PRIA

INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

Initiative in Education & Lifelong Learning

Certificate Programme

International Perspectives in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Unit 1

A Conceptual Understanding of 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

Unit 2: Methodological Aspects of Monitoring and Evaluation

Unit 3: Method, Tools and Techniques of Monitoring and Evaluation - I

Unit 4: Method, Tools and Techniques of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation - II

Unit 5: Learning from the Experiences of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

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Introduction

The first unit of this course is very important, as it forms the foundation for the remaining five units. For many of you, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) may be an entirely new concept; others may have heard about it but may not really comprehend the full meaning. The concepts introduced in this unit may thus seem rather difficult to begin with, but the course design and our interaction will ensure that this aspect is effectively taken care of as we progress.

The unit begins with an introduction of the concept of M&E, highlighting the key definitions and unraveling key terms. This will be followed by an assessment on why there is a need to undertake M&E in development interventions. The unit will then introduce the concept of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E), and provide a brief overview on the same.

The concepts introduced in the first unit, will be dealt with in greater detail in the subsequent five units. To help you go through this unit we have designed learning exercises like Think Tank, which will aid application of the learning to your own context. In addition, we have some illustrative points to think about under an exercise called Note Bank. It is necessary that you read the required readings provided at the end of the unit. We have also recommended other readings, which are optional.

All the very best with your first unit and rest assured...we will keep in touch through Moodle.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, you will be familiar with:

- The meanings of and inter-relationship between the processes of monitoring and evaluation, and how they relate to the processes of planning
- Why monitoring and evaluation are important, and what benefits flow from their use
- The differences between conventional and participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation
- The origins of participatory monitoring and evaluation
- The key features and underlying principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation
- How participatory monitoring and evaluation relates to participatory research and other similar forms of research
- The importance of participation and the diverse contexts in which monitoring and evaluation are carried out.

1.1 Defining Monitoring and Evaluation

1.1.1 Key Concepts

An everyday experience

Every day, we engage in planning, monitoring and evaluation. We get up in the morning and plan the day ahead. During the day, we look at our watch to see the time, to assess whether we have done what we had planned to do and consider what we still have to do before the day ends and whether we will be able to do it with the remaining time of the day. If we feel we cannot, we may change our plans. All this is what we call monitoring. Having done it, we may evaluate, which means going beyond determining whether things are going according to plan but asking more reflective and analytical questions. For example, does it matter that we are behind (or ahead of) schedule? What are the reasons for the situation being as it is? What has been the effect of what we have done? Have we actually done what needed to be done? Should we, on reflection, and in the light of events, have done something else instead, and therefore make changes to our future intentions? And if so, then what should we do?

In simple terms, planning is about looking ahead. Monitoring is about looking at what has been achieved when compared with the plans one has made, that is looking at what has happened. Evaluation is more about looking at what differences we have made (in comparison to the starting point) and what we need to do next, including possibly a change in plan.

Indeed, as Choudhary and Tandon (1989) point out, all of us engage in monitoring and evaluation, not only of our day's work, but also of the different stages in our lives - of our accomplishments, of our failures, as well as observing and assessing others and their accomplishments. Thus, the processes of monitoring and evaluation are integral to human thinking and daily existence. Such processes have existed throughout the history of civilisation.

Let us look in little more detail at what planning, monitoring and evaluation means when applied to the work and functioning of projects, programmes and organisations,

with a focus on the development sector.

Planning

Planning is usually taken to be a process of identifying what the need or problem is and formulating a course of action that will achieve the identified and expressed goals to address the need or solve this problem. It also involves identifying what the indicators of achievement are to be. Without them, it will be difficult to monitor and evaluate the achievements of the goals. Indicators are important constituents of the 'plan' we make at the outset.

Monitoring

A good definition of monitoring is:

Monitoring is the systematic and continuous assessment of the progress of a piece of work over time, which checks if things are going 'according to plan' and enables adjustments to be made in a methodical way (Bakewell, Adams, & Pratt, 2003)

One does not have to delve a great deal into the literature about Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation before the word 'indicators' comes up. The World Bank, for example, sees Monitoring as "a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide… indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives …." (Kusek & Rist, 2004).

Monitoring thus gives information on where a project or activity is at any given time (and over time) relative to its plans and the indicators contained in such plans. It aims at assessing whether things are goings in the right direction and pace. It seeks to answer the question: what has been done in reference to what was intended? Our working definition is given in Box 1.

Box 1 Monitoring: A working definition The systematic and continuous assessment of the progress of an activity to check if it is going according to plan and enable adjustments to be made if necessary.

Evaluation

The literal meaning of the word evaluation' is 'to determine the value of". Dictionary definitions include: 'to examine and judge the worth, quality, significance, amount, degree or condition' (Srinivasan, 1981). In other words, 'Evaluation' involves assessing or judging the worth of, or the value of a given activity.

This implies two things: first, a given activity is judged in its given context. Second, the judgment of the activity will mostly be in relation to the goal or objective of the activity, or some indicator of the progress towards it. Hence, this definition:

'Evaluation is the periodic assessment of the relevance, performance, efficiency and impact of a piece of work with respect to its stated objectives' (Bakewell, Adams, & Pratt, 2003).

In the context of evaluation, 'assessment' means something deeper than it does in the context of monitoring: just as one cannot talk about monitoring without talking of indicators, one cannot talk of evaluation without talking of judgment, and we will have more to say about that in a moment. Rubin (1995) describes evaluation as: '…Measuring, analysing and interpreting change (in order to) help people to determine how far objectives have been achieved; whether initial assumptions about what would happen were right; and to make judgments about the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the work.'

Or as another source puts it, Evaluation aims not just to question 'are we doing things right?', but also 'are we doing the right things?' (Herweg & Steiner, 2002).

As the World Bank says, the judgment may be about not only what is being achieved but also whether what is being done is relevant and appropriate. 'Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, including its design, implementation and results. Its aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of its objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluationshould provideinformation that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision making process….' (Kusek & Rist, 2004)

Evaluation thus goes beyond whetherplans and indicators are or are not being achieved, to whythey have or have not been achieved. It seeks, in other words, to address issues of causality - and what as a result needs to be done. It seeks to assess effectiveness. It seeks to answer the question: what should be done? Our working definition of Evaluation is in Box 2.

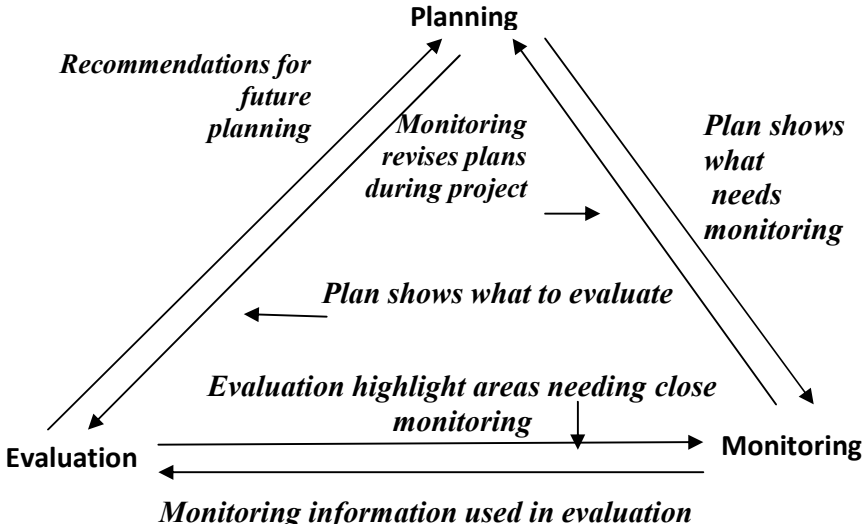
Box 2: Evaluation: A working definition

The systematic assessment of an activity, to determine the fulfilment and/or relevance of any aspect of its performance and results, in order to inform the future directions

THINK TANK

The head teacher of the primary school you attended many years ago contacts you.
'I know this is difficult,' she tells you, 'but I wonder if you will come along and give us a talk about monitoring and evaluation.'
'Who do you mean by "us"?' You reply, 'the teachers?'
'Oh no, I mean the children in the top class, the eleven-year-olds.'
Jot down, in no more than 100 words how you will explain these concepts to these students, concentrating on simple alternative words for 'monitoring' and 'evaluation'. You might find it useful to consult a Thesaurus.

Illustration 1: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation



(Bakewell, Adams, & Pratt, 2003)

Are there any way corrections that can be made in the image?

Evaluation highlights areas needing close monitoring; change highlight to highlights

It will be important to note that planning, monitoring and evaluation are 'intimately linked and cannot be dealt with in isolation' depict them as a triangle, as shown inabove illustration(Bakewell, Adams, & Pratt, 2003).

In its simplest terms, the sequence of planning, monitoring and evaluation is:

What do we want to do? Did we do it? How well did we do it? So, what do we do now?

1.1.2 Scope of monitoring and evaluation

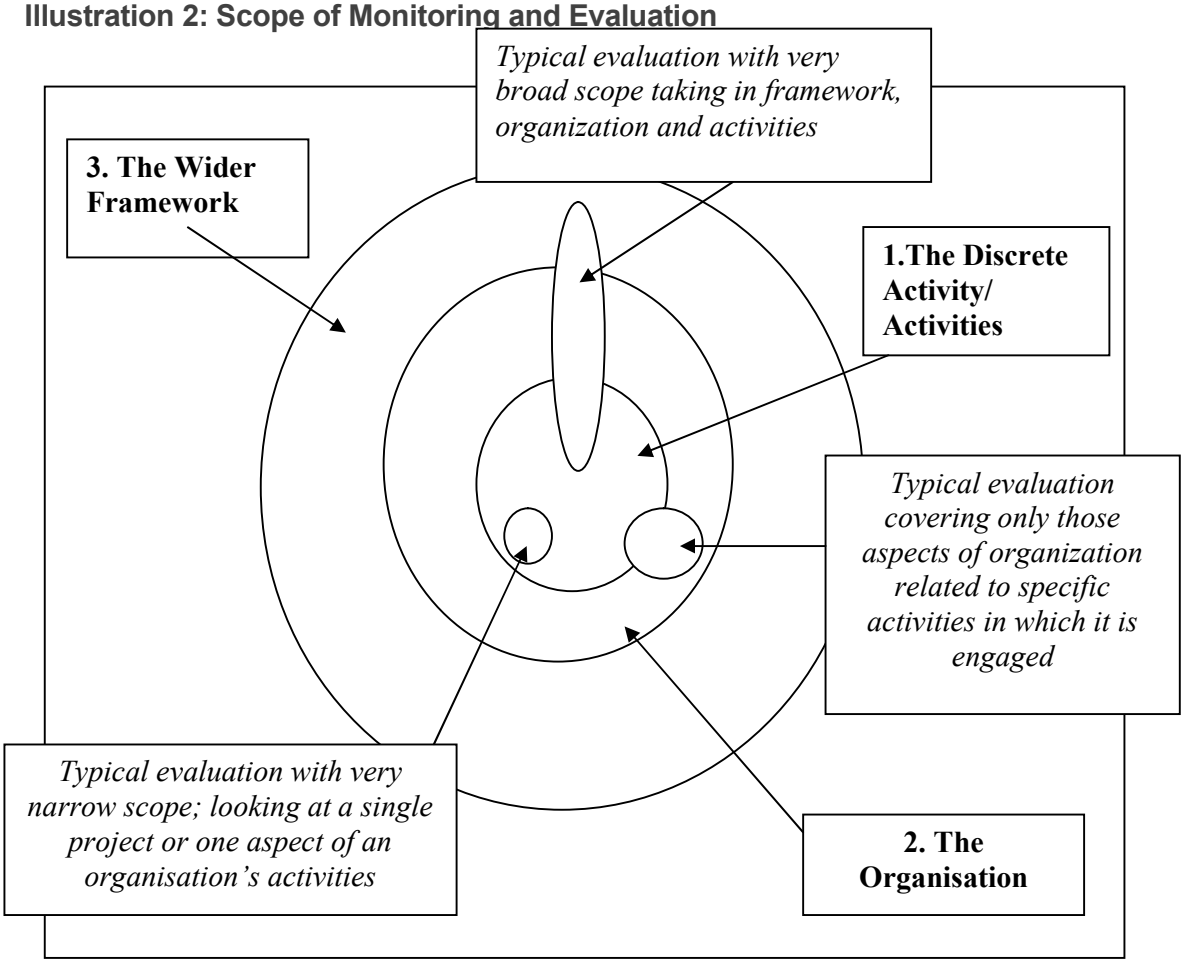
At this early stage of our course, it is important to recognize that planning, monitoring and evaluation can take place in diverse contexts. The most familiar and the best literature on the subject depict them as discrete activities, such as a specific 'project'. However, a great deal of literature situates monitoring and evaluation in an even more specific context: where the activity is a development project. We will use that context extensively in this course. However, as has already been cited, monitoring and evaluation can take place in a variety of contexts, including:

- The programmes through which projects are funded
- The policies that underpin such programmes. Examples of this can be found in the systematic 'tracking' carried out by international organisations, such as social watch and human rights on the progress of different countries and their governments, towards reaching the millennium development goals (MDGs) and their abuses of human rights.
- The overall functioning, management and governance of entire organisations
- The functioning and progress of whole communities and societies
- Specific aspects of projects, programmes, policies, organisations or communities, such as their efforts at gender inclusion, or their impact on poverty etc.

Another way of looking at this aspect is based on an analysis by Choudhary and

Tandon (1989), who describe evaluation in terms of its scope. See Illustration 2 below. The dotted circles (explained in italics) exhibit these more complex scopes. It is important to caution, that very often, the scope of a planning, monitoring or evaluation exercise may not be so easily described. Only one aspect of the activities of a project or organisation may be covered, such as gender equity or management systems. However, an evaluation may cover both an organisation and the projects it manages; or, it may include those aspects of the wider policy or relationships that are relevant. Indeed, as we will see from the case studies in subsequent units of the course, evaluations in particular are quite commonly of such a scope.

Illustration 2: Scope of Monitoring and Evaluation



1. *Discrete activity: The narrowest scope (inner circle) is where the focus is on a specific, discrete activity. This may typically take the form of a 'project'.*
2. *The organisation: The next circle shows a scope of a broader nature, where it includes the*

entire functioning of an organisation or programme.

3. *The wider framework: The outer circle is where the focus is still broader, on the wider framework of policies, regulations, public opinion, relationships and practices within which organisations, programmes or projects function.*

Judgment

As we have noted, evaluation involves making judgments. Here, one may ask, on what basis are such judgments (as well as the assessments involved in monitoring) made? This is an important question which we will return to time and again during the course.

We noted earlier that the assessment of an activity is in relation to something, and that something is the plan (and the indicators contained in it). When we turn to the judgments involved in evaluation, other bases of comparison become important. These include:

- The basis of some form of pre-determined standard: such as in student examinations, where judgment ends up in grades, for example, A, B, C and D.
- The basis of progress over time: we may make a judgment, for example, on how far has a person progressed in terms of skill or ability, as compared to a year ago or ten years ago?
- The basis of a comparison with similarly placed subjects: we may, for example, judge how much agricultural production in one community has improved as compared to that in another community.
- The 'on what basis?' question is only one of the important ones relating to judgment. Even more important is 'who makes the judgment?' Before we answer this, we need to start by looking at another question, of the need for undertaking monitoring and evaluation.

1.2 Purposes of Monitoring and Evaluation

Why should we monitor or evaluate? In the field of development, a common answer to this question is: 'because the funders insist on it.' The implication is therefore that 'If they do not, then there is no reason to do it.'

It must be pointed out in no uncertain terms that such viewpoints are entirely mistaken. There are many reasons to engage in planning, monitoring and evaluation of all projects, programmes and organisations, and not just those involved in development work.

1.2.1 Performance and results

Perhaps, the most common and important reason for engaging in monitoring and evaluation is that of determining performance and results. Monitoring and evaluation for this purpose, is often called 'formative'. The stress on performance and results is evident in the widespread use of terms such as 'Impact Assessment', and 'Impact Monitoring Assessment' (Dwivedi, 2001; Herweg & Steiner, 2002).

Kusek and Rist (2004), compare what they term 'traditional implementation-focused' monitoring and evaluation, where the focus is on how well a project, programme or policy is or was being executed, with what they see as the more useful approach, that is 'results-based' monitoring and evaluation', which addresses what they call the 'so what' questions - so, the activities have taken place? So what? A results-based system, they say, 'provides feedback on the actual outcomes and goals of [the] actions' and can be used not only at the project level (to which the traditional approach, they claim, is restricted) but in other settings too.

'Results' take different forms and are brought about over different periods of time. Here, it is appropriate to introduce further terms that will crop up frequently when monitoring and evaluation take place. The short-term result of an activity is usually termed the 'output'. The medium-term result is usually the 'outcome' while the long-term result is usually the 'impact'.

Bakewell, Adams and Pratt (2003) distinguish between outputs, outcomes and impacts in this way:
Outputs - these are what were done?

Outcomes - these are what was brought about as a direct result of the outputs, or in other words, what happened?

Impact- these are the long-term and sustainable changes (positive or negative), or in other words, what changed?

To take the example of a micro-credit project, its outputs are the supply of credit, the outcomes increased wealth and production in the community and the impact could be 'poverty reduction', or 'more economically empowered women', or a 'more sustainable local economy'. While naturally the aim of the project is to produce such intended results, it will be desirable, as far as possible, to seek to predict or hypothesize, intended outputs, outcomes and impacts, and possible unintended ones (both positive and negative) in the process of project design.

THINK TANK

You have no sooner heaved a sigh of relief at surviving the ordeal of teaching eleven-year-olds about monitoring and evaluation, than the headmistress, in the course of a 'thank you' call, now tells you that she is on the management committee of a local NGO that has been working for twenty-five years to increase school attendance of children living in a local slum. The committee has decided to carry out an evaluation exercise in order to determine what has been achieved over the years. 'I gather there are things called outputs, outcomes and impacts,' she says, 'and that some things called indicators need to be found for each of them. Can give me any ideas for our evaluation?'

To do so, I'll need to ask you some questions,' you say. Make a list of up to ten questions to ask her in order to help her.

1.2.2 Accountability

Accountability in simple terms can be understood as the acknowledgement of the responsibilities for purposes and action. One of the important purposes of undertaking monitoring and evaluation, is to assess whether the action taken, resources used and methodology applied, result in achieving the actual purpose of

the programme. Undertaking monitoring and evaluation helps in critically assessing the impact of the programme in terms of achieving the programme goals and target group's satisfaction. Thus, the findings from the process can result in identification of the people accountable, thereby, increasing accountability and improving the existing mechanisms.

In development programmes, an organisation is accountable to varioussources, like, donors,
beneficiaries, partners, other civil society organisations etc. Thus, it is important to do regular monitoring and evaluation of the programmes to a) assess the programme progress; b) assess the impact, or change brought from that progress; and c) report that back to donors and beneficiaries of the programme.

1.2.3 Learning

One of the most important purposes of monitoring and evaluation is learning. It provides useful learning in relation to a) what is or is not working, b) what changes are required in the original plan of action, c) what needs to be kept in mind when similar planning is done in future. These points are further discussed in detail in section 1.5.4.

1.2.4 Other purposes

While measuring and assessing, although 'performance and results' are important reasons for undertaking monitoring and evaluation, there are many other reasons that are equally, if not more, important. These include:

- Informing the making of choices and decisions - this purpose is often called **'summative'**
- Planning for more effective action
- Determining the impact of such action
- Justifying activities to disinterested parties
- Justifying activities to external funding bodies and donors
- Learning from successes and mistakes
- Communicating and sharing successes and failures with others to build solidarity

- Ensuring that the project, programme or organisation is operating sustainably (this is sometimes called 'process monitoring/evaluation')
- Building knowledge and capacity of people and organisations and
- Empowering people, thereby achieving social transformation

The other purposes can be summarized as:

- Creating a basis on which to justify project, programme or organisational activities. This is part of what is often termed **'accountability'**
- Helping build credibility among and relationships with the community, with others who have some form of interest or stake in the activity, and more generally, among the public, through good communication
- Capturing institutional learning and knowledge-building - this, may be within the organisation, or at the individual, project or programme level. This is part of what is often termed '**capacity-building'** or '**organisational strengthening** 'or '**building of learning organisations'**

An additional dimension comes from Fernandes and Tandon (1981), who argue that evaluation in the development field should aim to not only systematically (and with precision) review, analyse and judge experience in order to help decision-making, but to also build up knowledge and skills, having inherent usefulness to the community.

A number of these 'other' reasons, particularly those that are about knowledge- and capacity-building, empowerment and transformation, bring us back to the key question - by whom? Let us now examine this in more detail.

1.3 Understanding Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

1.3.1 A few thoughts on participation

Participation puts people - 'we' - at the centre. We made the plan, we monitored our progress, we evaluated and we learnt from the experience. We may well have done all this on a collective rather than an individual basis. Our introductory stories thus illustrate what this course is about: approaches to monitoring and evaluation that are participatory in nature.

As we shall see, monitoring and evaluation have come to be applied in more complex situations and settings, besides, the course of a day in an individual's life. In such situations, the participatory aspect has tended to get under-used, or even lost. As we will explain, this is more than disappointing, as participation enhances and enriches all forms of monitoring and evaluation. Participatory approaches are more than just alternative ways of going about things. They value people and enable them to learn and develop; they give people ownership and power. They enhance the quality of both the activity on hand and the understanding that we can gain from monitoring and evaluating it.

1.3.2 Origins of participatory approaches

a) Emergence of participatory research

General critiques of social science research

Participatory research (PR) belonged to a broad family of research techniques (which include those associated with participatory monitoring and evaluation), which emerged from the critiques of traditional social science research methodologies. Intraditional social science research, the researchers adapted and applied pure scientific methods to the study of social systems.

However, the knowledge such methodologies generated and the dissemination of the same remained in the domain of professionals and experts, and their institutions.

As Illich (1973 and 1977) the bodies of specialists that now dominate the creation, adjudication and implementation of needs, are a new kind of cartel. He observes thatin any area where a human need can be imagined, these new professionals - dominant, authoritative, monopolistic, legalised - have become exclusive experts of the public good.

Thus, the dominant social science research paradigm reinforced existing social hierarchies and resulted in ordinary people being excluded from participating in the process of knowledge production and distribution. The premise of the paradigm was that 'scientists' could research 'sites' in a 'neutral, objective and value-free' manner in order to develop general laws about various phenomena, which would, through academic approval, form 'truths' that could be passed on through teaching.

Nonetheless, some social science researchers concluded that:

- Despite the conduct and outputs of much social science research, the lives of ordinary and poor people remained little changed; and
- Research should be a means of learning, educational experience and social transformation. If not, it is meaningless.

At the same time, people at the community level, who had been oppressed and marginalised for generations - by unequal distribution of power, loss of livelihood sources, and control of information and knowledge by dominant elite groups were coming to the same conclusions, out of their own hard day-to-day experiences of life and survival.

Adult education practices

The emergence of participatory research was also greatly influenced by the practices of adult educators working in developing countries, who realised that the rise of professional specialisation, was devaluing popular knowledge and its production. Prominent among them were

a) Paolo Freire, in Latin America, who developed techniques of adult education among the poor that engaged them in critical analysis and organised action to improve their situation and

b) Orlando Fals-Borda, whose work aimed to legitimise 'popular knowledge' and to develop a 'science of the proletariat' with which the masses could conduct their own struggle for transformation (Fals-Borda, 1985; Rahman, 1984)

b) The growth of participatory development

A further influence on the emergence of participatory approaches came from practitioners involved in development work from the 1970s onwards, in both the north and south, but principally in the latter. Among them, debates grew about the fact that 'development elites' were controlling knowledge production systems, with the result that in social sciences, the status quo was preserved and a dependency created among the poor on government and elite sections for the resources, services and knowledge that comprised 'development'.

Researchers active in the development field also became concerned at the failure of development programmes and models all over the world.Therefore grew a 'radical critique of development expertise [and] in particular, how and with whose input developmentunderstandings are recognised as expertise.

Knowledge for and about development, has for the past 50 years, been so

shrouded in economic ideology and burdened with accoutrements of proof imposedby auditors and academics, that it was nearly unthinkable that it could come from poor people or that it could even be created or used by them…. The consequence was a body of knowledge about"development" locales that was many times removed from the sites themselves, not to mention the people whom it most intimately concerned; this remove was, furthermore, sanctioned by the academics and the academia. Utility, or project problem solving, was not a priority in knowing about projects. The beneficiaries were rarely the end users of what was known and there was a righteous divide between knowing and doing. This was made even more poignantly, since those in the know were rarely those who took action. Development and knowledge, like "military intelligence" became a non-sequitur and languished for years bereft of sensible propositions, burdened with ideological agendas and the trappings of scientific method' (Freedman, 1998)

As a result, some development practitioners began to realise the importance of indigenous and popular knowledge, in framing and delivering more effective development programmes. Prominent among them was Robert Chambers, who proposed the involvement of poor people in gathering information for development project planning and design – through what he initially termed *rapid rural appraisal* (RRA). He then took the developed practice further into what he *termed participatory rural appraisal (PRA).*

c) Emergence of RRA and PRA

Rapid rural appraisal (RRA)

RRA emerged in the late 1970s because of the following three main reasons:

- **Dissatisfaction** with the biases, especially the anti-poverty biases of rural 'development tourism' - the phenomenon of a brief rural visit by the urban-based professional.These biases were recognised as: **spatial** where visits were made to cities, on roadsides and to the centres of villages, thereby neglecting the peripheries; **project** - where projects were being undertaken, often with special official attention and support; **person** - meeting men more

than women, elites more than the poor, the users more than the non-users of services, and so on; **seasonal** - going in the dry and cool weather, rather than in the hot and wet seasons, which are often worse for poor rural people; and **diplomatic**- where the outsider does not wish to cause offence, by asking to meet poor people or see bad conditions. All these could combine to hide the worst of poverty and deprivation.

- **Disillusionment** with the normal processes of questionnaire surveys and their results. Questionnaire- surveys tended to be long-winded, tedious, a headache to administer, a nightmare to process and write-up, produce but the worst was that this inaccurate and unreliable data, leading to reports, if any, were long, late, boring, misleading, difficult to use and ignored.

- **Desire** for more cost-effective methods of learning. This was catalysed by the growing recognition among development professionals of the painfully obvious fact, that the rural people were themselves knowledgeable on many subjects which touched their lives. What became known as indigenous technical knowledge (ITK) was increasingly seen to have richness and value for practical purposes. One major question, as it seemed then, was how to more effectively tap ITK as a source of information for analysis and use by outside professionals.

RRA was developed for quick field-oriented results, with the following objectives:

1. Appraising agricultural and other needs of the rural community
2. Prioritising areas of research for meeting such needs
3. Possessing feasibility of development needs and action plan
4. Implementing such action plans, monitoring an evaluating them.

RRA enabled researchers to gain information and insights directly from the rural people and about rural conditions, in a more cost-effective and timely manner than through modes that entailed outsiders to obtain the information, taking it away and analysing it. RRA was extractive, or more neutrally, elicitive (Chambers, 1994).

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA)

By the mid-1980s, the words 'participation' and 'participatory' had entered the RRA vocabulary. In 1988, there were parallel developments in Kenya and India. In Kenya, the National Environment Secretariat, in association with Clark University, conducted an RRA in Mbusanyi, a community in the Machakos district, which led to the adoption a villageresource management plan. This was subsequently described as a participatory rural appraisal. Around the same time in 1988, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in India was interested indeveloping participatory RRA, and asked the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) for help. In September and October 1988, IIED and AKRSP staff facilitated participatory RRAswith villagers in Gujarat. The Kenya and Indian experiences were seminal for the development of PRA (Chambers, 1994)

By the mid-1990s, it was becoming increasingly evident that themechanical application of RRA techniques was often resulting in failure to reach and capture the views of poor people, particularly women, children and the socially excluded. There was renewed interest inmethods for participation at the grassroots, based on principles of human rights, and which aimed to use the research process itself as a means of empowerment.

PRA thus brought together RRA and social action for social transformation. Its application was based on a number of underlying principles:

- Embracing complexity in order to understand social reality, rather thanoversimplifying it in accordance with predetermined categories, theories and concepts of what such reality might beRecognising that multiple realities need to be considered in analysis or action; Involving the poor and the most disadvantaged as equal partners, in knowledge creation and problem analysis;

and

- Grassroots empowerment: not only gathering but making the assessment process itself a means of empowerment through linking grassroots learning with policy-making.

PRA aims to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse theirknowledge of life and conditions, as well as to plan, act, monitor and evaluate. Forms and applications of PRA have proliferated and are being applied in different fields, including natural resources management, agriculture, health and nutrition, poverty and livelihood programmes, and urban contexts. Not only NGOs and government departments, but also training institutes and universities have increasingly adopted PRA methods (Chambers, 1994).

There are other genres of PRA which include participatory learning methods (PALM), and participatory appraisal of natural resources (PANR). More recently, the term participatory learning and action (PLA) is being preferred, as it more effectively emphasises the importance of:

- Moving away from the use of participatory methods, as an extractive process by outsiders, to a sustainable learning process involving different stakeholders as equal partners; and of integrating learning with action.

According to Robert Chambers (Chambers, 1994)PLA is considered to be broader and inclusive than PRA and it tends to include other similar and related approaches and methods. We are providing a link

d) Other important influences

Just as participatory researchers seek to shift the sources and control of knowledge, so too do feminist researchers, who emphasise the need to work with women in a way that empowers them.

Like poor people, women too have been largely excluded from producing the dominant forms of knowledge. Feminist researchers also argue that the social sciences have been not only a science of male society but also a male science of

society (Callaway, 1991).

Feminist development practitioners and researchers have drawn attention to inequitable participation of women and men in development programmes. Women in development (WID), women and development (WAD) and gender and development (GAD) approaches, reflect changing thinking and practice on the women and development debate.

THINK TANK

As we will see, participatory monitoring and evaluation methods make extensive use of visual techniques such as drawings and other forms of pictorial art.
On a blank sheet of paper (as large as you like, but flip-chart size is preferable), create a visual illustration showing the historical and other influences that have brought about the existence of participatory monitoring and evaluation, which you might use when giving a short lecture on the subject.

1.3.3 General features of participatory approaches

The principal features of all forms of participatory research, including participatory monitoring and evaluation that have emerged as a result of the above trends and influences:

- Participatory research starts with the assumption that ordinary people already possess knowledge, and this needs to be valued and built upon.
- Rather than merely serving as a means for the advancement of academics, participatory research processes and results aim to be of benefit to the communities and people that they focus on. The objective of participatory research is the liberation of human creative potential and the mobilisation of human resources for resolving social problems. Its emphasis is on authenticity, rather than scientific validity.
- The participatory research process, from subject/problem/need identification to research design and formulation to interpretation and analysis and subsequent decision-making, actively involves and empowers those affected. It is part of a total educational experience that enables the needs to be determined, an awareness that has to be raised and the solutions to be identified. It is a process of knowing and acting.
- The people themselves have control of the process: they are the primary stakeholders, and not merely one stakeholder amongst many.
- Participatory research is a dialectic process, a dialogue over time. It does not aim to create a static picture of reality at one point in time. It stresses interpersonal communication among the involved parties; it is always 'collective' in nature.
- Participatory research often results in the creation or strengthening of organisations among the poor and marginalised.
- Participatory research is not value-neutral: it is ideologically committed to the weakest sections of society; it is integrally bound with social transformation and action, and with the use of knowledge as power; it is synonymous with the processes of liberation of the poor.

Other related terms

There is a great deal of debate about terms that have been created to describe research techniques that are not based on, or reject, those of 'conventional' or 'traditional' social science researchers. These include (apart from RRA and PRA which were discussed earlier):

- Action research
- 'Activist' research
- Ideological research
- Community-based research
- Empowerment research
- Collaborative research

Participatory approaches to research, including monitoring and evaluation, produce a variety of outcomes as follows:

- New knowledge is built upon a participant's existing knowledge
- People learn to take control and exercise their power
- People work collectively to seek and analyse information and make decisions. In doing so, informal collective often becomes more formalised in new or stronger organisations
- Options are created, debated and negotiated, and then accepted or rejected. This builds confidence and brings about people's empowerment

1.3.4 Principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation

The next two units of the course will examine in detail the various tools and techniques that feature both conventional and participatory forms of monitoring and evaluation. However, it is appropriate to conclude this unit with a short introduction to them by looking at the principles, which underpin such tools and techniques. Some will be obvious by now, others less so.

Narayan-Parker(1993) identifies six underpinning principles of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E):

- Collaboration;
- Generation of knowledge
  Problem-solving
- Releasing creativity
- Using multiple and innovative methods Involving experts as facilitators

Gaventa and Estrella (1998) outline four more:

- Learning
- Negotiation
- Flexibility
- Participation

We now briefly examine these ten underpinning principles.

1. Learning

Participatory monitoring and evaluation builds on what people already know and do, and both uses and develops their abilities and skills to monitor and evaluate their own progress (Feuerstein, 1986). As participants involved in PM&E gain skills, local the community's capacity for planning, problem-solving and decision-making is built. Both at the individual level and that of the community or organisation-level, people gain a greater understanding of the various factors (internal and external) that affect the conditions and dynamics of the project, organisation or community as a whole.

New knowledge builds on their existing knowledge: what works and what does not; and what alternative actions might need consideration. PME is an experiential learning cycle: a process of continuous learning, reflection and action. Ward (1997) identifies four levels of such learning:

- Level 1: Learning facts, knowledge
- Level 2: Learning transferable job skills
- Level 3: Learning to adapt and to derive lessons from success and failure
- Level 4: Learning to be innovative and creative to design the future rather than merely adapt to it.

The OECD sees levels 3 and 4 as 'enterprising' personal qualities referred to earlier. But, if they are to survive and prosper in a rapidly changing world, people need knowledge (Level 1) and skills (Level 2)(Ball, 1989).

2. Negotiation

As we have noted, PM&E is increasingly seen as a social process for negotiating between people's different needs, expectations and world views. At its heart are discourse and interaction (Gaventa & Estrella, 1998). Working together on PM&E improves the understanding of all parties of their own needs and the interests, perceptions and roles of others, so that the outcome can be continuously improved for all (Gaventa & Estrella, 1998). When placed in the context of an entire society or nation, it can readily be seen that PM&E contributes significantly to the achievement of democracy, through being a forum for discourse and debate (Freedman, 1998).

The issues that arise here are those of power, equity and social transformation, which we touched upon earlier in this unit. The processes of negotiation can either empower or disempower the different stakeholders, depending on the extent to which they are involved in the design, implementation, reporting and use of results of the PM&E process. The greater the level of participation of the beneficiaries, the more empowered they will be. The question of who creates and who controls the production of knowledge and information collected and created by monitoring and

evaluation is a central one.

Cousins and Whitmore (1997) argue that the main aim of 'transformative' PM&E is to empower people through a process, through which social groups produce knowledge about their reality, clarify and articulate their norms and values, and reach consensus about further action. Thus, the PM&E process is about transforming power relations.

As we have seen in this unit, an important part of the PM&E process, is the selection of indicators. We will see below and in later units how beneficiaries have knowledge and insights that can enable indicators to be chosen that may not otherwise be obvious to other stakeholders, thus enhancing the quality of PM&E.

3. Flexibility

Unlike many forms of conventional evaluation, there is no 'standard model' or 'blueprint' for PM&E in any particular setting or for any specific purpose. Indeed, processes should be contextual, taking into account the local socio-cultural, economic, political and institutional contexts in which they may take place (Marsden and Oakley, 1990). It follows that every PM&E exercise will be different: flexibility is the key to its design.

Freedman (1998) takes the principle of flexibility to its (logical) conclusion by arguing that evaluating in a participatory manner is an 'art' in marked contrast to the emphasis on 'science' of earlier generations of evaluation. 'Conventional evaluations,' he argues, 'can be needlessly elaborated because evaluators go to great lengths to surround their study with the appearance of rigour, in order to withstand the challenges of managers and ministers' offices'. And he goes on: 'The art is finding research exercises that participants like to do and that will make them proud of their work… this means using numbers for effect but not for proof, using common sense methods…. and generally recognising that compassion works as well as distance in assuring accurate information'. To go back to the choosing of indicators, he adds: '…it means avoiding indicators whose principal justification is that they are "standard" indicators…'

Freedman (1998) illustrates the point with an example of beneficiary creativity and insight in the choice of indicators for a water sanitation project in Indonesia:

'When water committee members, villagers…undertook an evaluation with the help of an external agency, they puzzled at first over what to ask. Planners would want to know about water-use patterns, hygiene and the maintenance of pumps. The villagers had different questions. The external agency facilitators recognising that the questions of beneficiaries and planners would be different, encouraged the water committee members to come up with their own indicators. The information that they wanted… was whether or not the women had turned a greater profit selling vegetables since the pumps had been installed. It was a good question because, for the village, one value of more accessible water was having more water to spread on vegetable gardens. So the question was asked and the answers carefully counted and it turned out that the proportion of women growing produce for sale and making more cash has increased by nearly 50 per cent in the course of the project' (Narayan Parker, 1993).

4. Collaboration

PM&E is a collaborative endeavor all the way through the process, from planning to analysis and change. 'Collaboration' means not just doing things together but taking decisions collectively, and making special efforts to ensure the meaningful participation of traditionally excluded or overlooked groups, such as women, youth and the most poor and marginalised (Narayan-Parker, 1993).

5. Generating knowledge

6. Problem-solving

7. Releasing creativity

PM&E seeks not just to gather and analyse information in order to generate knowledge in the form of a better understanding of a problem or need, and of the effect of the action being taken to address it. It includes that and goes beyond it, to developing 'Level 4' attributes among people: innovation, creativity, and problem-solving

abilities. The techniques used in PM&E are themselves designed to be creative and enjoyable, so that they do not only generate knowledge but also build self-esteem and confidence, and stimulate enthusiasm (Narayan-Parker, 1993).

8. Using multiple and innovative methods

The methods used in conventional approaches typically consist of 'expert' evaluator gathering information through individual interviews, along with data collection from files and records. In PM&E, as we will see in many of the case studies in other units, the methods used to plan, to gather information, to analyse it and to make decisions are much more numerous and imaginative, many of them borrowed and adapted from other disciplines, particularly the arts ((Narayan-Parker, 1993).

9. Involving experts as facilitators

While still often called 'the evaluator', outside 'experts' play very different roles than in conventional forms of monitoring and evaluation. The key difference is that that they facilitate and enable rather than 'do'. While it is often thought that PM&E is synonymous with 'self-evaluation', this is not true at all. In fact, many PM&E exercises involve outsiders, as will be evident from the case studies in the later units 5 and 6.

10. Participation

Gaventa and Estrella (1998) note that: 'perhaps what most distinguishes PM&E from more conventional "traditional" approaches to monitoring and evaluation is its emphasis on participation… PM&E acknowledges that there are multiple stakeholders who are, or should be, participants in monitoring and evaluation'.

What exactly is meant by 'participation'? Gaventa and Estrella (1998) point out that different people give very different meanings to it. 'In practice,' they point out:

'there is considerable variation in the level and degree of participation among the various stakeholders… There are two main ways to characterise participation in monitoring and evaluation: a) by whom it is initiated and conducted, and b) whose perspectives are particularly emphasised.

The first distinguishes between monitoring and evaluation that is externally,

internally or jointly led. The second distinguishes between which stakeholders are emphasised - all stakeholders? Beneficiaries? Or marginalised groups?' As in all forms of participatory research, it is the latter that is given more emphasis, even primacy, in PM&E.

1.3.5 Differences between participatory and conventional approaches to monitoring and evaluation

Conventional forms of evaluation

- aim at 'objectivity';
- are undertaken by 'outside experts';
- are often initiated by funding agencies; and

are mainly concerned with objectively establishing the financial and/or technical viability of a project or competence of those running it; recommending any needed changes to the project design or blueprint; ensuring that all aspects of the activity are carried out on time and to plan, and that the performance does not deviate from the blueprint or overrun cost or time limits. (UNDP, 1996)

Participatory forms of monitoring and evaluation

Participatory forms may well seek to do much the same things (in short, to improve the work), but additionally or alternatively they:

- more generally support and extend participatory models of development
- empower the monitored and/or evaluated communities, organisations, and individuals to play their part in analysing and solving their own problems
- value the pre-existing and indigenous knowledge and experience of local people in analysing their economic, political, social and cultural realities
- use learning and education to promote reflection and critical analysis by both project participants and development workers involve the active participation of beneficiaries, who play a central role in the entire process promote the beneficiaries' ownership of the project or programme

- use participatory approaches of obtaining data and generating knowledge, employing a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods
- create better, more in-depth, more widespread and more accurate knowledge of the performance and results of a development intervention (being participatory and collective in nature) (Jackson & Kassam, 1998).

This last point is important, which is that a higher quality of knowledge is produced by participatory monitoring and evaluation processes. Since each involved person or group has partial knowledge of the whole process, they may interpret the information generated and the outputs, outcomes and impacts differently. While power dynamics within those involved may prevent these differences of opinion from surfacing, engaging in a collective process of monitoring and evaluation, where people are encouraged to develop their own personal interpretations and judgments of the process, may well make these differences produce a higher quality of end result.

Table 1 below summarizes the key differences between conventionaland participatoryapproaches to monitoring and evaluation, adapted from Narayan-Parker (1993).

Table 1: Differences between conventional and participatory approaches to PM&E

	Conventional	Participatory

Who	External 'experts'	Community members, project/ programme staff, expert as 'facilitator'
What	Pre-determined indicators of success; mainly about costs and tangible outputs etc.	People identify their own indicators which may include, but not be restricted to, tangible outputs
How	Focus on 'scientific objectivity'; distancing of evaluators from other participants; uniform, often complex, procedures; delayed or limited access to results	Self-evaluation; simple methods adapted to local culture; open, immediate sharing of results and local involvement in the entire process
When	Usually on completion of the project/programme; sometimes mid-term	More likely to be frequent or continuous
Why	Accountability; usually summative; to determine whether funding continues	Knowledge- and capacity-building; empowerment of local people to initiate, organise, control and take action

(Narayan-Parker, 1993)

It is a way of learning from and with community members and other stakeholders, to investigate, analyse and make informed and timely decision, learning to corrective action.

1.3.6 Participatory monitoring and evaluation in the development context

Participatory approaches are increasingly becoming the norm for the evaluation of development projects in the Third World (UNDP, 1996). Rarely are the objectives and purposes of such projects simple or singular, especially at the programmatic or organisational levels. One review of social development programmes alone (Oakley, Pratt and Clayton, 1998, cited in Dwivedi, 2001) suggests that they may have any or all of these objectives:

- Poverty reduction: In terms not only of income generation and increased production but also of helping poor people gain access to the resources necessary to sustain their livelihood
- Human development: Meaning better education, health, family planning, literacy, skills etc. Participation: Involving poor people directly in the development process
- Empowerment: Beyond participation, helping people to gain the knowledge, skills and abilities that enable them to have more power to defend their interests, promote their livelihoods and to make choices and decisions
- Women's social and economic development: The promotion of gender equity to ensure equal access to resources and development benefits
- Rights and social justice: Including those enshrined in constitutions and democratic processes, particularly the rights of the marginalised and the vulnerable

It can readily be seen that unlike conventional approaches to monitoring and evaluation of these goals, the adoption of participatory approaches will in themselves actually contribute towards their achievement. Or to look at it from another angle, the use of conventional approaches may well actually reduce the

chances of achieving them.

Summary

We understood in depth the concept of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), by unfolding the key definitions and terms. Further we assessed the need to undertake M&E in development interventions. We comprehended the concept of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E), by briefly over viewing its historical context, exploring its underlying principles and drawing comparisons with conventional M&E.

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