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International Perspectives in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Unit 6

Contemporary Issues in Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation

International Perspectives in Participatory Monitoring & 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

Unit 6: Contemporary Issues in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

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Introduction

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) is primarily used for the purpose of improving project planning and implementation. As a project management tool, PM&E provides stakeholders and project managers with information to assess whether project objectives have been met and how resources have been used. This helps in making critical decisions about project implementation and in planning future activities. The practice of PM&E has, of late, shifted from evaluation of projects to evaluation of the programme. This shift has enlarged its scope. Instead of looking at a project within the boundaries of the programme, the focus is at looking at the “impact” of programmatic approaches. PM&E is being used to help ensure that project and programme impacts influence and reorient policy; to strengthen organisations in the civil society sector; to provide public accountability of local and national government programmes to communities; to encourage institutional reform towards more participatory structures; to persuade funding agencies to reassess their objectives and attitudes by understanding and negotiating stakeholders’ perspectives through PM&E; and to build theories and check/adapt our understanding of society and development (Guijt, Arevalo and Saladores, 1998).

In this Unit, we shall discuss contemporary issues in PM&E relating to its purpose, methodology and application. The purpose-related issues by and large focus on the issue of unequal power relations, conflicts and conflict resolutions and participation. The methodological issues pertain to questions about developing a new set of indicators and methodological rigour for comparison and generalisation. The application covers issues of scaling up to include aspects of advocacy and campaigns, capacity building and networking

Learning Objectives

After completing this Unit, you will be

- Familiar with emerging issues in PM&E relating to its purpose, methodology and application; and
- Able to analyse and apply them in varied contexts.

6.1 Purpose-related Issues

PM&E brings stakeholders together to understand each other's views and reach for a consensus on what will be monitored or evaluated, how and when data will be collected and analysed, and how findings will be shared, and action taken. As they consent to keep track of change together, they will need to make compromises on various fronts as to whose indicators count more, what methods are feasible and considered valid, who is involved in which way, etc. It is inevitable that not all the different perspectives will merge smoothly or can even be reconciled. Issues of power relations, conflict and conflict resolution, and participation are, therefore, crucial as they affect the purpose of the PM&E process.

6.1.1 Unequal power relations

Different sets of participants have different power relations among themselves. Unequal social relations and positions exist either between stakeholders (for example, local community, facilitators, organisations and donor agencies) or at different institutional levels (for example, village, programme or policy levels). If one ignores the issues of unequal power relations, the process of authentic participation may not take place at all. The PM&E exercise may degenerate into an exercise controlled by the powerful. For instance, donors and organisations are legitimate stakeholders to the outcome of the PM&E exercise. How and to what extent do we incorporate their viewpoints? How can we not distort the PM&E process or undermine critical reflections by crucial stakeholders? The questions of ownership and control of knowledge and uses to which it might be put are significant. *Who controls and who influences the PM&E process?* A great deal of transparency between the funder and the funded is required in negotiations as to which criteria will be used to determine change and progress.

More exploration is needed to understand the extent the influential stakeholders would willingly share with less-privileged participants, that is the local community (Estrella & Gaventa, 1998).

Layers of power exist within local communities. Therefore, in addition to understanding the differences in influences and status between different stakeholders, one should also look into differences within stakeholder groups themselves. Indicators for monitoring project impacts could differ among community members according to gender, individual and household status. Members of marginalised groups are generally excluded from the designing, planning and implementation of the PM&E process, while educated and politically connected participants tend to dominate the PM&E process (Estrella & Gaventa, 1998).

If PM&E is used as a strategy for empowering marginalised groups and people, revealing problems, gaps and errors will not necessarily be viewed kindly by those with more power. It is inevitable that not all the different perspectives will merge smoothly or can even be reconciled. As greater stakeholder involvement in M&E brings together those with more power and those with less power, it also requires a look at the ethics of coping with unpredictable outcomes that do not necessarily please the stakeholder group(s) with power over others. What preconditions for PM&E can help it achieve expectations of empowerment? (Guijit, Arevalo and Saladores, 1998)

6.1.2 Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Participative consultation and collaboration between stakeholder groups in the PM&E process lead us to believe that group consensus is readily achieved in the negotiation process. On the contrary, as new voices and new measures enter the PM&E process, there is a likelihood that conflict will emerge over whose reality counts. It is important to understand the basis of such conflict and the process of conflict resolution. Differences in priorities and needs often make it difficult to decide unanimously on how to monitor indicators. Resolution of conflict by stakeholders could be to use less quantitative measures; the NGO staff could take on the responsibility of monitoring their own indicators in order to maintain more scientific and rigorous data to fulfill their information needs (Estrella & Gaventa, 1998).

Participatory evaluation can have various interpretations or conceptualisations, varying according to who initiates the evaluation, who conducts it, the stage at which it is planned, what is measured and how it is measured. External consultants may consider that they are conducting a participatory evaluation if they consult with NGO staff and some beneficiaries and use PRA techniques, although they are merely extracting information for their own analysis and presentation at the head office. However, an outside consultant can facilitate a highly participatory evaluation, promoting institutional learning and self-reflection and adjustment of activities on the part of beneficiaries. Equally, evaluations conducted at the grassroots level are not necessarily participatory if unequal power relations are restricting the expression of certain groups.

6.1.3 Participation in Practice

PM&E lays emphasis on the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process. PM&E practitioners believe that the stakeholders who are involved in development planning and implementation should also be involved in monitoring changes and determining the indicators for “success”. However, there still remains great ambiguity in defining who stakeholders are, who should be involved, and to what extent they can or want to be involved. For instance, the M&E process may include beneficiaries as stakeholders, but in practice pay little attention to marginalised groups, including women, the poor and the non-literate.

Participation may vary at different stages of the PM&E and project cycles. For instance, local participants are generally less involved in the early stages of designing and planning as well as later stages of analysis and dissemination, whereas their participation tends to be very high during the data collection stage.

Establishing a common set of principles for PM&E process could be a solution, but what these core values will entail, how these will be determined, and by whom, remains open to question. The problem stems not only from the difficulty in identifying who participates, but also in determining what roles different stakeholders can and should play at which stages of the process. While the tendency is to emphasise the involvement of all stakeholders in all aspects of PM&E, this may not be realistic or desirable. How do we decide who gets involved – and on what basis they be invited to join PM&E processes? What degree of involvement is expected and what is realistic?

6.2 Methodology - related Issues

6.2.1 Developing Scientific Rigour

It is often assumed that more conventional approaches are more quantitative and therefore achieve a certain degree of “rigour”, “objectivity”, and “replicability”. By contrast, participatory approaches are said to obtain more qualitative information that is locally meaningful, readily useful and context specific, but is said to be more “subjective”. Innovations with methods, sequences and combinations of methodologies are also forcing new questions. For example, what is needed to combine the need for participation, flexibility and a learning agenda with scientific rigour? When do we use more conventional forms of monitoring and evaluation, and when do we use more participatory forms – how can we combine them? In the absence of set standards and definitions, how can we identify examples of best practice from which to learn? How do we guarantee not falling into the trap of developing an overly complex approach that demands too much time and gathers irrelevant information?

How does one validate a PM&E exercise? What are the bases by which validation can occur? If PM&E is a collective process of reflection and action on both past, present and future then it helps the group to reflect critically upon its primary objectives, its goals, process and how the empowerment of the marginalised has taken place. The group is, therefore, able to assess whether their plan of action has been effective and meaningful. In such a case PM&E is valid if it results in consciousness of the group of their realities, and helps bring about and catalyse change at all levels of functioning. The next question then follows: how does one arrive at the indicators of change? If we predetermine the indicators then we are predetermining the outcome. If we assume change as a dynamic process then we cannot predict the outcome.

Unlike the conventional evaluation process, PM&E highlights the inherent contradictions among and within various constituencies. If this questions the assumptions about change – individual, group, organisational, social-economic and political – then this itself is a validation of the PM&E process.

There has been a great deal of emphasis on adopting a flexible approach to PM&E. However, this raises the question whether maintaining flexibility in PM&E can provide information that compares changes on a continuous basis over time and that is applicable for making generalisations, especially when tracking processes on a larger scale and area of coverage. Further discussion is needed to explore the balance between ensuring flexibility and providing uniform information to allow for comparability and generalisability.

6.2.2 Developing Indicators

Many methodological questions relate to the use of indicators. The literature on M&E emphasises the importance of selecting precise indicators carefully, as it is easy to identify too many and choose ambiguous or irrelevant ones. However, the growing experiences with PM&E, which involve more and different groups of people, are also stressing the importance of ensuring that indicators meet the different information requirements of those involved. Furthermore, indicators should ideally look at short and longer term changes; local and broader scale changes; the general development process and concrete initiatives; quantitative and qualitative information; and tangible and intangible impacts (Guijit, Arevalo and Saladores, 1998).

With so many information needs, selecting indicators becomes a difficult task. How do we guide this process? Who should/can be involved and for whom is the information? If one group decides on what should be collected, will other groups also find that relevant or credible evidence of change? Bringing the different perspectives on what should be monitored and evaluated together is an essential process that helps build consensus about the vision for development. However, flexibility about the methods is required because development visions change, information needs shift, and therefore indicators will also change.

While a great deal of documented literature on PM&E focuses on identifying indicators, the procedures for indicator development are not always clear or straightforward, especially when different stakeholders with different priorities and needs are involved. As PM&E is increasingly being applied in different contexts, there is a need to develop new types of indicators to monitor important aspects of development which are not traditionally assessed, namely, “participation”, “empowerment”, “transparency” and “accountability”.

6.2.3 The Facilitator’s Role

Facilitation is crucial in the PM&E process. Facilitation helps create an environment of sharing and reflection. It identifies resources, collects information, analyses and systematises that information and plans actions to help bring together the viewpoints of various stakeholders in the PM&E exercise. It facilitates dialogue between the constituencies.

Facilitators could be internal persons from the organisation or external, or a combination of both internal and external persons. The facilitators should have effective facilitation skills such as sensitivity to viewpoints of different stakeholders; understanding the context where the PM&E is being undertaken; identifying the participants; manoeuvring the PM&E process in various stages for collecting, analysing and utilising information.

The documentation of actual PM&E experiences rarely recognises the role of facilitators, the necessary skills required in shaping the outcome of the PM&E process or how those skills are developed, particularly pertaining to conflict and conflict resolution.

6.3 Application-related Issues

6.3.1 M&E of Advocacy & Campaigns

The purpose of advocacy is to influence decision makers to adopt or change laws and policies (and sometimes even practices that are not regulated by policies) that affect a particular population. Campaigns are organised to bring awareness and mobilise the community at the grassroots. A large number of development actors are now designing interventions in a campaign mode to demonstrate collective strength, as well as actively engage with policy making institutions.

- **Rationale of monitoring and evaluating advocacy campaigns**

M&E of advocacy helps us to check whether advocacy work is on track; whether the objectives have been achieved; and whether any changes need to be made to the strategy. It enables us to learn from our experiences to avoid making the same mistakes in future advocacy work; produce credible reports for donors and supporters; and generate financial and political support for the cause.

- **Process**

In any advocacy campaign there are a number of stages through which it progresses – not necessarily in a linear fashion but more usually in an iterative and complex way – on the way to reaching its objectives. In a typical campaign, the following stages could be distinguished:

- The awareness of civil society organisations is raised and they take up the campaign. Policy positions and strategies are determined. Effective alliances are formed.
- A public constituency is created. Media attention is won. Awareness of the issue is raised and support created amongst the general public.
- The terms of public debate are changed. New civil society perspectives and alternative approaches are introduced into the policy debate.
- There is a change of policy on the part of the targeted governments, institutions or companies.
- There is a change in practice by the targeted government, institution or company. The policy changes are put into practice in an effective and sustained way.
- The lives of affected people are changed for the better (Atkinson, 2011).

The reaching of each stage can be regarded as an outcome or milestone, and a campaign can be evaluated in terms of how far along this road it aimed to reach and whether or not it reached it. This “milestone” approach is useful in that it recognises that campaign objectives are usually very ambitious and are quite often not achieved. Such frequent failures can have a disempowering effect on campaigners. However, this approach enables us to recognise what was achieved, and the campaign to be evaluated in a more nuanced way. For example, the raising of awareness of an issue in the affected communities, and the building of campaign alliances, may not seem like much of an achievement in terms of reaching the overall objectives, but it may mean greater empowerment the next time an issue like this comes up (Atkinson, 2011).

- **Methodology**

Various instruments exist for measuring the impacts of service delivery-oriented programmes in tangible and process terms; however, the initiatives of campaigns and policy influencing are still in its nascent stage. Evolution of various instruments, areas of measuring impact, appropriate indicators and suitable methodologies have yet not taken place with the growing importance to advocacy initiatives where a large chunk of resources are deployed by the international NGOs. It would be pertinent to build appropriate means of measuring the outcomes and impacts.

(i) Developing clear action plan and follow-up

A clearly defined plan of action in both the campaigns helps in monitoring the progress.

Monitoring mechanisms include setting up a secretariat to provide executive/operational functions for completing the plan as per schedule as well as keeping in touch regularly with the campaign members. Different committees such as *Mass Mobilisation Committee, Research and Advocacy Committee, Programme Management Committee*, etc, may be created. This would help in providing leadership in specific areas of concern, regularly monitoring the progress and discuss it in the core group (the secretariat) for the revision of plans (Kumar, 2005).

(ii) Interviews

The basic methodology of “triangulation” can be used, that is, asking the same set of key questions of a range of different stakeholders – officials, politicians, journalists, NGO allies, grassroots citizens, etc, and looking for an overlapping in their views. Where the views of such differing stakeholders are similar, a reasonable degree of confidence could be given to that view. Where they do not coincide, reasons for those differences needed to be proposed (Kumar, 2005).

(iii) Creating a regular feedback mechanism

It is important to create a feedback mechanism emerging from the grassroots to identify bottlenecks faced by citizens. For instance, e-discussion forums, created for the purpose of sharing relevant information on the forthcoming events and strategies, can kick start a healthy discussion amongst members, giving relevant feedback to improve upon the plans and strategies. Creation of a website can provide an opportunity to people to be part of the campaign either by joining it or providing feedback on the contents of the campaign.

The campaign secretariat can personally receive feedback and take up the issue with the concerned departments to address the difficulties faced by citizens (Kumar, 2005).

Feedback workshops can be organised to share the data collected before it is finalised. Feedback from such workshops can lead to significant additions and modifications in the final report.

(iii) Research using structured formats and questionnaires

A study can be conducted at the grassroots level to identify possible impacts of the campaign as well as the areas of weakness. It could also help us understand the gaps in promises and realities, to take up issues of concern at the local level as well as for national level advocacy (Kumar, 2005).

- **Challenges in monitoring and evaluation of advocacy campaigns**

Unstructured log-frames and flexible action plans

Many a time, advocacy, initiatives and campaigns do not have specified time frames and concrete plans of action which result in poor monitoring of the advocacy outcomes and impacts. On the other hand, donors of the partners engaged in policy influencing and advocacy want proposals in tight log-frames. Developing very straight-jacketed plans becomes a nightmare for campaign planners. What should be the planning instruments other than log-frames, which can facilitate more flexible yet measurable plans? (Kumar, 2005)

Unclear indicators of outcome and impact

How do we define quantitative indicators to reflect the size of the campaign? How do we define qualitative and process indicators, which may reveal more than interesting stories and narrations of events? Defining indicators of success as outcomes and impacts is difficult in campaigns and macro policy influencing projects. Consequently, data collection in the campaign also becomes extremely difficult. It is also not easy to fix the time frame for the outcomes due to greater uncertainties associated with advocacy efforts (Kumar, 2005).

Collective accountability and multiple actors

Most campaigns have multiple partnerships and large-scale membership to make it a success. Most members wear multiple hats and it becomes extremely difficult for them to systematically report on the responsibilities undertaken by them. As a result, it becomes quite difficult to fix either responsibility of monitoring with any specific individual or organisation. This primarily results in weak monitoring of campaigns, as the staff appointed in the secretariat also does not have legitimate authority to ask the members to provide information on the success/ failure of the campaigns on structured formats (Kumar, 2005).

Ambitious targets and broad policy influencing agenda

Many of the policy advocacy efforts have highly ambitious targets of bringing about macro level structural changes. In reality, over a short and medium time frame, it becomes extremely difficult to measure the success or extent of the achievement of goals. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation gets reduced to reporting activities and outputs rather than outcomes and impacts. It also becomes extremely difficult to measure the cost effectiveness of such initiatives in relation to the attainment of their larger goals or the attainment of impact indicators (Kumar, 2005).

6.3.2 M&E of Capacity Development

- **Understanding “capacity building”**

Capacity is “the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully” (OECD, 2011, p. 2). The capacity of an individual, an organisation or a society is not static. It changes over time, and is subject to both internal and

external influences. Many of these changes are unplanned. For example, an organisation can lose capacity if key individuals leave or change positions within that organization (Simister & Smith, 2010).

Capacity development entails purposeful use of knowledge and information to achieve capacity outcomes such as raised awareness, enhanced knowledge and skills, improved consensus and team work, strengthened coalitions, enhanced networks, and new implementation know-how. These outcomes trigger or advance positive changes that contribute to the achievement of a particular development goal (World Bank, 2012).

Capacity building refers to some kind of external intervention or support to develop capacities with the intention of facilitating or catalysing change.

It is important to distinguish between **inside-out** and **outside-in** perspectives of capacity building. The inside-out perspective suggests that capacity development depends on an organisation's ability to effectively define and achieve its own goals and objectives (or accomplish its mission). When an organisation develops its own capacity building programme to address its own needs, the capacity building can be seen as a **demand-driven process**. If the driver for change comes from the outside (outside-in perspective) – frequently from donors or international NGOs – then the capacity building is perceived as being a **supply-driven process** (Simister & Smith, 2010).

A range of different players provide capacity building services. These include donors, international NGOs (INGOs), southern NGOs, specialist capacity building service providers based in the global North (North America and Europe) and the global south (South America, Africa, and Asia), academic institutions and individual organisational

development (OD) advisers and facilitators. These providers do not always act in isolation. For example, a donor might provide money to an INGO based on its perceived ability to add value through capacity building or other forms of partnership. The INGO might then advise a supported partner based in the global south to seek assistance from a sister NGO, or it might commission an OD consultant to do capacity building on its behalf. There is also a range of different capacity building recipients. This includes individuals, organisations, and sector, thematic, geographic or issue-based networks and coalitions. Increasingly, institutional donors are also supporting capacity building at government and civil society levels; not only to improve performance directly but also to increase accountability and mutual engagement in policy making under a governance agenda (Simister & Smith, 2010).

The M&E of capacity is concerned with assessing the changing capacity of an organisation (or individual, or society) whilst the M&E of capacity building is concerned both with the quality and relevance of capacity building efforts, and the immediate changes which are occurring. The M&E of capacity building focuses not only on capacity development (changes in capacity at the individual, organisational or societal level) but also the extent to which this is supported (or hindered) by external interventions (Simister & Smith, 2010).

- **The rationale of M&E of capacity building**

The inside-out perspective suggests that the M&E efforts need to be based around self-assessment and learning in order to improve future performance, and that the organisation concerned is in the best position to know what its capacity is, what capacity it lacks, and what changes are required to bridge any perceived gaps. Outsiders may have a role in supporting this process, but any ultimate judgment on change, and the relevance of that change, must come from within. The outside-in perspective, on the contrary, suggests that self-assessment alone is not enough and that there needs to be

some critical, external assessment preferably by beneficiaries of the organisation. In reality, however, it is often those with the power and money, that is, the donors, whose voices are heard the loudest (Simister & Smith, 2010).

M&E designed for accountability to donors and supporters is not the same as M&E designed to learn and improve. The purpose(s) for which M&E are carried out will have a large degree of influence over the types of approaches and methodologies used. The competing demands on M&E of capacity building within and across different organisations often create confusion over the purpose of M&E. For example, a donor might need information on the short-term results of capacity building efforts in order to be accountable to the government or the public. A capacity building provider might want to report results to donors, but may also want to learn in order to improve its services. The recipient of capacity building may be more interested in monitoring and evaluating their own capacity for learning purposes. And programme/project officers within that recipient organisation might simply need information for basic programme management (Simister & Smith, 2010).

- **Tools for M&E of capacity building**

Many tools are used to generate information on capacity building and capacity development. These include the standard tools of M&E such as individual or group interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires and surveys, direct or participatory observation and PRA techniques. Some organisations use scrapbooks or diaries to collect regular evidence of change, whilst timelines are also considered a useful method of systematically plotting observed changes or changes in opinions and impressions. Changes in individuals' knowledge and behaviour are sometimes assessed through evaluation forms and tests. On a wider level, appreciative inquiry is increasingly being used as a vehicle for both planning and impact assessment, and there are a number of newer tools and methodologies such as balanced scorecard and impact pathways that

are also generating increased interest. None of these tools have specifically been designed with capacity building in mind, but all have been adapted for the purpose at one time or another. Other interesting participatory tools include outcome mapping, the organisational timeline, and the most significant change (MSC) story-telling technique. These tools vary in their applications and complexity (Simister & Smith, 2010).

- **Challenges to M&E of capacity building**

Capacity building and capacity building measurement are highly complex

Organisational capacity is multi-dimensional, dynamic, and highly influenced by contextual factors. Because of the range of possible interactions that affect organisational capacity, both within an organisation and between an organisation and its environment, it is often difficult to trace a direct causal link between a capacity building intervention and outcomes reflecting organisational strengthening. For example, the renewal of conflict, the departure of a key staff member, or the loss of a major donor will challenge an organisation's capacity to respond effectively, obscuring the links between the capacity building intervention and changes in capacity (Fitzgerald, Posner & Workman, 2009).

Capacity building is gradual

Capacity building experts agree that capacity building is a long-term process, with some estimating that it may take as long as ten years before real results are achieved. It is important to be realistic about the kinds of changes that might take place within the timeframe of the capacity building intervention, and to time data collection appropriately. For example, clarifying an organisation's mission or establishing a strategic vision is not

likely to happen meaningfully in one instance and could take several months or more. The process may require a number of incremental changes, consultation, and buy-in from multiple levels of stakeholders (Fitzgerald, Posner & Workman, 2009).

Capacity building is political

Capacity building often requires that an organisation delve into its internal affairs and address the power dynamics within the organisation. The presence of an external capacity builder can be perceived as intrusive and power struggles among an organisation's staff often surface during the capacity building process. The political nature of capacity building presents challenges for measurement as well as implementation of capacity building activities. For example, the M&E process could be "captured" by one set of stakeholders, reflecting only their perceptions of capacity development (Fitzgerald, Posner & Workman, 2009).

6.3.3 M & E of Networks

- **Understanding networks**

A network is any group of individuals and organisations who, on a voluntary basis, exchange information or goods or implement joint activities and who organise themselves for those purposes in such a way that individual autonomy remains intact (Prasad & Prasad, 2005).

Networks, as forums for social exchange, allow members and users to interact directly with one another so that this interaction influences the way they think or what they do within or outside the network. They open opportunities through shared work to raise the profile of research results, foster cross-fertilisation, influence the policy community, build research and policy capacities, or build a case for a new research agenda, etc (Earl, 2004).

Networks also enable learning of participatory attitudes and behaviours such as respect for autonomy, accommodation to shared responsibility, tolerance for often-high degrees of goal and role ambiguity and unpredictable futures. This implies respecting democracy, diversity, dynamism, excellence and related processes in organisations that foster these (Prasad & Prasad, 2005).

The effectiveness of networks depends on how well individual member organisations function and maintain a variety of boundaries, namely, being accommodative to diverse interests, gender issues and how consistently they respond to the external environment in their respective organisations/contexts, and within the network.

- **Rationale of M&E of networks**

M&E of networks are undertaken primarily for learning, preserving institutional memory, seeking accountability, future planning and strategising and consolidation of networks.

- **Issues and questions**

Network coordination

- What “style” of governance is used in networks? (Definition of governance could include: location and nature or coordination function; membership criteria and roles; means of setting/revising goals and decision-making; organisational structure and processes; and modes of communication.)
- What coordination approaches are used in networks? (Definition of coordination approach could include: mechanisms for decision-making, consensus-building and collaboration; donor role; leadership and ownership; learning; continuity.)
- What outcomes have these approaches yielded in terms of networking (cooperation, resource mobilisation, growth, etc) and in terms of development results (influence, research capacity, research outputs, etc)?
- With these approaches, what challenges have been encountered and how have they been handled? (iScale, 2010)

Network sustainability

- What is meant by sustainability of networks?
- What factors help or hinder the sustainability of networks?
- When a network is planned to have a limited lifespan, what factors facilitate productive functioning and satisfactory wrapping-up/completion of the network? (iScale, 2010)

Intended results/development outcomes of networks

- What have been the objectives of networks [and how have they evolved over time]?
- Is there continuity between the corporate intent and the project network objectives? (iScale, 2010)

- **PM&E Tools**

Most M&E tools focus on examining a specific aspect of the network or metric like participation, structure or connections. Individual tools can be used in various combinations to support a broader network approach to M&E and support data gathering for specific metrics of interest. The tools reviewed here are grouped in three main categories aligned with the three network metric categories:

- ***Network Vibrancy*** – tools that focus on measuring and monitoring characteristics of the network identified as “essential” to the overall health and functioning of the network.

Examples of such characteristics include: trust, participation, sustainability and alignment (iScale, 2010).

NOTE BANK**Channels of Participation**

This simple tool helps a network understand how and where members are interacting with the network and what their priorities are. “Categories” of participation are conceptualised as a set of concentric circles with the outer ring representing lower levels of active participation (for example, participating in mailing lists) and inner rings increasing levels of active participation (for example, participation in network strategy). This tool has been used by a number of networks. In one example, a lobbying network described several levels of participation from 1 – inner-circle: high levels of communication, debate, discussion and input; part of the decision-making process; trusted and has regular dialogue with government to 5 – recipient of information. The network then develops a simple table to record the members’ level of participation, what they contribute to the network and other factors like level of access members have to key players, etc.

(iScale, 2010)

- **Network Connectivity** – tools that examine the nature of the ties, relationships and process that promote connectivity. Examples include: communication quality and practice, and collaboration (iScale, 2010).

NOTE BANK**Social Network Analysis**

Network methodologies are applied to human social relations and groups as a way to analyse behaviour patterns focusing on the role of group structures and relational aspects of society. Included in this set of approaches are also organisational network analysis (ONA), which uses network methodologies to examine the relationships between organisations, and dynamic network analysis (DNA), which uses network methodologies to assess the changes in “dynamic” or “longitudinal networks” in which the set of relationships or the membership changes over time. DNA is used to describe processes in which the structures of relationships do not remain constant over time.

(iScale, 2010)

- **Network Effects** – tools that help to elucidate and clarify what outputs network activities are producing, what outcomes and impacts these contribute to, and reflect, revise and refine the original network theory of change or underlying strategies (iScale, 2010).

NOTE BANK**Participatory Impact Pathway Analysis (PIPA)**

PIPA is a practical planning, monitoring and evaluation approach developed for use in complex projects in the water and food sectors. PIPA begins with a participatory workshop where stakeholders make explicit assumptions about how the project will achieve an impact. Activities include: constructing a problem tree, visioning exercises and network mapping.

The results of these exercises are then articulated in the form of two logic models. 1) The Outcome Logic Model, which describes the project's medium-term objectives in the form of hypotheses. 2) The Impact Logic Model, which describes how the expected outcomes will lead to the ultimate impact.

The outcome targets and milestones set by participants are regularly revisited and revised as part of the M&E activities. PIPA promotes learning and provides a framework for action research on processes of change.

Contribution Assessment

Understanding how members participate, why some members participate more than others, how to encourage greater participation and how to measure participation are key questions for a network. Contribution assessment helps a network understand the level of commitment and contribution that its participants are offering and see where resources lie in the network by mapping the contributions members believe they can make. It can be used to create a baseline to assess if the network enabled its members to contribute over time and how that contribution created value for the network.

Participatory Story-Building

An interactive evaluative exercise is undertaken by network members. Key actors, strategies and moments of change are mapped as a way of plotting the story of change on which all are working together. Each participant will have a slightly different story to tell about their

work and the key moments of changes and challenges from their point of view.

This exercise seeks to bring all stories together into one, without losing the individual richness, and then examine the combined story. The process helps the network to understand who or where the main points of influence are and what the key moments of change have been. This enables learning about the network's scope of work, reach and access as well as which strategies have been most influential. These learnings can then be incorporated into the future planning and strategy.

Outcome Mapping (OM)

OM can be used at the project, programme or organisational levels as a monitoring system or to evaluate ongoing or completed activities. It makes explicit a programme's theory of change and takes a learning-based and use-driven view of evaluation guided by principles of participation and iterative learning, encouraging evaluative thinking throughout the programme cycle by all programme team members.

Outcome mapping focuses on the changes in behaviour, relationships or actions of those individuals, groups or organisations with whom the network interacts directly. Outcome mapping allows for monitoring and evaluation in relation to the much broader development context while focusing specific assessment on activities within the network's sphere of influence.

(iScale, 2010)

- **Challenges of network monitoring and evaluation**

Networks are complicated

It is difficult to disaggregate the network into appropriate units of analysis. It is often the case that the network in its entirety is equated with the secretariat. Using the secretariat as a proxy for the entire network is problematic as the secretariat is only one of the

many actors that make up the network. While the secretariat makes an important contribution to the network, it is only one piece of the puzzle.

Gathering comparable and consistent data across the network is difficult. A network's evaluation framework needs to be flexible enough to apply across levels and activity streams while maintaining enough consistency to allow for cross comparison (iScale, 2010).

- ***Networks are complex***

Traditional tools and approaches are often not designed to capture both the tangible and intangible impacts associated with networks. While there is a tendency to focus on tangible impacts, networks are both a means towards ends and an end in themselves. The existence of the network itself is inherently valuable; without it there would be no interaction of its parts. Many unplanned and unintended positive changes occur from the existence of a vibrant network that would not have occurred otherwise. However, these impacts can be difficult to capture and attribute.

Networks, particularly those without clear network hubs, face challenges ensuring that evaluation learnings are disseminated and utilised throughout the network.

Networks are complicated and complex systems operating at multiple levels and across numerous dimensions and involving a diverse range of stakeholders each with their own strategies and theories of change. They are particularly likely to have emergent outcomes as a result (iScale, 2010).

Summary

In this Unit, we deliberated on contemporary issues in PM&E relating to its purpose, methodology and application. In the section on purpose-related issues we focused on the issues of unequal power relations, conflicts and conflict resolution, and participation. Under methodological issues we raised the questions about developing new sets of indicators and methodological rigour for comparison and generalisation. The application issues covered issues of advocacy and campaigns, capacity building and networking.

Recommended Readings

- Guijt, I., Arevalo, M., & Saladeros, K. (1998). *Participatory monitoring and evaluation: Tracking change together*. London: IIED.
- Simister, N., & Smith, R. (2010). *Monitoring and evaluating capacity building: Is it really that difficult?* Oxford: International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC).
- Estrella, M., Gaventa, J., & Institute of Development Studies (Brighton, England). (1998). *Who counts reality?: Participatory monitoring and evaluation ; a literature review*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex.

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