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Initiative in Education & Lifelong Learning

Appreciation Programme

Monitoring and Evaluation of Adult Education Programmes

Module - II

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Introduction and Objectives

Introduction

Before designing a monitoring and evaluation plan, it is important to understand its various components. The second Module of this course will familiarize you with the core features of a monitoring and evaluation plan. These include

- basic questions that need to be answered before designing
- determining indicators of the plan
- using, analysing and reporting the results.

With this combined knowledge, practitioners can implement and modify monitoring and evaluation plans based on the requirements of their specific adult education programmes.

Objectives

- Learn the basics of a monitoring and evaluation plan
- Be able to identify and establish indicators of a programme
- Learn how to report and use results of monitoring

Unit 1: Elements of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A monitoring and evaluation plan can only be formulated once the programme plan and objectives of the programme are in place. It is however essential that the development of the plan should be in place before the implementation phase.

This unit will look at the core components of a participatory monitoring and evaluation plan.

1.1 Key Questions of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A monitoring and evaluation plan comes into being as a part of the programme planning, which aims to answer certain basic questions. These questions will then have to be revisited during the implementation of the plan. A well thought out and well-designed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan incorporates participatory methodologies and ensures the sustainability of a programme.

Why are we doing monitoring and evaluation?

Regardless of the field for which a monitoring and evaluation plan has been drafted, defining its ***objectives*** is the first major step towards designing the plan. The objectives of monitoring are usually guided by the overall programme objectives. The broad objectives of the monitoring and evaluation plan are:

- Being able to assess progress and results
- Making informed choices for improving the delivery of the programme
- Determining the impacts of programmes
- Providing credibility to the performance of the programme
- Showing results 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 in a sustainable manner

- Building knowledge and capacity of people and organisations
- Empowering beneficiaries, thereby achieving social transformation

Women's Empowerment through Literacy and Livelihood Development (WELLD) was launched in two states of India – Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. This project was to be implemented in a two phased approach and was due for appraisal after one year.

The main ***objective of WELLD project was to*** *develop an effective educational and asset building model for women in India, which could be adapted easily to local conditions and contribute to women's empowerment*. This was further broken down into four specific objectives:

1. Women increase skills and knowledge in literacy, savings and credit, and livelihood improvement
2. Local partners strengthen their capacity to run the programme and to participate in its eventual expansion
3. Effective participatory monitoring and evaluation systems developed with the local partners and women participants
4. Policy makers and resource providers increase their knowledge of innovative, integrated approaches to educational and asset building models for women's empowerment

(PRIA, 2002)

Based on the main objectives of the project, the focus of monitoring of the WELLD project was to,

1. Assess the progress of the women learners, based on a set of indicators decided by the women themselves
2. Monitor the role of local partners, based on their involvement in management of accounts and formation of rules and regulations
3. Monitor the level of participation of both women learners and local partners in the progress of the project

Who is it for?

Depending on the definition of the objectives of the M&E plan, the relevant stakeholders may include but are not limited to:

- Programme managers - those involved in the designing, formulating and managing the programme at the highest level
- Fieldworkers - those involved in the implementation of the programme at the field level
- The community - the participants/beneficiaries and their smaller groups
- The funders
- Government agencies – local, national
- Associated project partners
- Policy-makers

Once the stakeholders have been identified, it is easier to ascertain how their interests should be taken into account in the M&E plan. Different stakeholders may emphasise and prioritise objectives that are different from M&E plan. Hence, it is a challenge to incorporate these diverse sets of interests in a coherent M&E plan, which has to be simple to implement and not burden the programme implementers.

During the WELLD experience, it was found that monitoring was required to be done by all the learners and the partners involved. Women learners were keen to know their own progress vis-à-vis literacy and livelihoods, while other implementing partner NGOs were interested in knowing

- The overall progress
- Quality of inputs
- Ascertaining the effective use of resources
- Assessing the process and progress of women's learning
- identifying problems and possible solutions at an early stage of the project

A monitoring plan was then developed which addressed three levels of actors:

- The level of women learners
- The level of implementing NGOs in the two states
- The project holder level – (PRIA, 2002)

What is the scope?

The scope of a monitoring and evaluation exercise can be a project, a programme or even an activity. It can be done for the entire organisation or part of it; a community or any other defined geographic area. It can even be done for a policy (at any level from, for example, gender-awareness within an organisation to anti-poverty policy of the government at the national level), or a process.

It is evident from the above detail that the focus of an evaluation can be

a) broad for example, of the totality of structures and processes at work, within an entire organisation or a single programme or
b) very narrow for example, of one small group of project participants or one aspect such as governance arrangements of an organisation

In the WELLD example given above, the monitoring and evaluation plan had scope at both the overall programme level, as well as the narrowly defined level of women learners. In most adult education programmes, M&E plans do need to focus on the specific learning processes as promotion of learning is the core objective of such programmes. However, project activities related to learning materials, instructor preparation, learning environment and physical facilities can also be critical elements for monitoring the progress of planned activities.

When?

As noted previously, M&E is a continuous process embedded in a project cycle; the periodicity of monitoring can be fixed depending upon the duration of the project, its various phases and components. In an annual project cycle, while monitoring may be carried out once a quarter, evaluation, however, has to be structured in finite time periods and it may be pre-planned at various stages. These are:

- At the project appraisal stage (sometimes called ‘ex-ante’)
- Halfway into the project (sometimes known as ‘mid-term reviews’)

- on project completion ('final evaluation')
- 'ex-post' evaluation is done some time after a project is completed, in order to judge long-term impact and/or sustainability

(Rubin, 1995)

Setting up a monitoring and evaluation plan has six steps which need to be repeated twice – first during planning and then during implementation.

1. Establishing the purpose and scope - Why do we need to monitor and evaluate and how comprehensive should our monitoring and evaluation system be?
2. Identifying performance questions, information needs and indicators - What do we need to know in order to monitor and evaluate the project, so as to manage it well?
3. Planning information gathering and organising - How will the required information be gathered and organised?
4. Planning critical reflection processes and events - How will the information be analysed, to make sense of the same and use this to make improvements in the project?
5. Planning for quality communication and reporting – What, how and to whom do we want to communicate in terms of our project activities and processes?
6. Planning for the necessary conditions and capacities - What is needed to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation system actually works?

Source: (IFAD, 2013, p. 23)

1.2 The Logical Framework (Log-frame) Analysis Matrix

In many project planning activities, a log-frame matrix is used, which helps to systematize a logical approach for planning an adult education programme.

The log-frame consists of a table which summarises the key elements of a programme plan. This table outlines the key features that are needed to be fulfilled for the project to achieve its goal. Though used at the very beginning of the planning stage, it can also be used as the basis of defining the objectives of the monitoring and evaluation plan.

Programme Description		Measurable Indicators	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Goal	The overall broad impact to which the programme will contribute	The key indicators related to the overall goal	The sources of information for these indicators	External factors necessary to sustain objectives in the long run
Purpose	The immediate development outcome at the end of the project	Indicators that will clearly show achievement of this short-term objective	The sources of information that exist and the methods required to acquire such information	External factors and conditions necessary to achieve the objective
Outputs	Specific deliverables; results envisaged to achieve specific objectives	Indicators to measure whether and to what extent results are achievable	Sources of information for the indicators	External conditions that are required to be met to obtain expected results on schedule
Activities	Sequence of key activities necessary to produce expected results	Means to implement such activities, including equipment, supplies etc.	The sources of information to assess action and progress; the financial necessity of actions	Pre-conditions required for activities to be initiated

Using such a matrix ensures that an objective is identified at every level of the programme. The log frame guides the monitoring plan by highlighting the existing commitments of the project plans. The log-frame analysis matrix is an essential tool for result based planning and will be dealt with in greater detail in the next module.

Unit 2: Determining Indicators

It is important to set objectives and assessment indicators that are realistic and achievable, as too often these steps are taken without consulting with the primary stakeholders of the programme. This may lead to a deviation from local realities and show results that are misleading.

2.1 Why we need Indicators

Indicators are ways of measuring the progress of a programme. The 'progress' is determined by the aims and objectives of each specific initiative. Indicator setting is then one of the most crucial and challenging aspect of a monitoring and evaluation plan.

In various adult education programmes, it is important to understand what learners individually and collectively define as 'successful outcomes'. This process can be challenging and requires patience, time and resources. Ideally, a wide group of stakeholders and community members should be involved in this process, facilitated by inclusive processes and dialogue. Since participatory monitoring and evaluation is **expert-facilitated and not expert-driven**, it is critical to let visions of change come from the community itself. These thoughts and perspectives of change and transformation must not be imposed by external entities that are assumed to have expertise regarding the needs of the community.

Indicators can bring to light certain points such as

- The extent the overall programme objectives have been met
- The magnitude of the reach of the programme
- The extent to which each target has been met

Selection of Indicators

Indicators need to measure physical and visible (measureable) outcomes, and also changes in attitudes and behaviour, which is often less tangible and not always easy to count. Known as **Quantitative indicators,** these are emphasised in mainstream monitoring and evaluation approaches, since they can help us to assess the tangible impacts and magnitude of progress of the programmes. **Qualitative indicators**, on the other hand, help assess the impacts of the programme in a more descriptive way. Indicators can take different formats, such as a pictures or stories of results and impacts. This is particularly important to consider when working with people who have low levels of literacy or formal education. One of the important things to note about monitoring and evaluation is that at times the most important indicators may not be quantifiable.

While there are no set rules to selecting indicators, one popular guideline has been to use the acronym '**SMART**'. This guideline tends to suit quantitative indicators in particular and should be

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ttainable and action-oriented
- **R**elevant and
- **T**ime-bound

Another acronym recently suggested is '**SPICED'.** Indicators should

- **S**ubjective
- **P**articipatory
- **I**nterpretable
- **C**ommunicable

- **E**mpowering and
- **D**isaggregated

SMART refers to the properties of indicators, while **SPICED** optimizes their utilization.

Although SMART or SPICED indicators need not always be used, they give clear criterion to evaluate the quality of indicators. Essentially, the choice of indicators depends on what changes the stakeholders want to better understand and asses. The SPICED Approach puts more emphasis on developing indicators that stakeholders can define and use for their own purpose of interpreting and learning, rather than simply measuring, or demonstrating impact to meet donor/funding requirements. (Mayoux, 2002)

There are many different types of indicators. Some of them are:

- **Input indicators**- for example, funds covering the planned learning activities of the programme, capacities of staff, adequacy and quality of learning materials, physical logistics of the programme, etc.
- **Process indicators**- for example, the number of adult learners participating in the programme; number of people reached through the activities of the learning programme; participation rates, regularity of attendance, reasons for drop-outs, instructor behavior, interaction amongst learners, etc.
- **Output indicators**- for example, numbers of learners completing the course, numbers of learners who understood the materials, extent of learning assimilated, efficiency of budget utilization, etc.
- **Outcome or impact indicators**- for example, number of learners who used their learning to improve their lives, improvements in the family standards, changes in the community, etc. (Better Evaluation, 2013)

Most adult education programmes begin with a set of objectives and appropriate indicators are set against those. For example, a literacy programme may have ‘30% reduction in women’s illiteracy rates in a locality’, as its objective. Sometimes, donors also state objectives in broad term, such as, percentage reduction in unemployment, or increase in gender empowerment. Broad objectives relating to issues such as human rights or gender empowerment often mean very different things at the local level. For example, the question of gender empowerment may be regarded in different ways by different stakeholders. To the international donor it may imply unconditional equality in the family. But to the local people, it could mean the improvement in the living conditions of the women and it may not, necessarily, mean a restructuring of domestic power relations, as perceived of by the donors.

Developing indicators that help us understand what change means at the community level is challenging, but several steps can be taken that make the process simpler to understand and implement.

- The process of setting objectives and indicators is essentially concerned with understanding the individuals and community the facilitator works with. Development in this context, is a partnership and understanding regarding
- What change means at the community level?
- What change communities strive to realise?
- How programmes and projects can help them achieve it?

Increasingly, participatory approaches are helping close the gap between project implementers and stakeholders by increasing the dialogue between the two.

Working with communities in participatory approach is essential to understanding what changes are sought and what changes have already occurred. (Parks, 2005)

In the WELLD project, indicators were built after consultation with the women learners on what they considered as the progress in the project. After several rounds of facilitation, women came out with indicators which best indicated their progress.
Indicators identified by women learners in Madhya Pradesh included:

1. **General Information**: total number of classes held; attendance of women. (Example of *Measurable data***)**

2. **Literacy**: reading and writing (with and without the help of book) - alphabets, words, sentences and numbers. (Example of *Attainable/action-oriented indicator*)

3. **Discussions**: understanding of the subject; discussing without hesitation; participation. (Example of *Specific indicator***)**

4. **Savings and Credit**: (Example of *Relevant indicator*)
   a. At the level of women: need fulfillment; regular savings; unity and trust; participation
   b. At the level of small and large organisations: management of accounts; linking with livelihoods; forming rules and regulations

At the level of NGOs, a simple system of monitoring was developed taking each activity and building output indicators. For instance, on the training, the indicators were:

1. How many facilitators attended the training?
2. How many were trained?
3. The skills gained and attitudes changed during the training
4. How the learning gained was used while teaching the women learners? (PRIA, 2002)

As you can see, the WELLD project indicators fulfill four out of five SMART criteria.
Can you think of an indicator that fulfills the fifth criterion of 'Time Bound?

Unit 3: Reporting and Using Monitoring and Evaluation Results

Reporting is the documentation of results of monitoring and evaluation, as well as the presentation of them to appropriate stakeholders, at specified times. To help ensure efficiency, the purpose of reporting should be clearly defined. The timeframe of reporting should be defined to suit its purpose. Reporting from a monitoring and evaluation perspective and process ensures that stakeholders are briefed about the results of an ongoing or completed intervention.

Who is the report for?

At the very outset, a monitoring report is meant for at least three basic stakeholders

- Programme manager
- Fieldworker
- Learners/Community

However, an evaluation report can also be meant for a larger audience, such as the funding agencies, the programme planners, policy-makers and the wider professional audience. It is essential that all relevant stakeholders have access to monitoring and evaluation reports, which identify the issues that each of them is particularly concerned with.

What is the objective of the report?

For different stakeholders, the progress of the programme may be defined differently.

- For the programme manager, the progress will depend on targets being met and activities being successful. But they are also concerned with whether the programme has run within the given budget, and if the allocation of resources have been justified.
- The fieldworker may be concerned with the same issues, but at a local scale.

- For a beneficiary/learner, the overall monitoring report may not be as important as a detailed localized report, which, focuses on the progress of her learning process (and that of her peers).

Therefore, it is essential to understand the various levels of stakeholders view progress differently.

How is it communicated?

Reports include initial inception reports, interim progress reports and periodic debriefing reports. Usually the M&E in-charge drafts an interim or preliminary report and then discusses it with the various stakeholders. The form of presentation of monitoring results can also be innovative to suit the relevant stakeholders; for example, audio-visuals may be more suited to illiterate learners, along with verbal presentation, slides or short summaries. Formal texts with charts and diagrams can also be used to enhance the understanding of emerging results and lessons.

There are no definite rules when providing a monitoring and evaluation report. However, it is very important that the reports are sensitive to the target audiences, so that they can use the knowledge in future programmes.

An example of when additional capacity is needed in case of adult literacy programmes is

- If training of instructors is weak, an external advisory can be called upon.
- In case the physical environment, such as lack of ventilation in a classroom, etc. are hindering the process of learning

Creating a dialogue

One of the main purposes of a monitoring report is to inform various stakeholders of the level of progress of the project.

However, this is done in order for the various levels to be able to come together and discuss the situation of the programme in order to modify it and make its delivery more efficient and effective in the future. Therefore, a monitoring report should be used to create a dialogue amongst various stakeholders, which could include but not limited to:

- Discussing the budget and the reallocation of resources, if needed
- Rescheduling of present activities
- Introduction of new activities
- Re-establishing targets and short term goals
- Bringing in additional capacity

Therefore, a report is not only a documentation of the progress, but the very platform that allows for the revisiting of objectives, targets, and progress on the same, with the purpose of providing support to further improve the programme implementation.

In order for the reporting to be effective, it must broadly meet the following criteria:

1. ***Timeliness***: whether reports are submitted at the specified and agreed times. A flow chart can record when the reports are due and received.
2. ***Completeness***: whether all information required in the report is provided. This can be monitored by checking the report contents against what was agreed upon.
3. ***Consistency***: whether the units used in consecutive reports facilitate comparison in performance over time. Checking reports against agreed milestones and indicators specified in the monitoring plan. The information reported can provide a link between the baseline studies, follow up studies and associated evaluations.
4. ***Relevance***: only the information that is of importance to the decisions being taken is of value. This includes ensuring that the report is not repetitive, or contains excessive information, in the context of the stakeholder who is reading it. It is also important to ensure that the report is relevant to the target audience.

Different stakeholders, such as country directors, government officials, donors, development practitioners, community leaders and learners, etc. will require different forms and levels of information.

5. ***Reliability and accuracy***: the extent to which the report is a fair representation of the facts. It is also important to be consistent in use of terminology, definitions and descriptions of the programmes activities and localities.
6. ***Good presentation***: the information should be open to speedy assimilation by the user. Poor presentation can often obscure the message that the information is intended to convey. The use of graphs, charts and other diagrams help make information more digestible.
7. ***Cost effectiveness***: As a resource in a decision making process, information has both a cost and a value. It is important to ensure that cost of preparing M&E reports is not unreasonable, and it serves the purpose for which it is meant.

Summary

When developing a monitoring and evaluation plan, it is important to keep the core questions in mind.

- What is the objective?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What is the scope of the plan?
- Who decides the indicators of the plan, and on what basis?
- What tools should be used in order to effectively implement the plan?
- When should the plan be implemented?

The indicators of the monitoring plan form the foundation of the M&E process and should be done thoughtfully, keeping local contexts in mind. Once the data has been collected through the monitoring process, it is analysed and reported to the various stakeholders. It is essential that the report gives feedback and creates dialogue between the levels of stakeholders. This should lead to identifying successes and shortcomings, within the overall programme plan, as well as the M&E plan. The M&E plan is a live document which can and should be constantly appraised in order to be fully effective.

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