



**INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY**

Initiative in Education & Lifelong Learning

## **Certificate Programme**

# **NGO Management: Foundation Course**

## **UNIT – 6**

**Process Documentation & Monitoring And Evaluation**

## **Units of NGO Management : Foundation Course**

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### **Unit 1: Introduction to NGO Management**

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- Definitions And Nomenclature
- Characteristics
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- Evolution Of NGOs Along Different Developmental Frameworks And Approaches
- NGOs In Developing Countries

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- Process Documentation
- Monitoring
- Features Of Monitoring
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- Difference Between Monitoring And Evaluation
- Differing Approaches To Monitoring And Evaluation
- Elements Of A Monitoring And Evaluation Plan

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## Introduction

In the last decade, there has been increasing visibility and a well-articulated position in terms of ideology and implementing strategies of NGOs involved in social development, be it health care, literacy, environment protection, deforestation, or land development. Each NGO's social development endeavour, irrespective of their ideological or geographical positioning, has some light to throw on the theories of grassroots development. Along with these theories, social development agencies are spending increasingly more time in developing institutional mechanisms. In an overall context, social development organisations are concerned about both organisational development and programme execution. It is in this context that processes like process documentation, and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) assume great significance and importance. While the former provides insights into programmes and strategies, along with building the capacity of the organisation, the latter are integral components of the sustainability of any programme or project. In order to achieve long-term success in a project, it is crucial to have a strong M&E system in place. This will ensure that the programme is always moving along its intended path, while correcting itself for earlier unforeseen obstacles that may be faced in implementation.

While in Unit 5 we analysed the different aspects of resource mobilisation, in this Unit we proceed to examine the implications of process documentation on organisational growth. This Unit also covers the various aspects related to M&E of social development programmes from an organisation's perspective, and gives a brief outline of the designing of such a plan.

## Learning Objectives

After completing this Unit you will be familiar with:

- The meaning and concept of process documentation
- Rationale of M&E processes, and its different approaches
- Key elements of an M&E plan

## 6.1 Process Documentation

### History

The term 'process documentation research' was first coined at a workshop in the Philippines in 1978 as social science research into the field implementation of a pilot programme to improve communal irrigation by developing effective farmers' institutions for irrigation management set in motion by the Philippines National Irrigation Agency (PNIA) (Dwivedi, 2003).

Process documentation was treated as a tool for providing an action agency with a new intervention strategy based on the information generated from activities in a few project sites, and the problems and issues emerging from the field activities. Thus, process documentation served as an input into the process of reorienting an action agency to new modes of working with its clients. In this approach, social scientists resided in the village along with the project staff and began detailed observation and documentation of the processes of user group formation and functioning. The programme applied the learning approach<sup>1</sup> as opposed to blueprint approach<sup>2</sup> (Dwivedi, 2003). The principal feature of process documentation research was the placement of specially trained and supervised researchers from outside the agency at the village level who attended and observed all process activities, interviewed community and project participants, analysed records and generated data on project actions, interventions, attitudes and expectations.

### Overview

Every social change mission organisation operates under its articulated ideology, mission and perspectives. A variety of processes take place during articulation and during

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<sup>1</sup> In the learning approach, there is scope for experimentation wherein the agency learns through action at one or two sites. It emphasises pilot sites, which are treated as laboratories from which experiences are generated and requires understanding in detail of what is happening at the pilot sites.

<sup>2</sup> In the blueprint approach, planning focusses on the preparation of planning documents, which specifies the activities of a project, the time frame and expected outcome. Once approved, the plan is ready for implementation.

implementation. It is very difficult to capture all processes that a development organisation undergoes. It is in this context that process documentation is used as a tool to collect systematic data on various processes. However, it should not be confused with an evaluation process which is essentially a post-facto exercise. In contrast, process documentation seeks to gather all data for reflection and analysis and use it for re-examination of strategic and operational frameworks.

Process documentation can thus be defined as the method of collecting, collating, analysing and communicating data in ways appropriate for the context. Often the term is understood as mere documentation of activities. Hence, documentation of events, programmes and activities is considered the main task. For those who are process oriented, documenting the processes takes priority, while documenting achievements and targets becomes the priority for target oriented programmes. Whether it is the process or target approach, it is important to take note of the fact that each event culminates after a series of happenings. So, each occurrence is a post-facto in itself. The happenings prior to an event include many *a priori* conceptual understanding of the group of participating people, their thinking and perspectives, the social context, social demands and expectations, and many other recurring activities. Hence, process documentation is seen as a research activity for understanding the manner in which social development strategies and theories are formulated (PRIA, 1993).

In conventional process documentation, participant observation, study of reports and interview of key persons are the predominant methods used. However, in a participatory framework, since the key actors are actively involved, their thinking, memories, analysis and reflections constitute major sources of data. Since each project or organisation is unique in itself, there are no established methods of data collection. However, the data collection is guided by two major factors (PRIA, 1993):

1. Conceptual and theoretical understanding of the project theme and the required organisational management aspects



For example, for a community health project or an urban slum sanitation project, there is already some available understanding about the nature of service available, poor people's access to services and the nature of project implementation strategies. This available understanding guides in setting up the framework for data collection.

## 2. Actual context

Each project has its own course of direction which does not strictly follow any framework, theory or paradigm. Herein, the day-to-day happenings constitute a major source of data collection.

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#### **Routinisation Of Process Documentation**

Process documentation is an emerging research area in social development. The methods of process documentation cannot be generalised. It needs to be developed in every organisational context. When the organisation develops a framework for process documentation for itself, spelling out the people to be involved, duration, frequency, areas and use of methods, it sees the documentation of processes in a much more systematic way. Moreover, once a process documentation method is articulated, it should be refined from time to time to serve the desired purpose. Since it takes care of theoretical and conceptual aspects as well as day-to-day happenings, it is an open-ended process and a continuous learning exercise.

#### **Concept**

Since its inception, process documentation has been defined and interpreted in different ways. Most of the available literature refers to process documentation as a technique of project implementation and monitoring with the involvement of experts and communities. In some other instances, it is projected as a technique of documentation based on participant observation. Process documentation is a means to achieve efficient information systems on the implementation and monitoring aspects of a project. It

includes approaches for managing information in development projects and programmes, which are complementary to existing routine information. While such an interpretation may be valuable, process documentation can make immense contribution to experiential learning for individuals and collective growth. It also contributes towards conceptual and philosophical refinement. The purpose of process documentation can be to improve implementation and monitoring methods and to strengthen involvement of the people responsible for the intervention.

In today's context, there is an enormous thrust on processes of development and not merely on the targets which the development intervention aims at. The meaning of development has also undergone change and has widened from what it was interpreted earlier, where development was synonymous with per capita growth, economic growth and industrialisation. The growth-centered model was criticised for failing to acknowledge the growth of human beings and their involvement in development. The latter began to be recognised from the decade of the 1970s and 1980s, when sustainability became an integral component of development and people's management and ownership capacities began to be recognised, which also led to the rise in debates on participation (qualitative aspects of development). The processes of development, therefore, gained more importance than achieving targets in a mechanistic way. Collectivisation and organisation of people, their awareness, participation, leadership and responsibilities began to take centre stage.

Process documentation therefore entails documentation of all these kinds of processes, which are not limited to reporting mere activities and achievements, but courses or routes that are followed. Therefore, it is not an activity report alone, nor is it a theory paper or a strategy paper. In fact, process documentation is about observing a change process, recording it and analysing it (what happened, why did it happen, what did not take place and why?), learning from it and acting on it. It is different from other social science researches in the sense that it seeks out occurrences of similar events or deviations or searches for the causative factors in an ongoing manner. Hence, it results

in constant thinking, reflecting and analysis of the development concepts and the implementing strategies (Dwivedi, 2003).

However, in most cases it is observed that very little attention is accorded to observing and recording the processes, with more focus on activities and achievements for recording and documentation. It is here that process documentation shows deviation, as it embraces not only the results and activities but also the processes which play a major role in the success of any project (Dwivedi, 2003).

#### **NOTE BANK**

Process documentation broadly focuses on three aspects of a development agency or project:

- (i) The first set of processes is related to tasks and activities. Under this, the choice of the programme implementation strategy, division of roles and responsibilities, evaluation and monitoring systems and their shifts are included.
- (ii) The second set of processes is those emanating from an organisation's interaction with the section of society with which the organisation primarily works and acquires distinctive importance in the course of growth of the organisation. These processes manifest themselves in activities and programmes that an organisation takes up in order to move in the desired direction.
- (iii) The third set of processes relate to the structure of the organisation and interaction among its various elements. The structure of an organisation is shaped by five essential elements, i.e., people, tasks, division of labour, accountability and decision making.

The sub-sets of such processes are:

- The processes rooted in interaction between individual goals and organisational goals, individual competence and task requirement, individual values and organisational culture, individual growth and the organisation's future requirements
- Nature of functioning related to participation, communication, leadership, decision making and problem solving
- Processes rooted in dialectics between formal structure of the organisation and informal culture

## Documentation Of Unanticipated Processes

Planned intervention is an ongoing, socially constructed and negotiated process, not simply the execution of an already specified plan of action with predictable outcomes. Therefore, any project intervention, in the due course of action, faces a number of unanticipated processes, which deviates considerably from the plan of action that was initially conceived. Therefore, process documentation looks to incorporate the changes that occur in a process, the reasons behind it, and the corresponding adjustment strategies (Da Silva, Le Borgne, & Dickinson, 2011).

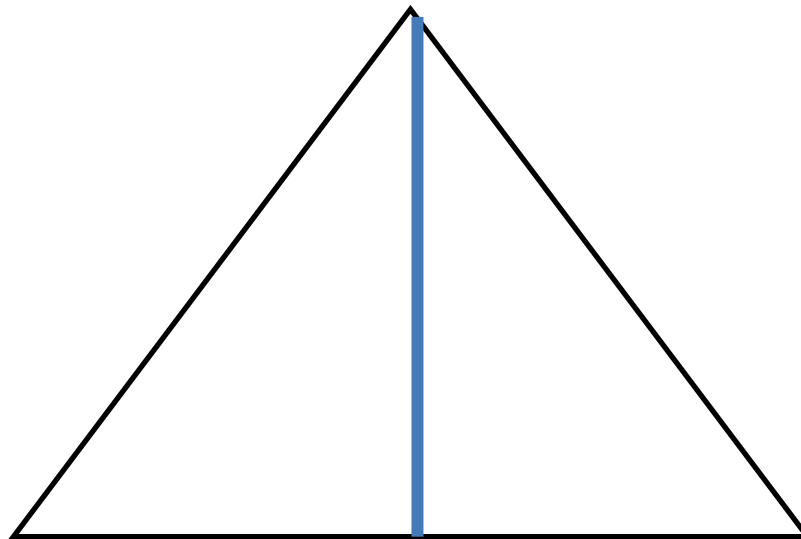


Fig 1: Planned project interventions

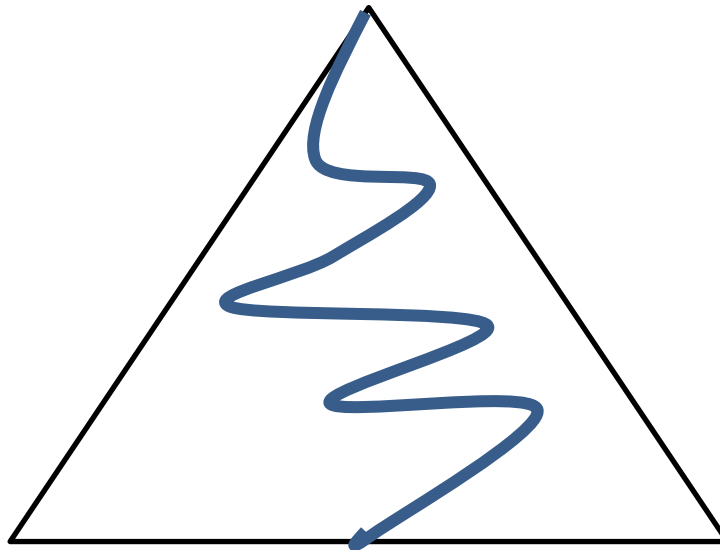


Fig 2: Unanticipated processes in the actual course project implementation

### 6.1.2 Theory Of Change

As process documentation is about observing a change process, recording, analysing it (what happened, why did it happen, what did not take place and why?), learning from and acting on it, it is also important to have conceptual clarity on what this change process is. This change process is based on the premise that a planned intervention is an ongoing, socially constructed and negotiated process, not simply the execution of an already specified plan of action with predictable outcomes. As process documentation captures the factors (expected or otherwise) that affect the change process, which an intervention is aimed at, it is guided by and provides feedback on a certain programme logic or 'theory of change'.

The theory of change with respect to a particular intervention refers to the underlying assumptions and explicit ideas about how a change is expected to take place as a result of the intervention. Developing a theory of change involves:

**1. Developing a vision of success**

It is a short description of the sustainable future that the project wishes to help bring about. It describes real people, real relationships, institutions and cultures. However, it is important to ensure that it does not paint a picture of a remote, idealised and unachievable future. Therefore, it must be a plausible picture of people behaving and experiencing life differently and in a sustainable way.

**2. Mapping the most critical actors**

The second step involves mapping of critical stakeholders/actors who are key to a particular project/intervention. It includes individuals, groups, institutions, etc.

**3. Developing (medium term) outcome statements for each critical actor**

An outcome is defined as noticeable and felt changes in condition, attitude, behaviour, capacities (knowledge/skills), institutions, and relationships which can be attributed OR plausibly associated to specific interventions under a project. It may be in the form of increased access to information, or knowledge on rights and entitlements.

**4. Mapping the preconditions of success (as series of short term outcomes)**

If a project wants to achieve success, it ought to list down certain pre-conditions for success.

**5. Defining strategies to achieve each precondition of success**

Along with mapping the pre-conditions for success, it is also necessary to define the specific strategies that need to be employed for achieving the same.

**Case Study: *Civic Engagement In Municipalities***

The 74th Constitutional Amendment to the Indian constitution mandates Indian municipalities to provide basic services to citizens. Municipalities, as institutions of local governance, are expected to deepen the roots of democracy and enable just and equitable development. These institutions promise democracy and development to flourish at the local level. However, a variety of issues are affecting the effective and efficient functioning of these institutions and their ability to fulfil their mandates. Despite being democratically elected, there is hardly any institutional mechanism for harnessing and promoting citizen voice and participation, particularly of the urban poor, informal settlers, and other marginalised people. As a result, the elected representatives, technocrats and bureaucrats working in these municipalities are not accountable to the citizens for their conduct and performance. The citizens are mostly unaware of their rights with regard to accessibility, availability and quality of municipal services as municipalities do not communicate transparently to the citizens. Decision making within the municipality is often purposefully kept obscured and non-transparent to citizens; this brews corruption among officials. The capacity of municipalities to respond to citizens' needs is also very limited as appropriate funds, functions and functionaries have not been devolved to the municipalities by the higher tiers of government. Many a time the policy, procedures and guidelines related to devolution are inadequate. The capacities of citizens to hold municipalities accountable through regular monitoring of their performance are also very limited. As these municipalities continuously fail to respond to the citizens' aspiration and daily needs, the citizens have also become indifferent and apathetic to these institutions.

On the other hand, NGOs in India largely being rural centric hardly appreciate the growing urbanisation of poverty, deprivation and marginalisation in India. Their capacities and willingness to engage with municipalities and provide support to citizens to get organised, facilitating them to demand services and review municipal performance are also limited. State governments actively promote delivery of services like water, sanitation and solid waste management by private companies which charge hefty fees from the

citizens for these services. This may have somewhat addressed the needs of the upper middle class and middle class citizens who can afford these payments for such services. However, the needs of the urban poor have remained unattended.

With this background PRIA, with decades of experience on citizen participation and local governance in India and elsewhere, decided to address the democratic and development deficits in selected Indian municipalities. PRIA aspired to enhance the quality of democracy in select Indian municipalities to improve basic services to the most marginalised families. A two-pronged approach was proposed:

- (i) Strengthening the voice and participation of citizens and civil society; and
- (ii) Strengthening municipalities to institutionalise social accountability mechanisms including sensitising key municipal managers (elected councilors and officers)

A number of interventions were identified to:

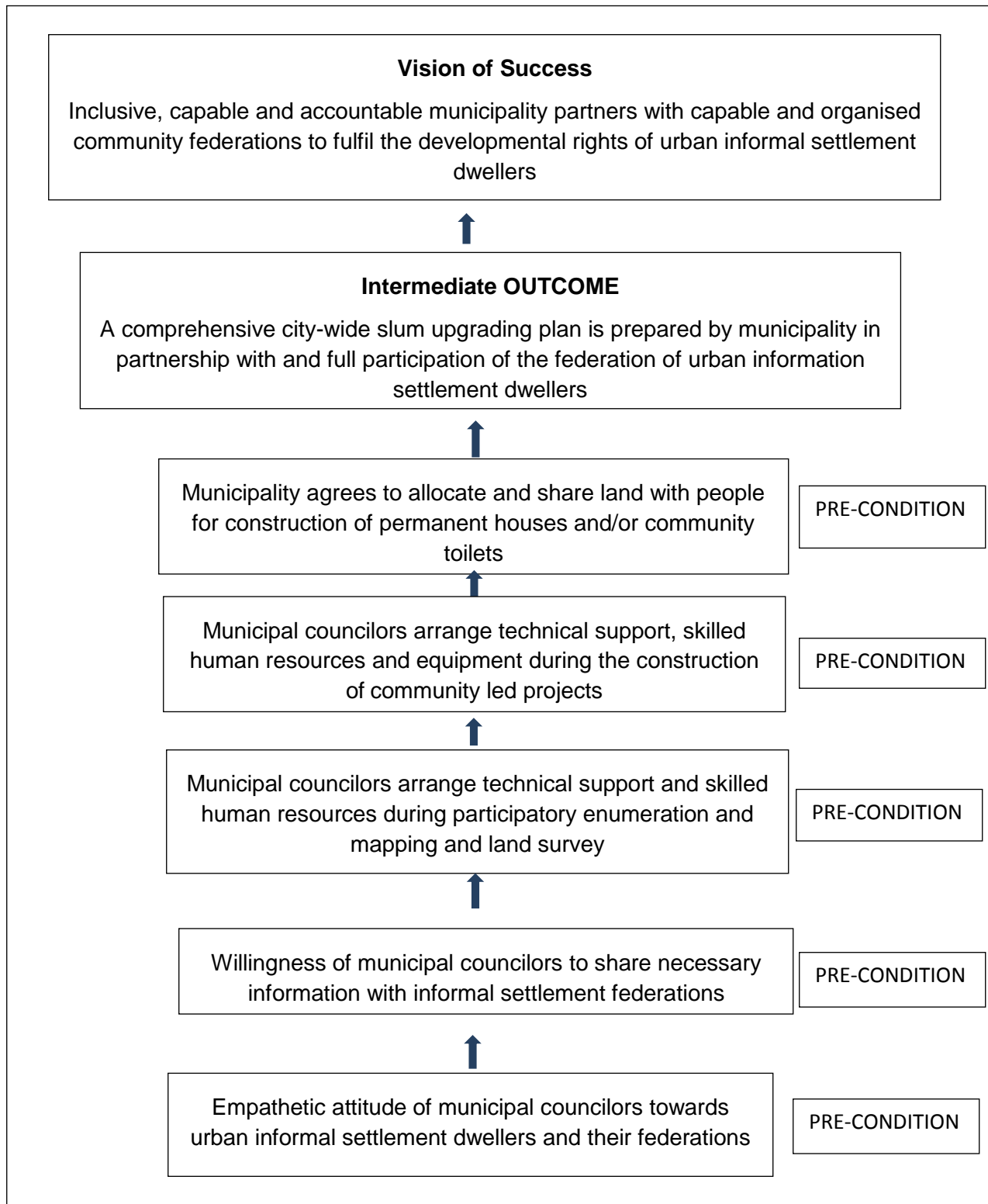
- (i) Build capacities of marginalised families to engage in regular, sustained and constructive dialogue with municipalities through monitoring and demanding quality services;
- (ii) Develop capacities of municipalities in institutionalising social accountability mechanisms and to include needs of marginalised families in planning and decision making in the municipalities; and
- (iii) Enable capacities of local CSOs to engage in activities that promote democratic urban local governance; and to engage with national and sub-national policies and programmes on municipalities

PRIA decided that the project should be premised on the assumption that organised civic engagement will enhance accountability and responsiveness of municipalities towards the most marginalised. This responsiveness will be demonstrated through improvement in service delivery. It assumed that the current state of mistrust among citizenry and apathy of civil society to engage in the urban governance process and vice versa could be 'corrected' through sensitisation, capacity development and advocacy initiatives. It



also assumed that national policies and guidelines will continue to support democratic decentralisation; however future changes in policies are expected to strengthen authorities of municipalities and civic engagement. Figure 1 below depicts the change pathway for this particular intervention.

Fig 1: Change Pathway:



### 6.1.3 Steps Involved In Process Documentation (Da Silva, Le Borgne, & Dickinson, 2011)

1. Identifying the theory of change and operational assumptions behind the initiative
2. Capturing systematically, information related to the theory of change and operational assumptions
3. Organising information in such a way that stakeholders can reflect and learn about the process
4. Analysing information by looking at common themes, trends and patterns and placing findings in the context of the project and the project's theory of change
5. Disseminating information in a format (and at a pace) that is useful and comprehensible
6. Using the findings to improve the approach, strategy and adjust theory/assumptions about change

### 6.1.4 Benefits Of Process Documentation

Process documentation can result in numerous benefits. Some of them are (Da Silva, Le Borgne, & Dickinson, 2011):

- Help project staff and other stakeholders track meaningful events in their project, discern more accurately *what* is happening, *how* it is happening and *why* it is happening
- Set a project in its local context and the reality of people's lives.
- Stimulate public debate about key obstacles and opportunities for change
- Improve the quality and impact of a project
- Contribute to the collection of qualitative information to fill out the story behind the figures
- Encourage learning from mistakes and create opportunities to celebrate impact
- Challenge assumptions
- Lead to closer relationships with stakeholders and give them a voice

## 6.2 Monitoring

Monitoring is a continuous internal management activity, whose purpose is to ensure that the programme achieves its defined objectives within the prescribed time frame and budget. In simple terms, it implies looking at what and how much has been achieved, when compared with the plans of the programme. It is the system which follows a well-designed process, primarily to generate information to improve programme implementation. It involves provisions of regular feedback on the progress of programme implementation, and the problems faced during this process.

It is a systematic effort to compare the performance with laid-down objectives and standards, in order to determine whether progress is in line with them. It also envisages the taking of remedial measures when unintended aspects emerge that affect planned implementation.

A major function of managers, planners, field administrators and other practitioners is to monitor progress at various levels and stages of implementation. The first step then is to have a clear plan on the criteria of monitoring that have to be observed during implementation. This has to be done at the planning stage. The manager will then need field-based information in order to make appropriate decisions about programme directions and operation strategies. The manager needs data on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme plan in order to identify possible gaps between the planned and actual activities implemented in the field.

Field administrators and other practitioners would be keen on monitoring to determine whether or not clients and other beneficiaries are gaining from the programme. Well-designed and carefully scheduled programme monitoring follows a systematic framework for collecting and analysing information in implementation activities with the end view of improving the management and operation at various stages of the programme.

### 6.2.1 Features Of Monitoring (APPEAL, 2001)

1. Continuous ongoing activity that tracks each activity from the start to its finish
2. Dynamic feature because its processes and details evolve and change as the monitoring functions are in progress
3. Forward-looking process, as it seeks to anticipate problems and shortcomings
4. Corrective approach, suggesting remedial measures to rectify defects and failures even as they occur
5. Consolidative methodology, seeking feedback of initiatives from the authorities at the top to the grassroots at the bottom
6. Enforces clear thinking and constant alertness, as the objectives and standards of the programme/project need to be clearly established. This is critical, as shortcomings will need to be identified and addressed immediately in order that the highest levels of programme quality are maintained

### 6.2.2 Characteristics Of A Good Monitoring System

In order to ensure the chances of success of the programme, monitoring is needed at various stages of the programme cycle from the inception of the programme to the completion of final activities. Thus a good monitoring system should:

- Provide periodic and timely feedback on physical and substantive programme accomplishments, as well as financial status
- Identify problems that require solutions and action. Problems may be specific to the programme (changes in procurement procedures), or institutional in nature (changes in the context where it is being implemented)
- Be relatively simple, to incorporate the basic information required by programme management. The use of complicated forms requiring a large volume of data creates confusion and reduces the enthusiasm of all those involved.
- For effective problem solving, monitoring should ensure timeliness of information and ensure that the feedback is implemented

Further, the monitoring process should take in to consideration the different areas of accountability, such as (APPEAL, 1999):

- ✓ *Coverage Accountability*: Is the programme serving the intended beneficiaries? Are there any beneficiaries that are being excluded from the programme? Are there beneficiaries that are being wrongfully included in the programme?
- ✓ *Service Delivery Accountability*: Are the services being delivered in proper amounts? Are the activities and interventions provided really the intended programme services?
- ✓ *Fiscal Accountability*: Are the allocated funds being effectively used? Are the expenditures properly documented?
- ✓ *Legal Accountability*: Are the relevant statues and rules being observed by the programme?

#### THINK TANK

An example of wrongful inclusion and mistaking exclusion takes place when accounting for below poverty line (BPL) individuals in India. Because of this lack of accountability, a number of beneficiaries may miss out the policy programmes targeting them.

*Can you think of any other example of programmes where lack of monitoring has hindered project implementation in your country?*

## 6.3 Evaluation

Evaluation is the systematic process of collecting and analysing information to determine whether and to what extent objectives are being realised. Evaluation thus aims to examine the project in its entirety – the context, inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. It aims to make recommendations that may lead to the revision of the programme design or replacing it entirely. It may also recommend changes in the future course of action for the programme.

Programme evaluations are less frequent than monitoring activities, considering factors of cost and time. Evaluations are usually conducted by social research experts who are not considered an internal part of the programme implementation function.

Evaluation fulfills two functions. The first is an *internal support function* which aims to analyse the past and provide inputs for the future. The second is a *control function* to assess the real outcomes of the programme. This includes control over accounts and financial operations. However, it is important to make a distinction between the two functions, so as to not emphasise one over the other (Satyamurthi, 1997).

Evaluation can be said to be an 'appraisal' and thus has a few basic criteria of assessment cutting across all kind of development programmes – effectiveness, efficiency, viability, reproducibility, intervention strategy, satisfaction and impact – which together form the core foundations for an evaluation process.

### 6.3.1 Classification

Evaluation can take place in different phases of the project, including a simultaneous evaluation process which studies different components of a programme across periods of time. Some common classifications of evaluation are:

- *Concurrent Evaluation* done at periodic intervals throughout the lifetime of the project
- *Mid-term Evaluation* conducted half-way through the project duration. Thus, if a project is to run for three years (36 months), the mid-term evaluation would be taken up at the end of 18 months.
- *Final Evaluation* is taken up only after the project has run its course, which helps in understanding the impact of the programme. This is essential as even though the programme might be over, the analysis of this data can be the foundation for the next set of programmes.

### 6.3.2 Purpose

It is important to understand the broad purposes of evaluation, so that such a process may be conducted using a credible methodology and in the right spirit. It provides:

- An objective and reliable assessment of the learning as well as the socio-economic impact of the programme
- An assessment regarding the sustainability of the programme
- Feedback to local organisers, implementation personnel and other stakeholders regarding the outcomes of the project, its strengths and weaknesses, and suggests remedial measures for future phases
- Analytical inputs to the planning of future programmes

#### THINK TANK

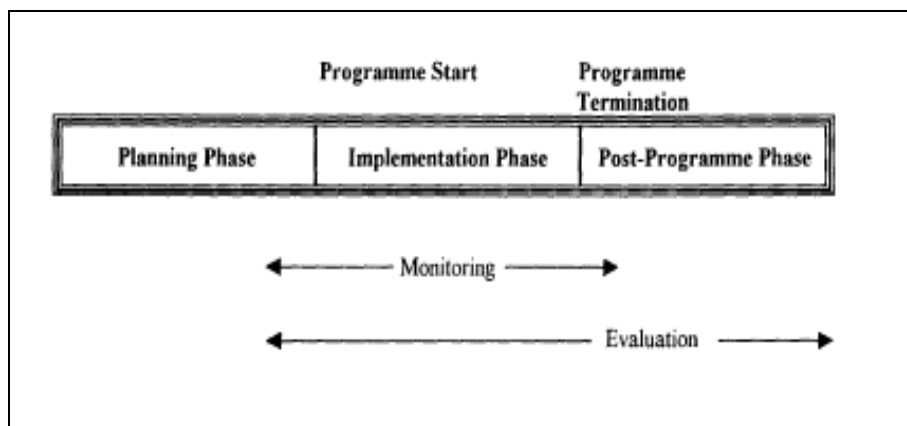
What, in your view, are some of the other significant attributes that makes evaluation an extremely important exercise in any development project?



## 6.4 Differences Between Monitoring And Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are two different project management tools that are closely related, interactive and mutually supportive. Through routine tracking of project progress, monitoring can provide quantitative and qualitative data useful for designing and implementing project evaluation exercises. Evaluation, on the other hand, can support project monitoring. With the assistance and inputs of periodic evaluations, monitoring tools and strategies can be refined and further developed. Some might argue that good monitoring substitutes project evaluations. This might be true in small-scale, short-term projects, or when the main objective of M&E is to obtain information to improve the process of implementation of an ongoing project. However, evaluation is essential in order to assess the impact and future development of any project.

### Monitoring And Evaluation Cycle



Monitoring	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Purpose</b> is to improve efficiency and adjust work plan</li> <li>• <b>Prime focus</b> is to present inputs/outputs, process outcomes and work plans</li> <li>• Is a continuous process over a shorter <b>period</b> of time</li> <li>• <b>Process</b> involves regular meetings, preparation of reports, monthly/quarterly reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Purpose</b> is to improve effectiveness, assess for impacts and provide inputs for future programmes                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Prime focus</b> is effectiveness and relevance of programme</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Can be periodic efforts over long <b>periods</b> of time</li> <li>• <b>Process</b> may require additional data collection and surveys, such as baseline data, to compare impacts and gauge improvements due to programme implementation</li> </ul>

## 6.5 Differing Approaches To Monitoring And Evaluation

M&E processes have been viewed under two approaches:

- The conventional approach; and
- The participatory approach

Conventional and participatory M&E are not always distinguishable. 'External' experts are usually involved in both forms of M&E, but assume different roles. Conventional processes are more 'expert-driven' in nature where they direct the design, data collection process, analysis and report writing. Participatory M&E on the other hand is 'expert-facilitated' in nature. They encourage the existing stakeholders (programme implementers and beneficiaries) to participate in the formulation and implementation of M&E plans.

A brief account of both the approaches is given below.

### *(i) Conventional Monitoring And Evaluation*

Conventional M&E has essentially been a 'top-down' approach, drawing from the tradition of scientific investigation. It attempts to produce information that is necessarily 'objective', 'value free' and 'quantifiable'. Historically, these traditional approaches emphasise achieving programme effectiveness and practical utility. Since outsiders are usually contracted to conduct the evaluation for the sake of 'enhancing objectivity', participants who may be affected by the findings of an evaluation have little or no input in the process. The characterising features of a conventional M&E process are:

- Focus on measurement
- Orientation to the needs to programme funders and policy makers, rather than participants and local people
- Striving for objectivity, distance between evaluator and participants
- Conducted for the purpose of making judgments rather than empowerment

**(ii) Participatory Monitoring And Evaluation**

Participatory M&E is a way of learning from and with community members to investigate, analyse and evaluate constraints and opportunities faced during the implementation of a programme. Such a methodology allows for collective, informed and timely decision-making practices regarding the programme. It is based on the belief that people external to a situation learn best about it from those who are most closely involved in the situation and it is the latter that can best analyse their own problems, albeit with facilitation from the former. Participation then allows for a self-determined change, which goes further than any externally induced change.

The characterising features of a participatory M&E process are (Estrella & Gaventa, 1998):

- Enhanced participation, especially of beneficiaries
- Increased authenticity of locally relevant findings
- Greater sustainability of project activities, by identification of strengths and weaknesses for better project management and decision making
- Increased local level capacity, which in turn contributes to self-reliance in overall project implementation
- Sharing of experience through systematic documentation and analysis based on broad based participation
- Strengthened accountability to donors
- More efficient allocation of resources

Thus participatory M&E can:

- Be conducted by all actors (the 'experts', programme developers and learners) in order to systematically record and analyse the information which they have determined to be important for assessing progress and impacts
- Raise critical challenging questions, while simultaneously creating self-confidence.

The learners and the community can have a space to be critical about the programme without taking it personally

- Be an active process for framing questions and seeking answers, rather than a passive method of giving answers to questions posed by others. In other words, it can allow for an opportunity wherein people investigate and analyse their own work, aims and impacts
- Provide learners with opportunities for interactive dialogue to check and cross-check their understanding and to get peer feedback on their progress. This not only lets them see where they make mistakes, but also to learn from them
- The results of such an evaluation can be used as a part of community learning, not just as an individual process. If all members and learners of the community are aware of the process at every stage, it helps minimise repetitive mistakes and it can then become a truly empowering learning experience

### **6.5.1 Difference Between Conventional Monitoring & Evaluation And Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation**

Perhaps what distinguishes participatory monitoring from the conventional approach is its emphasis on the inclusion of a wider sphere of stakeholders in the monitoring process. Project management practitioners believe that stakeholders who are involved in the development, planning and implementation should also be involved in monitoring changes and determining the evaluation indicators for 'success' (Parks, 2005).

**Contrasting Features: Conventional And Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation**

	Conventional	Participatory
Who	External experts	Community members, project staff, facilitator
What	Predetermined indicators of success, principally cost and production outputs	People identify their own indicators of success, which may include production outputs
How	Focus on 'scientific objectivity'; distancing of evaluators from other participants; uniform, complex procedures; delayed, limited access to results	Self-evaluation; simple methods adapted to local culture; open, immediate sharing of results through local involvement in evaluation processes
When	Usually upon completion of project/programme; sometimes mid-term	More frequent, small-scale evaluations
Why	Accountability, usually summative, to determine if funding continues	To empower local people to initiate, control and take corrective action

## 6.6 Elements Of A Monitoring And Evaluation Plan

An M&E 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 section will look at the core components of a participatory M&E plan.

### Key Questions Of A Monitoring And Evaluation Plan

An M&E plan comes into being as a part of 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 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 an M&E 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 M&E 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

#### NOTE BANK

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 the 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 (PRIA, 2002):

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



### ***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

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)

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 the 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.

### ***What Is The Scope?***

The scope of an M&E 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 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, the M&E 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 has to be structured in finite time periods and it may be pre-planned at various stages. These are (Rubin, 1995):

- 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

**Setting up a monitoring and evaluation plan has six steps which need to be repeated twice – first during planning and then during implementation (IFAD, 2013):**

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?

## Summary

This Unit gave a detailed account of process documentation, and the manner in which it is carried out in the context of development projects from an organisation's point of view. Additionally, this Unit examined the concepts of M&E separately, along with giving clarity on the distinction between the two. The Unit also gave information on the different approaches to M&E and the key elements of a good M&E plan.

## Recommended Readings

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