory evaluation can be done short-term; [it] needs to be built in from the very beginning of a project and the process takes time and sustained contact.
- A participatory approach (to evaluation) does not work in an organisation that is not participatory.
- The whole question of gender and the issues raised by our differences were exemplified by not even being allowed, at first, to talk with the men.
- What is needed is a collaborative relationship in which all parties are able to contribute their understanding and knowledge in an atmosphere of respect and mutuality. Such a relationship is formed only when all members share a deep respect for the abilities, characteristics and culture of one another… As one of the [founder/managers] concluded in the final meeting: ‘I’m so impressed with these people. They are much more intelligent than I thought!’” (Whitmore, 1998)

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What can one possibly say about this latter observation?

THINK TANK
In Unit 2, we set out ten key principles/characteristics that feature in participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation:

- Learning;
- Negotiation;
- Flexibility;
- Collaboration;
- Generating knowledge;
- Problem-solving:
- Releasing creativity;
- Using multiple and innovative methods;
- Involving experts as facilitators;
- Participation.

We now invite you to examine each of the case studies we have presented and assess them in terms of the extent to which the principles and characteristics can be found in them. You can either use the chart to make your own notes, and/or assess them by "marking" them on each feature using a scale of your own design.

	1:Bangladesh	***2: India***	***3:St.Vincent***	***4: India***	***5:Mexico***
Learning					
Negotiation					
Flexibility					
Collaboration					
Generating knowledge					
Problem-solving					
Releasing creativity					
Using multiple and innovative methods					
Involving experts as facilitators					
Participation					

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5.2.2 Key Learnings

To conclude, it will be significant to reflect on some key issues regarding the practice of participatory evaluation, as effectively highlighted by Choudhary and Tandon (2001).

1. Difference Between Methodology And Method

Participatory evaluation is a methodology which aims to enhance the capacity of ordinary people, projects and groups to carry out systematic and critical reflection and an evaluation process of their own activities, programmes, organisations and perspectives on a regular and ongoing basis. It aims at demystifying the process of evaluation and in strengthening capacity at the grass roots to undertake evaluation. Within the context of this overall methodology the different tools, techniques and methods for data collection, for facilitating reflection, and for improving analyses are situated. The choice of method is based on the specific context of the given evaluation intervention.

2. Nature Of Data

It is important to note that qualitative as well as statistical and quantitative information can be part of a participatory evaluation exercise. The type of information necessary to carry out a systematic process of reflection and critical analysis depends on a given participatory evaluation exercise and its specific objectives. The information thus can be statistical, cognitive, perceptual, qualitative, etc. Depending on the type of information one needs, the type of data collection methods will have to be created.

Some generic trends have shown that participatory evaluation exercises largely focusing on programmes tend to utilise methods of information collection that are highly quantitative and structured, that is, instruments and questionnaires, and collection of statistical information from records and documents. On the other hand, those participatory evaluation exercises where the focus primarily is on

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clarifying, sharpening or modifying perspectives and directions of an organisation, its teams, people's movement, etc, much more interactive and dialogue methods of information collection and analysis have to be utilised, that is in-depth interviews, informal, small group discussions, dialogues, and other interactive and open-ended methods. The data collection methods should facilitate greater involvement and participation, in the reflection and analysis process, of the members of the organisations and the group whose involvement is critical in the participatory evaluation exercise

3. Who Participates?

Who participates in the participatory evaluation process depends on the specific situation and on the concrete objectives of the participatory evaluation exercise. The party whose interests are directly and primarily influenced by the focal objectives of a given participatory evaluation exercise must be involved. However, it does not imply involvement of all the parties in an identical manner.

For instance, if in a grassroots non-governmental organisation's field programme the focus of evaluation is programmatic; the most crucial actors in the evaluation exercise would be field workers of the NGOs and the local people and beneficiaries. If, however, the focus or evaluation is clarifying the perspective of the NGO then the involvement of members of staff of the NGO is more important than involvement of local population.

Within a given participatory evaluation exercise, different parties can be involved at different stages as well as in different ways, and it is not necessary that every party who is a stake-holder in the participatory evaluation exercise gets involved in the same way

4. Role Of Donors

The needs of resource providers and donors in terms of evaluation have to be recognised as legitimate, in a participatory evaluation process. The concerns and

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needs of donors should be taken into consideration, especially at the initial stage of setting the objectives of evaluation. Due to the specific knowledge and understanding of a given project or a programme the donors can also contribute at a stage where the critical analysis and reflection process has progressed and broad findings are being articulated and future directions are being evolved.

For participatory evaluation to be effective it is helpful if funding is de-linked from the evaluation process. This will ensure that the process will be genuine, authentic and critical. It is also helpful if facilitating agencies do not become agents for the donors. They should behave as facilitators of the reflection process of the project or the NGO, and not managers of a process on behalf of the donors.

5. Role Of Outsiders

The issue of the outsider in a participatory evaluation exercise gets posed in the context of subjectivity and objectivity. Many people believe that a project, an organisation or movement on its own cannot be critical enough of its own experiences, practices and programmes, and that its self-evaluation may be biased. This is not true, especially in the case where they themselves are interested in critically reflecting on their own experiences. It is in its own interest to make the process critical, reflective and open.

The issue is, can, without any external assistance, a project, a group, a movement or an organisation facilitate the entire process of critical reflection on its own? Will it have the capacity, the competence and the resources to ensure that appropriate and relevant parties and individuals are involved in setting of the objectives, collection of information, in analysis of their information and in acting on the basis of that analysis? (Choudhary and Tandon, 1989).

Choudhary and Tandon highlight how in some cases this has been possible. It is also possible that some groups, projects or organisations may not have that capacity and that is where an outside agency or individual could facilitate this process. The role of the outsider in such a situation could be to help raise issues and questions, which may otherwise not get raised or may be difficult to raise, to

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bring into the open, information and concerns, which are generally not so clearly stated, to help in. articulating the objectives of an evaluation, to help create methods of information collection and analysis and to help the project or the organisation take charge of its own evaluation and use it in its own interest, and in many cases to prepare the report, especially in the case of grassroots groups

Thus the specific role of the outside agency to individual varies considerably, depending on the given situation and the specific objectives for the evaluation exercise. Any simplistic and universal prescriptions about the outsiders' roles are not warranted in such circumstances.

6. The Continuity Of Evaluation

Choudhary and Tandon (2001) emphasise that a participatory evaluation exercise should be seen as an ongoing process of critical reflection within an organisation, programme or people’s movement. It should be continuous as well as periodic. After a few years of experience in one area or in one programme or with a certain methodology, it is possible to take time off to reflect on it critically. And this may become an issue-based or event-based evaluation exercise.

According to them, the follow-up of the participatory evaluation exercise begins to take place during the exercise itself. They emphasise the need to concretely plan steps for follow-up from the evaluation exercise. In many cases, broad directions are agreed upon and it is here that future steps in planning and implementing those directions need to be set up at the end of a participatory evaluation exercise. The role of the outside facilitator or facilitating agency can continue in the follow-up period, but it may need to be re-negotiated as facilitating a reflection exercise and providing inputs to implement new programmes require different role and competencies.

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Summary

In the course of this Unit, we have looked into a range of practical approaches to participatory monitoring. Various tools, as we have seen, need to be used in accordance with various settings. Critical issued related to participatory monitoring have also been dealt upon, in this Unit. Practical approaches, in terms of tools and processes have been discussed too. Participatory evaluation as a integral part of programme implementation has also been covered in this Unit.

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